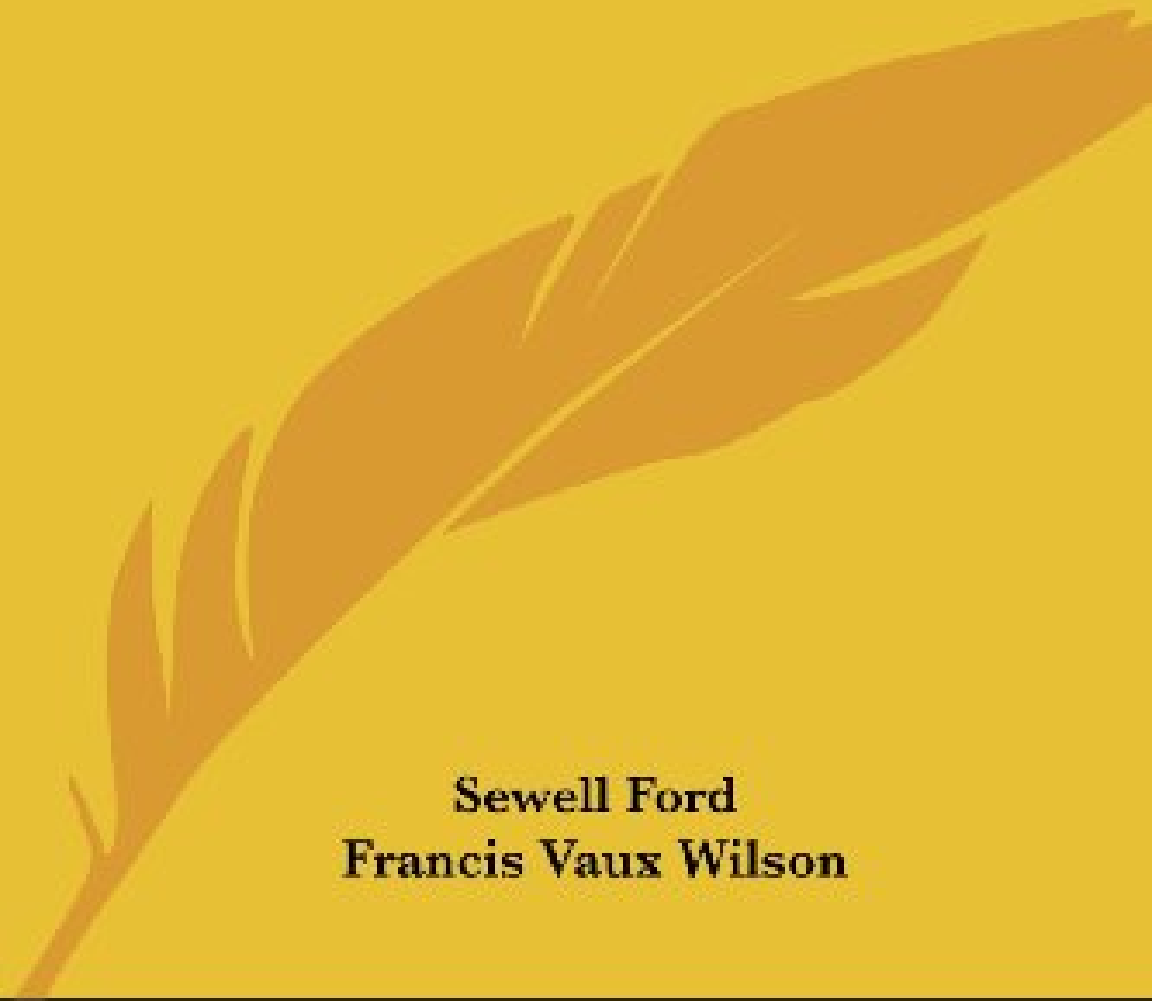
Shorty McCabe



Sewell Ford
Francis Vaux Wilson

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SHORTY MCCABE ***



She was a dream, all right.

Shorty McCabe

By
Sewell Ford

Illustrated by
Francis Vaux Wilson



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SHORTY McCABE

CHAPTER I

Excuse me, mister man, but ain't you—Hello, yourself! Blamed if I didn't think there was somethin' kind of natural about the looks, as you come pikin' by. How're they runnin', eh?

Well say, I ain't seen you since we used to hit up the grammar school together. You've seen me, eh? Oh, sure! I'd forgot. That was when you showed up at the old Athletic club the night I got the belt away from the Kid. Doin' sportin' news then, wa'n't you? Chucked all that now, I s'pose?

Oh, I've kept track of *you*, all right. Every time I sees one of your pieces in the magazines I reads it. And say, some of 'em's kind of punk. But then, you've got to sling out somethin' or other, I expect, or get off the job. Where do you dig up all of them yarns, anyway? That's what always sticks me. You must knock around a whole bunch, and have lots happen to you. Me? Ah, nothin' ever happens to me. Course, I'm generally on the move, but it's just along the grub

track, and that ain't excitin'.

Yes, it's been a couple of years since I quit the ring. Why? Say, don't ever put that up to a has-been. It's almost as bad as compoundin' a felony. I could give you a whole raft of reasons that would sound well, but there's only one that covers the case. There's a knockout comin' to the best of 'em, if they hang to the game long enough. Some ain't satisfied, even after two or three. I was. I got mine, clean and square, and I ain't ashamed of it. I didn't raise any holler about a chance shot, and I didn't go exhibitin' myself on the stage. I slid into a quiet corner for a month or so, and then I dropped into the only thing I knew how to do, trainin' comers to go against the champs. It ain't like pullin' down your sixty per cent of the gate receipts, but there's worse payin' jobs.

Course, there's times when I finds myself up against it. It was durin' one of them squeezes, not so long ago, that I gets mixed up with Leonidas Dodge, and all that foolishness. Ah, it wa'n't anything worth wastin' breath over. You would? Honest? Well, it won't take long, I guess.

You see, just as my wad looks like it had shrunk so that it would rattle around in a napkin ring, someone passes me the word that Butterfly was down to win the third race, at 15 to 1. Now as a general thing I don't monkey with the ponies, but when I figured up what a few saw-bucks would do for me at those odds, I makes for the track and takes the high dive. After it was all over and I was comin' back in the train, with only a ticket where my roll had been, me feelin' about as gay as a Zulu on a cake of ice, along comes this Mr. Dodge, that I didn't know from next Tuesday week.

"Is it as bad as that?" says he, sizin' up the woe on my face. "Because if it is they ought to give you a pension. What was the horse?"

"Butterfly," says I. "Now laugh!"

"I've got a right to," says he. "I had the same dope."

Well, you see, that made us almost second cousins by marriage and we started to get acquainted. I looked him over careful but I couldn't place him within a mile. He had points enough, too. The silk hat was a veteran, the Prince Albert dated back about four seasons, but the gray gaiters were down to the minute. Being an easy talker, he might have been a book agent or a green goods distributor. But somehow his eyes didn't seem shifty enough for a crook, and no con. man would have lasted long wearing the kind of hair that he did. It was a sort of lemon yellow, and he had a lip decoration about two shades lighter, taggin' him as plain as an "inspected" label on a tin trunk.

"I'm a mitt juggler," says I, "and they call me Shorty McCabe. What's your line?"

"I've heard of you," he says. "Permit me," and he hands out a pasteboard that read:

LEONIDAS MACKLIN DODGE
Commissioner-at-Large

"For what?" says I.

"It all depends," says Mr. Dodge. "Sometimes I call it a brass polisher, then again it's a tooth-paste. It works well either way. Also it cleans silver, removes grease spots, and can be used for a shaving soap. It is a product of my own lab'ratory, none genuine without the signature."

"How does it go as a substitute for beef and?" says I.

"I've never quite come to that," says he, "but I'm as close now as it's comfortable to be. My gold reserve counts up about a dollar thirty-nine."

"You've got me beat by a whole dollar," says I.

"Then," says he, "you'd better let me underwrite your next issue."

"There's a friend of mine up to Forty-second Street that ought to be good for fifty," says I.

"I've had lots of friendships, off and on," says he, "but never one that I could cash in at a pinch. I'll stay by until you try your touch."

Well, the Forty-second Street man had been gone a month. There was others I might have tried, but I didn't like to risk gettin' my fingers frost-bitten. So I hooks up with Leonidas and we goes out with a grip full of Electro-Polisho, hittin' the places where they had nickel-plated signs and brass hand rails. And say! I could starve to death doing that. Give me a week and two pairs of shoes and I might sell a box or so; but Dodge, he takes an hour to work his side of the block and shakes out a fist full of quarters.

"It's an art," says he, "which one must be born to. After this you carry the grip."

That's the part I was playin' when we strikes the Tuscarora. Sounds like a parlor car, don't it? But it was just one of those swell bachelor joints—fourteen stories, electric elevators, suites of two and three rooms, for gents only. Course, we hadn't no more call to go there than to the Stock Exchange, but Leonidas Macklin, he's one of the kind that don't wait for cards. Seein' the front door open and a crowd of men in the hall, he blazes right in, silk hat on the back of

his head, hands in his pockets, and me close behind with the bag.

"What's up; auction, row or accident?" says he to one of the mob.

Now if it had been me that butted in like that I'd had a row on my hands in about two minutes, but in less time than that Leonidas knows the whole story and is right to home. Taking me behind a hand-made palm, he puts me next. Seems that some one had advertised in a mornin' paper for a refined, high-browed person to help one of the same kind kill time at a big salary.

"And look what he gets," says Leonidas, wavin' his hand at the push. "There's more'n a hundred of 'em, and not more'n a dozen that you couldn't trace back to a Mills hotel. They've been jawing away for an hour, trying to settle who gets the cinch. The chap who did the advertising is inside there, in the middle of that bunch, and I reckon he wishes he hadn't. As an act of charity, Shorty, I'm going to straighten things out for him. Come on."

"Better call up the reserves," says I.

But that wa'n't Mr. Dodge's style. Side-steppin' around to the off edge of the crowd, just as if he'd come down from the elevator, he calls out good and loud: "Now then, gentlemen; one side, please, one side! Ah, thank you! In a moment, now, gentlemen, we'll get down to business."

And say, they opened up for us like it was pay day and he had the cash box. We brought up before the saddest-lookin' cuss I ever saw out of bed. I couldn't make out whether he was sick, or scared, or both. He had flopped in a big leather chair and was tryin' to wave 'em away with both hands, while about two dozen, lookin' like ex-bath rubbers or men nurses,

were telling him how good they were and shovin' references at him. The rest of the gang was trying to push in for their whack. It was a bad mess, but Leonidas wasn't feazed a bit.

"Attention, gentlemen!" says he. "If you will all retire to the room on the left we will get to work. The room on the left, gentlemen, on the left!"

He had a good voice, Leonidas did, one of the kind that could go against a merry-go-round or a German band. The crowd stopped pushin' to listen, then some one made a break for the next room, and in less than a minute they were all in there, with the door shut between. Mr. Dodge tips me the wink and sails over to the specimen in the chair.

"You're Mr. Homer Fales, I take it," says he.

"I am," says the pale one, breathing hard, "and who—who the devil are you?"

"That's neither here nor there," says Leonidas. "Just now I'm a life-boat. Do you want to hire any of those fellows? If so—"

"No, no, no!" says Homer, shakin' as if he had a chill. "Send them all away, will you? They have nearly killed me."

"Away they go," says Leonidas. "Watch me do it."

First he has me go in with his hat and collect their cards. Then I calls 'em out, one by one, while he stands by to give each one the long-lost brother grip, and whisper in his ear, as confidential as if he was telling him how he'd won the piano at a church raffle: "Don't say a word; to-morrow at ten." They all got the same, even to the Hickey-boy shoulder pat as he passed 'em out, and every last one of 'em faded away trying to keep from lookin' tickled to death. It

took twenty minutes by the watch.

"Now, Mr. Fales," says Leonidas, comin' to a parade rest in front of the chair, "next time you want to play Santa Claus to the unemployed I'd advise you to hire Madison Square Garden to receive in."

That seemed to put a little life into Homer. He hitched himself up off'n the middle of his backbone, pulled in a yard or two of long legs and pried his eyes open. You couldn't call him handsome and prove it. He had one of those long, two-by-four faces, with more nose than chin, and a pair of inset eyes that seemed built to look for grief. The corners of his mouth were sagged, and his complexion made you think of cheese pie. But he was still alive.

"You've overlooked one," says he, and points my way. "He wouldn't do at all. Send him off, too."

"That's where you're wrong, Mr. Fales," says Leonidas. "This gentleman is a wholly disinterested party, and he's a particular friend of mine. Professor McCabe, let me introduce Mr. Homer Fales."

So I came to the front and gave Homer's flipper a little squeeze that must have done him as much good as an electric treatment, by the way he squirmed.

"If you ever feel ambitious for a little six-ounce glove exercise," says I, "just let me know."

"Thanks," says he, "thanks very much. But I'm an invalid, you see. In fact, I'm a very sick man."

"About three rounds a day would put you on your feet," says I. "There's nothing like it."

He kind of shuddered and turned to Leonidas. "You are certain that those men will not return, are you?" says he.

"Not before to-morrow at ten. You can be out then, you know," says Mr. Dodge.

"To-morrow at ten!" says Homer, and slumps again, all in a heap. "Oh, this is awful!" he groans. "I couldn't survive another!"

It was the worst case of funk I ever saw. We put in an hour trying to brace him up, but not until we'd promised to stay by over night could we get him to breathe deep. Then he was as grateful as if we'd pulled him out of the river. We half lugs him over to the elevator and takes him up to his quarters. It wasn't any cheap hang-out, either—nothing but silk rugs on the floor and parlor furniture all over the shop. We had dinner served up there, and it was a feed to dream about—oysters, ruddy duck, filly of beef with mushrooms, and all the frills—while Homer worries along on a few toasted crackers and a cup of weak tea.

As Leonidas and me does the anti-famine act Homer unloads his hard-luck wheeze. He was the best example of an all-round invalid I ever stacked up against. He didn't go in for no half-way business; it was neck or nothing with him. He wasn't on the hospital list one day and bumping the bumps the next. He was what you might call a consistent sufferer.

"It's my heart mostly," says he. "I think there's a leak in one of the valves. The doctors lay it to nerves, some of them, but I'm certain about the leak."

"Why not call in a plumber?" says I.

But you couldn't chirk him up that way. He'd believed in that leaky heart of his for years. It was his stock in trade. As near as I could make out he'd began being an invalid about the time he should

have been hunting a job, and he'd always had some one to back him up in it until about two months before we met him. First it was his mother, and when she gave out his old maid sister took her turn. Her name was Joyphena. He told us all about her; how she used to fan him when he was hot, wrap him up when he was cold, and read to him when she couldn't think of anything else to do. But one day Joyphena was thoughtless enough to go off somewhere and quit living. You could see that Homer wouldn't ever quite forgive her for that.

It was when Homer tried to find a substitute for Joyphena that his troubles began. He'd had all kinds of nurses, but the good ones wouldn't stay and the bad ones he'd fired. He'd tried valets, too, but none of 'em seemed to suit. Then he got desperate and wrote out that ad. that brought the mob down on him.

He gave us a diagram of exactly the kind of man he wanted, and from his plans and specifications we figured out that what Homer was looking for was a cross between a galley slave and a he-angel, some one who would know just what he wanted before he did, and be ready to hand it out whenever called for. And he was game to pay the price, whatever it might be.

"You see," says Homer, "whenever I make the least exertion, or undergo the slightest excitement, it aggravates the leak."

I'd seen lots who ducked all kinds of exertion, but mighty few with so slick an excuse. It would have done me good to have said so, but Leonidas didn't look at it in that way. He was a sympathizer from headquarters; seemed to like nothin' better'n to hear Homer tell how bad off he was.

"What you need, Fales," says Leonidas, "is the country, the calm, peaceful country. I know a nice, quiet little place, about a hundred miles from here, that would just suit you, and if you say the word I'll ship you off down there early to-morrow morning. I'll give you a letter to an old lady who'll take care of you better than four trained nurses. She has brought half a dozen children through all kinds of sickness, from measles to broken necks, and she's never quite so contented as when she's trotting around waiting on somebody. I stopped there once when I was a little hoarse from a cold, and before she'd let me go to bed she made me drink a bowl of ginger tea, soak my feet in hot mustard water, and bind a salt pork poultice around my neck. If you'd just go down there you'd both be happy. What do you say?"

Homer was doubtful. He'd never lived much in the country and was afraid it wouldn't agree with his leak. But early in the morning he was up wantin' to know more about it. He'd begun to think of that mob of snap hunters that was booked to show up again at ten o'clock, and it made him nervous. Before breakfast was over he was willing to go almost anywhere, only he was dead set that me and Leonidas should trail along, too. So there we were, with Homer on our hands.

Well, we packed a trunk for him, called a cab, and got him loaded on a parlor car. About every so often he'd clap his hands to his side and groan: "Oh, my heart! My poor heart!" It was as touchin' as the heroine's speeches to the top gallery. On the way down Leonidas gave us a bird's-eye view of the kind of Jim Crow settlement we were heading for. It was one of those places where they date things back to the time when Lem Saunders fell down cellar with a

lamp and set the house afire.

The town looked it. There was an aggregation of three men, two boys and a yellow dog in sight on Main Street when we landed. We'd wired ahead, so the old lady was ready for us. Leonidas called her "Mother" Bickell. She was short, about as thick through as a sugar barrel, and wore two kinds of hair, the front frizzes bein' a lovely chestnut. But she was a nice-spoken old girl, and when she found out that we'd brought along a genuine invalid with a leak in his blood pump, she almost fell on our necks. In about two shakes she'd hustled Homer into a rocking-chair, wedged him in place with pillows, wrapped a blanket around his feet, and shoved him up to a table where there was a hungry man's layout of clam fritters, canned corn, boiled potatoes and hot mince pie.

There wasn't any use for Homer to register a kick on the bill-of-fare. She was too busy tellin' him how much good the things would do him, and how he must eat a lot or she'd feel bad, to listen to any remarks of his about toasted crackers. For supper there was fried fish, apple sauce and hot biscuit, and Homer had to take his share. He was glad to go to bed early. She didn't object to that.

Mother Bickell's house was right in the middle of the town, with a grocery store on one side and the postoffice on the other. Homer had a big front room with three windows on Main Street. There was a strip of plank sidewalk in front of the house, so that you didn't miss any footfalls. Mother Bickell could tell who was goin' by without lookin'.

Leonidas and me put in the evening hearin' her tell about some of the things that had happened to her oldest boy. He'd had a whirl out of most everything

but an earthquake. After that we had an account of how she'd buried her two husbands. About ten o'clock we started for bed, droppin' in to take a look at Homer. He was sittin' up, wide awake and lookin' worried.

"How many people are there in this town?" says he.

"About a thousand," says Leonidas. "Why?"

"Then they have all marched past my windows twice," says Homer.

"Shouldn't wonder," says Leonidas. "They've just been to the postoffice and back again. They do that four times a day. But you mustn't mind. Just you thank your stars you're down here where it's nice and quiet. Now I'd go to sleep if I was you."

Homer said he would. I was ready to tear off a few yards of repose myself, but somehow I couldn't connect. It was quiet, all right—in spots. Fact is, it was so blamed quiet that you could hear every rooster that crowed within half a mile. If a man on the other side of town shut a window you knew all about it.

I was gettin' there though, and was almost up to the droppin'-off place, when some folks in a back room on the next street begins to indulge in a family argument. I didn't pay much notice to the preamble, but as they warmed up to it I couldn't help from gettin' the drift. It was all about the time of year that a feller by the name of Hen Dorsett had been run over by the cars up to Jersey City.

"I say it was just before Thanksgivin'," pipes up the old lady. "I know, 'cause I was into the butcher's askin' what turkeys would be likely to fetch, when Doc Brewswater drops in and says: 'Mornin', Eph.

Heard about Hen Dorsett?' And then he told about him fallin' under the cars. So it *must* have been just afore Thanksgivin'."

"Thanksgivin' your grandmother!" growls the old man. "It was in March, along the second week, I should say, because the day I heard of it was just after school election. March of '83, that's when it was."

"Eighty-three!" squeals the old lady. "Are you losin' your mind altogether? It was '85, the year Jimmy cut his hand so bad at the sawmill."

"Jimmy wasn't workin' at the mill that year," raps back the old man. "He was tongin' oysters that fall, 'cause he didn't hear a word about Hen until the next Friday night, when I told him myself. Hen was killed on a Monday."

"It was on a Saturday or I'm a lunatic," snaps the old lady.

Well, they kept on pilin' up evidence, each one makin' the other out to be a fool, or a liar, or both, until the old man says: "See here, Maria, I'm goin' up the street and ask Ase Horner when it was that Hen Dorsett was killed. Ase knows, for he was the one Mrs. Dorsett got to go up after Hen."

"Yes, and he'll tell you it was just before Thanksgivin' of '85, so what's the use?" says the old lady.

"We'll see what he says," growls the old man, and I heard him strike a light and get into his shoes.

"Who're you bettin' on?" says Leonidas.

"Gee!" says I. "Are you awake, too? I thought you was asleep an hour ago."

"I was," says he, "but when this Hen Dorsett debate

breaks loose I came back to earth. I'll gamble that the old woman's right."

"The old man's mighty positive," says I. "Wonder how long it'll be before we get the returns?"

"Perhaps half an hour," says Leonidas. "He'll have to thrash it all out with Ase before he starts back. We might as well sit up and wait. Anyway I want to see which gets the best of it."

"Let's have a smoke, then," says I.

"Why not go along with the old man?" says Leonidas. "If he finds he's wrong he may come back and lie about it."

Well, it *was* a fool thing to do, when you think about it, but somehow Leonidas had a way of lookin' at things that was different from other folks. He didn't know any more about that there Hen Dorsett than I did, but he seemed just as keen as if it was all in the family. We had hustled our clothes on and was sneakin' down the front stairs as easy as we could when we hears from Homer.

"I heard you dressing," says he, "so I got up, too. I haven't been asleep yet."

"Then come along with us," says Leonidas. "It'll do you good. We're only going up the street to find out when it was that the cars struck Hen Dorsett."

Homer didn't savvy, but he didn't care. Mainly he wanted comp'ny. He whispered to us to go easy, suspectin' that if we woke up Mother Bickell she'd want to feed him some more clam fritters. By the time we'd unlocked the front door though, she was after us, but all she wanted was to make Homer wrap a shawl around his head to keep out the night air.

"And don't you dare take it off until you get back," says she. Homer was glad to get away so easy and said he wouldn't. But he was a sight, lookin' like a Turk with a sore throat.

The old man had routed Ase Horner out by the time we got there, and they was havin' it hot and heavy. Ase said it wasn't either November nor March when he went up after Hen Dorsett, but the middle of October. He knew because he'd just begun shingling his kitchen and the line storm came along before he got it finished. More'n that, it was in '84, for that was the year he ran for sheriff.

"See here, gentlemen," says Leonidas, "isn't it possible to find some official record of this sad tragedy? You'll excuse us, being strangers, for takin' a hand, but there don't seem to be much show of our getting any sleep until this thing is settled. Besides, I'd like to know myself. Now let's go to the records."

"I'm ready," says Ase. "If this thick-headed old idiot here don't think I can remember back a few years, why, I'm willing to stay up all night to show him. Let's go to the County Clerk's and make him open up."

So we started, all five of us, just as the town clock struck twelve. We hadn't gone more'n a block, though, before we met a whiskered old relic stumpin' along with a stick in his hand. He was the police force, it seems. Course, *he* wanted to know what was up, and when he found out he was ready to make affidavit that Hen had been killed some time in August of '81.

"Wa'n't I one of the pall bearers?" says he. "And hadn't I just drawn my back pension and paid off the mortgage on my place, eh? No use routin' out the

Clerk to ask such a fool question; and anyways, he ain't to home, come to think of it."

"If you'll permit me to suggest," says Leonidas, "there ought to be all the evidence needed right in the cemetery."

"Of course there is!" says Ase Horner. "Why didn't we think of that first off? I'll get a lantern and we'll go up and read the date on the headstun."

There was six of us lined up for the cemetery, the three natives jawin' away as to who was right and who wasn't. Every little ways some one would hear the racket, throw up a window, and chip in. Most of 'em asked us to wait until they could dress and join the procession. Before we'd gone half a mile it looked like a torchlight parade. The bigger the crowd got, the faster the recruits fell in. Folks didn't stop to ask any questions. They just jumped into their clothes, grabbed lanterns and piked after us. There was men and women and children, not to mention a good many dogs. Every one was jabberin' away, some askin' what it was all about and the rest tryin' to explain. There must have been a good many wild guesses, for I heard one old feller in the rear rank squallin' out: "Remember, neighbors, nothin' rash, now; nothin' rash!"

I couldn't figure out just what they meant by that at the time; but then, the whole business didn't seem any too sensible, so I didn't bother. On the way up I'd sort of fell in with the constable. He couldn't get any one else to listen to him, and as he had a lot of unused conversation on hand I let him spiel it off at me. Leonidas and Homer were ahead with Ase Homer and the old duffer that started the row, and the debate was still goin' on.

When we got to the cemetery Homer dropped out and leaned up against the gate, sayin' he'd wait there for us. We piled after Ase, who'd made a dash to get to the headstone first.

"It's right over in this section," says he, wavin' his lantern, "and I want all of you to come and see that I know what I'm talking about when I give out dates. I want to show you, by ginger, that I've got a mem'ry that's better'n any diary ever wrote. Here we are now! Here's the grave and—well, durn my eyes! Blessed if there's any sign of a headstun here!"

And there wa'n't, either.

"By jinks!" says the old constable, slappin' his leg. "That's one on me, boys. Why, Lizzie Dorsett told me only last week that her mother had the stun took up and sent away to have the name of her second husband cut on't. Only last week she told me, and here I'd clean forgot it."

"You're an old billy goat!" says Ase Horner.

"There, there!" says Leonidas, soothing him down. "We've all enjoyed the walk, anyway, and maybe ——" But just then he hears something that makes him prick up his ears. "What's the row back there at the gate?" he asks. Then, turnin' to me, he says: "Shorty, where's Homer?"

"Down there," says I.

"Then come along on the jump," says he. "If there's any trouble lying around loose he'll get into it."

Down by the gate we could see lanterns by the dozen and we could hear all sorts of yells and excitement, so we makes our move on the double. Just as we fetched the gate some one hollers:

"There he goes! Lynch the villain!"

We sees a couple of long legs strike out, and gets a glimpse of a head wrapped up in a shawl. It was Homer, all right, and he had the gang after him. He took a four-foot fence at a hurdle and was streakin' off through a plowed field into the dark.

"Hi, Fales!" sings out Leonidas. "Come back here, you chump!"

But Homer kept right on. Maybe he didn't hear, and perhaps he was too scared to stop if he did. All we could do was to get into the free-for-all with the others.

"What did he do?" yells Leonidas at a sandy-whiskered man who carried a clothes-line and was shoutin', "Lynch him! Lynch him!" between jumps.

"Do!" says the man. "Ain't you heard? Why, he choked Mother Bickell to death and robbed her of seventeen dollars. He's wearin' her shawl now."

As near as we could make out, the thing happened like this: When the tail enders came rushin' up with all kinds of wild yarns about robbers and such, they catches sight of Homer, leanin' up in the shadow of the gate. Some one holds a lantern up to his face and an old woman spots the shawl.

"It's Mother Bickell's," says she. "Where did he get it?"

That was enough. They went for Homer like he'd set fire to a synagogue. Homer tried to tell 'em who he was, and about his heart, but he talked too slow, or his voice wa'n't strong enough; and when they began to plan on yankin' him up then and there, without printin' his picture in the paper, or a trial, he heaves up a yell and lights out for the boarding-house.

Ten hours before I wouldn't have matched Homer against a one-legged man, but the way he was gettin' over the ground then was worth the price of admission. I have done a little track work myself, and Leonidas didn't show up for any glue-foot, but Homer would have made the tape ahead of us for any distance under two miles. He'd cleared the crowd and was back into the road again, travelin' wide and free, with the shawl streamin' out behind and the nearest avenger two blocks behind us, when out jumps a Johnny-on-the-spot citizen and gives him the low tackle. He was a pussy, bald-headed little duffer, this citizen chap, and not bein' used to blockin' runs he goes down underneath. Before they could untangle we comes up, snakes Homer off the top of the heap, and skiddoos for all we had left in us.

By the time that crowd of jay-hawkers comes boomin' down to Mother Bickell's to view the remains we had the old girl up and settin' at the front window with a light behind her. They asked each other a lot of foolish questions and then concluded to go home.

While things was quietin' down we were making a grand rush to get Homer into bed before he passed in altogether. Neither Leonidas nor me looked for him to last more'n an hour or two after that stunt, and we were thinkin' of taking him back in a box. But after he got his breath he didn't say much except that he was plumb tired. We were still wonderin' whether to send for a doctor or the coroner, when he rolls over with his face to the wall and goes to sleep as comfortable as a kitten in a basket.

It was in the middle of the forenoon before any of us shows up for breakfast. We'd inspected Homer once, about eight o'clock, and found him still sawin' wood,

so we didn't try to get him up. But just as I was openin' my second egg down he comes, walkin' a little stiff, but otherwise as good as ever, if not better.

"How far was it that I ran last night, Mr. Dodge?" says he.

"About a mile and a half," says Leonidas, stating it generous. "And it was as good amateur sprinting as I ever saw."

Homer cracked the first smile I'd seen him tackle and pulled up to the table.

"I'm beginning to think," says he, "that there can't be much of a leak in my heart, after all. When we get back to town to-night, Mr. McCabe, we'll have another talk about those boxing lessons. Eggs? Yes, thank you, Mrs. Bickell; about four, soft. And by the way, Dodge, what *was* the date on that gravestone, anyway?"

CHAPTER II

What did we do with Homer, eh? Ah, forget it! Say, soon's he got back to town and found he could navigate 'round by himself, he begins to count up expenses. Then he asks us to put in a bill.

"Bill!" says I. "What for? I'm no hired man. I've been doin' this for fun." Leonidas says the same.

But Homer wouldn't have it that way. He says we've

done him a lot of good, and lost our valuable time, and he'll feel hurt if we don't let him make us a little present. With that he pries open a fat leather green goods case, paws over a layer of yellow backs two or three inches thick—and fishes out a couple of ten spots.

"Stung!" says Leonidas, under his breath.

"Homer," says I, shovin' 'em back at him, "if you're as grateful as all that, I'll tell you what you'd better do —keep these, and found a Home for Incurable Tightwads."

Then we loses him in the crowd, and each of us strikes out for himself. Blessed if I know where Leonidas strayed to, but I'm dead sure of the place I fetched up at. It was It'ly, North It'ly. Ever been there? Well, don't. Nothin' but dagoes and garlic and roads that run up hill. Say, some day when my roll needs the anti-fat treatment, I'm goin' to send over there and have 'em put a monument that'll read: "Here's where Shorty McCabe was buried alive for five weeks."

Doing? Wasn't a blamed thing doing there. We were just assassinatin' time, that's all. But the Boss thought he liked it, for a while, so I had to hang on. The Boss? Oh, he's just the Boss. Guess you wouldn't know him—he hasn't been cured by three bottles of anything, and isn't much for buyin' billboard space. But he's a star all right. He's got a mint somewhere, a little private mint of his own, that runs days and nights and overtime. Scotty mine? No, better'n that—defunct grandmothers and such. It's been comin' his way ever since he was big enough to clip a coupon. Don't believe he knows how much he *has* got, but that don't worry him. He don't even try to spend the gate receipts; just uses what he wants and lets the

rest pyramid.

Course, he's out of my class in a way; but then again, he ain't. The way we come to hook up was like this: You see, when I quits Homer, I takes the first thing that comes along, which happens to be the Jericho Lamb. He wants me to train him for his go with Grasshopper Jake, and I did.

Well, we pulls it off in Denver. The Lamb he bores in like a stone crusher for five rounds. Then he stops a cross hook with his jaw and is jarred some. That brings out the yellow. Spite of all I could say, he stops rushin' and plays for wind and safety. Think of that, with the Grasshopper as groggy as a five days old calf! Well, I saw what was coming to *him*, right there. When the bell rings I chucks my towel to a rubber and quits. I hadn't hired out for no wet nurse, and I told the crowd so.

Just as I was makin' my sneak this quiet-speakin' chap falls in alongside and begins to talk to me. First off I sized him up for one of them English Johnnies that had lost his eyeglass. But that's where I was dead wrong. He wasn't no Johnnie, and he wasn't no tinhorn sport. But he was a new one on me. They don't grow many like him, I guess, so no wonder I didn't get wise right away.

"Think the Lamb's all in?" says he.

"All in!" says I. "He never had anything to put in. He was licked before the bell tapped. And me trainin' him for five weeks! I'm goin' to kick myself all the way back to New York."

"I'll help you," says he. "I backed that Lamb of yours to win."

"How much?" says I.

"Oh, only a few hundred."

"But you ain't seen him licked yet," says I.

"I'll take your word for it," says he.

Say, that was no tinhorn play, was it? He goes off and leaves his good money up, just on a flier like that.

"You're the real goods," says I.

"I can return the sentiment," says he.

So we took the midnight East. When we got the morning papers at Omaha we saw that the Lamb only lasted half-way through the seventh, and 'possumed the count at that. Well, we got some acquainted before we hit Chicago, and by the time we'd landed in Jersey City I'd signed articles with him for a year. He calls it secretary, but I holds out for sparrin' partner.

Oh, he can handle the mitts some, all right; none of your parlor Y. M. C. A. business, either, but give and take. He strips at one hundred and forty and can stand punishment like a stevedore. But, of course, there's no chance of ever gettin' him on the platform. He likes to go his four rounds before dinner, just to take the drab coloring off the world in general. That's the way he puts it.

Take him all around, he's a thoroughbred. I know that much, but after that I don't follow him. I used to wonder sometimes. Give most Johnnies his pile and turn 'em loose, and what would they do? They'd wear out the club window-sills, and take in pink teas, and do the society turn. But not for him. He's a mixer, the Boss is. He wants to see things, all kinds.

Sometimes he lugs me along and sometimes he don't.

It all depends on whether I'd fit in. When he heads for Fifth Avenue I know I'm let out. But when he gets into a sack coat and derby hat I'm bettin' that maybe we'll fetch up somewheres on the East Side. Perhaps it'll be the grand annual ball of the Truck Drivers' Association, or just one of them Anarchist talkfests in the back room of some beer parlor. There's no telling. We may drink muddy coffee out of dinky brass cups with a lot of Syrian rug sellers down on Washington Street, or drop into the middle of a gang of sailors down on Front Street.

And I'm no bodyguard, mind. The Boss ain't in much need of that. But he likes to have some one to talk to, and I guess most of his friends don't go in for such promiscuous visitin' lists as he does. I like it well enough, but where *he* gets any fun out of it I can't see. I put it up to him once, and what do you suppose he says? Asks me if I ever heard of a duck by the name of Panzy de Lean.

"Sounds kind of familiar," says I. "Don't he run a hotel or something down to Palm Beach?"

"You're warm," says the Boss, "but you've mixed your dates. Old Panzy struck the east coast about four hundred years before our friend Flagler annexed it. And he wasn't in the hotel business. Exploring was his line. He was looking for a new kind of mineral water that he was going to call the Elixir of Life. Well, in some ways Panzy and I are alike."

It was a josh, all right, that he was handin' out, but he meant somethin' by it, for the Boss ain't the kind to talk just for the sake of making a noise. I never let on but what I was next. Later in the season I had a chance to come back at him with it, for along in February we got under way for Palm Beach ourselves.

"Goin' to take a hack at the 'lixir business?" I says.

"No, Shorty," says he. "Just going to dodge a few blizzards and watch the mob."

But he didn't like it much, being in that push, so we took a jump over to Bermuda, where everything's so white it makes your eyes ache. That didn't suit him, either.

"Shorty," says he one day, "you didn't sign for any outside tour, but I've got the go fever bad. Can you stand it for awhile in foreign parts?"

"I'm game," says I, not knowing what I was to be up against.

So we hiked back to New York and Mister 'Ankins—he's the lady-like gent that stays home an' keeps our trousers creased, an' juggles the laundry bag and so forth, when we're there—Mr. 'Ankins he packs a couple of steamer trunks and off we starts.

Well, we hit a lot of outlandish places, like Paris and Berlin; and finally, when things began to warm up some, and I knew by the calendar that the hokey-pokey men had come out on the Bowery, we lands in Monte Carlo. Say, I'd heard a lot about Monte Carlo on and off—there was a song about it once, you know—but if that's the best imitation of Phil Daly's they can put up over there, they'd better go out of business. Not that the scenery isn't bang-up and the police protection O. K., but the game—well, I've seen more excitement over a ten-cent ante.

The Boss didn't care much for that sort of thing anyway. He touched 'em up for a stack or two, but almost went to sleep over it. It wasn't until Old Blue Beak butted in that our visit began to look interestin'. He was a count, or a duke, or something, with a

name full of i's and l's, but I called him Blue Beak for short. The Boss said for a miniature word painting that couldn't be bettered. Never saw a finer specimen of hand-decorated frontispiece in my life. It wasn't just red, nor purple. It was as near blue as a nose can get. Other ways, he was a tall, skinny old freak, with a dyed mustache and little black eyes as shifty as a fox terrier's. He was as polite, though, as a book agent, and as smooth as the business side of a banana skin.

"What's his game," says I to the Boss, after Blue Beak and him had swapped French conversation for an hour. "Is it gold bricks or green goods?"

"My friend, the count," says the Boss, "wants to rent us a castle, all furnished and found; a genuine antique, with a pedigree that runs back to Marc Antony."

"A castle!" says I. "What's that the cue to? And how did he guess you were a come-on?"

"Every American is a come-on, Shorty," says the Boss. "But this is a new proposition to me. However, I mean to find out. I've told him to come back after dinner."

And old Blue Beak had his memory with him, all right. He came back. He and the Boss had a long session of it. In the morning the Boss says to me:

"Shorty, throw out your chest; you're going to live in a castle for a while."

Then he told me how it happened. Blue Beak wasn't any con. man at all, just one of those hard-up gents whose names look well in a list of guests, but don't carry weight with the paying teller. He was in such a rush to get the ranch off his hands, though, that price

didn't seem to figure much. That's what made the Boss sit up and take notice. He was a great one for wanting to know why.

"We'll start to-day," says he.

So off we goes, moseyin' down into It'ly on a bum railroad, staying at bummer hotels, and switching off to a rickety old chaise behind a pair of animated frames that showed the S. P. C. A. hadn't got as far as It'ly yet. Think of riding from the Battery to White Plains in a Fifth Avenue stage! That would be a chariot race to what we took before we hove in sight of that punky castle. After that it was like climbing three sets of Palisades, one top of the other, on a road that did the corkscrew all the way.

"That's your castle, is it?" says I, rubberin' up at it. "Looks like a storage warehouse stranded on Pike's Peak. Gee, but I wouldn't like to fall out of one of those bedroom windows! You'd never hit anything for an hour. Handy place to have company, though; wouldn't have to put on the potatoes until you saw 'em coming. So that's a castle, is it? I don't wonder old Blue Beak had a lot of conversation to unload. If I live up there all summer I shall accumulate enough talk to last me the rest of my life."

"Oh, I don't imagine we'll be lonesome," puts in the Boss. "I fancy I caught sight of one or two of our neighbors on the way."

"You did?" says I. "Where?"

"Behind the rocks," says he, kind of snickering.

But I never savvied. I'd had my eyes glued to that dago Waldorf-Astoria balanced up there on that toothpick of a mountain. I had a batty idea that the next whiff of breeze would jar it loose. But when

they'd opened up a gate like the double doors of an armory, and let us in, I forgot all that. Say, that castle was the solidest thing I ever run across. The walls were so thick that the windows looked like they were set at the end of tunnels. In the middle was a big court, such as they have in these swell new apartment houses, and a lot of doors and windows opened on that.

"Much as 'leven rooms and bath, eh?" says I.

"The Count assures me that there are two hundred and odd rooms, not reckoning the dungeons," said the Boss. "I hope we'll find one or two of them fit to live in."

We did, just about that. A white-headed old villain, who looked as if he'd just escaped from a "Pirates of Penzance" chorus—Vincenzo, he called himself—took our credentials and then showed us around the shop. There was a dining-room about the size of the Grand Central train shed. Say, a Harlem man would have wept for joy at sight of it. And there was a picture gallery that had Steve Brodie's collection beat a mile. As for bedrooms, there was enough to accommodate a State convention. The only running water in sight, though, was in the fountain out in the court, and the place looked as though when the gas man made his last call he'd taken the fixtures along with the meter.

Yet the Boss seemed to be tickled to death with the whole shooting match. At dinner that night he made me sit at one end of the dining-room table while he sat at the other, and we were so far apart we had to shout at each other when we talked. The backs of some of those dining-room chairs were more than eight feet tall. It was like leaning up against a billboard. The waiters looked like stage villains out

of a job, and whenever they passed the potatoes I peeled my eye for a knife play. It didn't come though. Nothing did.

We put in nearly a week rummaging through that moldy old barracks. It was three days before I could come down to breakfast without getting lost. The Boss found a lot to look at and paw over; old books and pictures, rusty tin armor and such truck. He even poked around in the coal cellars that they called dungeons.

I liked being up in the towers best. I'd go up there and look about due west, where New York was the last time I saw it. I never wanted wings quite so bad as I did then. And, say, I'd given up a month's salary for a sporting extra some nights. Dull? Why, there are crossroads up in Sullivan County that would seem like the Tenderloin alongside of that place.

Funny thing, though, was that the Boss was so stuck on it. He'd gas about the lakes, and the mountains, and the sky, and all that, pointing 'em out to me as if they were worth seeing, when I'd seen better'n that many a time, painted on back drops—and could get away from 'em when I wanted. But here it was a case of nowhere to stay but in. You couldn't go pikin' around the landscape without falling off the edge.

Guess I'd have gone clean nutty if it hadn't been for the little glove play we did every afternoon. We had some of the chorus hands fix up a nice lot of straw in a corner of the courtyard, so's to sort of upholster the paving stones, and after we got used to the new foot-work it was almost as good as a rubber mat.

We'd been having a gingery little go one day, with the whole crew of the castle, from head purser down to the second assistant pan wrastler, holding their

breath in the background, and I was playing shower bath for the Boss with a leather bucket, dipping out of the fountain pool and sousing it over him, when I spots a deadhead in the audience.

She'd been playin' peek-a-boo behind one of them big stone pillars, but I guess she had got so interested that she forgot and stepped out into the open. She was a native, all right; but say, she wasn't any back-row dago girl. She was in the prima donna class, she was. Ever see Melba made up for the "Carmen" act? Well, this one was about half Melba's size, but for shape and color she had her stung to a whisper; and as for wardrobe, she had it all on. Gold hoops in her ears, tinkly things on her jacket, and a rainbow dress with the reds and greens leading the field. Eyes were her strong point, though—regular forty candle powers. She had the current all switched on, too, and a plumb centre range on the Boss.

Now he wasn't exactly in reception costume, the Boss wasn't. When he'd knocked off his runnin' shoes it left him in a pair of salmon trunks that cleared the knees considerable. He'd made a fine ad. for a physical culture school, just as he stood; for he's well muscled, and his underpinning mates up, and he don't interfere when he walks. The cold water had brought out the baby pink all over him, and he looked like one of these circus riders does on the four sheet posters. He had the lime-light, too, for a streak of sun comin' down between the towers just hit him. I see the girl wasn't missin' any of these points. It wasn't any snap-shot she was takin', it was a time exposure.

"Who's your lady friend in the wings?" says I to the Boss.

"Where?" says he.

I jerks my thumb at her. For a minute there wasn't a word said. The Boss wasn't able, I guess, and the girl never moved an eyelash. Then he yells for the bath towel and makes a break inside, me after him. When we'd rubbed down and got into our Broadway togs, we chases back and organizes ourselves into a board of inquiry. Who was she—regular boarder, or just transient? Where did she come from? And why? Likewise how, trolley, subway, or balloon?

But I'm blessed if that whole gang didn't go as mum as a lot of railroad hands after a smash-up. Why, they hadn't seen no such lady, cross their hearts they hadn't. Maybe it was old Rosa, yes? And Rosa a sylph that would fit tight in a pork barrel! A goat, then?

"Let's give 'em the third degree," says I.

So we done it, locked 'em all in a room and put 'em on the carpet one by one. They was scared stiff, too stiff to talk. All but old Vincenzo, the white-haired old pirate the count had left in charge. He was a lovely peagreen under the gills, but he made a stagger at putting up a game of talk. No, he hadn't seen no one. He had been watching their excellencies in their little affair of honor. Still, he couldn't swear that *we* hadn't seen some one. Folks did see things at the castle; he had seen sights himself, though generally after dark. He remembered a song about a beautiful young lady who, back in the seventeen hundred and something, had—

But I shut him off there. This fairy might have seen seventeen summers, or maybe eighteen, but she was no antique. I could kiss the Book on that. She was a regular Casino broiler. I made a point of this. It didn't feaze the old sinner, though. He went on perjuring himself as cheerful as a paid witness, and he'd have broken the Ananias record if he'd had time.

"That will do for now," says the Boss, in a kind of "step-up-front-there" tone. "If you don't know who she was just now, we'll let it go at that. But by to-morrow you'll know the whole story. It'll be healthier for all hands if you do."

Vincenzo, though, didn't have a proper notion of what he was up against. Next day he knew less than the day before. He was ready to swear the whole outfit, by all the saints in the chapel, that there hadn't been a girl on the premises.

"Bring him along, Shorty," says the Boss, starting downstairs. "There's a hole in the sub-cellar that I want this old pirate to look through."

If that hole had been cut for an ash chute it was a dandy, for the muzzle of it was a mile more or less from anything solider'n air. We skewered Vincenzo's arms to the small of his back and let him down by the heels until he had a bird's-eye view of three counties. Then we pulled him up and tested his memory.

It worked all right. That upside-down movement had shook up his thought works. He was as anxious to testify as the front benchers at a Bowery mission on soup day. We loosened the cords a bit, set him where he could see the chute plain, and told him to blaze away.

Lucky the Boss knows Eye-talyun, for old Vincenzo couldn't separate himself from English fast enough. But they had me guessing what it was all about. I couldn't make out why the old chap had to use up all the dago words in the box just to tell who was the lady that had the private view. Once in a while the Boss would jab in a question, and then old Vincenzo would work his jaw all the faster. When it was all

over the Boss looks at me as pleased as though he'd got money from home, and says:

"Shorty, how's your nerve?"

"Not much below par," says I. "Why?"

"Because," says he, "they're after us—brigands."

"Brigands!" says I. "Tut, tut! Don't tell me that this dead and alive country can show up anything like that."

"It can," says he. "The woods are full of 'em."

Then he gives me the framework of what old Vincenzo had been telling him. The prima donna girl, it seems, was a lady brigandess, daughter of the heavy villain that led the bunch. She'd come in to size us up and make an estimate as to what we'd fetch on a forced sale. They had spotted us from the time we registered and had been hangin' around outside laying for us to separate. Their game was to pinch one of us and do business with the other on a cash basis—wanted some one left who could go away and cash a check, you see. When we didn't show no disposition to take after dinner promenades or before breakfast rambles they ups and tell Vincenzo that they wants the run of the castle and promises to toast his toes if they don't get it.

They don't have to promise but once, for Vincenzo has been through the mill. It was this kind of work that had queered the count. According to Vincenzo, old Blue Beak had been Pat-Crowed regular every season for five summers, and the thing had got on his nerves.

Well, Vincenzo lets three or four of 'em in one day just as the Boss and me were swappin' uppercuts and body punches in the courtyard. Maybe they didn't

like the looks of things. Anyway, they hauled off and sent for the main guy, who was busy down the line a-ways. He comes up with the reserves, and his first move is to send the girl in to get a line on us. And that was the way things stood up to date.

"Who'd a thought it?" says I. "The way she looked at you I suspicioned she'd marked you out as something good to eat."

That turned the Boss red behind the ears. "I'm afraid we'll have to ask for her visiting card the next time she calls," says he. "Come, Vincenzo, I want you to show me about locking up."

After that no one came or went without showing a pass, and I lugged about four pounds of brass keys around, for we didn't want to be stood up by a gang of moth-eaten brigands loaded with old hardware. They covered close by day, but at night we could see 'em sneakin' around the walls, like a bunch of second-story men new to their job. Neither the Boss nor I had a gun, never having had a call for such a thing, but we found a couple of old blunderbusses hung up in the hall, reg'lar junkshop relics, and we unlimbered them, loading with nails, scrap iron, and broken glass. 'Course, we couldn't hit anything special, but it broke the monotony for both sides. Once in a while they'd shoot back, just out of politeness, but I don't believe any of 'em ever took any medal at a schuetzenfest.

This lasted for two or three nights. It wasn't such bad fun, either, for us. The party of the second part, though, wasn't off on a vacation, like we were. They were out rustling for money to pay the landlord and the butcher, and they were losing time. Hard working lot of brigands they were, too. I wouldn't have monkeyed around after dark on that

perpendicular landscape for twice the money, and I don't believe any of 'em drew more than union rates. Fact is, I was getting to feel almost sorry for 'em, when one night something happened to give me the marble heart.

I'd been making my rounds with the brass foundry, seeing that all the tramp chains were on, putting out the cat, and coming the "Shore Acres" act, when I sees something dark skiddoo across the court to where the Boss stood smoking in the moonshine by the fountain. I does a sprint, too, and was just about to practise a little Eleventh Avenue jiu-jitsu on whoever it was—when flip goes a piece of black lace, and there was the lady brigandess, some out of breath, but still in the game.

She opens up on the Boss in a stage whisper that whirls him around as if he'd been on a string. Not wantin' to butt in ahead of my number, I sort of loafed around just outside the ropes, but near enough to block a foul. Now, I don't know just all they said, nor how they said it, but from what the Boss told me afterward they must have had a nice little confab there that would be the real thing for grand opera if some one would only set it to music.

Seems that she'd found out, the lady brigandess had, that the old man's gang had run across a bricked-up passageway down in one corner of the basement, a kind of All-Goods-Must-Be-Delivered-Here gate that had been thrown into the discards. Of course, they'd gone to work to open it up, and they'd got as far as some iron bars that called for a hack-saw. They'd sent off for their breaking and entering kit, meaning to finish the job next day. The following night they'd planned to drop in unexpected, sew the Boss up in his blanket before he could make a move, and cart

him off until I could bail him out with a peck or so of real money.

The rest of the scene the Boss never would fill in just as it came off the bat, but I managed to piece out that the brigandess, sizing us up for a couple of pikers, reckoned that we wouldn't pan out much cash, and that the Boss might be used some rough by the gang. That prospect not setting well on her mind, she rolls out the back door of their camp, makes a swift trip around to our new private entrance, squeezes through the bars, and comes up to put us wise.

Must have been just as she'd got to them lines that the Boss began taking a good look at her. I saw him gazin' into her eyes like he'd taken out a search warrant. Don't know as I could blame him much, either. She was a top liner. Wasn't anything coy or kittenish about her. She stood up and gave him as good as he sent. Next I see him make the only fool play but one that I ever knew the Boss to make—reg'lar kid trick.

"Here," says he, pulling off the big carbuncle ring he always wears, "that's to remember me by."

She didn't even look at it. No joolry for hers. Instead, she says something kind of low and sassy, pokes her face up, and begins to pucker.

The Boss he sort of side steps and squints over his shoulder at me. Now, I'm not sayin' what I'd do if a girl like that gave me the Cissy Loftus eye. It ain't up to me. But I know what I'd want the crowd to do—and I did it.

When I turned around again they was just at the breakaway, so it must have been one of the by-by forever kind, such as you see at the dock on sailing

day. Then she took us down to show us how she came in, and squeezed herself through the bars. They shook hands just once, and that was all.

That night there was a grand howl from the brigands. They had put in hours of real work, the kind they'd figured on cutting out after they got into the brigand business, only to run into a burglar-proof shutter which we had put up. They pranced around to the front gate and shook their fists at us, and called us American pigs, and invited us to come out and have our ears trimmed, and a lot of nonsense like that. I wanted to turn loose the blunderbusses, but the Boss said: "No, let 'em enjoy themselves."

"How long do you suppose they'll keep that sort of thing up?" says I.

"Vincenzo says some of them will stay around all summer unless we buy them off," says he.

"That's lovely," says I, "for anyone that's dead gone on the life here."

"I'm not," says he. "I can't get out of here too quick, now."

"Oh, ho!" says I, meaning not much of anything.

Being kept awake some by their racket that night, I got to thinking how we could give that gang of grafters the double cross. There wasn't any use making a back-alley dash for it, as we didn't know the lay of the land and they were between us and New York. But most of the fancy thinking I've ever done has been along that line—how to get back to Broadway. Along toward morning I throws five aces at a flip—turns up an idee that had been at the bottom of the deck. "It's a winner!" says I, and goes to sleep happy.

After breakfast I digs through my steamer trunk and hauls out a four-ounce can of aluminum paint that the intelligent Mr. 'Ankins had mistook for shavin' soap and put in before we left home. Then I picks out a couple of suits of that tin armor in the hall, a medium-sized one, and a short-legged, forty-fat outfit, and I gets busy with my brush.

"What's up?" says the Boss, seeing me slinging on the aluminum paint.

"Been readin' a piece on 'How to Beautify the House' in the 'Ladies' Home Companion,'" says I. "Got any burnt-orange ribbon about you?"

It was a three-hour job, but when I was through I'd renovated up that cast-off toggery so that it looked as good as if it had been just picked from the bargain counter. Then I waited for things to turn up. The brigands opened the ball as soon as it was dark. They'd rigged up a battering-ram and allowed they meant to smash in our front door. The Boss laughed.

"That gate looks as if it had stood a lot of that kind of boy's play, and I guess it's good for a lot more," says he. "Now, if they were not hopelessly medieval they would try a stick of dynamite."

We could have poured hot water down on them, or dropped a few bricks, but we didn't. We just let them skin their knuckles and strain their backs on the battering-ram. About moonrise I sprung my scheme.

"What do you say to throwing a scare into that bunch of back numbers?" says I.

"How?" says the Boss.

I led him down to the court, where I'd laid out the plated tinware to dry.

"Think you can fit yourself into some of that boiler plate?" says I.

That hit the Boss in the short ribs. We tackled the job off-hand, me strappin' a section on him, and he clampin' another on me. It was like dressing for a masquerade in the dark, neither of us ever having worn steel boots or Harveyized vests before. Some of the joints didn't seem to fit any too close, and a lot of it I suppose we got on hindside front and upside down, but in the course of half an hour we were harnessed for fair, including a conning tower apiece on our heads. Then we did the march past just to see how we looked.

"With a little white muslin you'd do to go on as the ghost in 'Hamlet,'" says the Boss, through his front bars.

"You sound like a junk wagon comin' down the street," says I, "and you're a fair imitation of a tinshop on parade. Shall we go for a midnight stroll?"

"I'm ready," says the Boss.

Grabbing up a couple of two-handed skull splitters that I'd laid out to finish our costumes, we swung open the gate and sasshayed out, calm and dignified, into the middle of that bunch of brigands.

It wasn't hardly a square deal, of course, they being brought up on a steady diet of ghost stories; and I reckon there was a spooky look about us that sent a frappé wireless up and down those dago spines. But, after all, it was the banana oil the aluminum paint was mixed with that turned the trick. Smelled it, haven't you? If there's any perfume fitter for a lost soul than attar of banana oil, it hasn't been discovered. First they went bug-eyed. Next they sniffed. At the second sniff one big duffer, with rings

in his ears and a fine assortment of second-hand pepper-boxes in his sash, digs up a scared yell that would have done credit to one of these Wuxtre-e-e! Wuxtre-e-e! boys, and then he skiddoos into the rocks like some one had tied a can to him. That set 'em all off, same's when you light the green cracker at the end of the bunch. Some yelled, some groaned, and some made no remarks. But they faded. Inside of two minutes by the clock we had the front yard to ourselves.

"Curtain!" says I to the Boss. "This is where we do a little disappearing ourselves, before they get curious and come back."

We hustled into the castle, pried ourselves out of our tin roofing, chucked our dunnage into old Blue Beak's best carryall, hitched a couple of auction-house steppers, and lit out on the town trail without so much as stopping to shake a da-da to old Vincenzo.

I didn't breathe real deep, though, until we'd fetched sight of a little place where the mountain left off and the dago police were supposed to begin. Just before we got to the first house we sees something up on a rock at one side of the road. Day was comin', red and sudden, and we saw who it was on the rock—the lady brigandess. Sure thing!

Now don't tax me with how she got there. I'd quit trying to keep cases on her. But there she was waiting for us. As we got in line she glued her eyes on the Boss and tossed him a lip-thriller with a real Juliet-Roxane movement. And the Boss blew one back. Well, that suited me, all right, so far as it went. But as we made for a turn in the road the Boss reached out for the lines and pulled in our pair of skates. Then he turns and looks back. So did I. She

was still there, for a fact, and it kind of looked as if she was holding her arms out toward him.

"By God, Shorty," says the Boss, breathing quick and talking through his teeth, "I'm going back."

"Sure," says I, "to New York," and I had a half-Nelson on him before he knew it was coming. We went four miles that way, too, the horses finding the road, before I dared let him up. I looked for trouble then. But it had been all over in a breath, just an open-and-shut piece of battiness, same as fellers have when they jump a bridge. He was meek enough the rest of the way, but sore. I couldn't pry a word out of him anyway. Not until we got settled down in the smoking-room of a Mediterranean steamer headed for Sandy Hook did he shake his trance.

"Shorty," says he, givin' me the friendly palm, "I owe you a lot more than apologies."

"Well, I ain't no collection agency," says I. "Sponge it off."

"I was looking for the Elixir," says he, "and—and I found it."

"I can get all the 'Lixir I want," says I, "between the East River and the North, and I don't need no cork-puller, either."

That's me. I've been back a week now, and even the screech of the L trains sounds good. Everything looks good, and smells good, and feels good. You don't have to pinch yourself to find out whether or not you're alive. You know all the time that you're in New York, where there's somethin' doin' twenty hours in the day.

It'ly! Oh, yes, I want to go there again—when I get to be a mummy.

CHAPTER III

Say, you can't always tell, can you? Here a couple of weeks back I thought I'd wiped It'ly off the map. We'd settled down in this little old burg, me and the Boss and Mister 'Ankins, nice and comfortable, and not too far from Broadway. And we was havin' our four o'clock teas with the mitts, as reg'lar as if there was money comin' to us for each round, when this here Sherlock proposition turns up.

Mister 'Ankins, he was the first to spot it, and he comes trottin' in where we was prancin' around the mat, his jaw loose, and his eyebrows propped up like Eddie Foy's when he wears his salary face.

"Hit's most hunnacountable, sir," says he.

"Time out!" says I, blockin' the Boss's pet upper cut. "Mister 'Ankins seems to have something on the place where his mind ought to be."

"Hankins," says the Boss, putting down his guard reluctant, "haven't I told you never to——"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir," says Mister 'Ankins, "but there's that houtrageous thing fawst to the door and, Lor' 'elp me, sir, Hi cawnt pull it hoff."

The Boss he looks at me, and I looks at the Boss, and then we both looks at Mister 'Ankins. Seein' as how he couldn't reveal much with that cheese pie face of his, we goes and takes a look at the door. It was the outside one, just as you gets off the elevator.

And there *was* something there, too; the dizziest kind of a visitin' card that was ever handed out, I suspicion, in those particular swell chambers for single gents. It was a cuff, just a plain, every day wrist chafer, pinned up with the wickedest little blood letter that ever came off the knife rack. Half an inch of the blade stuck through the panel, so the one who put it there must have meant that it shouldn't blow away. The Boss jerks it loose, sizes it up a minute, and says:

"Stiletto, eh? Made in Firenze—that's Florence. Shorty, have you any friends from abroad that are in the habit of leaving their cutlery around promiscuous?"

"I know folks as far west as Hoboken, if that's what you mean," says I, "but there ain't none of them in the meat business."

Well, we takes the thing inside under the bunch light and has another squint.

"Here's writin' in red ink," says I, and holds up the cuff.

"Read it," says the Boss.

"I could play it better on a flute," says I. "You try."

We didn't have to try hard. The minute he skinned his eye over that his jaw goes loose like he'd stopped a body wallop with his short ribs.

"It's Tuscan," says he, "and it means that someone's in trouble and wants help."

"Do they take this for police headquarters, or a Charity Organization?" says I. "Looks to me like a new kind of wireless from the wash lady. Why don't you pay her?"

"That's one of my cuffs," says the Boss.

"It's too well ventilated to get into the bag again," says I.

"Shorty," says he, lettin' my Joe-Weber go over his shoulder, "do you know where I saw that cuff last? It was in North Italy!"

Then he figured out by the queer laundry marks just where he'd shed this identical piece of his trousseau. We'd left it, with a few momentoes just as valuable, when we made that quick move away from that punky old palace after our little monkey shine with the brigands.

"You don't mean—?" says I. But there wa'n't no use wasting breath on that question. He was blushin'. We fiddled some on its having come from old Vincenzo, or maybe from Blue Beak, the Count that rented us the place; but the minute we tied that cuff up with the castle we knew that the one who sent it meant to ring up a hurry call on us for help, and that it wasn't anybody but the Lady Brigandess herself, the one that put us next and kept the Boss from being sewed up in a blanket.

"That's a Hey Rube for me," says I. "How about-cher?"

But the Boss was kicking off his gym. shoes and divin' through his shirt. In five minutes by the watch we were dressed for slootin'.

"I know a Dago roundsman—" says I.

"No police in this," says the Boss.

"Guess you're right," says I. "Too much lime-light and too little headwork. We'll cut the cops out. Where to first?"

"I'm going to call on the Italian consul," says the

Boss. "He's a friend of mine."

So we opened the sloot business with a ride in one of those heavy weight 'lectric hansoms, telling the throttle pusher to shove her wide open. Maybe we broke the speed ord'nance some, but we caught Mr. Consul on the fly, just as he was punchin' the time card. He wore a rich set of Peter Cooper whiskers, but barring them he was a well finished old gent, with a bow that was an address of welcome all by itself. The way that he shoved out leather chairs you'd thought he was makin' a present of 'em to us.

But the Boss hadn't any time to waste on flourishes. We got right down to cases. He wanted to know about where the Tuscans usually headed for when they left Ellis Island, what sort of gangs they had in New York and what kind of Black Hand deviltry they were most given to. He asked a hundred questions and never answered one. Then he shook hands with Mr. Consul and we chased out.

"It looks like the Malabistos," says the Boss. "They have a kind of headquarters over a basement restaurant. Perhaps they've shut her up there. We'll take a look at the place anyway."

A lot of good it did us, too. The spaghetti works was in full blast, with a lot of husky lowbrows goin' in and out, smokin' cheroots half as long as your arm, and acting as if the referee had just declared a draw. The opening for a couple of bare fisted investigators wasn't what you might call promisin'. Not having their grips and passwords, we didn't feel as though we could make good in their lodge.

"I could round up a gang and then we could rush 'em," says I.

"That wouldn't do," says the Boss. "Strategy is what

we need here."

"I'm just out of that," says I.

"Perhaps there's a back door," says the Boss.

So we moseys around the block, huntin' for a family entrance. But that ain't the way they build down in Mulberry Bend. They chucks their old rookeries slam up against one another, to keep 'em from fallin' over, I guess. Generally though, there's some sort of garlic flue through the middle of the block, but you need a balloon to find it.

"Hist!" says I. "Hold me head while I thinks a thunk. Didn't I come down here once to watch a try-out? Sure! And it was pulled off in the palatial parlors of Appetite Joe Cardenzo's Chowder Association, the same being a back room two flights up. Now if we could dig up Appetite Joe—"

We did. He was around the corner playing 'scope for brandied plums, but he let go the cards long enough to listen to my fairy tale about wantin' a joint where I could give my friend a private lesson.

"Sure!" said Joe, passing out the key, "but you breaka da chair I charga feefty cent."

There were two back windows and the view wasn't one you'd want to put in a frame. Down below was a court filled with coal boxes and old barrels, and perfumed like the lee side of Barren Island. But catty-corners across was the back of that spaghetti mill. We could tell it by the two-decker bill board on the roof. In the upper windows we could see Dago women and kids, but the windows on the second floor were black.

"Iron shutters," says the Boss. "And that's where she is if anywhere."

"Got a scalin' ladder and a jimmy in your pocket?" says I. "Then I'll have to run around to a three ball exchange and see if I can't dig up an outfit."

A patent fire escape and a short handled pick-axe was the best I could do. We made the board jumper fast inside and down I went. Then there was acrobatics; swingin' across to that three inch window ledge, balancin' with one foot on nothing, and single hand work with the pick-axe. Lucky that shutter-bar was half rusted away. She came open with a bang when she did come, and it near sent me down into the barrels. Me eyelashes held though, and there I was, up against a window.

"See anything?" says the Boss.

"Room to rent," says I, for it looked like we'd pried open a vacant flat.

Just then the sash goes up and something shiny glitters in the dark. I was just lettin' go with one hand to swing for a head when someone lets loose a Dago remark that was mighty business like and more or less familiar.

"Is it you?" says I. "If you're the Lady Brigandess own up sudden."

"Ah-h-h!" says she, thankful like, as if she'd seen her horse win by a nose. Then she puts up the rib tickler and grabs me by the wrist.

"Guess your lady friend's here," I sings out to the Boss.

"Have you got her?" says he.

"No," says I; "she's got me."

But no sooner does she hear him than she lets go of me, shoves her head out of the window and calls up

to him. The Boss says something back and for the next two minutes they swaps Dago talk to beat the cars.

"How shall I pass her up?" says I.

Just then she made a spring for that rope ladder of ours and overhands up like a trapeze star. An' me thinkin' we'd need a derrick or a bo's'n's chair!

It wa'n't no time for reunions at that stage of the game, nor for hard luck stories, either. None of us was pining to hold any sociables with the Malabistos. We quit the chowder club on the jump, streaked up the hill into Mott street, and piled into one of those fuzzy two horse chariots that they keep hooked up for weddin's and funerals.

"Where to?" says the bone thumper.

"Head her for Buffalo and let loose to beat the Empire State express," says I, "but hunt for asphalt."

That fetched us up Second Avenue, but there wasn't any conversin' done until we'd put fifty blocks behind us. Then I reckon the Boss asked the Lady Brigandess if she'd missed any meals lately. From the way he gave orders to steer for a food refinery she must have allowed that she had.

Not having time to be particular, we hit a goulash emporium where they spell the meat card mostly with cz's. But they gave us a private room upstairs, which was what we wanted. And it wasn't until we got inside that we had a full length view of her. Say, I was glad we'd landed so far east of Broadway. Post me for a welcher if she wasn't rigged out in the same kind of a chorus costume that she wore when we saw her last, over there in It'ly! Only it was more so. It was the kind of costume that'd been all right on a

cigarette card, or outside a Luna Park joint, and it would have let her into the Arion ball without a ticket; but it wasn't built for circulatin' 'round New York in.

"Piffle! Piffle!" says I to the Boss. "They'll think we've pinched her out of a Kiralfy ballet. Hadn't we better send for yer lady-fren's trunk?"

The Boss grinned, but he looked her over as satisfied as if she'd been dressed accordin' to his own water color sketches. She was something of a star, yes, yes! If you were lookin' for figure and condition, she had 'em. And when it came to the color scheme—well, no grease paint manipulator ever mixed caffy-o-lay and raspb'ry pink the way it grew on her. For a made-in-It'ly girl she was the real meringue.

"We'll see about clothes later," says the Boss, and ordered up seventeen kinds of sckeezedsky, to be served in relays.

She brought her appetite with her, all right, even if she had mislaid her suit case. And, while she was pitchin' into what passes for grub on Second Avenue, she told the Boss the story of her life. Leastways, that's what it sounded like to me.

The way I gets it from the Boss was like this: Her father, the old brigand pantanta, couldn't get over the way we'd bansheed his bunch of third rate kidnappers with our tin armor play. He accumulated a sort of ingrowin' grouch and soured on the whole push because they wouldn't turn state's evidence as to who had given us the dope to do 'em.

The Lady Brigandess she had stood that for a while, until one day she gets her Irish up, tells the old man how she tipped us off herself, and then makes tracks out of the country. One way and another she'd heard

a lot about America. So she takes out yellow tickets on a few spare sparks and buys a steerage berth for New York.

Well, she hadn't more'n got past Sandy Hook before a Malabisto runner spotted her. So did the advance man of another gang. They sized up the gold hoops in her ears, her real money necklace and some of the other furniture she sported, and they invited her home to tea. Just how the scrap began or what it was all about she didn't know, so the story by rounds hasn't been told. The next thing she knew though, they'd hustled her into the Bend and bottled her up in that back room, but not before she'd done a little extemporaneous carvin' on her own account. I gathered that three or four of the Malabistos needed some plain sewin' done on 'em after the bell rang, and that the rest wasn't so anxious for her society as at first. She'd been cooped up for two days when she managed to get hold of a Dago woman who promised to carry that cuff to the place where old Vincenzo had told her we hung out in New York.

"So far it's as good as playin' leading heavy in 'The Shadows of a Great City,'" says I, "but what's down for the next act? Where does she want to go now?"

Say, you'd thought the Boss had been nipped with the goods on. He goes strawb'ry color back to his ears. Next he takes a look across the table at her where she sits, quiet and easy, and as much to home as Lady Graftwad on the back seat of the tonneau. She was takin' notice of him, too, kind of runnin' over his points like he was something rich she'd won at a raffle and was glad to get. But the Boss he braced up and looked me straight in the eye.

"Shorty," says he, "I want to call your attention to the fact that this young lady is something like three

thousand miles from home, that we're the only two human beings on this side of the ocean she knows by sight, and that once she risked a good deal to do us a service."

"I'll put my name to all that," says I, "but what does it lead up to; where do we exit?"

"That," says the Boss, "is a conundrum."

"Ain't she got any programme?" says I.

"She—er—that is," says the Boss, trying to duck, "she says she wants to go with us."

"Whe-e-e-ew!" says I, through my front teeth. "This is *so* sudden. Just tell the lady, will you, that I've resigned."

"No you don't, Shorty," says the Boss. "You'll see this thing through."

"But look at them circus clothes," says I. "I've got no aunts or grandmothers, or second cousins that I could unload a Lady Brigandess on."

"Nor I," says the Boss.

But he didn't look half so worried as he might. Say, when I came to figure out what we were up against, I could feel little cold storage whiffs on my shoulder blades. Suppose someone should meet you in the middle of Herald Square, hand you a ring-tailed tiger, and then skiddoo. What? That would be an easy one compared to our proposition. It wasn't a square deal to shake her, and she'd made up her mind not to stay put anywhere again.

"Wait here until I telephone someone," says the Boss.

"De-lighted!" says I. "Better ring up the Gerry Society, too, while you're about it. They might help us out."

The Lady Brigandess and I didn't have a real sociable time while the Boss was gone. I could see she was watchin' every move I made, as much as to say, "You can't lose me, Charlie." It was just as cheery as waitin' in the Sergeant's room for bail.

When the Boss does show up he wears a regular breakfast food smile that made me leary, for when he looks tickled it don't signify that things are coming his way. Generally it only means that he's goin' to break out in a new spot.

"It just occurred to me," says he, "that I had accepted an invitation from the Van Urbans for the opera."

"What kind of a bluff did you throw?" says I.

"None at all, Shorty," says he. "I just asked if they would have room for three, and they said they would."

Say, the Boss don't need no nerve tonic, does he? You know about the Van Urbans, don't you? They weigh in at something like forty millions and are a good fifth on Mrs. Astor's list.

"Straight goods, now," says I, "you don't reckon to spring this aggregation on the diamond horse-shoe, do you?"

"We must put in the time somehow," says he.

I thought it might be all a grand josh, until I'd watched some of his moves. First we drives over to Fift' avenue and stops at one of those places where it says "Robes" on a brass plate outside. The Boss stays in there four minutes and comes out with a piece of dry goods that they must have stood him up a hundred for—kind of an opera cloak, ulster length, all rustly black silk outside and white inside. The Lady Brigandess she puts it on with no more fuss

than as if she'd been brought up on such things and had ordered this one a month ahead.

Next we heads for our own quarters, having shifted our Mott street chariot for the real article, with rubber tires and silver plated lamps. About that time I got wise to the fact that the Boss and her Ladyship were ringin' me into their talk, and I was gettin' curious. I see the Boss shaking his head like he was tryin' to prove an alibi, and every once in a while pointin' to me. First thing I knows she'd quit his side of the carriage and was snugglin' up alongside of me, and cooin' away in some outlandish kind of baby talk that I was glad I didn't savvy. I made no kick though, until she begins to pat me on the head.

"Call her off, will you?" says I. "I'm no lost kid."

"The young lady is just expressing her thanks," says the Boss, "to the gallant young hero who so nobly rescued her from the Malabistos. Don't shy, Shorty; she says that anyone so brave as you are needn't worry about not being handsome."

He was kiddin' me, see? I knew he'd given her some fairy tale or other, but I didn't have any come back that she could understand. I felt like a monkey though, having my hair mussed and thinkin' maybe next minute she'd give me the knife. And the Boss he sat there grinnin' like a Jack lantern.

I didn't get a chance to break away until we got to our own ranch. Then we left her sitting in the buggy while we went up to make a lightnin' change. Sure, I've got a head waiter's rig; bought it the time I had to lead off the grand march at the Tim Grogan Association's tenth annual ball, but I never looked to wear it out attendin' grand opera.

"I hope the Van Urbans will appreciate that I'm givin'

'em a treat," says I.

"They'll be blind if they don't," says the Boss. "Is it your collar that hurts?"

"No, it's the shoes," says I, "but the pain'll numb down by the time we get there."

We made our grand entry about the end of the second spasm. The Van Urbans had taken their corners. There was Papa Van Urban, lookin' like ready money; and Mamma Van Urban, made up regardless; and Sis Van Urban, one of those tall Gainsborough girls that any piker could pick for a winner on form and past performance.

Say, it took all the front I had in stock just to tag along as an also ran, but when I thought of the Boss, headin' the procession, I was dead sorry for him. And what kind of a game do you think he hands out? Straight talk, nothin' but! Course he didn't make no family hist'ry out of tellin' who his lady-fren' was, but as far as he went it tallied with the card, even to lettin' on that she was a Lady Brigandess.

"Out we go now," says I to myself, and looks to see Mamma Van Urban throw a cat fit. But she didn't. She just squealed a little, same's if someone had tickled her behind the ear, and then she began slingin' that gurgly-gurgly Newport talk that the Sixt' avenue sales ladies use. Sis Van Urban caught the same cue, and to hear 'em you'd thought the Boss had done something real cute. They gave the Lady Brigandess the High Bridge wig-wag and shooed her into a stage corner chair.

She never made a kick at anything until they tried to take away her cloak. Not much! She was just beginnin' to be stuck on that. She kept it wrapped around her like she knew the proprietor wa'n't

responsible for overcoats. The Boss tried to tell her how there wa'n't any grand larceny intended, but it was no go. She had her suspicions of the crowd, so they just had to let her sit there draped in black. And at that she wa'n't any misfit.

Now I'd been inside the Metropolitan once or twice before, havin' blown myself to a standee just for the sake of lookin' at the real things with their war paint on, but I wasn't feelin' any more to home in the back of that box than I would in the pilot house of an air ship.

But the Lady Brigandess didn't show no more stage fright than an auctioneer. She just holds her chin up and looks out at all that display of openwork dressmaking and cut glass exhibit without so much as battin' an eyelash. She was takin' it all in, too, from the bargain hats in the fam'ly circle, to the diamond tummy warmers in the parterre, but you'd never guessed that she'd just escaped from a Dago back district where they have one mail a week. If I hadn't seen her chumming with a hold-up gang that couldn't have bought fifteen cent lodgings on the Bowery, I'd bet the limit that she was a thoroughbred in disguise.

There was some rubberin' at her, of course, and I expect we had the safety vault crowd guessin' as to what kind of a prize the Van Urbans had won, but it didn't feaze her a bit. She just gave 'em the Horse Show stare, as cool as a mint frappé. The ringin' up of the curtain didn't disturb her any, either. When a chesty baritone sauntered down toward the footlights and began callin' the chorus names she glanced over her shoulder, casual like, just to see what the row was all about, and then went on sizin' up the folks in the boxes. She couldn't have done it better if she'd

taken lessons by mail.

"If she would only talk!" gurgles Mrs. Van Urban. "Doesn't she speak anything but Italian?"

"Pure Tuscan is all she knows," says the Boss, "and the way she talks it is better than any music you'll hear to-night. Wait until she has satisfied her eyes."

Pretty soon the baritone quits jawin' the chorus and a prima donna in spangled clothes comes to the front. Maybe it was Melba, or Nordica. Anyway, she was an A-1 warbler. She hadn't let go of more'n a dozen notes before the Lady Brigandess begins to sit up and take notice. First she has a kind of surprised look, as if a ringer had been sprung on her; and then, as the high C artist begins to let herself go, she swings around and listens with both ears. The music didn't seem to go in one side and out the other. It stuck somewhere between, and swayed and lifted her like a breeze in a posy bush. I could hear her toe tappin' out the tune and see her head keep time to it. Why, if I could get my money's worth out of music like that I'd buy a season ticket.

When the prima donna had cut it off, with her voice way up in the flies somewhere, and the house had rose to her, as the bleachers do when one of the Giants knocks a three bagger, the Lady Brigandess was still sittin' there, waitin' for more.

Her trance didn't last long, though. She just cast one eye around the boxes, where the folks were splittin' gloves and wavin' fans and yellin' "Bravo! Bravo!" so that you'd 'a-thought somebody'd carried Ohio by a big majority, and then she takes a notion to get into the game herself.

Shuckin' that high priced opera cloak she jumps up, drops one hand on her hip, holds the other up to her

lips and peels off a kind of whoop-e-e-e yodel that shakes the skylight. Talk about your cornet bugle calls! That little ventriloquist pass of hers had 'em stung to a whisper. It cut through all that patter and screech like a siren whistle splittin' a fish horn serenade, and it was as clear as the ring of silver sleigh bells on a frosty night.

After that it was all up to her. The other folks quit and turned to see who had done it. Two or three thousand pairs of double barrelled opera glasses were pointed our way. The folks behind 'em found something worth lookin' at, too. Our Brigandess wasn't in disguise any more. She stood up there at the box rail, straight as a Gibson girl, her black hair hangin' in two thick braids below her waist, the gold hoops in her ears all ajiggle, her little fringed jacket risin' and fallin', and her black eyes snappin' like a pair of burning trolley fuses. Well, say, if she wa'n't a pastelle I never saw one! I guess the star singer thought so, too. She'd just smiled and nodded at the others, but she blew a kiss up to our lady before she left.

I don't know just what would have happened next if someone hadn't shown up at the back of the box and asked for the Boss. It was the Italian consul that we'd been to see earlier in the day.

"Where'd you find her?" says he.

"Meanin' who?" says the Boss.

"Why, her highness the Princess Padova."

"Beg pardon," says the Boss, "but if you mean the young lady there, you're wrong. She's the daughter of a poor but honest brigand chief, and she's just come from Tuscany to discover New York."

"She's the Princess Padova or I'm a Turk," says the Consul. "Ask her to step back here a moment."

It sounded like a pipe dream, all right. Who ever saw a princess rigged out for the tambourine act and mixin' with a lot of chestnut roasters? But old whiskers had the evidence down pat, though. As he told it, she was a sure enough princess, so far as the tag went, only the family had been in the nobility business so long that the pedigree had lasted out the plunks.

It seemed that away back, before the Chicago fire or the Sayers-Heenan go, her great-grandpop had princed it in regulation shape. Then there'd come a grand mix-up, a war or something, and a lot of princes had either lost their jobs or got on the blacklist. Her great-grandpop had been one of the kind that didn't know when he was licked. They euchred him out of his castle and building lots, but he gathered up what was left of his gang and slid for the tall timber, where he went on princing the best he knew how. As he couldn't disgrace himself by workin', and hadn't lost the hankerin' for reg'lar meals, he got into the habit of taking up contributions from whoever came along, calling it a road tax. And that's how the Padova family fell into playing the hold-up game.

But the old man Padova, the Princess' father, never forgot that if he'd had his rights he would have been boss of his ward, and he always acted accordin'. So when he picked the Consul up on the road one night with a broken leg he gave him the best in the house, patched him up like an ambulance surgeon, and kept him board free until he could walk back to town. And so, when Miss Padova takes it into her head to elope to America with a tin trunk, Papa Padova hikes

himself down to the nearest telegraph office and cables over a general alarm to his old friend, who's been made consul.

"I've been having Mulberry Bend raked with a fine toothed comb," says he, "but when I saw her highness stand up here in the box I knew her at a glance, although it's been ten years since I saw her last."

Then he asked her if he hadn't called the trick, and she said he had.

"Now," says he, "perhaps you'll tell us why you came to America?"

"Sure," says she, or something that meant the same, "I've come over after me best feller. I've made up my mind that I'll marry him," and she slips an arm around the Boss's neck just as cool as though they'd been on a moonlight excursion.

Mr. Consul's face gets as red as a fireman's shirt, the Van Urbans catch their breath with both fists, and I begins to see what a lovely mess I'd been helping the Boss to get himself into. He never turned a hair though.

"The honor is all mine," says he, just as if he meant every word of it.

"Ahem!" says the Consul, kind of steadying himself against the curtains. "Perhaps it would be best, before anything more is said on this subject, for the Princess to have a talk with my wife. We'll take her home."

Well, they settled it that way and I was mighty glad to get her off our hands so easy.

Next afternoon the Consul shows up at our ranch as gay as an up-state deacon who's seeing the town

incog.

"Sir," says he to the Boss, givin' him the right hand of fellowship, "you're a real gent. After what you did last night I'm proud to know you; and I'm happy to state that it's all off with the Princess."

Then he went on to tell how Miss Padova, being out of her latitude, hadn't got her book straight. She'd carried away the notion that when a Princess went out of her class she had a right to sign on any chap that she liked the looks of, without waitin' for him to make the first move. They did it that way at home. But when the Consul's wife had explained the United States way, and how the Boss was a good deal of a rooster himself, with real money enough to buy up a whole rink full of Dago princes, why Miss Padova feels like a plush Christmas box at a January sale. She turns on the sprinkler, wants to know what they suppose the Boss thinks of her, and says she wants to go back to It'ly by the next trolley.

"But she'll get over feeling bad," says the Consul. "We'll ship her back next Friday, and you can take it from me that the incident is closed."

I was lookin' for the Boss to open a bottle or two on that. But he didn't. For a pleased man he held in well.

"Poor little girl!" says he, looking absent minded towards the Bronx. Then he cheers up a minute. "I say, do you mind if I run up and see her once before she sails?"

"You may for all of me," says the Consul, "but if you'll listen to my advice you won't go."

He did though, and lugged me along for a chaperone, which is some out of my line.

"I'm afraid they've rather overdone the explaining business," says he on the way up; and while I had my own idea as to that, I had sense enough, for once, not to butt in.

That was an ice house call, all right. They left us on the mat while our cards went up, and after a while the hired girl comes down to give us the book-agent glare.

"Th' Missus," says she, "says as how the young lady begs to be 'xcused."

"Does the young lady know we're here?" says the Boss.

"She does," says the girl, and shuts the door.

"Gee!" says I, "that's below the belt."

The Boss hadn't a word left in him, but I wouldn't have met him in the ring about then for anything less'n a bookie's bundle.

Just as we hit the sidewalk we hears a front window go up, and down comes a red rose plunk in front of us.

"Many happy returns of the day," says I, handing it to the Boss.

"I suppose you're right," says he. "It's the only way to look at it, I expect; and yet—oh, hang it all, Shorty, what's the use?"

"Ahr-r, say!" says I. "Switch off! It's all over, and you've side stepped takin' the count."

CHAPTER IV

Does the Boss let it go at that? Say, I was just thick enough to guess that he would. I was still havin' that dream, a few days later, when the Boss says to me:

"Shorty, you remember that old castle of ours?"

"You don't think I've been struck with softenin' of the brain, do you?" says I. "That'll be the last thing I'll forget. What's happened to it?"

"It's mine," says he.

"G'way!" says I. "They couldn't force you to take it."

"I've bought it," says he. "I cabled over an offer, and the Count has accepted."

"Goin' to blow it up?" I says.

"I hope," says he, gettin' a little red under the eyes, "to spend my honeymoon there; that is, if the Princess Padova—"

"The who?" says I. "Oh, you mean the lady brigandess?"

"If the Princess Padova," says he, keepin' straight on, "doesn't prefer some other place. We sail to-morrow."

"Then—then—" says I, catchin' my breath, "you've done it?"

It was silly askin' him. Why, it stuck out all over his face. I don't know what I said next, but it didn't matter much. He was too far up in the air to hear anything in particular. Just as we shakes hands though, he passes me an envelope and says:

"Shorty, I wish you'd take this down to my lawyer next Monday morning. It's a little matter I haven't

had time to fix up."

"Sure," says I. "I'll tie up any loose ends. And don't forget to give my regards to old Vincenzo."

Say, I s'pose I'd ought to told him what a mark he'd made of himself, takin' a chance with any such wild-rose runnin' mate as that; but somehow it seemed all right, for him. I couldn't get a view of the Boss mated up with any silk-lined, city-broke girl. I guess Miss Padova was about his style, after all; and I reckon it would take a man like him to manage one of her high flyin' kind. Anyway, I'm glad he got her.

I was sorry to lose the Boss, though. "It's me to go back to trainin' four flush comers again," says I, when he'd gone. And say, I wa'n't feelin' gay over the prospect. Some of these mitt artists is nice, decent boys, but then again you'll find others that you can't take much pride in.

You see, I'd been knockin' around for months with someone who was clean all the way through—washed clean, spoke clean, thought clean—and now there was no tellin' what kind of a push I'd fall in with. You've had a peek at trainin' camps, eh? Them rubbers is apt to be a scousy lot. It was the goin' back to eatin' with sword swallowers that came hardest, though. I can stand for a good many things, but when I sees a guy loadin' up his knife for the shovel act, I rubs him off my list.

I was goin' over all this, on the way down to the office of that lawyer the Boss wanted me to see. I'd met him a few times, so when I sends in my name there wa'n't any waitin' around in the ante-room with the office boy.

"Bring Mr. McCabe right in," says he. "Mister McCabe," mind you. He's one of those wiry, brisk

little chaps, with x-ray eyes, and a voice like a telephone bell. "Ah, yes!" says he, takin' the letter. "I know about that—some stock I was to turn into cash. Franklin!" he sings out. Franklin comes in like he'd come through a tube. "Bring me Mr. McCabe's bank book."

"Bank book!" says I. "I guess you've dipped into the wrong letter file. I don't sport any bank book."

"Perhaps you didn't yesterday," says he, "but to-day you do."

And say, what do you think the Boss had gone and done? Opened an account in my name, and fatted it up good and sweet, as a starter.

"But he didn't owe me anything like that," says I.

"A difference of opinion, Mr. McCabe," says the lawyer. "'For services rendered,' that was the way his instructions to me read. I sold the stock and made the deposit to your credit. That's all there is to it. Good day. Call again."

And the next thing I knew I was goin' down in the elevator with me fist grippin' that bank book like it was a life raft. First off I has to go and have a look at the outside of that bank. That's right, snicker. But say, I've had as much dough as that before, only I'd always carried it in a bundle. There's a lot of difference. Every tinhorn sport has his bundle, you know; but it's only your real gent that can flash a check book. I could feel my chest swellin' by the minute.

"Shorty," says I, "you've broke into a new class. Now you've got to make good."

And how do you s'pose I begins? Why, I hires one of these open faced cabs by the hour, and tells the chap

up top to take me up Fifth ave. I wanted to think, and there ain't any better place for brain exercise than leanin' back in a hansom, squintin' out over the foldin' doors. I'd got pretty near up to the Plaza before I hooks what I was fishin' after. It came sudden, too.

It was like this: Whilst I was sparrin' secretary to the Boss I'd met up with a lot of his crowd, and some of 'em had tried the gloves on with me. I didn't go in for sluggin' their blocks off, just to show 'em I could do it. There's no sense in that, unless you're out for a purse. Sparrin' for points is the best kind of fun, and for an all 'round tonic it can't be beat. They liked the way I handled 'em, and they used to say they wished they could take a dose of that medicine reg'lar, same as the Boss did.

"And that's just the chance I'm goin' to give 'em," says I.

With that I heads back for Forty-second street, picks out a vacant floor I'd noticed, and signs a lease. Inside of a week I has the place fixed up with mat, chest weights, and such; lays in a stock of soft gloves, buys a medicine ball or two, gets me some cards printed, and has me name done in gold letters on the ground glass. Boxin' instructor? Not on your accident policy. Nor private gym., either.

PROFESSOR M'CABE'S
STUDIO OF PHYSICAL CULTURE

That's the way the door plate reads. It may be a bluff, but it scares off the cheap muggs that would hang around a boxin' school. They don't know what it means, any more'n if it was Chinese.

Well, when I gets things all in shape I gives out word to some of those gents, and before I'd been runnin' a

fortnight I'd booked business enough to see that I'd struck it right. What's the use monkeyin' with comers when you can take on men that's made their pile? They're a high-toned lot, too, and they don't care what it costs, so long as I keeps 'em in shape. Some of 'em don't put on the mitts at all, but most of 'em works up to that.

Now there was Mr. Gordon. Sure, Pyramid Gordon. But I'll have to tell you about the game he stacks me up against. I'd had him as a reg'lar for about a month —Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, from five to six—and he was just gettin' so he knew what real livin' was, when somethin' breaks loose down on the street that makes him forget everything but the figures on the tape. So he quits trainin'. About ten days later he drops in one afternoon, with fur on his tongue, and his eyes lookin' like a couple of cold fried eggs.

"Are you comin' or goin', Mr. Gordon?" says I.

"Where, Shorty?" says he.

"Hospital," says I.

He grinned a little, the kind of grin a feller wears when he's bein' helped to his corner, after the count.

"I know," says he; "but when you've been sitting for two weeks on a volcano, Shorty, wondering whether it would blow you up, or open and let you fall in, you're apt to forget your liver."

"It ain't apt to forget you, though," says I. "Shall we have a little session right now?"

And then he springs his proposition. He'd got to go to Washington and back inside of the next two breakfasts, and he wanted me to go along, some on account of his liver, but mostly so's he could forget

that he was still on the lid. His private car was hitched to the tail of the Flyer, and he had just forty-five minutes to get aboard. Would I come?

"If I'm wiped out by the time we get back," says he, "I'll make you a preferred creditor."

"I'll take chances on that," says I.

They did do the trick to Pyramid once, you know; but they'd never got him right since. They had him worried some this time, though. You could tell that by the way he smiled at the wrong cues, and combed his deacon whiskers with his fingers. They're the only deacon whiskers I ever had in the Studio. Used to make me nervous when I hit 'em, for fear I'd drive 'em in. But he's dead game, Pyramid is, whether he's stoppin' mitts, or buckin' the Upright Oil push. So I grabs a few things off the wall, and we pikes for the ferry.

"Where's the other parties?" says I, when I'd sized up the inside of the Adeline. There was room enough for a minstrel troupe.

"We're to have it all to ourselves, professor," says he. "And it's almost time for us to pull out; there's the last Cortlandt-st. boat in."

About then we hears Mr. Rufus Rastus, the Congo brunet that's master of ceremonies on the car, havin' an argument out in the vestibule. He was tryin' to shunt somebody. They didn't shunt though, and in comes a long-geared old gent, wearin' one of those belted ulsters that they make out of horse-blankets for English tourists. He had a dinky cloth cap of the same pattern, and the lengthiest face I ever saw on a man. It wasn't a cheerful face, either; looked like he was huntin' for his own tombstone, and didn't care how soon he found it.

Rufus Rastus was hangin' to one of his arms, splutterin' things about this being a private car, and gettin' no more notice taken of himself than as if he'd been an escape-valve. Behind 'em, totin' a lot of leather bags of all shapes, was a peaked-nosed chap, who looked like he was doin' all the frettin' for a Don't Worry Club.

"It's honly Sir Peter," says the worried chap. "'E's myde a mistyke, y' know. Hi'll get 'im out, sir."

"Danvers, shut up!" says Sir Peter.

"Yes, sir; directly, sir; but—" says he.

"Shut up now and sit down!" Sir Peter wasn't scrappy about it. He just said it as though he was tired. But Danvers wilted.

"Shall I give 'em the run?" says I.

"No," says Mr. Gordon; "there's the bell. We can get rid of them at the first stop."

Then he goes over to Sir Peter, tells him all about the Adeline's bein' a private snap, and how he can change to a parlor-car at Trenton.

The old fellow seems to take it all in, lookin' him straight in the eye, without turnin' a hair, and then he says, just as if they'd been talkin' about it for a month: "You'd better wear a bucket, as I do. It looks a little odd, you know; but the decimals can't get through a bucket. Danvers!" he sings out.

"But you don't understand," says Pyramid. "I said this was a private car—private car!"

"Don't shout," says Sir Peter. "I'm not deaf. I'd lend you a bucket if I had an extra one; but I haven't. Danvers!"

This time Danvers edged in with one of those sole-

leather cases that an Englishman carries his plug-hat in.





"Got his wheels all under cover," says I.

"Don't you think, Sir Peter—" says he.

"Yes; but you don't," says Sir Peter. "Hurry on, now!"

And I'll be welched if Danvers didn't dig a wooden pail out of that hat-case and hand it over. Sir Peter chucks the cap, puts on the pail, drops the handle under his chin, and stretches out on a corner sofa as peaceful as a bench-duster in the park.

"Looks like he's got his wheels all under cover," says I. "Great scheme—every man his own garage."

"Who is he?" says Mr. Gordon to Danvers.

"Lord, sir, you don't mean to sye you don't know Sir Peter, sir?" says Danvers. "Why, 'e's Sir Peter—*the* Sir Peter. 'E's a bit heccentric at times, sir."

Well, we let it go at that. Sir Peter seemed to be enjoying himself; so we piles all the wicker chairs around him, opens the ventilators, and peels down for business.

Ever try hand-ball in a car that's being snaked over switches at fifty miles an hour? So far as looks went, we were just as batty as Sir Peter with his wooden hat. We caromed around like a couple of six-spots in a dice-box, and some of the foot-work we did would have had a buck-and-wing artist crazy. We was using a tennis-ball, and when we'd get in three strokes without missing we'd stop and shake hands. There wa'n't any more sense to it than to a musical comedy; but it was makin' Mr. Gordon forget his troubles, and it was doing his liver good. Danvers watched us from behind some chairs. He looked disgusted.

By the time we'd got half-way across Jersey we was ready for the bath tub. And say, that's the way to travel and stay at home, all to once. A private car for

mine. While we was puttin' on a polish with the Turkish towels, Rufus Rastus was busy with the dinner.

"Now, we'll have another talk with Sir Peter of the Pail," says Mr. Gordon.

We took the barricade down, and found him just as we'd left him. Then he an' Pyramid gets together; but it was the wizziest brand of conversation I ever heard. You'd have thought they was talkin' over the 'phone to the wrong numbers. Sir Peter would listen to all Mr. Gordon had to say, just as if he was gettin' next to every word, but his come-backs didn't fit by a mile.

"Sorry to disturb you," says Mr. Gordon; "but I'll have to ask you to change to a forward car next stop."

Sir Peter blinked his lamps at him a minute, and then he says: "Yes, it keeps the decimals out," and he taps the bucket, knowing like. "My own invention, sir. I'd advise you to try it if they ever bother you."

"Yes, I'll take your word for that," says Mr. Gordon; "but I'm afraid you'll have to be getting ready to move. This is my private car, you see."

"They always come point first," says Sir Peter; "that's how they get in. It's only the bucket that makes 'em shy off."

"Oh, the deuce!" says Pyramid. "Here, Shorty, you try your luck with him."

"Sure," says I. "I've talked sense through thicker things than a wooden pail." First I raps on his cupola with me knuckles, just to ring him up. Then, when I gets his eye, I says, kind of coaxin': "Pete, it's seventeen after six. That's twenty-three for you. Are you next?"

Now say, you'd thought most anyone would have dropped for a hint like that, dippy or not. But Sir Peter sizes me up without battin' an eye. He had a kind of dignified, solemn way of lookin', too, with eyes wide open, same's a judge chargin' a jury.

"You'll never need a bucket," says he.

Just then I heard something that sounded like pouring water from a jug, and I looks around, to see Mr. Gordon turnin' plum color and holdin' himself by the short ribs. I knew what had happened then. The nutty one had handed me the lemon.

"Scratch me off," says I. "I'm in the wrong class. If there's to be any more Bloomingdale repartee, just count me out."

Naw, I wa'n't sore, or nothin' like that. If anyone can get free vawdyville from me I'll write 'em an annual pass; but I couldn't see the use of monkeyin' with that bug-house boarder. Say, if you was payin' for five rooms and bath when you went on the road, like Mr. Gordon was, would you stand for any machinery-loft butt-in like that? I was waitin' for the word to pile Sir Peter on the baggage truck, Danvers and all.

Think I got it? Nix! Some folks is easy pleased. And Pyramid Gordon, with seventeen different kinds of trouble bein' warmed up for him behind his back, stood there and played kid. Said he couldn't think of losin' Sir Peter after that. He'd got to have dinner with us. Blessed if he didn't too, pail and all! Couldn't fall for any talk about changin' cars; oh, no! But when he sees the pink candles, and the oysters on the half, and the quart bott' in the ice bath, he seemed to get his hearin' back by wireless.

"Dinner?" says he. "Ah, yes! Danvers, has the prime

minister come yet? It was to-night that he was to dine with me, wasn't it?"

"To-morrow night, Sir Peter," says Danvers.

"Oh, very well. But you gentlemen will share the joint with me, eh? Welcome to Branscomb Arms! And let's gather around, sirs, let's gather around!"

You should have seen the way he did it, though. Reg'lar John Drew manners, the old duffer had. Lord knows where he thought he was, though; somewhere on Highgate Road, I suppose. But wherever it was, he was right to home—called Rufus Rastus Jenkins, and told Danvers he could go for the day. Gave me the goose-flesh back until I got used to it; but Mr. Gordon seemed to take it all as part of the game.

It beat all the dinners I ever had, that one. There we were poundin' over the rails through Pennsylvania at a mile-a-minute clip, the tomato soup doin' a merry-go-round in the plates, the engine tootin' for grade crossin's; and Sir Peter, wearin' his pail as dignified as a cardinal does a red hat, talkin' just as if he was back on the farm, up north of London. I don't blame Rufus Rastus for wearin' his eyes on the outside. They stuck out like the waist-buttons on a Broadway cop, and he hardly knew whether he was waitin' on table, or makin' up a berth.

With his second glass of fizz Sir Peter began to thaw a little. He hadn't paid much attention to me for a while, passin' most of his remarks over to Mr. Gordon; but all of a sudden he comes at me with:

"You're a Home Ruler, I expect?"

"Sure," says I. "Now, spring the gag."

But if there was a stinger to it, he must have lost it in the shuffle; for he opens up a line of talk that I didn't

have the key to at all. Mr. Gordon tells me afterwards it was English politics and that Sir Peter was tryin' to register me as a Conservative. Anyway, I've promised to vote for Balfour, or somebody like that next election; so I'm goin' to send word to Little Tim that he needn't come around. Had to do it, just to please the old gent. By the time we'd got to the little cups of black he'd switched to something else.

"I don't suppose you know anything about railroads?" says he to Mr. Gordon.

Then it was my grin. Railroads is what Pyramid plays with, you know. He's a director on three or four lines himself, and is always lookin' for more. It's about as safe to leave a branch road out after nightfall when Gordon's around as it would be to try to raise watermelons in Minetta Lane. He grinned, too, and said something about not knowing as much about 'em as he did once.

With that Sir Peter lights up one of Mr. Gordon's Key West night-sticks and cuts adrift on the railroad business. That made the boss kind of sick at first. Railroads was something he was tryin' to forget for the evenin'. But there wasn't any shuttin' the old jay off. And say! he knew the case-cards all right. There was too much high finance about it for me to follow close; but anyways I seen that it made Mr. Gordon sit up and take notice. He'd peg in a question now and then, and got the old one so stirred up that after a while he shed the bucket, lugged out one of his bags, and flashed a lot of papers done up in neat little piles. He said it was a report he was goin' to make to some board or other, if ever the decimals would quit bothering him long enough.

Well, that sort of thing might keep Mr. Gordon awake, but not for mine. Half-way to Baltimore I

turns in, leaving 'em at it. I had a good snooze, too.

Mr. Gordon comes to my bunk in the mornin', very mysterious. "Shorty," says he, "we're in. I've got to go up to the State Department for an hour or so, and while I'm gone I'd like you to keep an eye on Sir Peter. If he takes a notion to wander off, you persuade him to stay until I get back."

"What you say goes," says I.

I shoved up the shade and sees that they'd put the Adeline down at the end of the train-shed. About all I could see of Washington was the top of old George's headstone stickin' up over a freight-car. I fixed myself up and had breakfast, just as if I was in a boardin'-house, and then sits around waitin' for Sir Peter. He an' Danvers shows up after a while, and the old gent calls for tea and toast and jam. Then I knows he's farther off his base than ever. Think of truck like that for breakfast! But he gets away with it, and then says to Danvers:

"Time we were off for the city, my man."

I got a glimpse of trouble ahead, right there; for that chump of a Danvers never made a move when I gives him the wink. All he could get into that peanut head of his at one time was to collect those leather bags and get ready to trot around wherever that long-legged old lunatic led the way.

"They've changed the time on that train of yours, Sir Pete," says I. "She don't come along until ten-twenty-six now, spring schedule," and I winks an eye loose at Danvers.

"'Pon my word!" says Sir Peter, "you here yet? Danvers, show this person to the gates."

"Yes, sir," says Danvers. He comes up to me an'

whispers, kind of ugly: "I sye now, you'll 'ave to stop chaffin' Sir Peter. I won't 'ave it!"

"Help!" says I. "There's a rat after me."

"Hi'll bash yer bloomin' nose in!" says he, gettin' pink behind the ears.

"Hi'll write to the bloomin' pypers habout it if you do," says I.

I was wishin' that would fetch him, and it did. He comes at me wide open, with a guard like a soft-shell crab. I slips down the state-room passage, out of sight of Sir Peter, catches Danvers by the scruff, chucks him into a berth, and ties him up with the sheets, as careful as if he was to go by express.

"Now make all the holler you want," says I. "It won't disturb us none," and I shut the door.

But Sir Peter was a different proposition. I didn't want to rough-house him. He was too ancient; and anyway, I kind of liked the old chap's looks. He'd forgot all about Danvers, and was makin' figures on an envelope when I got back. I let him figure away, until all of a sudden he puts up his pencil and lugs out that bucket again.

"It's quit raining," says I.

"What do you know about it?" says he. "It's pouring decimals, just pouring 'em. But I've got to get my report in." With that he claps on the bucket, grabs a bag and starts for the car door.

It was up to me to make a quick play; for he was just ripe to go buttin' around those tracks and run afoul of a switch-engine. And I hated to collar him. Just then I spots the tennis-ball.

"Whoop-ee!" says I, grabbin' it up and slammin' it at

his head. I made a bull's-eye on the pail, too. "That's a cigar you owe me," says I, "and I gets two more cracks for my nickel." He tried to dodge; but I slammed it at him a couple more times. "Your turn now," says I. "Gimme the bucket."

Sounds foolish, don't it? I'll bet it looked a heap foolisher than it sounds; but I'd just thought of something a feller told me once. He was a young doctor in the bat ward at Bellevue. "They're a good deal like kids," says he, "and if you remember that, you can handle 'em easy."

And say, Sir Peter seemed to look tickled and interested. The first thing I knew he'd chucked the bucket on my head and was doin' a war-dance, lambastin' that tennis-ball at me to beat the cars. It was working, all right.

When he got tired of that I organized a shinny game, with an umbrella and a cane for sticks, and a couple of wicker chairs for goals. He took to that, too. First he shed his frock-coat, then his vest, and after a while we got down to our undershirts. It was a hot game from the word go. There wa'n't any half-way business about Sir Peter. When he started out to drive a goal through my legs he whacked good and strong and often. My shins looked like a barber's pole afterwards; but I couldn't squeal then. There was no way to duck punishment but to get the ball into his territory and make him guard goal. It wa'n't such a cinch to do, either, for he was a lively old gent on his pins.

After about half an hour of that, you can bet I wished I'd stuck to the bucket game. But Sir Peter was as excited over it as a boy with a new pair of roller-skates. He wouldn't stand for any change of program, and he wouldn't stop for breathin'-spells. Rufus

Rastus came out of his coop once to see what the row was all about; but when he saw us mixed up in a scrimmage for goal he says: "Good Lawd ermighty!" lets out one yell, and shuts himself up with his canned soup and copper pans. I guess Danvers thought I was draggin' his boss around by the hair; for I heard him yelp once in a while, but he couldn't get loose.

Sir Peter began to leak all over his head, and his gray hair got mussed up, and his eyes was bulgin' out; but I couldn't get him switched to anything else. Not much! Shinny was a new game to him and he was stuck on it. "Whee-yee!" he'd yell, and swing that crooked-handled cane, and bang would go a fancy gas globe into a million pieces. But a little thing like that didn't feaze him. He was out for goals, and he wasn't particular what he hit as long as the ball was kept moving.

It was a hot pace he set, all right. Every time he swung I had to jump two feet high, or else get it on the shins. And say! I jumped when I could. I'd have given a sable-lined overcoat for a pair of leg-guards just about then; and if I could have had that young bug-ward doctor to myself for about ten minutes—well, he'd have learned something they didn't tell him at Bellevue.

Course, I don't keep up reg'lar ring trainin' these days; but I'm generally fit for ten rounds or so any old time. I thought I was in good trim then, until that dippy old snoozer had rushed me for about twenty-five goals. Then I began to breathe hard and wish someone would ring the gong on him. There was no counting on when Mr. Gordon would show up; but his footsteps wouldn't have made me sad. I've let myself in for some jay stunts in my time; but this

gettin' tangled up with a bad dream that had come true—well, that was the limit. And I'd started out to do something real cute. You could have bought me for a bunch of pink trading stamps.

And just as I was wondering if this Bloomingdale séance was to go on all day, Sir Peter gives out like a busted mainspring, slumps all over the floor, and lays as limp as if his jaw had connected with a pile-driver. For a minute or so I was scared clear down to my toe-nails; but after I'd sluiced him with ice-water and worked over him a little, he came back to the boards. He was groggy, and I reckon things was loopin' the loops when he looked at 'em; but his blood pump was doing business again, and I knew he'd feel better pretty soon.

I helped him up on the bucket, that being handiest, and threw a three-finger slug of rye into him, and then he began to take an inventory of things in general, kind of slow and dignified. He looks at the broken glass on the car carpet, at the chairs turned bottom up, at me in my hard-work costume, and at his own rig.

"Really, you know, really—I—I don't quite understand," he says. "Where—what—"

"Oh, you're ahead," says I. "I wouldn't swear to the score; but it's your odds."

This didn't seem to satisfy him, though. He kept on lookin' around, as though he'd lost something. I guessed he was hunting for that blasted cane.

"See here," says I. "You get the decision, and there ain't goin' to be any encore. I've retired. I've had enough of that game to last me until I'm as old as you are, which won't be for two or three seasons on. If you're dead anxious for more, you wait until Mr.

Gordon comes back and challenge him. He's a sport."

But Sir Peter seemed to be clear off the alley. "My good man," says he, "I—I don't follow you at all. Will you please tell me where I am?"

Now say, how was I to know where he thought he was? What was the name of that place—Briskett Arms? I didn't want to chance it.

"This is the same old stand," says I, "right where you started an hour ago."

"But," says he—"but Lord Winchester?"

"He's due on the next trolley," says I. "Had to stop off at the gun-factory, you know."

Ever try to tear off a lot of extemporaneous lies, twenty to the minute? It's no pipe. Worse than being on the stand at an insurance third degree. I couldn't even refuse to answer on advice of counsel, and in no time at all he had me twisted up into a bow-knot.

"Young man," says he, "I think you're prevaricating."

"I'm doin' me best," says I; "but let's cut that out. P'raps you'd feel better if you wore the bucket awhile."

"Bucket?" says he. And I'll be put on the buzzer if he didn't throw the bluff that he'd never had the thing on his head.

"Oh, well," says I, "you've got a right to lie some if you want to. It's your turn, anyway. But let me swab you off a little."

He didn't kick on that, and I was gettin' busy with warm water and towels when the door opens, and in drifts Mr. Gordon with three well-fed gents behind him.

"Great cats!" says he, throwin' up both hands. "Shorty, what in blazes has happened?"

"Nothin' much," says I. "We've been playin' a little shinny."

"Shinny?" says he, just as though it was something I'd invented.

"Sure," says I. "And Sir Peter won out. As a shinny player he's a bird."

Then the three other ducks swarms in, and the way they powwows around there for a few minutes was enough to make a curtain scene for a Third avenue melodrama.

Mr. Gordon calmed 'em down though after a bit, and then I got a chance. I was a little riled by that time, I guess. I offered to tie pillows on both hands and take 'em all three at once, kickin' allowed.

"Oh, come, Shorty," says Mr. Gordon. "These gentlemen have been a little hasty. They don't understand, and they're great friends of Sir Peter. This is the British Ambassador, Lord Winchester, and these are his two secretaries. Now, what about this shinny?"

"It was a stem-winder," says I. "Sir Peter was off side most of the time; but I don't carry no grouch for that."

Then I told 'em how I'd done it to keep him off the tracks, and how he got so warmed up he couldn't stop until he ran out of steam. They were polite enough after that. We shook hands all round, and I went in and resurrected Danvers, and they got Sir Peter fixed up so that he was fit to go in a cab, and the whole bunch clears out.

In about an hour Mr. Gordon comes back. He wears one of the won't-come-off kind, and steps like he was feelin' good all over. "Professor," says he, "you needn't be surprised at getting a medal of honor from the British Government. You seem to have cured Sir Peter of the bucket habit."

"We're quits, then," says I. "He's cured me of wanting to play shinny. Say, did you find out who the old snoozer was, anyway?"

"The old snoozer," says he, "is the crack financial expert of England, and a big gun generally. He'd been over here looking into our railroads, and when he gets back he's to make a report that will be accepted as law and gospel in every capital of Europe. It was while he was working on that job that his brain took a vacation; and it was your shinny game, the doctors say, that saved him from the insane asylum. You seem to have brought him back to his senses."

"He's welcome," says I; "but I wish the British Government would ante up a bottle of spavin-cure. Look at that shin."

"We'll make 'em pay for that shin," says he, with a kind of it's-coming-to-us grin. "And by the way, Shorty; those few after-dinner remarks that Sir Peter made about his report—you could forget about hearing 'em, couldn't you?"

"I can forget everything but the bucket," says I.

"Good," says Mr. Gordon. "It—it's a private matter for a while."

We took a hansom ride around town until the noon limited was ready to pull out. Never saw a car ride do a man so much good as that one back to New

York seemed to do Mr. Gordon. He was as pleased with himself as if he was a red apple on the top branch.

It was a couple of weeks, too, before I knew why. He let it out one day after we'd had our little kaffee klatch with the gloves. Seems that hearing Sir Peter tell what he was goin' to report about American railroads was just like givin' Gordon an owner's tip on a handicap winner; and Pyramid don't need to be hit on the head with a maul, either. Near as I can get it, he worked that inside information for all it was worth and there's a bunch down around Broad street that don't know just what hit 'em yet.

Me? Little Rollo? Oh, I'm satisfied. With what I got out of that trip I could buy enough shin salve to cure up all the bruises in New York. That's on the foot rule, too.

CHAPTER V

It was that little excursion with Mr. Gordon that puts me up to sendin' over to Williamsburg after Swifty Joe Gallagher, and signin' him as my first assistant. Thinks I; if I'm liable to go strollin' off like that any more, I've got to have someone that'll keep the joint open while I'm gone. I didn't pick Swifty for his looks, nor for his mammoth intellect. But he's as straight as a string, and he'll mind like a setter dog.

Well, say, it was lucky I got him just as I did. I hadn't much more'n broke him in before I runs up against this new one. Understand, I ain't no fad chaser. I don't pine for the sporting-extra life, with a new red-ink stunt for every leaf on the calendar-pad. I got me studio here, an' me real-money reg'lars that keeps the shop runnin', and a few of the boys to drop around now and then; so I'm willing to let it go at that. Course, though, I ain't no side-stepper. I takes what's comin' an' tries to look pleasant.

But this little hot-foot act with Rajah and Pinckney had me dizzy for a few rounds, sure as ever. And I wouldn't thought it of Pinckney. Why, when he first shows up here I says to myself: "Next floor, Reginald, for the manicure." He was one of that kind: slim, white-livered, feather-weight style of chap—looked like he'd been trainin' on Welch rabbits and Egyptian cigarettes at the club for about a year.

"Is this Professor McCabe?" says he.

"You win," says I. "What'll it be? Me class in crochet

ain't begun yet."

He kind of looked me over steady like, and then he passes out a card which says as how he was Lionel Pinckney Ogden Bruce.

"Do I have my choice?" says I. "Cause if I do I nips onto Pinckney—it's cute. Well, Pinckney, what's doing?"

He drapes himself on a chair, gets his little silver-headed stick balanced just so between his knees, pulls his trousers up to high-water mark, and takes an inventory of me from the mat up. And say! when he got through I felt as though he knew it all, from how much I'd weigh in at to where I had my laundry done. Yes, Pinckney had a full set of eyes. They were black; not just ordinary black, same's a hole in a hat, but shiny an' sparklin', like patent leathers in the sun. If it hadn't been for them eyes you might have thought he was one of the eight-day kind that was just about to run down. I ought to have got next to Pinckney's model, just by his lamps; but I didn't. I'm learnin', though, and if I last long enough I'll be a wise guy some day.

Well, when Pinckney finishes his census of me he says: "Professor, I wish to take a private course, or whatever you call it. I would like to engage your exclusive services for about three weeks."

"Chic, chic!" says I. "Things like that come high, young man."

Pinckney digs up a sweet little check-book, unlimbers a fountain-pen, and asks: "How much, please?"

"Seein' as this is the slack season with me, I'll make it fifty per," says I.

"Hour or day?" says he.

Maybe I was breathin' a bit hard, but I says careless like: "Oh, call it fifty a day and expenses."

Business with the pen. "That's for the first week," says Pinckney, and I see he'd reckoned in Sunday and all.

"When can you come on?" says I.

"I'll begin now, if you don't mind," says he.

Then it was up to me; so I goes to work. Inside of ten minutes I had a fair notion of how Pinckney was put up. He wasn't as skimpy as he'd looked from the outside, but I saw that it wouldn't be safe to try the mitts: I might forget and put a little steam into the punch—then it would be a case of sweepin' up the pieces.

"Hold that out," says I, chuckin' him the shot-bag.

He put it out; but all there was in him was bracin' that arm.

"What you need," says I, "is a little easy track-work in the open, plenty of cold water before breakfast, and sleep in ten-hour doses."

"I couldn't sleep five hours at a stretch, much less ten," says he.

"We'll take something for that," says I.

We gets together a couple suits of running-togs, sweaters, towels and things, and goes downstairs where Pinckney has a big plum-colored homicide wagon waitin' for him.

"Tell Goggles to point for Jerome-ave.," says I. "There's a track out there we can use."

On the way up Pinckney lets loose a hint or two that gives me an outline map of his particular case. He

hadn't been hittin' up any real paresis pace, so far as I could make out. He'd just been trying to keep even with the coupons and dividends that the old man had left him, burnin' it as it came in, and he'd run out of matches. Guess there was a bunch of millinery somewhere in the background too, for he was anxious about how he'd feel around Horse-Show time. Maybe Pinckney had made his plans to be more or less agreeable about then; but when he got a kinetoscope picture of himself in a sanitarium he had a scare thrown into him. Next some one gives him a tip on the Physical Culture Studio and he pikes for Shorty McCabe.

Well, I've trained a good many kinds, but I'd never tried to pump red corpuscles into an amateur Romeo before. There was the three-fifty, though, and I sails in.

"Head up now, elbows in, weight on your toes, an' we're off in a bunch!" says I. "Steady there, take it easy! This ain't no hundred-yard sprint; this is a mile performance. There, that's better! Dog-trot it to the three-quarters, and if your cork ain't pulled by then you can spurt under the wire."

But Pinckney had lost all his ambition before we'd got half round. At the finish he was breathin' more air than his wind-tanks had known in months.

"Now for the second lap," says I.

"What? Around that fence again?" says Pinckney. "Why, I saw all there was to see last time. Can't we try a new one?"

"Do you think mile tracks come in clusters?" says I.

"Why not just run up the road?" asks Pinckney.

"The road it is," says I.

We fixed it up that Goggles was to follow along with the goose-cart and honk-honk the quarters to us as he read 'em on his speed-clock. We were three miles nearer Albany when we quit, and Pinckney was leakin' like a squeezed sponge.

"Throw her wide open and pull up at the nearest road-house," says I to Goggles.

He found one before I'd got all the wraps on Pinckney, and in no time at all we were under the shower. There was less of that marble-slab look about Pinckney when he began to harness up again. He thought he could eat a little something, too. I stood over the block while the man cut that three-inch hunk from the top of the round, and then I made a mortal enemy of the cook by jugglin' the broiler myself. But Pinckney did more than nibble. After that he wanted to turn in. Sleep? I had to lift him out at four G. M. The water-cure woke him, though. He tried to beg off on the last few glasses, but I made him down 'em. Then we starts towards Boston, Goggles behind, and Pinckney discovers the first sunrise he's seen for years.

Well, that's the way we went perambulatin' up into the pie-belt. First we'd jog a few miles, then hop aboard the whiz-wagon and spurt for running water. We didn't travel on any schedule or try to make any dates. Half the time we didn't know where we were, and didn't care. When bath-tubs got scarce we'd hunt for a pond or a creek in the woods. In one of the side-hampers on the car I found a quick-lunch outfit, so I gets me a broiler, lays in round steak and rye bread, and twice a day I does the hobo act over a roadside fire. That tickled Pinckney to death. Nights we'd strike any place where they had beds to let. Pinckney didn't punch the mattress or turn up his

nose at the quilt patterns. When it came dark he was glad enough to crawl anywhere.

Now this was all to the good. Never saw quite so much picnic weather rattled out of the box all at one throw. And the work didn't break your back. Why, it was like bein' laid off for a vacation on double pay—until Rajah butted in and began to mix things.

We'd pulled into some little town or other up in Connecticut soon after sun-up, lookin' for soft boiled eggs, when a couple of real gents in last-year ulsters pipes us off and saunters up to the car. They spots Pinckney for the cash-carrier and makes the play at him.

It was a hard-luck symposium, of course; but there was more to it than just a panhandle touch. They were all there was left of the Imperial Consolidated Circus and Roman Menagerie. They had lost their top and benches in a fire, deputy-sheriffs had nabbed the wagons and horses, the company was hoofing back to Broadway, and all they had left was Rajah. Would the honorable gentleman come and take a squint at Rajah?

For why? Well, it was this way: They hated to do it, Rajah being an old friend, just like one of the family, you might say, but there wasn't anything else. They'd just got to hock Rajah to put the Imperial Consolidated in commission again. The worst of it was, these here villagers didn't appreciate what gilt-edged security Rajah was. But his honor would see that the two-fifty was nothing at all to lend out for a beggarly week or so on such a magnificent specimen. Why, Rajah was as good as real estate or Government bonds. As for selling him, ten thousand wouldn't be a temptation. Would the gentlemen just step around to the stable?

It was then I began to put up the odds on Pinckney. I got a wink from them black eyes of his, and there was the very divil an' all in 'em, with his face as straight as a crowbar.

"Certainly," says he, "we'll be happy to meet Rajah."

They had him moored to one of the floor-beams with an ox-chain around his nigh hind foot. He wasn't as big as all out doors, nor he wasn't any vest-pocket edition either. As elephants go, he wouldn't have made the welter-weight class by about a ton. He was what I'd call just a handy size, about two bureaus high by one wide. His iv'ry stoop rails had been sawed off close to his jaw, so he didn't look any more wicked than a foldin'-bed. And his eyes didn't have that shifty wait-till-I-get-loose look they generally does. They were kind of soft, widowy, oh-me-poor-child eyes.

"He is sad, very sad, about all this," says one of the real gents. "Know? Rajah knows almost as much as we do, sir."

Pinckney took his word for it. "I think I shall accommodate you with that loan," says he. "Come into the hotel."

Say, I didn't think you could gold-brick Pinckney as easy as that. One of the guys wrote out a receipt and Pinckney shoved it into his pocket handin' over a wad of yellow-backs. They didn't lose any time about headin' southeast, those two in the ulsterets. Then we goes back to have another look at Rajah.

"It's a wonderful thing, professor, this pride of possession," says Pinckney. "Only a few persons in the world own elephants. I am one of them. Even though it is only for a week, and he is miles away, I shall feel that I own Rajah, and it will make me

glad."

Then he winks, so I knows he's just bein' gay. But Rajah didn't seem so gladsome. He was rockin' his head back and forth, and just as we gets there out rolls a big tear, about a tumblerful.

"Can't we do something to chirk him up a bit?" says I. "He seems to take it hard, being hung up on a ticket."

"There's something the matter with this elephant," says Pinckney, taking a front view of him. "He's in pain. See if you can't find a veterinary, professor."

Yes, they said there was a horse-doctor knockin' around the country somewhere. He worked in the shingle-mill by spells, and then again in the chair-factory, or did odd jobs. A blond-haired native turned up who was sure the Doc had gone hog-killin' up to the corners. So I goes back to the stable.

"I've found out," says Pinckney. "It's toothache. He showed me. Open up, Rajah, and let the professor see. Up, up!"

Rajah was accommodatin'. He unhinged the top half of his face to give me a private view. We used a box of matches locating that punky grinder. There was a hole in it big enough to drop a pool-ball into. Talk about your chamber of horrors! Think what it must be to be as big as that and feel bad all over.

"I never worked in an open-all-night painless shop," says I, "but I think I could do something for that if I could tap a drug store."

"Good," says Pinckney. "We passed one down the road."

They kept grindstones and stove-polish and dress-patterns there too, but they had a row of bottles in

one corner.

"Gimme a roll of cotton-battin' an' a quart of oil of cloves," says I to the man.

He grinned and ripped a little ten-cent bottle of toothache drops off a card. "It may feel that way, but you'll find this plenty," says he.

"You get busy with my order," says I. "This ain't my ache, it's Rajah's, and Rajah's an elephant."

"Sho!" says he, and hands over all he had in stock. I went back on the jump. We made a wad half as big as your head, soaked it in the clove oil and rammed it down with a nail-hammer. It was the *fromage*, all right. And say! Ever see an elephant grin and look tickled and try to say thank you? The way he talked deaf and dumb with his trunk and shook hands with us and patted us on the back was almost as human as the way a man acts when the jury brings in "Not guilty." Inside of three minutes Rajah was that kinky he tried to do a double-shuffle and nearly wrecked the barn. It made us feel good too, and we stood around there and threw bouquets at ourselves for what we'd done.

Then the cook came out and wanted to know should she keep right on boiling them eggs or take 'em off; so we remembers about breakfast. Callin' for a new deal on the eggs, we sent out word for 'em to fix up a tub of hot mash for Rajah and told the landlord to give our friend the best in the stable.

Rajah was fetchin' the bottom of the tub when we went out to say good-by. He stretched his trunk out after us as we went through the door. We'd climbed into the car and was just gettin' under way when we hears things smash, and looks back to see Rajah, with a section of the stable floor draggin' behind,

coming after us on the gallop.

"Beat it!" says I to Goggles, and he was reachin' for the speed lever, when he sees a town constable, with a tin badge like a stove-lid, pull a brass watch on us.

"What's the limit?" shouts Pinckney.

"Ten an hour or ten dollars," says he.

"Here's your ten and costs," says Pinckney, tossing him a sawbuck. "Go ahead, François."

We jumped into that village ordinance at a forty-mile an hour clip and would have had Rajah hull down in about two minutes, but Pinckney had to take one last look. The poor old mutt had quit after a few jumps. He had squat in the middle of the road, lifted up his trombone frontispiece and was bellowin' out his grief like a calf that has lost its mommer. Pinckney couldn't stand for that for a minute.

"I say now, we'll have to go back," says he. "That wail would haunt me for days if I didn't."

So back we goes to Rajah, and he almost stands on his head, he's so glad to see us again.

"We'll just have to slip away without his knowing it next time," says Pinckney. "Perhaps he will get over his gratitude in an hour or so."

We unhitches Rajah from the stable floor and starts back for the hotel. The landlord met us half-way.

"Don't you bring that critter near my place ag'in!" shouts he. "Take him away before he tears the house down."

An' no jollyin' nor green money would change that hayseed's mind. The whole population was with him too. While we were jawin' about it, along comes the town marshal with some kind of injunction warnin'

us to remove Rajah, the same bein' a menace to life and property.

There wa'n't nothing for it but to sneak. We moves out of that burg at half speed, with old Rajah paddin' close behind, his trunk restin' affectionately on the tonneau-back and a kind of satisfied right-to-home look in them little eyes of his. Made me feel like a pair of yellow shoes at a dance, but Pinckney seemed to think there was something funny about it. "'And over the hills and far away the happy Princess followed him,' as Tennyson puts it," says he.

"Tennyson was dead onto his job," says I. "But when do we annex the steam calliope and the boys in red coats with banners? We ought to have the rest of the grand forenoon parade, or else shake Rajah."

"Oh, perhaps we can find quarters for him in the next town, where he hasn't disgraced himself," says Pinckney.

Pinckney hadn't counted on the telephone, though. A posse with shot-guns and bench-warrants met us a mile out from the next place and shooed us away. They'd heard that Rajah was a man-killer and they had brought along a pound of arsenic to feed him. After they'd been coaxed from behind their barricade, though, and had seen what a gentle, confidin' beast Rajah really was, they compromised by letting us take a road that led into the next county.

"This is gettin' sultry," says I as we goes on the side-track.

"I am enjoying it," says Pinckney. "Now let's have some road work."

Say, you ought to have seen that procession. First

comes me and Pinckney, in running gear; then Rajah, hoofing along at our heels, as joyous as a chowder party; and after him Goggles, with the benzine wagon. Seems to me I've heard yarns about how grateful dumb beasts could be to folks that had done 'em a good turn, but Rajah's act made them tales seem like sarsaparilla ads. He was chock full of gratitude. He was nutty over it. Seemed like he couldn't think of anything else but that wholesale toothache of his and how he'd got shut of it. He just adopted us on the spot. Whenever we stopped he'd hang around and look us over, kind of admirin', and we couldn't move a step but he was there, flappin' his big ears and swingin' his trunk, just as though he was sayin': "Whoope-e-e, me fellers! You're the real persimmons, you are."

We couldn't find a hotel where they'd take us in that night, so we had to bribe a farmer to let us use his spare bed rooms. We tethered Rajah to a big apple-tree just under our windows to keep him quiet, and let him browse on a Rose of Sharon bush. He only ripped off the rain pipe and trod a flower-bed as hard as a paved court.

At breakfast Pinckney remarks, sort of soothin':

"We might as well enjoy Rajah's society while we have it. I suppose those circus men will be after him in a few days."

Then he remembers that receipt and pulls it out. I could see something was queer by the way he screwed up his mouth. He tosses the paper over to me. Say! do you know what them two ulsteret guys had done? They'd given Pinckney a bill of sale, makin' over all rights, privileges and good-will entire.

"You're it," says I.

"So it seems," says Pinckney. "But I hardly know whether I've got Rajah or Rajah's got me."

"If I owned something I didn't want," says I, "seems to me I'd sell it. There must be other come-ons."

"We will sell him," says Pinckney.

Well, we tried. For three or four days we didn't do anything else; and say, when I think of them days they seem like a mince-pie dream. We did our handsomest to make those Nutmeggers believe that they needed Rajah in their business, that he would be handy to have around the place. But they couldn't see it. We argued with about fifty horny-handed plow-pushers, showin' 'em how Rajah could pull more'n a string of oxen a block long, and could be let out for stump-digging in summer, or as a snow-plough in winter. We tried liverymen, storekeepers, summer cottagers; but the nearest we came to making a sale was to a brewer who'd just built a new house with red and yellow fancy woodwork all over the front of it. He thought Rajah might do for a lawn ornament and make himself useful as a fountain during dry spells, but when he noticed that Rajah didn't have any tusks he said it was all off. He knew where he could buy a whole cast-iron menagerie, with all the frills thrown in, at half the price.

And we wa'n't holding Rajah at any swell figure. He was on the bargain counter when the sale began. Every day was a fifty-per-cent. clearance with us. We were closing out our line of elephants on account of retiring from business, and Rajah was a remnant.

But they wouldn't buy. Generally they threatened to set the dogs on us. It was worse than trying to sell a cargo of fur overcoats in Panama. In time it began to

leak through into our heads that Rajah wa'n't negotiable. Didn't seem to trouble him any. He was just as glad to be with us as at first, followed us around like a pet poodle, and got away with his bale of hay as regular as a Rialto hamfatter raidin' the free lunch.

"Is it a life sentence, Pinckney?" says I. "Is this twin foster-brother act to a mislaid elephant to be a continuous performance? If it is we'd better hit the circuit regular and draw our dough on salary day. For me, I'm sick of havin' folks act like we was a quarantine station. Let's anchor Rajah to something solid and skiddoo."

But Pinckney couldn't stand it to think of Rajah being left to suffer. He was gettin' kind of sore on the business, just the same. Then he plucks a thought. We wires to a friend of his in Newport to run down to the big circus headquarters and jolly them into sending an elephant-trainer up to us.

"A trainer will know how to coax Rajah off," says he, "and perhaps he will take him as a gift."

"It's easy money," says I.

But it wasn't. That duck at Newport sends back a message that covers four sheets of yellow paper, tellin' how glad he was to get track of Pinckney again and how he must come down right away. Oh, they wanted Pinckney bad! It was like the tap of the bell for a twenty-round go with the referee missin'. Seems that Mrs. Jerry Toynbee was tryin' to pull off one of those back-yard affairs that win newspaper space—some kind of a fool amateur circus—and they'd got to have Pinckney there to manage it or the thing would fush. As for the elephant-trainer, he'd forgot that.

"By Jove!" says Pinckney, real sassy like.

"That's drawin' it mild," says I. "Would you like the loan of a few able-bodied cuss-words?"

"But I have an idea," says Pinckney.

"Handcuff it," says I; "it's a case of breakin' and enterin'."

But he didn't have so much loft-room to let, after all. His first move was to hunt up a railroad station and charter a box-car. We carpets it with hay, has a man knock together a couple of high bunks in one end, and throws in some new horse-blankets.

"Now," says Pinckney, "you and I and Rajah will start for Newport on the night freight."

"Have you asked Rajah?" says I.

But Rajah knew all about riding in box-cars. He walked up the plank after us just like we was a pair of Noahs. Goggles was sent off over the road with the cart, all by his lonesome.

I've traveled a good deal with real sports, and once I came back from St. Louis with the delegates to a national convention, but this was my first trip in an animal car. It wasn't so bad, though, and it was all over by daylight next morning. There wasn't anyone in sight but milkmen and bakers' boys as we drove down Bellevue-ave., with Rajah grippin' the rear axle of our cab. I don't know how he felt about buttin' into Newport society at that time of day, but I looked for a cop to pinch us as second-story men.

We fetches up at the swellest kind of a ranch you ever saw, iron gates to it like a storage warehouse, and behind that trees and bushes and lawn, like a slice out of Central Park. Pinckney wakes up the

lodge-keeper and after he lets down the bars we pikes around to the stable. It looked more like an Episcopal church than a stable, and we didn't find any horses inside, anyway, only seven different kinds of gasoline carts. The stable-hands all seemed to know Pinckney and to be proud of it, but they shied some at Rajah and me.

"This is part of a little affair I'm managing for Mrs. Toynbee," says Pinckney. "Professor McCabe and Rajah will stay here for a day or two, strictly *in cog.*, you know."

What Pinckney says seemed to be rules and regulations there, so Rajah and I got the glad hand after that. And for a stable visit it was the best that ever happened. I've stopped at lots of two-dollar houses that would have looked like Bowery lodgings alongside of that stable. And one of the boys thought he could handle the mitts some. Yes, that *in cog.* business wasn't so worse, at fifty per.

All this time Pinckney was as busy as the man at the ticket window, only droppin' in once or twice after dark to see if Rajah was stayin' good. The show was being knocked into shape and Pinckney was master of ceremonies. I knew he was goin' to work Rajah in somehow; but he didn't have any time to put me next and I never tumbled until he'd sprung the trick.

About the third day things began to hum around the Toynbee place. A gang of tentmen came with a round top and put it up. They strung a lot of side-show banners too, and built lemonade-stands in the shrubbery. If it hadn't been for the Johnnie boys in hot clothes strollin' around you'd thought a real one-ring wagon-show had struck town. But say, that bunch of clowns and bum bareback riders had papas who could have given 'em a Forepaugh outfit every

birthday.

Early next morning I got the tip from Pinckney to sneak Rajah out of the stable and over into the dressin'-tent. The way that old chap's eyes glistened when he saw the banners and things was a wonder. He sure did know a heap, that Rajah. He was as excited and anxious as a new chorus girl at a fall opening; but when I gave him the word he held himself in.

Just before the grand entry I got a peek at the house, and it was a swell mob: same folks that you'll see at the Horse Show, only there wasn't no dollar-a-head push to rubber at 'em, as they wa'n't on exhibition. They was just out for fun, and I guess they know how to have it, seein' that's their steady job.

Number four on the programme was put down as: "Mr. Lionel Pinckney Ogden Bruce, with his wonderfully life-like elephant Rajah." I heard the barker givin' his song an' dance about the act, and he got a great hand. Then Pinckney goes on and the crowd howls.

You see, he'd had a loose canvas suit, like pajamas, made for Rajah, and stuffed out with straw. It was painted to look something like elephant hide, but some of the straw had been left sticking through the seams. With Rajah sewed inside of this, he looked like a rank imitation of himself.

"Fake, fake!" they yells at 'em as they showed up. "Who's playing the hind legs, Lionel?" and a lot of things like that. They threw peanuts and apples at Rajah, and generally enjoyed themselves.

Then all of a sudden Pinckney pulls the puckering string, yanks off the padding, and out walks old Rajah as chipper as Billy Jerome. Fetch 'em? Well,

say! You've seen a gang of school-kids when the sleight-of-hand man makes a pass over the egg in the hat and pulls out a live rabbit? These folks acted the same way. They howled, they hee-hawed, they jumped up and down on the seats.

They'd been lookin' for the same old elephant with two men inside, the good old chestnut that they'd been tryin' to laugh over for years, and when this philopena was sprung on 'em they were as tickled as a baby with a jack-in-the-box. It wouldn't have got more'n one laugh out of a crowd of every-day folks, but that swell mob just went wild over it. It was a new stunt, done special for them by one of their own crowd.

Was Pinckney it? Why, he was the whole show! They kept him and Rajah in the ring for half an hour, and they let loose every time Rajah lifted his trunk or napped his ears. When he got 'em quiet Pinckney made a speech. He said he was happy to say that the grand door prize, as announced on the hand-bills, had been drawn by Mrs. Jeremiah Toynbee, and that Rajah was the prize. Would she take it with her, or have it sent?

You've heard of Mrs. Jerry. She's a real sport, she is. She's the one that stirred up all that fuss by takin' her tame panther down to Bailey's Beach with her. And Mrs. Jerry wasn't goin' back on her reputation or missin' any two-page ads. in the papers.

"You may send him, please," says Mrs. Jerry.

Maybe they thought that was all a part of Pinckney's fake. They didn't know how hard we'd tried to unload Rajah. We didn't do any lingerin' around. While the show was goin' on we sneaks out of the back of the tent with Rajah and across to the stable.

The rest was easy. He'd got so used to seein' me there that I reckon he'd sized it up for my regular hang-out, so when we ties him up fast and slides out easy, one at a time, he never mistrusts.

"Professor," says Pinckney, "it seems to me that this is an excellent opportunity for us to go away."

"It's all of that," says I, "and let's make it a quick shift."

We did. Goggles shook us up some on the way down, but we hit Broadway in time for breakfast.

CHAPTER VI

You didn't happen to see Pinckney at the last Horse Show, did you? Well, you'd never known him for the same ambulance fare that dropped into the Studio that day. He's been on the 'rock for two months now, and his nerves are as steady as a truck horse. There's more meat on him, too, than there was. I don't have to have a dustpan ready, in case I should jolt him one.

But say, next time any two-by-four chappy floats in here for a private course, I gets plans and specifications before I takes him on. No more Rajah business in mine. See?

There's another thing, too. I'm thinkin' of hirin' a husky boy with a club to do the turnkey act for me. Or maybe I could get out an injunction against

myself to keep me from leavin' home. What I need is a life sentence to stay in little old New York. It's the only place where things happen reg'lar and sensible. If you see rocks flyin' round in the air, or a new building doin' the hoochee-coochee an' sheddin' its cornices, or manhole covers poppin' off, you know just what's up—nothing but a little stick dynamite handled careless, or some mislaid gas touched off by a plumber.

But the minute I lets some one lead me across a ferry, or beyond the Bronx, the event card is on the blink, and I'm a bunky-doodle boy. Long's I don't get more'n a mile from Forty-Second-st., I'm Professor McCabe, and the cops pass me the time of day. Outside of that I'm a stray, and anyone that gets the fit ties a can to me.

It was my mix-up with that Blenmont aggregation that stirs me up. Pinckney was at the bottom of this, too. Course, I can't register any kick; for when it comes to doing the hair-trigger friendship act, Pinckney's the real skookum preferred. But this was once when he slipped me a blank.

Looked like bein' fed with a spoon, too, at the start. All I had to do was to take the one-thirty-six out to Blenmont, put in an hour with Jarvis, catch the three-fifty back, and charge anything I had the front to name. What's more, I kind of cottoned to Jarvis, from the drop of the hat.

He was waitin' at the station for me, with a high-wheeled cart, and a couple of gingery circus horses hitched one in front of the other like two links of wienerwurst. They were tryin' to play leap-frog as the train comes in; but it didn't seem to worry Jarvis any more'n if he was drivin' a pair of mail-wagon plugs.

One of those big pink-and-white chaps, Jarvis was, with nice blue eyes and ashes-of-roses hair. There was a lot of him, and it was well placed. He had sort of a soothing, easy way of talking, too, like a church organ with the soft pedal on.

Me and Jarvis got acquainted right away. He said he didn't care much about the physical-culture game—didn't exactly need it, and he'd been through all that before, anyway—but, mother and sister wanted him to take it up again, and Pinckney'd told what a crackerjack I was; so he thought he might as well go in for it. He said he'd had a little hole fixed up where one could do that sort of thing, y'know, and he hoped I wouldn't find it such a beastly bore, after all.

Oh, he was a gent, Mr. Jarvis. But what got me was the careless way he juggled the reins over those two bob-tailed nags that was doin' a ragtime runaway, and him usin' only three fingers, and touchin' 'em up with the whip. It was his lucky day, though, and we got there without an ambulance.

It was somethin' of a place to get to, yes—about a hundred and 'steen rooms and bath, I should say, with a back yard that must have slopped over into Connecticut some. That's what you get by havin' a grandpop who put his thumb-print on every dollar that came his way.

I guess Jarvis was used to livin' in a place like that, though. He didn't stop to tell what anything cost, or show off any of the bric-à-brac. He just led the way through seven or eight parlors and palm-rooms, until we fetched up in the hole he'd fixed up to exercise in. It was about three times as big as the Studio here, and if there was anything missing from the outfit I couldn't have told what it was—flyin'-rings, bars, rowin'-machine, punchin'-bags, dumb-bells—say!

with a secretary and a few wall mottos, there was the makin's of a Y. M. C. A. branch right on the ground. Then there was dressin'-rooms, a shower bath, and a tiled plunge tank like they have in these Turkish places.

"Lucky you don't go in strong for exercise," says I. "If you did, I s'pose you'd fix up Madison Square Garden?"

"That architect was an ass," says Jarvis; "but mother told him to go ahead. Fancy he thought I was a Sandow, you know."

Well, we gets into our gym. clothes, picks out a set of kid pillows, and had just stepped out on the rubber for a little warmin' up, when in sails a fluff delegation. There was a fat old one, that looked as though she might be mother; a slim baby-eyed one, that any piker would have played for sister; and another, that I couldn't place at all. She wasn't a Fifth-ave. girl—you could tell that by the way she wore her hair bunched down on the nape of her neck—but it was a cinch she wasn't any poor relation.



Mother, sister, and Lady Evelyn.

"Lost their way goin' to the matinée, eh?" says I.

Jarvis, he gets pink clear down to his collarbone. "I beg pardon, professor," says he. "It's only mother and the girls. I'll send them off."

"That's right; shoo 'em," says I.

But mother wouldn't shoo any more'n a trolley-car. "Now, don't be silly about it, Jarvis, dear," says she. "You know how Lady Evelyn dotes on athletics, and how your sister and I do, too. So we're just going to stay and watch you."

"Oh, come, mother," says Jarvis; "it isn't just the thing, you know."

"Ask Lady Evelyn," says mother. "Why, she's one of the patronesses of the Oldwich Cricket Club, and pours tea for the young men at their games. Now, go ahead, Jarvis; there's a dear."

He looks at me for a tip, and that gives him a hunch. "But the professor—" says he.

"Oh, Professor McCabe doesn't mind us a bit; do you now, professor?" says sister, buttin' in, real coy and giddy.

"I can stand it if you can," says I, and she tips me a goo-goo smile that was all to the candied violets.

"There!" says the mother. "Now go right on as though we were not here at all. But remember not to be too rough, Jarvis, dear."

I grins at that, and Jarvis dear looks foolisher than ever. But the ladies had settled themselves in front seats, and there didn't seem to be anything to do but to play marbles or quit an' go home. And say, I don't know which looked more like a stage-hand caught in front of the drop, Jarvis or me. We went through some kind of motions, though, until I begins to get over bein' rattled. Then I tries to brace him up.

"Little faster with that right counter there," says I. "And block more with your elbow. Ah, you're wide

open—see?" and I taps him once or twice. "Now look out for this left lead to the face. Come, use that right a little. 'Tain't in a sling, is it? Foot-work, now. You side-step like a truck-horse. There, that's the article. Now let 'em come—block, counter, guard!"

You see, I was doin' my best to work up a little excitement and get Jarvis to forget the audience; but it wasn't much use. About all we did was to walk around and pat each other like a pair of kittens. There'd been as much exercise in passin' the plate at church.

Mother thought it was lovely, though, and sister had that gushy look in her eyes that her kind wears after they've been to see Maude Adams. Lady Evelyn, though, didn't seem to be struck silly by our performance. She acted as though someone had been tryin' to sell her a gold brick. Her nose was up in the air, and she'd turned a shoulder to us, like she was wonderin' how long it would be before the next act was put on. Couldn't blame her, either. That was the weakest imitation of a sparrin' bout I ever stood up in.

But there was no stirrin' Jarvis. He'd got stage-fright, or cold feet, or something of the kind. It wa'n't that he didn't know how, for he had all the tags of a good amateur about his moves; but somehow he'd been queered. So, as soon as we can, we quits. Then sister gets her chance to gush. She rushes to the front and turns the baby stare on me like I was all the goods.

"Oh, it was just too sweet for anything!" says she. "Do you know, professor, I've always wanted to see a real boxing-match; but Jarvis would never let me before. He's told me horrid stories about how brutal they were. Now I know they're nothing of the sort. I shall come every time you and Jarvis have one, and so

will Lady Evelyn. You didn't think it was brutal, did you, Evelyn?"

Lady Evelyn humped her eyebrows and gave me one look. "No," says she, "I shouldn't call it brutal, exactly," and then she swallows a polite, society snicker in a way that made me mad from the ground up. Jarvis didn't lose any of that, either. I got a glimpse of him turnin' automobile red, and tryin' to choke himself with his tongue.

"It's something like the wand drill we used to do at college," says sister. "Don't you like the wand drill, professor?"

"When it ain't done too rough, I'm dead stuck on it," says I.

"I just knew you didn't like rough games," says she. "You don't look as though you would, you know."

"That's right," say I.

"Jarvis says that once you knocked out three men in one evening; but I'm sure you weren't rude about it," she gurgles.

"And that's no pipe, either," says I. "I wouldn't be rude for money."

"What is a knockout, anyway?" says she.

"Why," says I, "it's just pushin' a feller around the platform until he's too dizzy to stand up."

"What fun!" says sister.

We makes a break for the dressin'-room about then, and the delegation clears out. On the way back to the station Jarvis apologizes seven different ways, and ends up by givin' me the cue to the whole game.

Seems that mother's steady job in life was to get him

married off to some one that suited her for a daughter-in-law. She'd been at it for five or six years; but Jarvis had always blocked her moves, until Lady Evelyn shows up. I guessed that he'd picked her out himself, and was gettin' along fine, when mother begins to mix in and arrange things. Evelyn shies at that, and commences to hand Jarvis the frappéd smile. This little visit to the sparrin' exhibition the old lady had planned for Evelyn's special benefit.

"But hang it all!" says Jarvis, "I couldn't stand up there and show off, like a Sunday-school boy spouting a piece. Made me feel like a silly ass, you know."

"You looked the part," says I. "About one more of those stunts, and Lady Evelyn'll want to adopt the two of us."

"No more," says he. "She must think I'm a milksop. Why, she's got brothers that are officers in the British army, fellows who get themselves shot, and win medals, and all that sort of thing."

Well, I was sorry for Jarvis; for the girl was a good looker, all right, and they'd have mated up fine. But I'm no *schatchen*. Physical culture's my game, an' I ain't takin' on no marriage bureau as a side line. So we shook hands and called it a canceled contract. Then Jarvis jerks those circus horses out of a bow-knot and rounds the corner on one wheel, while I climbs aboard the choo-choo cars and gets back near Broadway.

I wasn't lookin' to run across Jarvis again, seein' as how me and him has our own particular sets; but 'twasn't more'n three days before he shows up at the Studio. He was lookin' down an' out, too.

"Dropped in for a real rough game of pussy-wants-a-

corner," says I, "or shall we make it ring-around-the-rosy?"

"I say, now, Shorty," says he, "if you'd had it rubbed in as hard as I have, you'd let up."

"Heard from Lady Evelyn?" says I.

He kind of groaned and fell into a chair. "I tried to tell her about it," says he; "but she wouldn't listen to a word. She only asked if you were a professor of dancing."

"Hully chee!" says I. "Say, you tell her from me that I'm a cloak-model, an' proud of it. Dancin'-master, eh? Do you stand for a josh like that?"

"Hang me if I do!" says he, jumpin' up and measurin' off three-foot steps across the floor. "The Lady Evelyn's going back to England in a few days, but before she leaves I want her to have a chance to—well, to see that I'm not the sort she thinks I am. And I want you to help me out, professor."

"Ah, say, you got the wrong transfer," says I. "I'm nothin' but a dub at anything like that. What you want is to get Clyde Fitch to build you a nice little one-act scene where you can play leadin' gent to her leadin' lady."

"You're mistaken, Shorty," says he. "I'm not putting up a game. No heroics for me. I'm just a plain, ordinary chump, and willing to let it go at that. But I'm no softy, and she's got to know it. There's another thing: mother and sister have carried this athletic nonsense about far enough. They'd like to exhibit me to all the fool women they know, as a kind of modern Hercules, and I'm sick of it. Now, I've got a plan that ought to cure 'em of that."

For Jarvis, it wa'n't so slow. Say, he ain't half so

much asleep as he looks. His proposition is to spring the real thing on 'em, a five-round go for keeps, with ring-weight gloves, and all the trimmin's.

"They've been bothering me for more," says he. "I haven't heard anything else since you were there. And Lady Evelyn's been putting them up to it, I'll bet a hat. What do you say, professor? Wouldn't you give it to them?"

"I sure would," says I. "It's comin' to 'em. And I know of two likely Red Hook boys that's just achin' to get at each other in the ring for a fifty-dollar purse."

"No, no," says Jarvis. "I mean to be in this myself. It's —it's necessary, you know."

"Oh!" says I, looking him over kind of curious. "But see here, do you think you'd be good for five rounds?"

"I'm not quite in condition now," says he; "but there was a time—"

You know. You've seen these college-trained boxers, that think they're hittin' real hard when their punch wouldn't dent a cheese-pie.

"We'd have to fake it some," says I.

"Oh, no, that wouldn't do at all," says Jarvis. "This must be a genuine match. I'll put up ten to one, five hundred to fifty; and if I stay the five rounds I get the fifty."

"Whe-e-ew!" says I. "It'd be like takin' candy from a kid. I couldn't do it."

Jarvis, he kind of colored up at that, but he didn't go off his nut. "I beg pardon," says he; "but I have an idea, you know, that it wouldn't be so one-sided as you think."

Well, say, I've made lots of easy money off'n ideas just like that, and when it was put up to me as a personal favor to do it, I couldn't renig. It did go against the grain to play myself for a longshot, though; but Jarvis wouldn't listen to anything else, claimin' his weight and reach made it an even thing. So I takes him on, an' we bills the go for the next afternoon.

"I may have to bring up Swifty Joe for a bottle-holder," says I, "an' Swifty ain't just what you'd call parlor broke."

"All the better for that," says Jarvis. "And I'd be much obliged if you'd find another like him for my corner."

Course, there's only one Swifty. He's got a bent-in nose, an' a lop ear, an' a jaw like a hippo. He's won more bouts by scarin' his man stiff than any plug in the business. He'd been a champ long ago, if it wa'n't for a chunk of yellow in him as big as a grape fruit. No, I couldn't match up Swifty. I done the next best thing, though; I sent for Gorilla Quigley, and gets Mike Slattery to hold the watch on us.

Mike gets the hint that this was a swell joint we was goin' to; so he shows up in South Brooklyn evenin' dress—plug hat, striped shirt, and sack coat. I makes him chuck the linen for a sweater; but I couldn't separate him from the shiny top piece. The Gorilla always wears a swimmin' jersey with a celluloid dicky; so he passes muster.

Anyways, when old Knee Pants, the Blenmont butler, sees us lined up at the front entrance, we had him pop-eyed. He was goin' to ring up the police reserves, when Mr. Jarvis comes out and passes us in.

"They're a group of forty-nine per cents.," says I; "but you said you wanted that kind."

"It's all right," says he. "I've explained to the ladies that a few of my friends interested in physical culture were coming up to-day, and that perhaps they'd better stay out; but they'll be there just the same."

He'd got 'em right, too. Just as we'd fixed the ropes, and got out the pails and towels, in they floats; mother beamin' away like a head-light, sister all fixed ready to blow bubbles, and the Lady Evelyn with her nose stickin' up in the air.

"Professor, will you do the honors?" says Jarvis to me.

And I did 'em. "Ladies," says I, "lemme put you next to some sure-fire talent. This gent with the ingrowin' Roman nose-piece is me assistant Swifty Joe Gallagher. He's just as han'some as he looks."

"Aw, cut it out!" says Swifty.

"Back under the sink with the rest of the pipes," says I, out of the side of my mouth. Then I does another duck. "And this here gooseb'ry blond in the Alice-blue jersey, is Mr. Gorilla Quigley, that put Gans out once—all but. The other gent you may have met before, seein' as he's from one of the first families of Brooklyn—lives under the bridge. His name's Mike Slattery. Now, if you'll excuse us, we'll get busy."

As I takes my corner, I could see mother beginnin' to look worried; but sister opens a box of chocolate creams and prepares to have the time of her life. Lady Evelyn springs her lorgnette and sizes us up like we was a bunch of Buffalo Bill Indians just off the reservation.

I'd forgot to tip off Slattery that there wasn't any postprandials expected of him; so the first thing I

knew he was makin' his little ring speech, just the same's if he was announcin' events at the Never Die Athletic club.

"Now gents—and ladies," says he, "this is a five-round go for a stay, between Professor Shorty McCabe, ex-light-weight champeen of the world, and another gent what goes on the cards as an unknown. It's catch weights, an' the winner pulls down the whole basket of greens. There ain't goin' to be no hittin' after the clinch, and if there's any fouls, you leave it to me. Don't come buttin' in. It's been put up to me to keep time an' referee this mix-up, and I don't want no help. You bottle-holders stay in your corners till the count's over. Now are you ready? Then go!"

There was a squeal or two when we sheds our bath-robes and steps to the middle, and I guesses that the ladies was gettin' their first view of ring clothes. But I wasn't lookin' anywhere but at Jarvis. And say, he would have made a hit anywhere. He had just paddin' enough to round him out well, and not so much as to make him look ladyfied. Course, he was a good many pounds over-weight for the job he'd tackled, but he'd have looked mighty well on a poster. Honest, it seemed a shame to have to muss him.

Jarvis wa'n't there to stand in the lime-light, though. He went right to work as though he meant business. I'd kind of figured on lettin' him have his own way for a couple of rounds, takin' it easy, an' jockeyin' him into making a showin'; but the first thing I knows he lands a right swing that near lifts me off my feet, an' Swifty sings out to me to stop my kiddin'.

"Beg pardon," says Jarvis; "but I'm after that fifty."

"If I'd had a putty jaw, you'd got it then," says I. "Here's the twin to that."

But my swipe didn't reach him by an inch, and the best I could do was to swap half-arm jolts until I'd got steadied down again. Well say, I wasn't more'n an hour findin' out that I couldn't monkey much with Jarvis. He knew how to let his weight follow the glove, and he blocked as pretty as if he was punchin' the bag.

"You didn't learn that in no college," says I, fiddlin' for a place to plant my left.

"You're quite right," says he, and bores in like a snow-plough.

We steamed up a little in the second; but it was an even break at that, barrin' the fact that I played more for the wind, and had Jarvis breathin' fast when Slattery called quits. Gorilla Quigley was onto his job, though, an' he gives him good advice while he was wavin' the towel. I could hear him coachin' Jarvis to save his breath and make me do the rushin'.

"Don't waste no time on that cast-iron mug of his," says Gorilla. "All you gotter do is cover up an' stay the limit."

But that wa'n't Jarvis's program. He begins like a bridge car-rusher makin' for a seat, and he had me back into my corner in no time at all. We mixed it then, mixed it good and plenty. Jarvis wa'n't handin' out any love-taps, either; and I didn't have beef enough to stop a hundred-an'-eighty pound swing without feelin' the jar. I was dizzy from 'em all right; but I jumps in close an' pounds away on his ribs until he gives ground. Then I comes the Nelson crouch, and rips a few cross-overs in where they'd do the most good.

That didn't stop him, though. Pretty soon he comes in for more. Say, I never see a guy that could look pleasanter while he was passin' out hot ones. It wasn't a fightin' grin, same as Terry wears; it was just a calm, steady, business-like proposition, one of the kind that goes with a "Sorry to trouble you, but I've got to knock your block off." Now, I can grin, too, until I makes up my mind that it's time to pull the other chap's cork. But I was never up against any of this polite business before. It wins me, though. Right there I says to myself: "Jarvis, if you can keep that up for two rounds more, you're welcome to win out." It was worth the money.

And just as I gets this notion in my nut, he cuts loose with a bunch of rapid-fire jabs that had me wonderin' where I'd be if one landed just right. I ain't got it mapped out yet just how it happened; for about then the ladies let go a lot of squeals; but I remembers stoppin' a facer that showed me pin-wheels, an' then I quits fancy boxin'.

We was roughin' it all over the ring, and Swifty an' the Gorilla was yellin' things, an' Slattery was yellin' back at them, and the muss was as pretty as any ten-dollar-a-head crowd ever paid to see, when all of a sudden Jarvis misses a swing, and I throws all I had into an upper cut. It connected with his chin dimple like a hammer on a nut. The next thing I knows Swifty has the elbow-lock on me from behind, and Mike is standin' over Mr. Jarvis makin' the count.

Well, there wa'n't any cheerin' and shoutin'. I didn't have to shake hands with any crazy bunch, or be toted off to the dressin'-room on their shoulders. When I gets so I can look straight I sees mother keeled over in her chair, and sister fannin' her with the chocolate box. And say, I felt like a lead quarter.

Next I takes a squint at Lady Evelyn. She was standin' up as stiff as a tin soldier on parade, with her eyes snappin' and her fingers clinched.

Just one of them looks was enough for me. I gets busy with a pail, and goes to work on Jarvis. He was clean out, of course, but restin' as easy as a baby. We was bringin' him round all right, when I feels a push that shoves me to one side, and in rushes Lady Evelyn. She gets one arm under his neck just as he opens his eyes with that kind of a "What's the matter now?" way they has of comin' back.

Course, it don't last long, that wizzy feelin' and there ain't any hurt to speak of afterward; but I reckon Lady Evelyn don't know much about knock-outs. The way she hugs him up you'd thought he'd been half killed. We was all lookin' foolish and useless, I guess, when the lady turns to me and snaps out:

"Brute! I hope you're satisfied!"

Say, it wouldn't have been worse if I'd been caught robbin' a poor box. "Thank you, ma'am," says I, and fades into the background.

"Go away, all of you!" says she.

So Swifty and the other two comes taggin' along behind, and we had a little reunion in the dressin'-room.

"On the dead, now," says Slattery, "what was the foul?"

"Who's claimin' foul?" says Swifty, bristlin'.

"Why the lady gives it to Shorty straight," says he.

"Ah, go dream about it!" says Swifty. "She don't know a foul from a body wallop."

"See here," says I, "you can talk all that over while

you're hoofin' it back to the station; and you're due to be on your way in just four minutes by the clock; so chuck it!"

"I ain't heard no step-lively call," says Slattery. "Besides, I likes the place."

"Well, it don't like you," says I. "Mr. Jarvis and me have had enough of your rough-house society to last us a time and a half. Now bunky-doodle!"

They was a sore-head trio for fair, after that; but when I'd paid 'em off, with a fiver extra for luck, they drops out of a window onto the lawn and pikes off like a squad of jail-breakers. I was some easier in my mind then; but I wa'n't joyful, at that.

You see, Mr. Jarvis had treated me so white, and he was such a nice decent chap, that I was feelin' mighty cut up about givin' him the quick exit right before the girl he was gone on. Sure, he'd played for it; but I could see I shouldn't have done it. Knock-outs ain't in my line any more, anyway; but to spring one right before women folks, and in a swell joint like Blenmont—say, it made me feel like a last year's straw hat on the first day of June.

"Shorty," says I, "you're a throw-back. You better quit travelin' with real gents, and commence eatin' with your knife again. Here's Mr. Jarvis gets you to help him out in a little society affair, and you overdoes it so bad he can't square himself in a hundred years. Back to the junction for yours."

Well, I was that grouchy I wouldn't look at myself in the glass. But I rubs down and gets into my Rialto wardrobe that I'd brought along in a suit-case. Then I waits for Jarvis. Oh, I didn't want to see him, but it was up to me to say my little piece.

It was near an hour before he shows up, wearin' his bathrobe, an' lookin' as gay as a flower-shop window.

"On the level, now," says I, before he had a show to make any play at me, "if I'd known what a pinhead I was, I'd stayed in the cushion. How bad did I queer you?"

"Shorty," says he, shovin' out his hand, "you're a brick."

"An' cracked in the bakin', eh?" says I.

"But you don't understand," says he. "She's mine, Shorty! The Lady Evelyn—she's promised to marry me."

"Serves you right," says I, as we shakes hands. "But how does she allow to get back at me?"

"Oh, she knows all about everything now," says Jarvis, "and she wants to apologize."

Say, he wasn't stringin' me either. Blow me if she didn't. And sister? "You're horrid!" says she. "Perfectly horrid. So there!" Now can you beat 'em? But, as I've said before, when it comes to figurin' on what women or horses'll do, I'm a four-flusher.

CHAPTER VII

No, I ain't goin' out to Blenmont these days. Jarvis does his exercisin' here, and he says his mother's havin' a ball room made out of that gym.

I've been stickin' to the pavements, like I said I would. Lookin' cheerful, too? Why not? If you'd been a minute sooner you'd heard me wobblin' "Please, Ma-ma, nail a rose on me." But say, I'll give you the tale, and then maybe you can write your own ticket.

You see, I'd left Swifty Joe runnin' the Physical Culture Studio, and I was doin' a lap up the sunny side of the avenue, just to give my holiday regalia an airing. I wasn't thinkin' a stroke, only just breathin' deep and feelin' glad I was right there and nowhere else—you know how the avenue's likely to go to your head these spring days, with the carriage folks swampin' the traffic squad, and everybody that is anybody right on the spot or hurrying to get there, and everyone of 'em as fit and finished as so many prize-winners at a fair?

Well, I wasn't lookin' for anything to come my way, when all of a sudden I sees a goggle-capped tiger throw open the door of one of them plate-glass benzine broughams at the curb, and bend over like he has a pain under his vest. I was just side-steppin' to make room for some upholstered old battle-ax that I supposed owned the rig, when I feels a hand on my elbow and hear some one say: "Why, Shorty McCabe! is that you?"

She was a dream, all right—one of your princess-cut girls, with the kind of clothes on that would make a turkey-red check-book turn pale. But you couldn't fool me, even if she had put a Marcelle crimp in that carroty hair of hers, and washed off the freckles and biscuit flour. You can't change Irish-blue eyes, can you? And when you've come to know a voice that's got a range from maple-sugar to mixed pickles, you don't forget it, either. Know her? Say, I was brought up next door to Sullivan's boarding-house.

"You didn't take me for King Eddie, did you, Miss Sullivan?" says I.

"I might by the clothes," says she, runnin' her eyes over me, "only I see you've got him beat a mile. But why the Miss Sullivan?"

"Because I've mislaid your weddin'-card, and there's been other things on my mind than you since our last reunion," says I. "But I'm chawmed to meet you again, rully," and I begins to edge off.

"You act it," says she. "You look tickled to death—almost. But I'm pleased enough for two. Anyway, I'm in need of a man of about your weight to take a ride with me. So step lively, Shorty, and don't stand there scaring trade away from the silver shop. Come, jump in."

"Not me," says I. "I never butts into places where there's apt to be a hubby to ask who's who and what's what."

"But there isn't any hubby now," says she.

"North Dakotaed him?" says I.

"No," says she; "I've got a decree good in any State. His friends called it heart failure. I can't because I used to settle his bar bills. You're not shy of widows, are you?"

Now say, there's widows and widows—grass, baled hay, and other kinds—and most of 'em I passes up on general principles, along with chorus girls and lady demonstrators; but somehow I couldn't seem to place Sadie Sullivan in that line. Why, her mother 'n' mine used to borrow cupfuls of flour of each other over the back fence, and it was to lick a feller who'd yelled "brick-top" after Sadie that started me to takin' my first boxin' lessons in Mike Quigley's barn.

"I ain't much used to traveling in one of these rubber-tired show windows," says I; "but for the sake of old times I'll chance it once," and with that I climbs in; the tiger puts on the time-lock, and we joins the procession. "Your car's all to the giddy," I remarks. "Didn't it leave you some short of breath after blowin' yourself to this, Sadie?"

"I buy it by the month," says she, "including Jeems and Henri in front. It comes higher that way; but who cares?"

"Oh," says I, "he left a barrel, then?"

"A cellarful," says Sadie.

And on the way up towards the park I gets the scenario of the acts I'd missed. His name was Dipworthy—you've seen it on the labels, "Dipworthy's Drowsy Drops, Younsgters Yearn for 'Em"—only he was Dipworthy, jr., and knew as little about the "Drop" business as only sons usually do about such things. Drops wa'n't his long suit; quarts came nearer being his size.

It was while he was having a sober spell that he married Sadie; but that was about the last one he ever had. She stuck to him, though; let him chase her with guns and hammer her with the furniture, until the purple monkeys got him for good and all. Then she cashed in the "Drop" business, settled a life-insurance president's salary on her mother, bought a string of runnin' ponies for her kid brother, and then hit New York, with the notion that here was where you could get anything you had the price to pay for.

"But I made a wrong guess, Shorty," says she. "It isn't all in having the money; it's in knowing how to make it get you the things you want."

"There's plenty would like to give you lessons in that," says I.

"You?" says she.

"Say, do I look like a con. man?" says I.

"There, there, Shorty!" says she. "I knew better, only I've been gold-bricked so much lately that I'd almost suspect my own grandmother. I've got two maids who steal my dresses and rings; a lady companion who nags me about the way I talk, and who hates me alive because I can afford to hire her; and even the hotel manager makes me pay double rates because I look too young for a real widow. Do you know, there are times when I almost miss the late Dippy. Were you ever real lonesome, Shorty?"

"Once or twice," says I, "when I was far from Broadway."

"That's nothing," says she, "to being lonesome *on* Broadway. And I've been so lonesome in a theatre box, with two thousand people in plain sight, that I've dropped tears down on the trombone player in the orchestra. And I was lonesome just now, when I picked you up back there. I had been into that big jewelry store, buying things I didn't want, just for the sake of having some one to talk to."

"Ah, say," says I, "cut it in smaller chunks, Sadie. I'm no pelican."

"You don't believe me?" says she.

"I know this little old burg too well," says I. "Why, with a hundred-dollar bill I can buy more society than you could put in a hall."

"But don't you see, Shorty," says she, "that the kind you can buy isn't worth having? You don't buy yours,

do you? And I don't want to buy mine. I want to swap even. I'm not a freak, nor a foreigner, nor a quarantine suspect. Look at all these women going past—what's the difference between us? But they're not lonesome, I'll bet. They have friends and dear enemies by the hundreds, while I haven't either. There isn't a single home on this whole island where I can step up and ring the front door-bell. I feel like a tramp hanging to the back of a parlor-car. What good does my money do me? Suppose I want to take dinner at a swell restaurant—I wouldn't know the things to order, and I'd be afraid of the waiters. Think of that, Shorty."

I tried to; but it was a strain. If anyone else had put it up to me that Sadie Sullivan, with a roll of real money as big as a bale of cotton, could lose her nerve just because she didn't have a visitin'-list, I'd have told 'em to drop the pipe. She was giving me straight goods, though. Why, her lip was tremblin' like a lost kid's.

"Chuck it!" says I. "For a girl that had a whole bunch of Johnnies on the waitin' list, and her with only one best dress to her name at the time, you give me an ache. I don't set up for no great judge of form and figure; but my eyesight's still good, I guess, and if I was choosin' a likely looker, I'd back you against the field."

That makes her grin a little, and she pats my hand kind of sisterly like. "It isn't men I want, you goose; it's women—my own kind," says she, and the next minute she gives me the nudge and whispers: "Now, watch—the one in the chiffon Panama."

"Shiff which?" says I. But I sees the one she means—a heavy-weight person, rigged out like a dry-goods exhibit and topped off with millinery from the spring

openin', coming toward us behind a pair of nervous steppers. She had her lamps turned our way, and I hears Sadie give her the time of day as sweet as you please. She wasn't more'n six feet off, either; but it missed fire. She stared right through Sadie, just as if there'd been windows in her, and then turned to cuddle a brindle pup on the seat beside her.

"Acts like she owed you money," says I.

"We swapped tales of domestic woe for two weeks at Colorado Springs season before last," said Sadie; "but it seems that she's forgotten. That's Mrs. Morris Pettigrew, whose husband—"

"That one?" says I. "Why, she ain't such a much, either. I know folks that think she's a joke."

"She feels that she can't afford to recognize me on Fifth-ave., just the same. That's where I stand," says Sadie.

"It's a crooked deal, then," says I.

And right there I began to get a glimmer of the kind of game she was up against. Talk about freeze-outs!

"I'll show her, though, and the rest of 'em!" says Sadie, stickin' out her cute little chin. "I'm not going to quit yet."

"Good for you!" says I. "It's a pastime I ain't up in at all; but if you can ever find use for me behind the scenes anywhere, just call on."

"I will, Shorty," says she, "and right now. Come on down to Sherry's with me for luncheon."

"Quit your kiddin'," says I. "You don't want to queer the whole program at the start. I'd be lost in a place like that—me in a sack suit and round-top dicer! Why, the head waiter'd say 'Scat!' and I'd make a dive

under the table."

She said she didn't care a red apple for that. She wanted to sail in there and throw a bluff, only she couldn't go alone, and she guessed I'd do just as I was.

Course, I couldn't stand for no fool play of that kind; but seein' as she was so dead set on the place, I said we'd make it a 'leven-o'clock supper, after the theatre; but it must be my blow.

"I've got the clothes that'll fit into a night racket," says I, "and besides, I've got to get a few points first."

"It's a go," says she.

So we made a date, and Sadie drops me at the Studio. I goes right to the 'phone and calls up Pinckney at the club. Didn't I tell you about him? Sure, that's the one. You wouldn't think though, to see him and me tappin' each other with the mitts, that he was a front ranker in the smart push. But he's all of that. He's a pacemaker for the swiftest bunch in the world. Say, if he should take to walkin' on his hands, there wouldn't be no men's shoes sold on Fifth-ave. for a year.

Well, he shows up here about an hour later, lookin' as fresh as though he'd just come off the farm. "Did you say something about wanting advice, Shorty?" says he.

"I did," says I.

"Religious, or otherwise?" says he. "But it makes no difference; I'm yours to command."

"I don't ask you to go beyond your depth," says I. "It's just a case of orderin' fancy grub. I'm due to blow a lady friend of mine to the swellest kind of a supper

that grows in the borough; no two-dollar tabble-doty, understand; but a special, real-lace, eighteen-carat feed, with nothing on the bill of fare that ain't spelled in French."

"Ah!" says he, "something like *Barquettes Bordellaise*, *poulet en casserole*, *fraises au champagne*, and so on, eh?"

"I was about to mention them very things," says I. "But my memory's on the blink. Couldn't you write 'em down, with a diagram of how they look, and whether you spear 'em with a fork, or take 'em in through a straw?"

"Why, to be sure," says he. So he did, and it looked something like this:

"*Consomme au fumet d'estaragon* (chicken soup—big spoon).

"*Barquettes Bordellaise* (marrow on toast, with mushrooms—fork only).

"*Fonds d'artichauts Monegosque* (hearts of artichokes in cream sauce—fork and breadsticks)."

There was a lot more to it, and it wound up with some kind of cheese with a name that sounded like breakin' a pane of glass.

I threw up my hands at that. "It's no go," says I. "I couldn't learn to say all that in a month. How would it do for me to slip the waiter that program and tell him to follow copy?"

"We'll do better than that?" says Pinckney. "Where's your 'phone?"

Pretty soon he gets some one on the wire that he calls Felix, and they has a heart-to-heart talk in French for about ten minutes.

"It's all arranged," says he. "You are to hand my card to the man at the door as you go in, and Felix will do the rest. Eleven-fifteen is the hour. But I'm surprised at you, Shorty. A lady, eh? Ah, well! In the spring the young man's fancy gently turns—"

"Ah, say!" says I. "There ain't no call for any funny cracks about this. You know me, and you can guess I'm no Willie-boy. When I get a soft spot in my head, and try to win a queen, it'll be done on the dead quiet, and you won't hear no call for help. But this is a different proposition. This is a real lady, who's been locked out by the society trust, and who takes an invite from me just because we happened to know each other when we was kids."

"Oh-ho!" says Pinckney, snappin' them black eyes the way he does when he gets real waked up. "That sounds quite romantic."

"It ain't," says I. "It's just as reg'lar as takin' your aunt to a sacred concert."

He seemed to want to know the details, though; so I told him all about Sadie, and how she'd been ruled out of her class by a lot of stiffs who wa'n't one-two-sixteen with her, either for looks or lucre.

"And it's a crooked decision," says I. "Maybe Sadie wasn't brought up by a Swedish maid and a French governess from Chelsea, Mass.; but she's on velvet now, and she's a real hand-picked pippin, too. What's more, she's a nice little lady, with nothin' behind her that you couldn't print in a Sunday-school weekly. All she aims to do is to travel with the money-burners and be sociable. And say, that's natural, ain't it?"

"It's quite human," says Pinckney, "and what you've told me about her is very interesting. I hope the little

supper goes off all right. Ta-ta, Shorty."

Well, it began frosty enough; for when it came to pilotin' a lady into that swell mob, I had the worst case of stage-fright you ever saw. Say, them waiters is a haughty-lookin' lot, ain't they? But after we'd found Felix, and I'd passed him a ten-spot, and he'd bowed and scraped and towed us across the room like he thought we held a mortgage on the place, I didn't feel quite so much as if I'd got into the wrong flat.

I did have something of a chill when I caught sight of a sheepish-looking cuss in the glass. He looked sort of familiar, and I was wondering what he'd done to be ashamed of, when I sees it was me. Then I squints around at the other guys and say, more'n half of 'em wore the same kind of a look. It was only the women that seemed right to home. There wasn't one in sight that didn't have her chin up and her shoulders back, and carrying all the dog the law allows. They treated them stiff-necked food-slingers like they was a lot of wooden Indians. You'd see 'em pilin' their wraps on one of them lordly gents just as if he was a chair. Then they'd plant themselves, spread out their dry-goods, peel off their elbow gloves, and proceed to rescue the cherry from the bottom of the glass.

And Sadie? Well, say, you'd thought she'd never had a meal anywhere else in her life. The way she bossed Felix around, and sized up the other folks, calm as a Chinaman, was a caution. And talk! I never had so much rapid-fire conversation passed out to me all in a bunch before. Course, she was just keepin' her end up, and makin' believe I was doing my share, too. But it was a mighty good imitation. Every now and then she'd tear off a little laugh so natural that I could almost swear I'd said something funny, only I

knew I hadn't opened my head.

As for me, I was busy tryin' to guess what was under the silver covers that Felix kept bringin' in, and rememberin' what Pinckney had said about forks and spoons. Say, I suppose you've been up against one of those little after-the-play-is-over suppers that they serve behind the lace curtains on Fifth-ave.; but this was my first offense. Little suppers! Honest, now, there was more'n I'd want if I hadn't been fed for a week. Generally I can worry along with three squares a day, and when I do feel like havin' a bite before I hit the blankets, a *sweitzerkase* sandwich does me. But this affair had seven acts to it, and everyone was a mystery.

"Why, I didn't know you were such an epicure," says Sadie.

"Me either," says I; "but I'd never let myself loose before. Have some more *pulley* from the *carrousell* and help yourself to the—the other thing."

"Shorty, tell me how you managed it," says she.

"I've been taking lessons by mail," says I.

"You're a dear to do it, anyway," says she. "Just think of the figure I'd cut coming here by my lonesome. It's bad enough at the hotel, with only Mrs. Prusset. And I've been wanting to come for weeks. What luck it was, finding you to-day!"

"Say, don't run away with the idea that I'm makin' a day's work of this," says I. "I'm havin' a little fun out of this myself. There's worse company than you, y'know."

"And I've met a heap of men stupider than Shorty McCabe," says she, givin' me the jolly with that sassy grin of hers, and lettin' go one of those gurgly laughs

that sounds as if it had been made on a clarinet.

It was just about then that I looks up and finds Pinckney standing on one foot, waitin' for a chance to butt in.

"Why, professor! This is a pleasure," says he.

"Hello!" says I. "Where'd you blow in from?"

Then I makes him acquainted with Sadie, and asks him what it'll be. Oh, he did it well; seemed as surprised as if he hadn't seen me for a year, and begins to get acquainted with Sadie right away. I tried to give her the wink, meanin' to put her next to the fact that here was where she ought to come out strong on the broad A's, and throw in the dontcher-knows frequent; but it was no go. She didn't care a rap. She talked just as she would to me, asked Pinckney all sorts of fool questions, and inside of two minutes them two was carryin' on like a couple of kids.

"I'm a rank outsider here, you know," says she, "and if it hadn't been for Shorty I'd never got in at all. Oh, sure, Shorty and I are old chums. We used to slide down the same cellar door."

S'elp me, I was plumb ashamed of Sadie then, givin' herself away like that. But Pinckney seemed to think it was great sport. Pretty soon he says he's got some friends over at another table, and did she mind if he brought 'em over.

"Think you'd better?" says she. "I'm the Mrs. Dipworthy of the 'Drowsy Drops,' you know, and that's a tag that won't come off."

"If you'll allow me," says he, "I'll attend to the tag business. They'll be delighted to meet you."

"Say," says I, soon as he'd left, "don't be a sieve, Sadie. Just forget auld lang syne, and remember that you're travelin' high."

"They've got to take me for what I am, or not at all," says she.

"Yes, but you ain't got no cue to tell the story of your life," says I.

"That's my whole stock in trade, Shorty," says she.

I was lookin' for her to revise that notion when I sees the kind of company Pinckney was luggin' up to spring on us. I'd seen their pictures in the papers, and knew 'em on sight. And the pair wasn't anything but the top of the bunch. You know the Twombley-Cranes, that cut more ice in July than the Knickerbocker Trust does all winter. Why say, to see the house rubber at 'em as they came sailin' our way, you'd thought they was paid performers stepping up to do their act. It was a case of bein' in the lime-light for us, from that on.

"Hully chee!" says I. "Here's where I ought to fade."

But there wasn't any show to duck; for Felix was chasin' over some more chairs, and Pinckney was doin' the honors all round, and the first thing I knew we was a nice little fam'ly party, chuckin' repartee across the pink candle shades, and behavin' like star boarders that had paid in advance.

It was Sadie, though, that had the centre of the stage, and I'll be staggered if she didn't jump in to make her bluff good. She let out everything that she shouldn't have told, from how she used to wait on table at her mother's boarding-house, to the way she'd got the frozen face ever since she came to town.

"But what am I expected to do?" says she. "I've got no

Hetty Green grip on my bankbook. There's a whole binful of the 'Drowsy Drop' dollars, and I'm willing to throw 'em on the bonfire just as liberal as the next one, only I want a place around the ring. There's no fun in playing a lone hand, is there? I've been trying to find out what's wrong with me, anyway?"

"My dear girl," says Mrs. Twombley-Crane, "there's nothing wrong with you at all. You're simply delicious. Isn't she, now, Freddie?"

And Freddie just grinned. Say, some men is born wise. "Professor McCabe and I are exchanging views on the coming light-weight contest," says he. "Don't mind us, my dear."

Perhaps that's what we were gassin' about, or why is a hen. You can search me. I was that rattled with Sadie's nerve display that I didn't follow anything else real close.

But when it was all over, and I'd been brought to by a peep at the bill the waiter handed me, I couldn't figure out whether she'd made a bull's-eye or rung in a false alarm.

One thing I did notice, as we sails out, and that was the stout Pettigrew person who'd passed Sadie the pickled pig's foot on the avenue that afternoon. She was sitting opposite a skimpy little runt with a bald head, at a table up near the door where the waiters juggled soup over her feathers every time they passed. Her eyes were glued on Sadie as we came up, and by the spread of the furrows around her mouth I see she was tryin' to crack a smile.

"Now," thinks I, "here's where she collects chilblains and feels the mercury drop."

But say! would you look for it in a dream book?

What does Sadie do but pass her out the glad hand and coo away, like a pouter pigeon on a cornice, about being tickled to see her again. Oh, they get me dizzy, women do!

That wa'n't a marker though, to the reverse English carom Sadie takes after we'd got into a cab and started for her hotel. Was there a jolly for me, or a "Thank you, Shorty, I've had the time of my life?" Nothin' like it. She just slumped into her corner and switched on the boo-hoos like a girl that's been kept after school.

"Enjoy yourself, Sadie," says I. "Only remember that this is a hansom, not a street sprinkler."

That didn't fetch her; so after a while I tries her again. "What went wrong?" says I. "Was she stringin' you, or was it the way I wore my face that queered the show?"

"It's all right, Shorty," says she between weeps. "And nothing's wrong, nothing at all. Mrs. What's-Her-Name's asked me to stay a week with her at their Newport place, and old Mrs. Pettigrew will turn green before morning thinking of me, and I've shaken the hoodoo at last. But it all came so much in a lump that I just had to turn on the sprayer. You know how I feel, don't you, Shorty?"

"Sure," says I, "just as well as if you'd sent me a picture postal of the place you boarded last."

But say, I turned the trick, didn't I? I didn't know what was comin' out of the box, of course; and maybe I was some jolted at throwin' three sixes to a pair, but there they lay.

No, I ain't goin' into the boostin' line as a reg'lar thing; but I guess if any amateur in the business gets

a rose nailed on him, I ought to be the gent. Not?

CHAPTER VIII

Did you shut the hall door? That's right. There's no tellin' what's liable to float in here any time. Say, if they don't quit it, I'll get to be one of these nervous prostraters, that think themselves sick abed without half tryin'. Sure, I'm just convalescin' from the last shock.

How? Now make a guess. Well, it was this way: I was sittin' right here in the front office, readin' the sportin' dope and takin' me reg'lar mornin' sunbath, when the door-buzzer goes off, and in drifts about a hundred and ninety pounds of surprise package.

There was a foreign label on it, all right; but I didn't know until later that it read "Made in Austria." He was a beefy sort of gent, with not much neck to speak of, and enough curly black hair to shingle a French poodle. He was well colored, too. Beats the cars, don't it, the good health that's wasted on some of these foreigners?

But what takes my eye most was his trousseau. Say! he was dressed to the minute, from the pink in his buttonhole, to the mother-of-pearl gloves; and the back of his frock coat had an in-curve such as your forty-fat sisters dream about. Why, as far as lines went, he had Jimmy Hackett and Robert Mantell on the back shelf. Oh, he was a crusher, sure!

"I have the purpose of finding Prof-fes-seur McCabby," says he, reading it off'n a card.

"If you mean McCabe," says I, "I'm discovered."

"Is it you that are also by the name of Shortee?" says he.

"Shorty for short," says I, "and P. C. D. on the end to lengthen it out—Physical Culture Director, that stands for. Now do you want my thumb-print, and a snap-shot of my family-tree?"

That seemed to stun him a little; but he revived after a minute, threw out his chest, lifted his silk lid, and says, solemn as a new notary public takin' the oath of office: "I am Baron Patchouli."

"You look it," says I. "Have a chair."

"I am," says he, gettin' a fresh start, "Baron Patchouli, of Hamstadt and Düsseldorf."

"All right," says I, "take the settee. How are all the folks at home?"

But say, there wa'n't any use tryin' to jolly him into makin' a short cut of it. He'd got his route of parade all planned out and he meant to stick by it.

"Professeur McCabby—" says he.

"Don't," says I. "You make me feel like I'd been transplanted into French and was runnin' a hack-line. Call it McCabe—a-b-e, abe."

"One thousand pardons," says he, and tries again. This time he gets it—almost, and I lets him spiel away. Oh, mama! but I wish I could say it the way he did! It would let me on the Proctor circuit, if I could. But boiled down and skimmed, it was all about how I was a kind of safety-deposit vault for everything he had to live for.

"My hopes, my fortune, my happiness, the very breath of my living, it is all with you," says he as a windup, hittin' a Caruso pose, arms out, toes in, and his breath comin' hard.

How was that for news from home? I did some swift surmisin', and then I says, soothin' like: "Yes, I know; but don't take on about it so. They're all right, just as you handed 'em over; only I asked me friend the Sarge to lock 'em up till you called. We'll walk around and see the Sarge right away."

"Ah!" says he, battin' his noble brow, "you do not comprehend. You make to laugh. And me, I come to you from the adorable Sadie."

"Sadie?" says I. "Sadie Sullivan that was?"

He bows and grins.

"If you've got credentials from Sadie," says I, "it's all right. Now, what's doing? Does she want me to match samples, or show you the sights along the White Lane?"

"Ah, the adorable Sadie!" says he, rollin' his eyes, and puffin' out his cheeks like he was tryin' the lung-tester. "I drive with her, I walk with her, I sit by her side—one day, two day, a week. Well, what happens? I am charm, I am fascinate, I am become her slave. I make to resist. I say to myself: 'You! You are of the noble Austrian blood; the second-cousin of your mother is a grand duke; you must not forget.' Then again I see Sadie. Pouff! I have no longer pride; but only I luff. It is enough. I ask of her: 'Madam Deepworth, where is the father of you?' She say he is not. 'Then the uncle of you?' I demand. She say: 'I'm shy on uncles.' 'But to who, then,' I ask, 'must I declare my honorable passion?' 'Oh,' she say, 'tell it to Shorty McCabe.' Ha! I leap, I bound! I go to M.

Pinckney. 'Tell me,' I say, 'where is to be found one Shorty McCabe?' And he sends me to you. I am come."

On the level, now, it went like that. Maybe I've left out some of the frills, but that was the groundwork of his remarks.

"Yes," says I, "you're a regular come-on. I guess the adorable Sadie has handed you a josh. She's equal to it."

But that got by him. He just stood there, teeterin' up and down on his patent leathers, and grinnin' like a monkey.

"I say," says I, "she's run you on a sidin', dropped you down a coal-hole. Do you get wise?"

Did he? Not so you would notice it. He goes on grinnin' and teeterin', like he was on exhibition in a museum and I was the audience. Then he gets a view of himself in the glass over the safe there, and begins to pat down his astrakhan thatch, and punch up his puff tie, and dust off his collar. Ever see one of these peroxide cloak models doin' a march past the show windows on her day off? Well, the Baron had all those motions and a few of his own. He was ornamental, all right, and it wa'n't any news to him either.

About then, though, I begins to wonder if I hadn't been a little too sure about Sadie. There's no tellin', when it comes to women, you know; and when it hit me that perhaps, after all, she'd made up her mind to tag this one from Austria, you could have fried an egg on me anywhere.

"Look here, Patchouli," says I. "Is this straight about you and Sadie? Are you the winner?"

"Ah, the adorable Sadie!" says he, comin' back to earth and slappin' his solar plexus with one hand.

"We've covered that ground," says I. "What I want to know is, does she cotton to you?"

"Cot-*ton*? Cot-*ton*?" says he, humpin' his eyebrows like a French ballad singer.

"Are you the fromage?" says I. "Is she as stuck on you as you are on yourself? Have you made good?"

He must have got a glimmer from that; for he rolls his eyes some more, breathes once like an air-brake bein' cut out, and says: "Our luff is like twin stars in the sky—each for the other shines."

"It's as bad as all that, is it?" says I. "Well, all I've got to say is that I'd never thought it of Sadie; and if she sent you down here on approval, you can tell her I'm satisfied if she is."

I figured that would jar him some, but it didn't. He looked as pleased as though I'd told him he was the ripest berry in the box, and before I knew what was comin' he had the long-lost-brother tackle on me, and was almost weepin' on my neck, splutterin' joy in seven different kinds of language. Just then Swifty Joe bobs his head in through the gym. door, springs that gorilla grin of his, and ducks back.

"Break away!" says I. "I don't want to spoil the looks of anythin' that Sadie's picked out to frame, but this thing has gone about far enough. If you're glad, and she's glad, then I ain't got any kick comin'. Only don't rub it in."



He had the long-lost-brother tackle on me.

Say, it was like talkin' to a deaf man, sayin' things to the Baron.

"She's mine, yes?" says he. "I have your permission, Professeur McCabe?"

"Sure," says I. "If she'll have you, take her and welcome."

Now you'd thought that would have satisfied him, wouldn't you? But he acted like he'd got a half-arm jolt on the wind. He backed off and cooled down as if I'd chucked a pail of water over him.

"Well," says I, "you don't want it in writin', do you? I'm just out of permit blanks, and me secretary's laid up with a bad case of McGrawitis. If I was you, I'd skip back and keep my eye on Sadie. She might change her mind."

The Baron thought he'd seen a red flag, though. He put in a worry period that lasted while you could count fifty. Then he forks out his trouble.

"It is not possible that I have mistake, is it?" says he. "I am learn that Madam Deepworth is—what you call —one heiress? No?"

See? I'd been sort of lookin' for that; and there it was, as plain as a real-estate map of Gates of Paradise, Long Island. Me bein' so free and easy with tellin' him to help himself had thrown up a horrible suspicion to him. Was it true that Sadie's roll was real money, the kind you could spend at the store? And say, long's it was up to me to write her prospectus, I thought I might as well make it a good one.

"Do you see that movin'-van out there?" says I.

The Baron saw it.

"And have you been introduced to these?" I says, flashin' a big, wrist-size wad of tens and fives.

Oh, he was acquainted all right.

"Well," says I, "Sadie's got enough of these put away to fill two carts like that."

Fetch him? Why, his fingers almost burnt a hole through his gloves.

"Ah-h-h!" says he, and takes a little time out to picture himself dippin' into the family pocket-book.

Course, it wa'n't any of my funeral, but when I thinks of a sure-enough live one, like Sadie, that I'd always supposed had a head like a billiard table, gettin' daffy about any such overstuffed frankfurter as this specimen, I felt like someone had shoved a blue quarter on me. Worst of it was, I'd held the step-ladder for her to climb up where such things grow.

I was gettin' rawer to the touch every minute, and was tryin' to make up my mind whether to give the Baron a quick run down the stairs, or go off an' leave him to dislocate his neck tryin' to see the small of his back in the mirror; when in comes Pinckney, with that little sparkle in his eyes that I've come to know means any kind of sport you're a mind to name.

"Hello!" says he, givin' the Baron a hand. "You found him, eh? Hello, Shorty. Got it all fixed, have you?"

"Say," says I, pullin' Pinckney over by the window, "did you put this up on me?"

He said he didn't, honest.

"Then take your fat friend by the hand," says I, "and lead him off where things ain't liable to happen to him."

"Why, what's up, Shorty?" says he. "Haven't you

given him your blessing, and told him to go in and win?"

"Switch off!" says I. "I've heard enough of that from the Baron to last me a year. What's it all about, anyway? Suppose he has laid his plans to Miznerize Sadie; what's he want to come hollerin' about it to me for? I'm no matrimonial referee, am I?"

I knew somethin' was ticklin' Pinckney inside; but he put up a front like a Special Sessions judge. "Baron," says he, callin' over to Patchouli, "I forgot to mention that our friend, the professor, doesn't understand the European system of conducting such affairs as this. If you'll pardon me, I'll make it clear to him."

Well, he did and a lot more. It seems that the Baron was a ringer in the set where Sadie and Pinckney had been doing the weekend house-party act. He'd been travelin' on that handle of his, makin' some broad jumps and quick shifts, until he'd worked himself up, from a visitor's card at a second-rate down-town club, to the kind of folks that quit New York at Easter and don't come back until the snow flies again. They don't squint too close at a title in that crowd, you know.

First thing the Baron hears, of course, is about the Drowsy Drop dollars and the girl that's got 'em. He don't lose any time after that in makin' up to Sadie. He freezes to her like a Park Row wuxtree boy does to a turkey drumstick at a newsies' Christmas dinner, and for Pinckney and the rest of 'em it was as good as a play.

"Huh!" says I. "You're easy pleased, ain't you? But I want to tell you that it grouches me a lot to think that Sadie'd fall for any such wad-huntin' party as that."

"What ho!" says Pinckney. "Here's a complication that we hadn't suspected."

"Meanin' which?" says I.

"Perhaps it would be better to postpone that explanation," says he; "but I sympathize with your state of mind, Shorty. However, what's done is done, and meanwhile the Baron is waiting."

"It wouldn't surprise me none," says I, "to hear that that's his trade. But say, what kind of a steer is it that brings him to me? I ain't got that straight yet."

Pinckney goes on to say as how the foreign style of negotiatin' for a girl is more or less of a business proposition; and that Sadie, not havin' any old folks handy to make the deal, and maybe not havin' the game clear in her own mind, shoves him my way, just off-hand.

"To be sure," says Pinckney, "whatever arrangements you may happen to make will not be binding, but they will satisfy the Baron. So just act as if you had full authority, and we'll see if there are any little details that he wants to mention."

Sure enough, there was. He handed 'em to me easy; oh, nice and easy! He didn't want much for a starter —just a trifle put within easy reach before the knot was tied, a mere matter of ten million francs.

"No Jims nor Joes?" says I.

"The Baron is accustomed to reckoning in francs," says Pinckney. "He means two million dollars."

"Two million cases?" says I, catchin' my breath. Well, say! I had to take another look at him. If I could think as well of myself as that I wouldn't ask no better.

"Patchouli," says I, "you're too modest. You shouldn't put yourself on the bargain counter like that."

The Baron looks like I'd said somethin' to him in Chinese.

"The professor thinks that demand is quite reasonable, considering all things," says Pinckney.

And that went with the Baron. Then he has to shake hands all round, same's if we'd signed terms for a championship go, and him and Pinckney gets under way for some private high-ball factory over on the avenue. I wa'n't sorry to lose 'em. Somehow I wanted to get my mind on something else.

Well, I put in a busy mornin', tryin' to teach blocks and jabs to a couple of youngsters that thinks boxin' is a kind of wrist exercise, like piano-playin', and I'd got a pound or so off a nice plump old Bishop, who comes here for hand-ball and stunts like that. I was still feelin' a bit ugly and wishin' there was somethin' sizable around to take it out on, when in comes Curly Locks and Pinckney again.

"Has he made up his mind that he wants my wad, too?" says I to Pinckney.

"No," says he. "The Baron has discovered that up where Sadie is staying the law requires a prospective bridegroom to equip himself with a marriage license. He thinks he will get one in town and take it back with him. Now, as you know all about such things, Shorty, and as I have an appointment at twelve-thirty, I'll leave the Baron with you. So long!" and he gives me the wink as he slides out.

Say, I had my cue this trip, all right. I couldn't see just why it was, but the Baron had been passed up to me. He was mine for keeps. I could hang him out for

a sign, or wire a pan to him. And he was as innocent, the Baron was, as a new boy sent to the harness shop after strap oil. He'd got his eyes fixed on the Drowsy Drops bank-account, and he couldn't see anything else. He must have sized me up as a sort of Santa Claus that didn't have anything to do between seasons but to be good to his kind.

"So you want to take out a license, do you?" says I, comin' a Mr. Smooth play.

"If the professeur would be so oblige," says he.

"Oh, sure," says I. "That's my steady job. A marriage license, eh?"

I had a nineteenth-story view of the scheme he'd built up. He means to go back heeled with the permit from me, with the little matter of the two million ready all cinched, and the weddin'-papers in his inside pocket. Then he does the whirlwind rush at Sadie, and as he dopes it out to himself, figurin' on what a crusher he is, he don't see how he can lose. And I suppose he thinks he can buy a marriage license most anywhere, same's you can a money-order.

With that I had a stroke of thought. They don't hit me very often, but when they do, they come hard. I had to go over to the water cooler and grin into the tumbler. Then I walks up to the Baron and taps him on the chest.

"Patchouli," says I, "you come with me. I'll get you a Romeo outfit that'll astonish the natives."

It took me about two hours, chasin' him down to the Bureau of Licenses, and huntin' up me old side partner, Jimmy Fitzpatrick, that's the main guy there. But I didn't grudge the time. Jimmy helped me out a

lot. He's a keen one, Jimmy is, and when he'd got next, he threw in a lot of flourishes just where they was needed most. He never cracked a smile, either, when the Baron tipped him a dime.

I didn't let loose of Patchouli until I'd seen him stow away that sealed envelope, and had put him aboard the right train at the Grand Central. Then I went back to the Studio lookin' so contented that Swifty struck me for a raise.

That was on a Monday. Long about Thursday I thought I might get word from Pinckney, or some of 'em; but there was nothin' doin'.

"Somebody's put Curly Locks wise," thinks I, "or else he's sneaked away to jump off the dock."

I didn't have anyone on that afternoon; so I was just workin' off a little steam on a punchin'-bag, doing the long roll and a few other stunts. I was getting nicely warmed up, and hittin' the balloon at the rate of about a hundred and fifty raps a minute, when I hears somebody break past Swifty and roar out:

"Where he iss? Let me to him!"

It was the Baron, his mustache bristlin' out like a bottle-cleaner, and blood in his eye. "Ha-r-r-r!" says he in real heavy-villain style. "You make me a joke, you?"

"G'wan!" says I over me shoulder. "You was born a joke. Sit down and cool off; for it's your next," and with that I goes at the bag again.

Say, it ain't much of a trick to fight the bag, y'know. Most any Y. M. C. A. kid can get the knack of catchin' it on his elbows and collarbone, makin' it drum out a tune like the finish of a Dutch opera. And that's about all I was doin', only chuckin' a few extra

pounds into it maybe. But if you don't know how easy it is, it looks like a curtain-raiser for manslaughter. And I reckon the Baron hadn't any idea I'd strip as bunchy as I do.

Course, there's no tellin' just what went on in his mind while he stood there. Swifty says his mouth come open gradual, like a bridge draw that's being swung for a tug; and his eyes began to bug out, and the noble Austrian assault-and-battery blood faded out of his face same's the red does in one of Belasco's sunsets. And pretty soon, when I thought my little grandstand play'd had a chance to sink in, I throws a good stiff one into the bag, ducks from under, and turns around to sing out "Next!" to the Baron.

But he wa'n't in sight. Pinckney was there though, and Sadie behind him, both lookin' wild.

"Hello!" says I. "Where's Patchouli? He was anxious to see me a minute ago."

"He seemed anxious not to, when he passed us on the stairs just now," says Pinckney.

"Did he leave any word?" says I.

"He just said 'Bah!' and jumped into a cab," says Pinckney.

"He didn't hurt you, did he?" says Sadie.

"What, him?" says I. "Not that I know about. But I've got this to tell you, Mrs. Dipworthy: if you put any high value on your new steady, you'd better chase him off this reservation."

"Why, Shorty McCabe!" says she, takin' me by the shoulders and turnin' them blue eyes of hers straight at me. "My new steady? That—that woolly-haired freak?"

Say, you could have slipped me into the penny slot of a gum machine. Oh, fudge! Piffle! Splash! It's a wonder when I walk I don't make a noise like a sponge—I take some things in so easy. Is it curious my head never aches?

Pinckney sees how bad I was feelin', and he cuts in to tell me how things had worked out. And say, do you know what that Patchouli had done?

After I left him he goes back tickled to death, and waits for an openin'. Then, one night when they was havin' a big hunt ball, or some kind of swell jinks, he tolls Sadie into the palm-room, drops to the mat on his knees, and fires off that twin-star-luff speech, beggin' her to fly with him and be his'n. As a capper he digs up that envelop, to show her there needn't be any hitch in the program.

"What's this?" says Sadie, making a sudden grab and gettin' the goods. With that she lets go a string of giggles and streaks it out into the ball-room.

"It is the document of our marriage," says the Baron, makin' a bold bluff.

"Oh, is it?" says she, openin' the thing up, and reading it off. "Why, Baron, this doesn't give you leave to marry anyone," says Sadie; "this is a peddler's license, and here's the badge, too. If you wear this you can stand on the corner and sell shoe-laces and collar-buttons. I'd advise you to go do it."

It was while the crowd was howlin' and pinnin' the fakir's tag on him that he began to froth at the mouth and tell how he was comin' down to make mincemeat of me.

"That's why we followed him," says Pinckney—"to avert bloodshed."

"If he had so much as touched you, Shorty," says Sadie, "I would have spent my pile to have had him sent up for life."

"Oh, it wouldn't have cost that much," says I. "With me thinkin' the way I did then, maybe there wouldn't have been a whole lot left to send."

Ah, look away! I ain't tellin' what Sadie did next. But say, she's a hummin'-bird, Sadie is.

CHAPTER IX

How about him, eh?—the two-spot of clubs in billiard cloth and buttons at the door. There's no tellin' what the Studio'll have next—maybe a sidewalk canopy and a carriage caller. Swifty Joe's gettin' ambitious. Me gettin' mixed up with that Newport push has gone to Swifty's head like a four-line notice does to the pompadour of a second row chorus girl. First off he says it's a shame I don't have a valet.

"Say," says I, "don't it keep me busy enough remindin' you that I'm still able to wear my own clothes, without puttin' on an extra hand?"

But after this last stunt he broke out again; so we compromised on Congo. I thought Swifty'd had him made to order, uniform and all; but he says he found him, just as he stands, doin' the stray act over on Sixth-ave. He'd come up from New Orleans with a

fortune-tellin' gent that had got himself pinched for doing a little voudoo turn on the side, and as Congo didn't have much left but his appetite, I put him on the pay-roll at two per and found. And say, I'm stung, at that. To look at him you'd think a ham sandwich would run him over; but he's got a capacity like a shop-lifter's pocket. For three days I tried to feed him up on the retail plan, and then I let out the contract to a free-lunch supply concern.

Sure, it gives the joint kind of a swell look, havin' him on the door, and if it didn't act the same on Swifty's head I wouldn't kick.

On the dead now, I don't care so much about loomin' up in the picture. There's them that it suits down to the ground, and that shows up well in front; and then again, there's a lot of people gets the spot light on 'em continual who'd be better off in the shade. I'm a top-gallery boy, by rights, and that's where you'll find me most of the time; but now and then I get dragged down into the wings with a note. Yes, yes, I'm just back after one of them excursions.

You see, after we'd shunted Sadie's Baron back on to the goulash circuit, where he belonged, and Sadie and Pinckney had got over their merry fit and skipped off to wake up another crowd of time assassinators, at Rockywold, or some such place as that, I says to myself, "Shorty," says I, "you stick to the physical-culture game and whittle out the by-plays."

That's just what I was doin', too, when an A. D. T. shows up with a prepaid josh from Pinckney, givin' me a special invite to run out and help 'em celebrate.

"Any come-back?" says the boy.

"No, sonny," says I; "you can cut the wire."

Say, Pinckney means all right, and he's done me some good turns; but that don't put me in his class, does it? Nay, nay, says I. Here's one dinner party that I ducks. And with that I gets busy on one of my reg'lars who's bein' trained to go against two months of foreign cookin'. I hadn't more'n finished with him, though, when there comes another yellow envelop. This one was from Sadie, and it was a hurry call. She didn't say much; but I could see heel-prints of trouble all over it.

"Me for Rockywold," says I, chuckin' a collar in a suit-case and grabbin' a time-table off the rack.

Yes, that was different. Maybe I'm a jay to cast myself for any such part; but since Sadie an' me had that little reunion, I've kind of felt that sooner or later she might be let in for a mix-up where I'd come in handy, and when it was pulled off I wanted to be within hail.

Course, I wasn't layin' out no hero act; like showin' up with a can of gasolene just as the tank ran dry, or battin' the block off'm a villyun in a dress suit. I was just willin' to hang around on the edges and make myself useful generally. Not that I'm followin' the she-male protectin' business regular. But with Sadie it's another thing. We used to play in the same alley, you know; and she don't forget it, even if she has come into a bunch of green money as big as a haystack.

She was on hand when I dropped off the smoker, sittin' in the Rockywold station rig and lookin' for me with both eyes. And say, what a difference it makes to clothes who wears 'em!

"It's bully of you to come, Shorty," says she.

"Oh, I don't know," says I. "I guess good judges

wouldn't call it a medal play. What's loose?"

"Buddy," says she.

For a minute I was lost, until she asks if I don't remember the youngster. "Oh, sure!" says I. "That kid brother of yours, with the eighteen-karat ringlets and a girly kind of face? The Sisters used to dress him up in a Fauntleroy suit for the parochial school fair, and make him look like a picture on an Easter card. Nice, cute little chap, eh?"

"He was cute once—ten or twelve years ago," says Sadie. "He isn't as cute as he was. He doesn't wear ringlets now—he likes rings better. And that's why I had to send for you, Shorty. I couldn't tell anyone else. Oh, the little wretch! If it wasn't for mother I'd cure him of a lot of things."

Well, we had some family history on the way out, beginnin' with the way Buddy'd been spoiled at home, takin' in a few of the scrapes Sadie had helped him out of, and endin' with his blowin' in at Rockywold without waitin' for a bid from anyone. Seems he'd separated himself from the last stake Sadie had handed out—nothin' new, same old fool games—and now he wanted a refill, just as a loan, until he could play a tip he'd got from a gent he'd met in a beanery.

"And I just wouldn't stand for that," says Sadie. "Those bookmakers are nothing but swindlers, anyway. I know, because I bet ten dollars on a race once, and didn't win."

Say, I had a lithograph of Buddy and his beanery tip goin' up against an argument like that. Of course it wa'n't more'n two minutes before Sadie'd got her Sullivan up. She offered Buddy his choice between a railroad ticket home to mother, or nothing at all.

Buddy wouldn't arbitrate on those lines. He said he was a desperate man, and that she'd be sorry before night. Sadie'd heard that before; so she just laughed and said the steam-car ticket offer would be held open until night.

She didn't see anything more of Buddy for a couple of hours, and then she caught him as he came up from the billiard-room. Bein' an expert on such symptoms, she knew why he talked like his mouth was full of cotton, but she couldn't account for the wad of bills he shook at her. Buddy could. He'd run across a young Englishman down there who thought he could handle a cue. Buddy had bet hot air against real money, and trimmed his man.

"That wasn't the worst of it, though," said Sadie. "After I had got him up to my rooms he pulled out the money again, to count it over, and out came a three-inch marquise ring—an opal set with diamonds—that I knew the minute I put my eyes on it. There were her initials on the inside, too. Oh, no one but Mrs. Purdy Pell."

"Tut, tut!" says I. "You can easy square it with her."

"But that's just what I can't do," says Sadie. "She loves me about as much as a tramp likes work. She tells folks that I make fools of her boys. Her boys, mind you! She claims every stray man under twenty-five, and when I came here she had three of them on the string. Goodness knows, I didn't want them! They're only imitation men, anyway. And it was her ring that Buddy had in his pocket."

"Maybe he hadn't lifted it," says I.

Sadie swallowed a bit hard at that; but she raps out the straight goods. "Yes, he did," says she. "He must have sneaked it out of her room as he went down

stairs. Think of it! Stealing! He's done a lot of foolish things before; but I didn't think he would turn out a crook. The Lord knows where he gets that kind of blood from—not from the Sullivans, or the Scannells, either. But I can't have him put away. There's mother. And he won't mind a thing I say. Now what shall I do, Shorty?"

"Where's Buddy now?" says I.

"Locked in my clothes-closet, with his hands tied and a gag in his mouth," says she. "Oh, I can handle him that way, big as he is; and I wasn't going to take any more chances. But it's likely that Mrs. Pell has missed her ring by this time and is raising a howl about it. What's to be done?"

Say, there was a proposition for you! And me just a plain, every-day mitt juggler that don't take thinkin' exercises reg'lar. "Guess you've pushed the wrong button this time, Sadie," says I. "But I'll stay in your corner till the lights go out. Is anyone else on?"

"Not a soul," says Sadie.

"That's some help," says I. "First we'll have a little talk with Buddy."

I couldn't see what good that would do, but it was up to me to make some kind of a move.

When they'd landed us under the porte cochere—yes, you'd call it stoppin' at the horse-block—I sails in like I'd come alone, and hunts up Pinckney.

"What's all this about me bein' needed up here?" says I. "Goin' to make me Queen of the May?"

"By Jove, Shorty!" says he, "that's a clever idea. We'll do it."

"Yes, you will—not," says I. "You'll cut it out. I ain't

no wine agent, and I left me rag doll to home; so if there's any funny stunts expected, you tell 'em I've put on a sub. Oh, sure, I'll stay to dinner, but as for leadin' any cotillions, change the card."

He gave his word they wouldn't spring anything like that on me, and then he called up a waiter in knee pants, and had him show me up to my quarters so I could get me gas-light clothes on before they unlocked the dinin'-room doors. After I'd made a quick shift I slid over into the next wing, followin' directions, and found Sadie.

"Mrs. Pell's on the war-path already," says she. "She's having it out with her maid now. Come in."

She'd dug Buddy out of the wardrobe and had him propped up in a corner.

"Better unstopper him and take off the bandages," says I.

And say, he had a lot of language corked up inside of him. It wasn't very sisterly, either, and most of it would have sounded better at a race-track; but I shut the transom and motioned to Sadie to let him spiel away, never chippin' in a word, only standing one side and lookin' him over.

So far as the outside went he was a credit to the family—one of these slim clean-cut youngsters, with a lot of curly red hair, pinky-white cheeks, and a pair of blue eyes that had nine kinds of deviltry in 'em. I could figure out how mother might be able not to see anything but good in Buddy. Hanged if I could get very sore on him myself, and knowin' how he'd been cuttin' up, at that.

"Well," says I, when he'd got out of breath some, "feel any better, do you?"

"Huh!" says he, givin' me a squint sideways. "Some cheap skate of a private detective, eh! You can't throw a scare into me that way, sis. Chase him out."

"Buddy," says I, "give up the rings."

"How'd you know there was more than one?" says he.

"Give up," says I, holdin' out me hand.

He did it, like a little man. There was two besides the marquise; one an emerald as big as a lima bean, and the other a solitaire spark that could have been shoved up for three or four hundred. You see, a woman like Mrs. Purdy Pell generally has a collection of those things lyin' around on her dressin'-table, and; knew if Buddy'd got any, he'd made a haul.

"I'm ashamed of you, Buddy," says I.

"You needn't be," says he. "I guess you'd do the same if you had a sister that wanted to see you starve in the streets. Oh, you needn't screw up your eyebrows, Sadie. It's so. And if you don't cough up a thousand and let me go, I'll swipe anything in sight. I can stand being pinched if you can afford to have me."

Sadie threw up her hands at that, and began walkin' up and down the room. "Do you hear that?" says she. "That's the kind of a brother I've got."

"It's something awful," says I. "Just hearin' him talk makes me feel shivery. It beats the band how wicked some of these cigarette desperados do get. Don't, Buddy, or I'll faint. I wouldn't dare stay in the room if your sister wa'n't handy to tie you up again in case you started to cut loose."

"I've got a good notion to push in your face," says he.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Shorty," says Sadie.

"I won't," says I; "but I'm scared stiff."

Just about then, though, Buddy seemed to have got a bulletin over a special wire. He was gazin' at me with his mouth open and a pucker between his eyes. "What Shorty?" says he. "Say, you ain't Shorty McCabe, are you?"

"Not to you," says I. "I got to draw the line somewhere, and with bad men I stands on my dignity. I'm Professor McCabe, sonny."

"Holy cats!" says he. "Honest, professor, I didn't mean a word of it. I take it all back. Why say, I saw you put out the Kangaroo in two rounds."

"Then you've had a liberal education," says I.

"Gee!" says he, lettin' off some more surprise, and bracin' himself back in the chair like he was afraid of falling off.

Well say, I've been rode to my dressin'-room on shoulders, and welcomed home from fights by mobs with brass bands; but for a gen-u-ine ovation I guess Buddy's little stunt came as near bein' the real thing as any. Dewey comin' back from the Philippines, or Mr. Get-There Hadley landin' in St. Louis with the Standard Oil scalps, wa'n't in it with me bein' discovered by Buddy Sullivan. I couldn't get the key to it then, but I've mapped it out now. Most of his enthusiasm was owin' to the fact that ever since he was fifteen Buddy'd based his claim to bein' a real sport on my havin' come from the same block as he did.

Anyway, it was a lightnin' change. From being a holy terror, Buddy calmed down to as peaceful a young gent as you'd want to meet. If I'd just shake hands with him once and call it square, he'd follow any

program I'd a mind to plan out.

"Only don't let her send me home to maw," says he. "Say, they get up at six in the morning there, and if I don't crawl down by seven maw lugs up toast and eggs, and talks to me like I was a kid."

"Well, where'd you like to be shipped?" says I.

"Aw, come now, professor," says he. "You don't have to be told that. There ain't but one place where a fellow like me can really live. You get sis to put me back on Broadway with a few hundred in my clothes, and I'll kiss the Book that she won't hear from me for a year."

"But how about this jewelry-collectin' fad of yours?" says I.

"Ah, I wasn't going to carry it off," says he. "I let her see I had it, on purpose. I'll be good."

Well, Sadie was willin' to let it go at that, and we was just gettin' this part of the mix-up straightened out lovely, when there came a rap at the door.

"Quick," says Sadie. "They mustn't see Buddy or you either, Shorty!"

So Buddy was pushed into the closet again, and I dodges behind a tall dressin'-mirror in the corner. It was a red-eyed girl with lumps in her throat. She said she was Mrs. Purdy Pell's maid.

"Mrs. Pell's missed some rings," says she, "and we've been havin' words over it. I told her there was a suspicious-looking young man in the house that I'd seen comin' out of your rooms awhile ago, and I didn't know but what you'd missed some things, too, ma'am."

"Ask Mrs. Pell to step over here for a minute," says

Sadie.

"What's doing?" says I, after the maid had left.

"I don't know," says Sadie. "I've got to give that jewelry back to the silly thing first; then we'll see."

So I handed the trinkets over, and it wasn't long before Mrs. Pell shows up. And say, the minute them two came together the mercury dropped about thirty degrees. Bein' behind the glass, I couldn't see; but I could hear, and that was enough.

"Here are your lost rings," says Sadie.

That's her, every tick of the watch. If she was tackled by a gyasticutus, she'd grab it by the horns.

"Oh!" says Mrs, Pell, gatherin' 'em in; "And how does it happen that you have them?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow," says Sadie.

"I'd rather not wait that long," says Mrs. Pell. "I prefer to know now."

"You ought to be satisfied to get them back," says Sadie.

"Perhaps," says Mrs. Pell; "but I'm just a little curious to know how they got away. My maid thinks the person who took them is still in the house."

"If I listened to all the things my maid says—" begins Sadie.

"There are maids and maids," says Mrs. Pell. "I can trust mine. She saw the man. More than that, Mrs. Dipworthy, she thinks he is hidden in your rooms."

"She must have seen my brother," says Sadie, "or Professor McCabe."

"It's quite possible," says Mrs. Pell; "but I shall insist

on having the officers sent for."

"Why," says Sadie, "I might have taken them myself, just as a joke."

"Indeed!" says Mrs. Pell in a polite assault-and-battery tone. "Then perhaps you will confess as much to the other guests? Will you?"

And that was a facer for Sadie. She'd been keeping a stiff lip up to this, but she came to the scratch wabbly in her voice. "You wouldn't want me to do that, would you?" says she.

"In justice to my maid, I must," says Mrs. Pell.

"Well," says Sadie, "if you're mean enough for that, I suppose I—"

But, say, I couldn't stay under cover any longer, with her bein' pushed down the chute in that style. I was wise to her game all right. She meant to stand up and take all that was coming, even if it put her down and out, just to keep the hooks off that kid brother of hers. And me loafin' back of the ropes with me hands in me pockets! I'd been a welcher, wouldn't I?

"Did I hear my cue?" says I, steppin' out into the lime-light.

It was a tableau, for fair. Me and Mrs. Purdy Pell didn't do anything but swap looks for a minute or so. I can't say just how pleased she was, but I've had better views. She wasn't any dainty, lily-of-the-valley sort. She was a good deal of a cabbage rose, I should say, and carried more or less weight for age. She had an arm on her like a fore-quarter of beef. I don't wonder that Purdy Pell skipped to Europe and didn't put in any answer when the proceedin's came up.

"Are you the one?" says she.

"No, he isn't," says Sadie, speakin' up brisk.

"That's right," says I; "but it was me brought your finger sparks back to light, ma'am."

"And where did you find them?" says Mrs. Pell, turnin' the third-degree stare on me.

"That's a professional secret," says I, "which I can't give up just yet."

"Oh, you can't!" says she. "This is interesting."

And with that she begins to size us up, one after the other. Oh, she had us tied to the post, with nothin' to do but chuck the knives at us. For a gallery play, it was the punkiest I ever put up. Here I'd come splashin' in with both feet, like an amateur life-saver goin' to the rescue, and I hadn't done anything but raise the tide.

Sadie didn't have a word to say. She was just bitin' her lip, and gettin' white about the mouth from the mad in her. And say, maybe Her Stoutness didn't enjoy watchin' us squirm. She was gettin' even for every look one of her Willie boys had ever wasted on Sadie.

"We'll see if you two can be induced to confide your precious secret to the police," says she. "I mean to find out who stole my rings."

She hadn't more than sent in that shot before the closet door opens, and Buddy comes out, blinkin' like a bat.

"It's all over, ain't it?" says he.

"It is now," says I, and looks to see Mrs. Purdy Pell begin to holler: "Stop thief!"

But it was a case of being off the alley again. Say, I'm glad I wasn't backin' my guesses with good money

that night, or I'd come home with my pockets wrong side out. Ever see a hundred-and-eighty-pound fairy with a double chin turn kittenish? That was her.

"Why, Mr. Sullivan!" she gurgles, throwin' him a Julia Marlowe goo-goo glance.

"Hello, Dimples!" says Buddy. "Oh, they were your rings, were they? Then it's all right. I just borrowed 'em to scare sister into a cat fit and make her open up—just for a josh, you know."

"Why, why!" says Mrs. Pell, lookin' twisted, "is Mrs. Dipworthy your sister?"

"Sure," says Buddy. "But say, Dimples, you're the very girl I was wanting to see most. I've got another sure thing, good as a title guarantee, for the Croton stakes, and if you'll back it for me we'll make a killing. How about it, eh?"

"Oh, you reckless boy," says Mrs. Pell, tapping him on the cheek. "But you did give me such a lovely tip at the Aqueduct, and—and we'll see. Come, I want to talk to you," and she put out a wing for him to take.

As they drifted down towards the terrace Buddy turns and gives us the sassy wink over his shoulder.

"Looks like we'd lost our job, Sadie," says I.

"The silly old moss-agate!" says Sadie.

Then I goes down and reports to Pinckney, and puts in the rest of the evenin' bein' introduced as the gent that set the Baron Patchouli up in the shoe-string business. I felt like I'd opened up a jack-pot on a four-flush, but Pinckney and the rest seemed to be having a good time, so I stuck it out. In the morning Buddy goes along back to town with me.

"Say, professor," says he, pattin' a roll of twenties in

his trousers pocket, "I wouldn't pass this along to anyone else, but if you want to connect with a hatful of easy coin, just plunge on Candy Boy."

"That's your beanery tip, is it?" says I. "Much obliged, Buddy, but I guess after the bookies get all you and Mrs. Pell are goin' to throw at 'em they won't need mine."

See? It was up to me to push home a great moral lesson, and I done my best. But what's the use? Next mornin' I takes up the paper and reads how Candy Boy wins, heads apart.

CHAPTER X

But say, I guess Buddy'll work out all right. There's good stuff in him. Anyways, I ain't losin' my eyesight, tryin' to follow his curves. And my date book's been full lately. That's the way I like it. If you know how to take things there's a whole lot of fun in just bein' alive; ain't there? Now look at the buffo combination I've been up against.

First off I meets Jarvis—you know, Mr. Jarvis of Blenmont, who's billed to marry that English girl, Lady Evelyn, next month. Well, Jarvis he was all worked up. Oh, you couldn't guess it in a week. It was an awful thing that happened to him. Just as he's got his trunk packed for England, where the knot-tyin' is to take place, he gets word that some old lady that was second cousin to his mother, or something like that, has gone and died and left him all her property.

"Real thoughtless of her, wa'n't it?" says I.

"Well," says Jarvis, lookin' kind of foolish, "I expect she meant well enough. I don't mind the bonds, and that sort of thing, but there's this Nightingale Cottage. Now, what am I to do with that?"

"Raise nightingales for the trade," says I.

Jarvis ain't one of the joshin' kind, though, same as Pinckney. He had this weddin' business on his mind, and there wa'n't much room for anything else. Seems the old lady who'd quit livin' was a relative he didn't know much about.

"I remember seeing her only once," says Jarvis, "and then I was a little chap. Perhaps that's why I was such a favorite of hers. She always sent me a prayer-book every Christmas."

"Must have thought you was hard on prayer-books," says I. "She wa'n't batty, was she?"

Jarvis wouldn't say that; but he didn't deny that there might have been a few cobwebs in the belfry. Aunt Amelia—that's what he called her—had lived by herself for so long, and had coaxed up such a case of nerves, that there was no tellin'. The family didn't even know she was abroad until they heard she'd died there.

"You see," says Jarvis, "the deuce of it is the cottage is just as she stepped out of it, full of a lot of old truck that I've either got to sell or burn, I suppose. And it's a beastly nuisance."

"It's a shame," says I. "But where is this Nightingale Cottage?"

"Why, it's in Primrose Park, up in Westchester County," says he.

With that I pricks up my ears. You know I've been puttin' my extra-long green in pickle for the last few years, layin' for a chance to place 'em where I could turn 'em over some day and count both sides. And Westchester sounded right.

"Say," says I, leadin' him over to the telephone booth, "you sit down there and ring up some real-estate guy out in Primrose Park and get a bid for that place. It'll be about half or two-thirds what it's worth. I'll give you that, and ten per cent. more on account of the fixin's. Is it a go?"

Was it? Mr. Jarvis had central and was callin' up

Primrose Park before I gets through, and inside of an hour I'm a taxpayer. I've made big lumps of money quicker'n that, but I never spent such a chunk of it so swift before. But Jarvis went off with his mind easy, and I was satisfied. In the evenin' I dropped around to see the Whaleys.

"Dennis, you low-county bog-trotter," says I, "about all I've heard out of you since I was knee high was how you was achin' to quit the elevator and get back to diggin' and cuttin' grass, same's you used to do on the old sod. Now here's a chance to make good."

Well, say, that was the only time I ever talked ten minutes with Dennis Whaley without bein' blackguarded. He'd been fired off the elevator the week before and had been job-huntin' ever since. As for Mother Whaley, when she saw a chance to shake three rooms back and a fire-escape for a place where the trees has leaves on 'em, she up and cried into the corned beef and cabbage, just for joy.

"I'll send the keys in the mornin'," says I. "Then you two pack up and go out there to Nightingale Cottage and open her up. If it's fit to live in, and you don't die of lonesomeness, maybe I'll run up once in a while of a Sunday to look you over."

You see, I thought it would be a bright scheme to hang onto the place for a year or so, before I tries to unload. That gives the Whaleys what they've been wishin' for, and me a chance to do the weekend act now and then. Course, I wa'n't lookin' for no complications. But they come along, all right.

It was on a Saturday afternoon that I took the plunge. You know how quick this little old town can warm up when she starts. We'd had the Studio fans goin' all the mornin', and the first shirtwaist lads was

paradin' across Forty-second street with their coats off, and Swifty'd made tracks for Coney Island, when I remembers Primrose Park.

I'd passed through in expresses often enough, so I didn't have to look it up on the map; but that was about all. When I'd spoiled the best part of an hour on a local full of commuters and low-cut high-brows, who killed time playin' whist and cussin' the road, I was dumped down at a cute little station about big enough for a lemonade stand. As the cars went off I drew in a long breath. Say, I'd got off just in time to escape bein' carried into Connecticut.

I jumps into a canopy-top surrey that looks like it had been stored in an open lot all winter, and asks the driver if he knows where Nightingale Cottage is.

"Sure thing!" says he. "That's the place Shorty McCabe's bought."

"Do tell!" says I. "Well, cart me out to the front gate and put me off."

It was a nice ride. If it had been a mile longer I'd had facts enough for a town history. Drivin' a depot carriage was just a side issue with that Primrose blossom. Conversin' was his long suit. He tore off information by the yard, and slung it over the seat-back at me like one of these megaphone lecturers on the rubber-neck wagons. Accordin' to him, Aunt 'Melie had been a good deal of a she-hermit.

"Why," says he, "Major Curtis Binger told me himself that in the five years he lived neighbors to her he hadn't seen her more'n once or twice. They say she hadn't been out of her yard for ten years up to the time she went abroad for her health and died of it."

"Anyone that could live in this town that long and

not die, couldn't have tried very hard," says I. "Who's this Major Binger?"

"Oh, he's a retired army officer, the major is; widower, with two daughters," says he.

"Singletons?" says I.

"Yep, and likely to stay so," says he.

About then he turns in between a couple of fancy stone gate-posts, twists around a cracked bluestone drive, and lands me at the front steps of Nightingale Cottage. For the kind, it wa'n't so bad—one of those squatty bay-windowed affairs, with a roof like a toboggan chute, a porch that did almost a whole lap around outside, and a cobblestone chimney that had vines growin' clear to the top. And sure enough, there was Dennis Whaley with his rake, comin' as near a grin as he knew how.

Well, he has me in tow in about a minute, and I makes a personally conducted tour of me estate. Say, all I thought I was gettin' was a couple of buildin' lots; but I'll be staggered if there wa'n't a slice of ground most as big as Madison Square Park, with trees, and shrubbery, and posy beds, and dinky little paths loopin' the loop all around. Out back was a stable and goosb'ry bushes and a truck garden.

"How's thim for cabbages?" says Dennis.

"They look more like boutonnieres," says I. But he goes on to tell as how they'd just been set out and wouldn't be life-size till fall. Then he shows the rows that he says was goin' to be praties and beans and so on, and he's as proud of the whole shootin'-match as if he'd done a miracle.

When we got around to the front again, where Dennis has laid out a pansy harp, I sees a little

gatherin' over in front of the cottage next door. There was three or four gents, and six or eight women-folks. They was lookin' my way, and talkin' all to once.

"Hello!" says I. "The neighbors seem to be holdin' a convention. Wonder if they're plannin' to count me in?"

I ain't more'n got that out before one of the bunch cuts loose and heads for me. He was a nice-lookin' old duck, with a pair of white Chaunceys and a frosted chin-splitter. He stepped out brisk and swung his cane like he was on parade. He was got up in white flannels and a square-topped Panama, and he had the complexion of a good liver.

"I expect that this is Mr. McCabe," says he.

"You're a good guesser," says I. "Come up on the front stoop and sit by."

"My name," says he, "is Binger, Curtis Binger."

"What, Major Binger, late U. S. A.?" says I. "The man that did the stunt at the battle of What-d'ye-call-it?"

"Mission Ridge, sir," says he, throwin' out his chest.

"Sure! That was the place," says I. "Well, well! Who'd think it? I'm proud to know you. Put 'er there."

With that I had him goin'. He was up in the air, and before he'd got over it I'd landed him in a porch rocker and chased Dennis in to dig a box of Fumadoras out of my suit-case.

"Ahem," says the Major, clearin' his speech tubes, "I came over, Mr. McCabe, on rather a delicate errand."

"If you're out of butter, or want to touch me for a drawin' of tea, speak right up, Major," says I. "The pantry's yours."

"Thank you," says he; "but it's nothing like that; nothing at all, sir. I came over as the representative of several citizens of Primrose Park, to inquire if it is your intention to reside here."

"Oh!" says I. "You want to know if I'll join the gang? Well, seein' as you've put it up to me so urgent, I don't care if I do. Course I can't sign as a reg'lar, this bein' my first jab at the simple life; but if you can stand for the punk performance I'll make at progressive euchre and croquet, you can put me on the Saturday night sub list, for a while, anyway."

Now, say, I was layin' out to do the neighborly for the best that was in me; but it seemed to hit the Major wrong. He turned about two shades pinker, coughed once or twice, and then got a fresh hold. "I'm afraid you fail to grasp the situation, Mr. McCabe," says he. "You see, we lead a very quiet life here in Primrose Park, a very domestic life. As for myself, I have two daughters—"

"Chic, chic, Major!" says I, pokin' him gentle in the ribs with me thumb. "Don't you try to sick any girls on me, or I'll take to the tall timber. I'm no lady's man, not a little bit."

Then the explosion came. For a minute I thought one of them 'Frisco ague spells had come east. The Major turns plum color, blows up his cheeks, and bugs his eyes out. When the language flows it was like turnin' on a fire-pressure hydrant. An assistant district attorney summin' up for the State in a murder trial didn't have a look-in with the Major. What did I mean—me, a rough-house scrapper from the red-light section—by buttin' into a peaceful community and insultin' the oldest inhabitants? Didn't I have no sense of decency? Did I suppose respectable people were goin' to stand for such?

Honest, that was the worst jolt I ever had. All I could do was to sit there with my mouth ajar and watch him prancin' up and down, handin' me the layout.

"Say," says I, after a bit, "you ain't got me mixed up with Mock Duck, or Paddy the Gouge, or Kangaroo Mike, or any of that crowd, have you?"

"You're known as Shorty McCabe, aren't you?" says he.

"Guilty," says I.

"Then there's no mistake," says he. "What will you take, cash down, for this property, and clear out now?"

"Say, Major," says I, "do you think it would blight the buds or poison the air much if I hung on till Monday morning? That is, unless you've got the tar all hot and the rail ready?"

That fetched a grunt out of him. "All we desire to do, sir," says he, "is to maintain the respectability of the neighborhood."

"Do the other folks over there feel the same way about me?" says I.

"Naturally," says he.

"Well," says I, "I don't mind telling you, Major, that you've thrown the hooks into me good an' plenty, and it looks like I'd have to make a new book. I didn't come out here' to break up any peaceful community; but before I changes my program I'll have to sleep on it. Suppose you slide over again some time to-morrow, when your collar don't fit so tight, and then we'll see if there's anything to arbitrate."

"Very well," says he, does a salute to the colors, and

marches back stiff-kneed to tell his crowd how he'd read the riot act to me.

Now, say, I ain't one of the kind to lose sleep because the conductor speaks rough when I asks for a transfer. I generally takes what's comin' and grins. But this time I wa'n't half so joyful as I might have been. Even the sight of Mother Whaley's hot biscuits and hearin' her singin' "Cushla Mavourneen" in the kitchen couldn't chirk me up. I'd been keen for lookin' the house over and seein' what I'd got in the grab; but it was all off. Course I knew I had the rights of the thing. I'd put down me good money, and there wa'n't any rules that could make me pull it out. But I've lived quite some years without shovin' in where I knew I'd get the frigid countenance, and I didn't like the idea of beginnin' now.

I couldn't go back on my record, either. In my time I've stood up in the ring and put out my man for two thirds of the gate receipts. I ain't so proud of that now as I was once; but I ain't never had any call to be ashamed of the way I done it. What's more, no soubrette ever had a chance to call herself Mrs. Shorty McCabe, and I never let 'em put my name over the door of any Broadway jag parlor.

You got to let every man frame up his own argument, though. If these Primrose Parkers had listed me for a tough citizen, that had come out to smash crockery and keep the town constable busy, it wa'n't my cue to hold any debate. All the campaign I could figure out was to back into the wings and sell to some well-behaved stock-broker or life-insurance grafter.

It was goin' to be tough on the Whaleys, though. I didn't let on to Dennis, and after supper we sat on the back steps while he smoked his cutty and gassed

away about the things he was goin' to raise, and how the flower-beds would look in a month or so. About nine o'clock he shows me a place where I can turn in, and I listens to the roosters crowin' most of the night.

Next mornin' I had Dennis get me a Sunday paper, and after I'd read the sportin' notes, I turns to the suburban real estate ads. "Why not own a home?" most of 'em asks. "I know the answer to that," says I. And say, a Luna Park Zulu that had strayed into young Rockefeller's Bible class would have felt about as much at home as I did there on my own porch. The old Major was over on his porch, walkin' up and down like he was doin' guard duty, and once in a while I could see some of the women-folks takin' a careful squint at me from behind a window blind. If I'm ever quarantined, it won't be any new sensation.

It wasn't exactly a weddin' breakfast kind of a time I was havin'; but I didn't dodge it. I was just lettin' it soak in, "for the good of me soul," as Father Connolly used to say, when I sees a pair of everfed blacks, hitched to a closed carriage, switch in from the pike and make for the Major's. "Company for dinner," says I. "That's nice."

I didn't get anything but a back view as he climbed out on the off side and was led in by the Major; but you couldn't fool me on them short-legged, baggy-kneed pants, or that black griddle-cake bonnet. It was my little old Bishop, that I keeps the fat off from with the medicine-ball work.

"Lucky he didn't see me," says I, "or he'd hollered out and queered himself with the whole of Primrose Park."

I was figurin' on fadin' away to the other side of the house before he showed up again; but I didn't hurry

about it, and when I looks up again there was the Bishop, with them fat little fingers of his stuck out, and a three-inch grin on his face, pikin' across the road right for me. He'd come out to wig-wag his driver, and, gettin' his eyes on me, he waddles right over. I tried to give him the wink and shoo him off, but it was no go.

"Why, my dear professor!" says he, walkin' up and givin' me the inside-brother grip with one hand and the old-college-chum shoulder-pat with the other.

I squints across the way, and there was the Major and the girls, catchin' their breath and takin' it all in, so I sees it's no use throwin' a bluff.

"How's the Bishop?" says I. "You've made a bad break; but I guess it's a bit too late to hedge."

He only chuckles, like he always does. "Your figures of speech, professor, are too subtle for me, as usual. However, I suppose you are as glad to see me as I am to find you."

"Just what I was meanin' to spring next," says I, pullin' up a rocker for him.

We chins awhile there, and the Bishop tells me how's he been out to lay a cornerstone, and thought he'd drop in on his old friend, Major Binger.

"Well, well, what a charming place you have here!" says he. "You must take me all over it, professor. I want to see if you've shown as good taste on the inside as you apparently have on the out." And before I has time to say a word about Jarvis's Aunt 'Melie, he has me by the arm and we're headed for the parlor. I hadn't even opened the door before, but we blazes right in, runs up the shades, throws open the shutters, and stands by for a look.

Say, it was worth it! That was the most ladyfied room I ever put me foot in. First place, I never see so many crazy lookin' little chairs, or bow-legged tables, or fancy tea-cups before in my life. There wa'n't a thing you could sit on without havin' to call the upholstery man in afterward. Even the gilt sofa looked like it ought to have been in a picture.

But what had me button-eyed was the wall decorations. If I hadn't been ridin' on the sprinker for so long I'd thought it was time for me to hunt a D. T. institute right then. First off I couldn't make 'em out at all; but after the shock wore away I see they were dolls, dozens of 'em, hangin' all over the walls in rows and clusters, like hams in a pork shop. And say, that was the wooziest collection ever bunched together! They wa'n't ordinary Christmas-tree dolls, the store kind. Every last one of 'em was home-made, white cotton heads, with hand-painted faces. Course, I tumbled. This was some of that half-batty Aunt 'Melie's work. This was what she'd put in her time on. And she sure had produced.

For face paintin' it was well done, I guess, only she must have been shut up so long away from folks that she'd sort of forgot just how they looked. Some of the heads had sunbonnets on, and some nightcaps; but they were all the same shape, like a hardshell clam, flat side to. The eyes were painted about twice life-size—some rolled up, some canted down, some squintin' sideways, and a lot was just cross-eye. There was green eyes, yellow eyes, pink eyes, and the regular kinds. They gave me the creeps.

When I turns around, the Bishop stands there with his mouth open. "Why," says he—"why, professor!" That was as far as he could get. He gasps once or twice and gets out something that sounds like

"Remarkable, truly remarkable!"

"That's the word," says I. "I'll bet there ain't another lot like this in the country."

"I—I hope not," says he. "No offence meant, though. Do you—er—do this sort of thing yourself?"

Well, I had to loosen up then. I told him about Aunt 'Melie, and how I'd bought the place unsight and unseen. And when he finds this was my first view of the parlor it gets him in the short ribs. He has a funny fit. Every time he takes a look at them dolls he has another spasm. I gets him out on the porch again, and he sits there slappin' his knees and waggin' his head and wipin' his eyes.

By-'m'-by the Bishop calms down and says I've done him more good than a trip to Europe. "You must let me bring Major Binger over," says he. "I want him to see those dolls. You two are bound to be great cronies."

"I've got my doubts about that," says I. "But don't you go to mixin' up in this affair, Bishop. I don't want to lug you in for any trouble with any of your old friends."

You couldn't stave the Bishop off, though. He had to hear the whole yarn, and the minute he gets it straight he jumps up.

"Binger's a hot-headed old—well," says he, catchin' himself just in time, "the Major has a way of acting first, and then thinking it over. I must have a talk with him."

I guess he did, too; for they were at it some time before the Bishop waves by-by to me and drives off.

I'd just got up from one of Mrs. Whaley's best chicken

dinners, when I hears a hurrah outside, and horses stampin' and a horn tootin'. I rushes out front, and there was Pinckney, sittin' up on a coach box, just pullin' his leaders out of Dennis's pansy bed. There was about a dozen of his crowd on top of the coach, includin' Mrs. Dipworthy—Sadie Sullivan that was—and Mrs. Twombley Crane, and a lot more.

"Hello, Shorty!" says Pinckney. "Is the doll exhibition still open? If it is, we want to come in."

They'd met the Bishop; see? And he'd steered 'em along.

Well say, I might have begun the day kind of lonesome, but it had a lively finish, all right. Inside of ten minutes Sadie has on one of Mother Whaley's white aprons and is takin' charge. She has some of them fancy tables and chairs lugged out on the porch, and the first thing I knows I'm holdin' forth at a pink tea that's the swellest thing of the kind Primrose Park ever got its eyes on.

CHAPTER XI

No, Nightingale Cottage ain't in the market, and it looks like I'd got a steady job introducin' Aunt 'Melie's doll collection to society; for Pinckney carts down a new gang every Sunday. As Sadie's generally on hand to help out, I'm ready to stand for it. Anyways, I've bought a fam'ly ticket and laid in a stock of fancy groceries.

The Maje? Oh, him and me made it up handsome. He comes over and tells me about that Mission Ridge stunt of his every chance he gets. But say, I'm beginnin' to find out there's others. It's a great place, Primrose Park is, and when I sized it up as a sort of annex to a cemetery I'd mistook the signs.

It don't make much difference where you are, all you've got to do to keep your blood from thinnin' out, is to mix in with folks. Beats all how much excitement you can dig up that way.

Now, I wa'n't huntin' for anything of the kind, but I was just usin' my eyes and keepin' my ears open, so I notices that out on the main road, in front of the Park, is one of those swell big ranches that hog the shore front all the way from Motthaven up to the jumpin'-off place. From the outside all you can see is iron gates and stone wall and stretches of green-plush lawn. Way over behind the trees you can get a squint at the chimney tops, and you know that underneath is a little cottage about the size of the Grand Central station. That's the style you live in when you've hit the stock-market right, or in case you've got to be a top-notch grafter that the muck-rakers ain't jungled yet.

I'd been wonderin' what kind of folks hung out in there, but I'd never seen any of 'em out front, only gardeners killin' time, and coachmen exercisin' the horses. But one mornin' I gets a private view that was worth watchin' for.

The first thing on the program was an old duffer dodgin' in and out around the bushes and trees like he was tryin' to lose somebody. That got me curious right away, and I begins to pipe him off. He was togged out in white ducks, somethin' like a window cook in a three-off joint, only he didn't sport any

apron, and his cap had gold braid on it. His hair was white, too, and his under lip was decorated with one of them old-fashioned teasers—just a little bunch of cotton that the barber had shied. He was a well-built old boy, but his face had sort of a sole leather tint to it that didn't look healthy.

From his motions I couldn't make out whether he was havin' a game of hide-and-go-seek or was bein' chased by a dog. The last thought seemed more likely, so I strolls over to the stone wall and gets ready to hand out a swift kick to the kioodle, in case it was needed.

When he sees me the old gent begins to dodge livelier than ever and make signals with his hands. Well, I didn't know his code. I couldn't guess whether he wanted me to run for a club, or was tryin' to keep me from buttin' in, so I just stands there with my mouth open and looks foolish.

Next thing I sees is a wedge-faced, long-legged guy comin' across the lawn on the jump. First off I thought he was pushin' one of these sick-abed chairs, like they use on the board walk at Atlantic City. But as he gets nearer I see it was a green wicker tea-wagon—you know. I ain't got to the tea-wagon stage myself, but I've seen 'em out at Rockywold and them places. Handy as a pocket in a shirt, they are. When you've got company in the afternoon the butler wheels the thing out on the veranda and digs up a whole tea-makin' outfit from the inside. When it's shut it looks a good deal like one of them laundry push-carts they have in Harlem.

Now, I ain't in love with tea at any time of the day except for supper, and I sure would pass it up just after breakfast, but I don't know as I'd break my neck to get away from it, same's the old gent was doin'.

The minute he gets a look at the wagon comin' his way he does some lively side-steppin'. Then he jumps behind a bush and hides, givin' me the sign not to let on.

The long-legged guy knew his business, though. He came straight on, like he was followin' a scent, and the first thing old Whitey knows he's been run down. He gives in then, just as if he'd been tagged.

"Babbitt," says he, "I had you hull down at one time, didn't I?"

But either Babbitt was too much out of breath, or else he wasn't the talkative kind, for he never says a word, but just opens up the top of the cart and proceeds to haul out some bottles and a glass. First he spoons out some white powder into a tumbler. Then he pours in some water and stirs it with a spoon. When the mess is done he sticks it out to the old gent. The old one never lifts a finger, though.

"Salute, first, you frozen-faced scum of the earth!" he yells. "Salute, sir!"

Babbitt made a stab at salutin' too, and mighty sudden.

"Now, you white-livered imitation of a man," says the old gent, "you may hand over that villainous stuff! Bah!" and he takes a sniff of it.

Babbitt keeps his eyes glued on him until the last drop was down, then he jumped. Lucky he was quick on the duck, for the glass just whizzed over the top of his head. While he was stowin' the things away the old fellow let loose. Say, you talk about a cussin', I'll bet you never heard a string like that. It wasn't the longshoreman's kind. But the way he put together straight dictionary words was enough to

give you a chill. It was the rattlin' style he had of rippin' 'em out, too, that made it sound like swearin'. If there was any part of that long-legged guy that he didn't pay his respects to, from his ears to his toe-nails, I didn't notice it.

"It's the last time you get any of that slush into me, Babbitt," says he. "Do you hear that, you peanut-headed, scissor-shanked whelp?"

"Ten-thirty's the next dose, Commodore," says he as he starts off.

"It is, eh, you wall-eyed deck swab?" howls the Commodore. "If you mix any more of that infant food for me I'll skin you alive, and sew you up hind side before. Do you hear that, you?"

I was wearin' a broad grin when the old Commodore turns around to me.

"If that fellow keeps this up," says he, "I shall lose my temper some day. Ever drink medicated milk, eh? Ugh! It tastes the way burnt feathers smell. And I'm dosed with it eight times a day! Think of it, milk! But what makes me mad is to have it ladled out to me by that long-faced, fish-eyed food destroyer, whose only joy in life is to hunt me down and gloat over my misery. Oh, I'll get square with him yet, sir; I swear I will."

"I wish you luck," says I.

"Who are you, anyway?" says he.

"Nobody much," says I, "so there's two of us. I'm livin' in the cottage across the way."

"The deuce you say!" says he. "Then you're Shorty McCabe, aren't you?"

"You're on," says I. "How'd you guess it?"

Well, it seems one of my reg'lars was a partner of his son-in-law, who owned the big place, and they'd been talkin' about me just the day before. After that it didn't take long for the Commodore and me to get a line on each other, and when I finds out he's Roaring Dick, the nervy old chap that stood out on the front porch of his ship all through the muss at Santiago Bay and hammered the daylights out of the Spanish fleet, I gives him the hand.

"I've read about you in the papers," says I.

"Not so often as I used to read about you," says he.

And say, inside of ten minutes we was like a couple of G. A. R. vets, at a reunion. Then he told me all about the medicated-milk business.

It didn't take any second sight to see that the Commodore was a gay old sport. He'd been on the European station for three years, knockin' around with kings and princes, and French and Russian naval officers that was grand dukes and such when they was ashore; and he'd carried along with him a truck-driver's thirst and the capacity of a ward boss. The fizzy stuff he'd stowed away in that time must have been enough to sail a ship on. I guess he didn't mind it much, though, for he'd been in pickle a long time. It was the seventeen-course night dinners and the foreign cooking that gave him the knockout.

All of a sudden his digester had thrown up the job, and before he knew it he was in a state where a hot biscuit or a piece of fried potato would lay him out on his back for a week. He'd come home on sick leave to visit his daughter, and his rich son-in-law had steered him up against a specialist who told him that if he didn't quit and obey orders he wouldn't last three weeks. The orders was to live on nothin' but

medicated milk, and for a man that had been livin' the way he had it was an awful jolt. He couldn't be trusted to take the stuff himself, so they hired valets to keep him doped with it.

"I scared the first one half to death," says the Commodore, "and the next one I bribed to smuggle out ham sandwiches. Then they got this fellow Babbitt to follow me around with that cursed gocart, and I haven't had a moment's peace since. He's just about equal to a job like that, Babbitt is. I make him earn his money, though."

You'd have thought so if you could have seen the old Commodore work up games to throw Babbitt off the track. I put in most of the day watchin' 'em at it, and it was as good as a vaudeville act. About a quarter of an hour before it was time for the dose the valet would come out and begin to look around the grounds. Soon as he'd located the Commodore he'd slide off after his tea wagon. That was just where the old boy got in his fine work. The minute Babbitt was out of sight the Commodore makes a break for a new hidin' place, so the valet has to wheel that cart all over the lot, playin' peek-a-boo behind every bush and tree until he nailed his man.

Now you'd think most anyone with a head would have cracked a joke now and then with the old gent, and kind of made it easy all round. But not Babbitt. He'd been hired to get medicated milk into the Commodore, and that was all the idea his nut could accommodate at one time. He was one of these stiff-necked, cold-blooded flunkies, that don't seem much more human than wooden Indians. He had an aggravatin' way, too, of treatin' the old chap when he got him cornered. He was polite enough, so far as what he had to say, but it was the mean look in his

ratty little eyes that grated.

With every dose the Commodore got madder and madder. Some of the names he thought up to call that valet was worth puttin' in a book. It seemed like a shame, though, to stir up the old gent that way, and I don't believe the medicine did him any more good. He took it, though, because he'd promised his daughter he would. Course, I had my own notions of that kind of treatment, but I couldn't see that it was up to me to jump in the coacher's box and give off any advice.

Next mornin' I'd been out for a little leg-work and I was just joggin' into the park again, when I hears all kinds of a ruction goin' on over behind the stonewall. There was screams and yells and shouts, like a Saturday-night riot in Double Alley. I pokes up a giraffe neck and sees a couple of women runnin' across the lawn. Pretty soon what they was chasin' comes into view. It was the Commodore. He was pushin' the tea-wagon in front of him, and in the top of that, with just his legs and arms stickin' out, was Babbitt.

I knew what was up in a minute. He'd lost his temper, just as he was afraid he would, and before he'd got it back again he'd grabbed the valet and jammed him head first into the green cart. But where he was goin' with him was more'n I could guess. Anyway, it was somewhere that he was in a hurry to get to, for the old boy was rushin' the outfit across the front yard for all he was worth.





In the top of the tea wagon, was Babbitt.

"Oh, stop him, stop him!" screams one of the women, that I figures out must be the daughter.

"Stop 'im! Stop 'im!" yells the other. She looked like one of the maids.

"I'm no backstop," thinks I to myself. "Besides, this is a family affair."

I'd have hated to have blocked that run, too; for it was doin' me a lot of good, just watchin' it and thinkin' of the bumps Babbitt was gettin', with his head down among the bottles.

I follows along on the outside though, and in a minute or so I sees what the Commodore was aimin' at. Out to one side was a cute little fish-pond, about a hundred feet across, and he was makin' a bee line for that. It was down in a sort of hollow, with nice smooth turf slopin' clear to the edge.

When the Commodore gets half-way down he gives the cart one last push, and five seconds later Mr. Babbitt, with his head still stuck in the wagon, souses into the water like he'd been dropped from a balloon. The old boy stays just long enough to see the splash, and then he keeps right on goin' towards New York.

At that I jumps the stone wall and prepares to do some quick divin', but before I could fetch the pond Babbitt comes to the top, blowin' muddy water out of his mouth and threshin' his arms around windmill fashion. Then his feet touches bottom and he finds he ain't in any danger of bein' drowned. The wagon comes up, too, and the first thing he does is to grab that. By the time I gets there he was wadin' across with the cart, and the women had made up their minds there wa'n't any use fainting.

"Babbitt," says the Commodore's daughter, "explain your conduct instantly. What were you doing standing on your head in that tea-wagon?"

"Please, ma'am, I—I forget," splutters Babbitt, wipin' the mud out of his eyes.

"You forget!" says the lady. And say, anyone that knew the old Commodore wouldn't have to do any guessin' as to who her father was. "You forget, do you? Well, I want you to remember. Out with it, now!"

"Yes, ma'am," says Babbitt, tryin' to prop up his wilted collar. "I'd just give him his first dose for the day, and I'd dodged the glass, when somethin' catches me from behind, throws me into the tea-wagon, and off I goes. But that dose counts, don't it, ma'am? He got it down."

I sees how it was then; Babbitt had been gettin' a commission for every glass of the medicated stuff he pumped into the Commodore.

"Will you please run after my father and tell him to come back," says the lady to me.

"Sorry," says I, "but I'm no antelope. You'd better telegraph him."

I didn't stay to see any more, I was that sore on the whole crowd. But I hoped the old one would have sense enough to clear out for good.

I didn't hear any more from my neighbors all day, but after supper that night, just about dusk, somebody sneaks in through the back way and wabbles up to the veranda where I was sittin'. It was the old Commodore. He was about all in, too.

"Did—did I drown him?" says he.

"You made an elegant try," says I; "but there wasn't water enough."

"Thank goodness!" says he. "Now I can die calmly."

"What's the use dyin'?" says I. "Ain't there no thin' else left to do but that?"

"I've got to," says he. "I can't live on that cursed stuff they've been giving me, and if I eat anything else I'm done for. The specialist said so."

"Oh, well," says I, "maybe he's made a wrong guess. It's your turn now. Suppose you come in and let me have Mother Whaley broil you a nice juicy hunk of steak?"

Say, he was near starved. I could tell that by the way he looked when I mentioned broiled steak. He shook his head, though. "If I did, I'd die before morning," says he.

"I'll bet you a dollar you wouldn't," says I.

That almost gets a grin out of him. "Shorty," says he, "I'm going to risk it."

"It's better'n starving to death," says I.

And he sure did eat like a hungry man. When he'd put away a good square meal, includin' a dish of sliced raw onions and two cups of hot tea, I plants him in an arm chair and shoves out the cigar box. He looks at the Fumadoras regretful.

"They've kept those locked away from me for two weeks," says he, "and that was worse than going without food."

"Smoke up, then," says I. "There's one due you."

"As it will probably be my last, I guess I will," says he.

Honest, the old gent was so sure he'd croak before mornin' that he wanted to write some farewell letters, but he was too done up for that. I tucked him into a spare bed, opened all the windows, and before I could turn out the light he was sawin' wood like a hired man.

He was still workin' the fog horn when I went in to rout him out at five o'clock. It was a tough job gettin' him up, but I got him out of his trance at last.

"Come on," says I, "we've got to do our three miles and have a rub-down before breakfast."

First off he swore he couldn't move, and I guess he was some stiff from his sprint the day before, but by the time he'd got out where the birds was singin', and the trees and grass looked like they'd been done over new durin' the night, I was able to coax him into a dog-trot. It was a gentle little stunt we did, but it limbered the old boy up, and after we'd had a cold shower and a quick rub he forgot all about his joints.

"Well, are you set on keepin' that date in the obituary column, or will we have breakfast?" says I.

"I could eat cold lobscouse," says he.

"Mother Whaley's got somethin' better'n that in the kitchen," says I.

"I suppose this will finish me," says he, tacklin' the eggs and corn muffins.

Now, wouldn't that give you the pip? Why, with their specialists and medicated dope, they'd got the old chap so leery of good straight grub that he was bein' starved to death. And even after I'd got him braced up into something like condition, he didn't think it was hardly right to go on eatin'.

"I expect I ought to go back and start in on that slop diet again," says he.

I couldn't stand by and see him do that, though. He was too fine an old sport to be polished off in any such style. "See here, Commodore," says I, "if you're dead stuck on makin' a livin' skeleton of yourself, why, I throws up me hands. But if you'll stay here for a couple of weeks and do just as I say, I'll put you in trim to hit up the kind of life I reckon you think is worth livin'.

"By glory!" says he, "if you can do that I'll—"

"No you won't," say I. "This is my blow."

Course, it was a cinch. He wa'n't any invalid. There was stuff enough in him to last for twenty years, if it was handled right. He begun to pick up right away. I only worked him hard enough to make the meals seem a long ways apart and the mattress feel good. Inside of a week I had the red back in his cheeks, and he was chuckin' the medicine ball around good and hard, and tellin' me what a scrapper he used to be when he first went to the cadet mill, down to Annapolis. You can always tell when these old boys feel kinky—they begin to remember things like that. Before the fortnight was up he wasn't shyin' at anything on the bill of fare, and he was hintin' around that his thirst was comin' back strong.

"Can't I ever have another drink?" says he, as sad as a kid leavin' home.

"I'd take as little as I could get along with," says I.

"I'll promise to do that," says he.

He did, too. About the second day after he'd gone back to his son-in-law's place, he sends for me to come over. I finds him walkin' around the grounds as

spry as a two-year-old.

"Well," says I, "how did the folks take it?"

He chuckles. "They don't know what to say," says he. "They can't see how a specialist who charges five hundred dollars for an hour's visit can be wrong; but they admit I'm as good as new."

"How's Babbitt?" says I.

"That's why I wanted you to come over," says he. "Now watch." Then he lets out a roar you could have heard ten blocks away, and in about two shakes old wash-day shows up. "Ha! You shark-nosed sculpin!" yells the Commodore. "Where's your confounded tea cart? Go get it, sir."

"Yes, sir; directly, sir," says Babbitt.

He comes trottin' back with it in a hurry.

"Got any of that blasted decayed milk in it?" says the Commodore.

"No, sir," says Babbitt.

"Are you glad or sorry? Speak up, now," says the Commodore.

"I'm glad, sir," says Babbitt, givin' the salute.

"Good!" says the Commodore. "Then open up your wagon and mix me a Scotch high-ball."

And Babbitt did it like a little man.

"I find," says the Commodore, winkin' at me over the top of his glass, "that I can get along with as few as six of these a day. To your very good health, Professor McCabe."

Stand it? Well, I shouldn't wonder. He's a tough one. And ten years from now, if there's another Dago fleet

to be filled full of shot holes, I shouldn't be surprised to find my old Commodore fit and ready to turn the trick.

CHAPTER XII

You'd most think after that I'd have cut out the country for a while; but say, I'm gettin' so I can stand a whole lot of real breathin' air. Anyway, I've put the Studio on summer schedule, and every Saturday about noon I pikes out to Primrose Park, to see if me estate's growed any durin' the week.

Well, the last time I does it, I drops off about two stations too soon, thinkin' a little outdoor leg-work would do me good.

It was a grand scheme, and I'd been all right if I'd followed the trolley track along the post-road; but the gasolene carts was so thick, and I got to breathin' so much gravel, that I switches off. I takes a nice-lookin' lane that appears like it might bring me out somewhere near the place I was headin' for; but as I ain't much on findin' my way where they don't have sign-boards at the corners, the first thing I knows I've made so many turns I don't know whether I'm goin' out or comin' back.

It was while I was doin' the stray act, and wonderin' if it was goin' to shower, or was only just bluffin', that I bumps into this Incubator bunch, and the performance begins.

First squint I took I thought somebody'd been settin' out a new kind of shrubbery, and then I sized it up for a lot of umbrella jars that had been dumped there. But pretty soon I sees that it's nothin' but a double row of kids, all dressed the same. There must have been more'n a hundred of 'em, and they was standin' quiet by the side of the road, just as much to home as if that was where they belonged. Now, it ain't the reg'lar thing to find any such aggregation as that on a back lane, and if I'd had as much sense as a family horse in a carryall I'd shied and rambled the other way. But I has to get curious to see what it's all about, so I blazes ahead, figurin' on takin' a good look as I goes by.

At the head of the procession was a lady and gent holdin' some kind of exercises, and as I comes up I notices something familiar about the lady's back hair. She turns around just then, gives a little squeal, and makes for me with both hands out. Sure, it was her—Sadie Sullivan, that was. Well, I knew that Sadie was liable to be floatin' around anywhere in Westchester County, for that seems to be her regular stampin' ground since she got to travelin' with the country house set; but I wasn't lookin' to run across her just then and in that company.

"Oh, Shorty!" says she, "you're a life-saver! I've half a mind to hug you right here."

"If it wa'n't for givin' an exhibition," says I, "I'd lend you the other half. But how does the life-savin' come in? And where'd you collect so many kids all of a size? Is that pop, there?" and I jerks me thumb at the gent.

"Captain Kenwoodie," says Sadie, "I want you to know my friend, Professor McCabe. Shorty, this is Captain Sir Hunter Kenwoodie, of the British war

office."

"Woodie," says I, "how goes it?"

"Chawmed to meet you, I'm suah," says he.

"Oh, splash!" says I. "You don't mean it?"

Well, say! he was a star. His get-up was somethin' between that of a mounted cop and the leader of a Hungarian band, and he was as stiff as if he'd been dipped in the glue-pot the day before. I'd heard somethin' about him from Pinckney. He'd drawn plans and specifications for a new forage cap for the British army, and on the strength of that he'd been sent over to the States to inspect belt buckles, or somethin' of the kind. Talk about your cinch jobs! those are the lads that can pull 'em out. On his off days—and he had five or six a week—Woodie'd been ornamentin' the top of tally-hos, and restin' up at such places as Rockywold and Apawamis Arms.

Seems like he'd discovered Sadie, too, and had booked himself for her steady company. From her story it looked like they'd been takin' a little drive around the country, when they ran up against this crowd of kids in checked dresses from the Incubator home. There was a couple of nurses herdin' the bunch, and they'd all been sent up the Sound on an excursion barge, for one of these fresh-air blow-outs that always seem like an invitation for trouble. Everything had gone lovely until the chowder barge had got mixed up with a tow of coal scows and got bumped so hard that she sprung a leak.

There hadn't been any great danger, but the excitement came along in chunks. The crew had run the barge ashore and landed the whole crowd, but in the mix-up one of the women had backed off the gangplank into three feet of water, and the other had

sprained an ankle. The pair of 'em was all to the bad when Sadie and the Cap came along and found 'em tryin' to lead their flock to the nearest railroad station.

Course, Sadie had piled right out, loaded the nurses into the carriage, tellin' the driver to find the next place where the cars stopped and come back after the kids with all the buggies he could find, while she and Woodie stood by to see that the Incubators didn't stampede and get scattered all over the lot.

"So, here we are," says Sadie, "with all these children, and a shower coming up. Now, what shall we do and where shall we go?"

"Say," says I, "I may look like an information bureau, but I don't feel the part."

Sadie couldn't get it through her head, though, that I wasn't a Johnny-on-the-spot. Because I'd bought a place somewhere in the county, she thought I could draw a map of the state with my eyes shut. "We ought to start right away," says she.

She was more or less of a prophet, too. That thunder-storm was gettin' busy over on Long Island and there was every chance of its comin' our way. It lets loose a good hard crack, and the Englishman begins to look worried.

"Aw, I say now!" says he, "hadn't I better jog off and hurry up that bloomin' coachman?"

"All right, run along," says Sadie.

You should have seen the start of that run. He got under way like a man on stilts, and he was about as limber as a pair of fire-tongs. But then, them leather cuffs on his legs, and the way his coat hugged the small of his back, wa'n't any help. I was enjoyin' his

motions so much that I hadn't paid any attention to the kids, and I guess Sadie hadn't either; but the first we knows they all falls in behind, two by two, hand in hand, and goes trottin' along behind him.

"Stop 'em! Stop 'em!" says Sadie.

"Whoa! Cheese it! Come back here!" I yells.

They didn't give us any more notice, though, than as if we'd been holdin' our breath. The head pair had their eyes glued on the Captain. They were the leaders, and the rest followed like they'd been tied together with a rope. They was all girls and I guess they'd average about five years old. I thought at first they all had on aprons, but now I sees that every last one of 'em was wearin' a life-preserver. They'd tied the things on after the bump, and I suppose the nurses had been too rattled to take 'em off since. Maybe it wa'n't a sight to see them bobbin' up and down!

Woodie, he looks around and sees what's comin' after him, and waves for 'em to go back. Not much. They stops when he stops, but when he starts again they're right after him. He unlimbers a little and tries to break away, but the kids jump into the double-quick and hang to him.

I knew what was up then. They'd sized him up for a cop, and cops was what they was used to. You've seen those lines of Home kids bein' passed across the street by the traffic squad? Well, havin' lost their nurses, and not seein' anything familiar-lookin' about Sadie or me, they'd made up their minds that Woodie was it. They meant to stick to him until something better showed up. Once I got this through my nut, I makes a sprint to the head of the column and gets a grip on the Cap.

"See here, Woodie!" says I, "you're elected. You'll have to stay by the kids until relieved. They've adopted you."

"Aw, I say now," says he, "this is too beastly absurd, y'know. It's a bore. Why, if I don't find some place or other very soon I'll get a wetting."

"You can't go anywhere without those kids," says I; "so come along back with us. We need you in our business."

He didn't like it a little bit, for he'd figured on shakin' the bunch of us; but he had to go, and when he came right-about-face the procession did a snake movement there in the road that would have done credit to the Seventh Regiment.

I'd been lookin' around for a place to make for. Off over the trees toward the Sound was a flag-pole that I reckoned stood on some kind of a buildin' and there was a road runnin' that way.

"We'll mosey down towards that," says I; "but we could make better time, Cap'n, if you'd get your party down to light-weight marchin' order. Suppose you give the command for them to shed them cork jackets."

"Why, really, now," says he, lookin' over the crowd kind of helpless, "I haven't the faintest idea how to do it, y'know."

"Well, it's up to you," says I. "Make a speech to 'em."

Say, that was the dopiest bunch of kids I ever saw. They acted like they wa'n't more'n half alive, standin' there in pairs, as quiet as sheep, waitin' for the word. But that's the way they bring 'em up in these Homes, like so many machines, and they didn't know how to act any other way. Sadie saw it, and dropped down

on her knees to gather in as many as she could get her arms around.

"Oh, you poor little wretches!" says she, beginnin' to sniffle.

"Cut it out, Sadie!" says I. "There ain't any time for that. Unbuckle them belts. Turn to, Cap, and get on the job. You're in this."

As soon as Woodie showed 'em what was wanted, though, they skinned themselves out of those canvas sinkers in no time at all. We left the truck in the road, and with the English gent for drum-major, Sadie in the middle, and me playin' snapper on the end, we starts for the flag-pole. I thought maybe it might be a hotel; but when we got where the road opened out of the woods to show us how near the Sound we was, I sees that it's a yacht club, with a lot of flags flyin' and a whole bunch of boats anchored off. About then we felt the first wet spots.

"They've got to take us into that club-house," says Sadie.

We'd got as far as the gates, one of these fancy kind, with a hood top over the posts, like the roof of a summer-house, when the sprinkler was turned on in earnest. Woodie was gettin' rain-drops on his new uniform, and he didn't like it.

"I'll stay here," says he, and bolts under cover.

The Incubator kids swings like they was on a pivot, and piles in after him. There wasn't anything to do then but stop under the gate, seein' as the club-house was a hundred yards or so off. I snaked Woodie out, though, and made him help me range the youngsters under the middle of the roof; and when we'd got 'em packed in four deep, with Sadie squeezed in too,

there wa'n't an inch of room for either of us left.

And was it rainin'? Wow! You'd thought four eights had been rung in and all the water-towers in New York was turned loose on us. And the thunder kept rippin' and roarin', and the chain-lightnin' streaked things up like the finish of one of Colonel Pain's exhibits.

"Sing to them!" shouts Sadie. "It's the only way to keep them from being scared to death. Sing!"

"Do you hear that, Woodie?" says I across the top of their heads. "Sing to 'em, you lobster!"

The Captain was standing just on the other side of the bunch. He'd got the front half of him under cover, but there wasn't room for the rest; so it didn't do him much good, for the roof eaves was leakin' down the back of his neck at the rate of a gallon a minute.

"Only fu-fu-fawncy!" says he. "I don't fu-feel like singing, y'know."

"Make a noise like you did then," says I. "Come on, now!"

"But really, I cawn't," says he. "I n-never sing, y'know."

Say, that gave me the backache. "See here, Woodie," says I, lookin' as wicked as I knew how, "you sing or there'll be trouble! Hit 'er up, now!"

That fetched him. He opened his face like he'd swallowed something bitter, made one or two false starts, and strikes up "God save the King." I didn't know the words to that, so I makes a stab at "Everybody Works but Father," and Sadie tackles somethin' else.

For a trio that was the limit. The kids hadn't seemed to mind the thunder and lightnin' a whole lot, but when that three-cornered symphony of ours cut loose they begins to look wild. Some of 'em was diggin' their fists into their eyes and preparin' to leak brine, when all of a sudden Woodie gets into his stride and lets go of three or four notes that sounded as if they might belong together.

That seemed to cheer those youngsters up a lot. One or two pipes up, kind of scared and trembly, but hangin' onto the tune, and the next thing we knew they was all at it, givin' us "My Country 'Tis of Thee" in as fine shape as you'd want to hear. We quit then, and listened. They followed up with a couple of good old hymns and, if I hadn't been afloat from my shoes up, I might have enjoyed the program. It was a good exhibition of nerve, too. Most kids of that size would have gone up in the air and howled blue murder. But they didn't even show white around the gills.

Inside of ten minutes it was all over. The shower had moved off up into Connecticut, where maybe it was wanted worse, and we got our heads together to map out the next act. Sadie had the say. She was for takin' the kids over to the swell yacht club there, and waitin' until the nurses or some one else came to take 'em off our hands. That suited me; but when it came to gettin' Captain Sir Hunter to march up front and set the pace, he made a strong kick.

"Oh, by Jove, now!" says he, "I couldn't think of it. Why, I've been a guest here, y'know, and I might meet some of the fellows."

"What luck!" says Sadie. "That'll be lovely if you do."

"You come along, Woodie," says I. "We've got our orders."

He might have been a stiff-lookin' Englishman before, but he was limp enough now. He looked like a linen collar that had been through the wash and hadn't reached the starch tub. His coat-tails was still drippin' water, and when he walked it sounded like some one was moppin' up a marble floor.

"Only fancy what they'll think!" he kept sayin' to himself as we got under way.

"They'll take you for an anti-race-suicide club," says I; "so brace up."

We hadn't more'n struck the club-house porch, and the steward had rushed out to drive us away, when Sadie gives another one of them squeals that means she's sighted something good.

"Oh, there's the Dixie Girl!" says she.

"You must have 'em bad," says I. "I don't see any girl."

"The yacht!" says she, pointin' to the end of the dock. "That big white one. It's Mrs. Brinley Cubbs' Dixie Girl. You wait here until I see if she's aboard," and off she goes.

So we lined up in front to wait, the Incubators never takin' their eyes off'n Woodie, and him as pink as a sportin' extra, and sayin' things under his breath. Every time he took a hitch sideways the whole line dressed. All hands from the club turned out to see the show, and the rockin'-chair skippers made funny cracks at us.

"Ahoy the nursery!" says one guy. "Where you bound for?"

"Ask popper," says I. "He's got the tickets."

Woodie kept his face turned and his jaw shut, and if he had any friends in the crowd I guess they didn't

spot him. I'll bet he wa'n't sorry when Sadie shows up on deck and waves for us to come on.

Mrs. Brinley Cubbs was there, all right. She was a tall, loppy kind of female, ready to gush over anything. As well as I could size up the game, she was one of the near-swells, with plenty of gilt but not enough sense to use it right. Her feelin's were in good workin' order though, and she was willin' to listen to any program that Sadie had on hand.

"Bring the little dears right aboard," says she, "and we'll have them home before dark. Why, Sir Hunter, is it really you?"

"I'm not altogether sure," says Woodie, "whether it's I or not," and he made a dive to get below.

Well, say, that was a yacht and a half, that Dixie Girl! The inside of her was slicker'n any parlor car you ever saw. While they was gettin' up steam, and all the way down to the East river, Mrs. Cubbs had the hired hands luggin' up everything eatable they could find, from chicken salad to ice-cream, and we all took a hand passin' it out to that Incubator bunch.

They knew what grub was, yes, yes! There wasn't any holdin' back for an imitation cop to give the signal. The way they did stow in good things that they'd probably never dreamed about before was enough to make a man wish he had John D.'s pile and Jake Riis's heart. I forgot all about bein' wet, and so did Woodie. To see him jugglin' stacks of loaded plates you'd think he'd graduated from a ham-and factory. He seemed to like it, too, and he was wearin' what passes for a grin among the English aristocracy. By the time we got to the dock at East 34th-st. there was more solid comfort and stomach-ache in that cabin than it'll hold again in a thousand years.

Sadie had me go ashore and telephone for two of them big rubber-neck wagons. That gave us time to get the sleepers woke up and arrange 'em on the dock. Just as we was gettin' the last of the kids loaded in for their ride up to the Home, a roundsman shows up with two cops.

"Where do you kids belong?" he sings out.

With that there comes a howl, and the whole bunch yells:

> Hot pertater—cold termater—alligater—Rome!
> We're the girls from the Incubator Home!

"Caught with the goods!" says he, turnin' to the Cap'n and me. "You're arrested for wholesale kidnappin'. There's a general alarm out for youse."

"Ah, back to the goats!" says I. "You don't think we look nutty enough to steal a whole orphan asylum, do you, Rounds?"

"I wouldn't trust either of you alone with a brick block," says he. "And your side partner with the Salvation Army coat on looks like a yegg man to me."

"Now will you be nice, Cap?" says I.

At this Sadie and Mrs. Cubbs tries to butt in, but that roundsman had a head like a choppin' block. He said the two nurses had come to town and reported that they'd been held up in the woods and that all the kids had been swiped. As Woodie fitted one of the descriptions, we had to go to the station, that was all there was about it.

And say, if the Sarge hadn't happened to have been one of my old backers, we'd have put in the night with the drunk and disorderlies. Course, when I tells me little tale, the Sarge give me the ha-ha and

scratches our names off the book. We didn't lose any time either, in hittin' the Studio, where there was a hot bath and dry towels.

But paste this in your Panama: Next time me and Woodie goes out to rescue the fatherless, we takes along our raincoats. We've shook hands on that.

CHAPTER XIII

How's Woodie and Sadie comin' on? Ah, say! you don't want to take the things she does too serious. It's got to be a real live one that interests Sadie. And, anyway, Woodie's willing to take oath that she put up a job on him. So it's all off.

And I guess I ain't so popular with her as I might be. Anyway, I wouldn't blame her, after the exhibition I made the other night, for classin' me with the phonies. It was trouble I hunted up all by myself.

Say, if I hadn't been havin' a dopey streak I'd a known something was about due. There hadn't a thing happened to me for more'n a week, when Pinckney blows into the Studio one mornin', just casual like, as if he'd only come in 'cause he found the door open. That should have put me leary, but it didn't. I gives him the hail, and tells him, he's lookin' like a pink just off the ice.

"Shorty," says he, "how are you on charity?"

"I'm a cinch," says I. "Every panhandler north of

Madison Square knows he can work me for a beer check any time he can run me down."

"Then you'll be glad to exercise your talents in aid of a worthy cause," says he.

"It don't follow," says I. "The deservin' poor I passes up. There's too much done for 'em, as it is. It's the unworthy kind that wins my coin. They enjoys it more and has a harder time gettin' it."

"Your logic is good, Shorty," says he, "and I think I agree with your sentiments. But this is a case where charity is only an excuse. The ladies out at Rockywold are getting up an affair for the benefit of something or other, no one seems to know just what, and they've put you down for a little bag punching and club swinging."

"Then wire 'em to scratch the entry," says I. "I don't make any orchestra circle plays that I can dodge, and when it comes to fightin' the leather before a bunch of peacock millinery I renigs every time. I'll put on Swifty Joe as a sub., if you've got to have some one."

Pinckney shook his head at that. "No," says he, "I'll tell Sadie she must leave you off the program."

"Hold on," says I. "Was it Sadie billed me for this stunt?"

He said it was.

"Then I'm on the job," says I. "Oh, you can grin your ears off, I don't care."

Well, that was what fetched me out to Rockywold on a Friday night, when I had a right to be watchin' the amateur try-outs at the Maryborough Club instead. The show wasn't until Saturday evenin', but Pinckney said I ought to be there for the dress rehearsal.

"There's only about a dozen guests there now, so you needn't get skittish," says he.

And a dozen don't go far towards fillin' up a place like Rockywold. Say, if I had the price, I'd like a shack where I could take care of more or less comp'ny without settin' up cot beds, but I'll be blistered if I can see the fun in runnin' a free hotel like that.

These amateur shows are apt to be pretty punk, but I could see that, barrin' myself, there was a fair aggregation of talent on hand. The star was a googoo-eyed girl who did a barefoot specialty, recitin' pomes to music, and accompanyin' herself with a kind of parlor hoochee-coochee that would have drawn capacity houses at Dreamland. Then there was a pretty boy who could do things to the piano, a funeral-faced duck that could tell funny stories, and a bunch of six or eight likely-lookin' ladies and gents who'd laid themselves out to prance through what they called a minuet. Lastly there was me an' Miriam.

She was one of these limp, shingle-chested girls, Miriam was. She didn't have much to say, so I didn't take any particular notice of her. But at the rehearsal I got next to the fact that she could tease music out of a violin in great style. It was all right if you shut your eyes, for Miriam wasn't what you'd call a pastel. She was built a good deal on the lines of an L-road pillar, but that didn't bar her from wearin' one of these short-sleeved square-necked, girly-girly dresses that didn't leave you much in doubt as to her framework.

Yes, Miriam could have stood a few well-placed pads. She'd lived long enough to have found that out, too, but they was missin'. I should guess that Miriam

had begun exhibitin' her collar-bones to society about the time poor old John L. fought the battle of New Orleans. Yet when she snuggled the butt end of that violin down under her chin and squinted at you across the bridge, she had all the motions of a high-school girl.

'Course, I didn't dope all this out to myself at the time; for, as I was sayin', I didn't size her up special. But it all came to me afterwards—yes, yes!

The excitement broke loose along about the middle of that first night. I'd turned in about an hour before, and I was poundin' my ear like a circus hand on a Sunday lay-over, when I hears the trouble cry. First off I wasn't goin' to do any more than turn over and get a fresh hold on the mattress, for I ain't much on routin' out for fires unless I feel the head-board gettin' hot. But then I wakes up enough to remember that Rockywold is a long ways outside the metropolitan fire district, and I begins to throw clothes onto myself.

Inside of two minutes I was outdoors lookin' for a chance to win a Carnegie medal. There wasn't any show at all, though. The fire, what there was of it, was in the kitchen, in the basement of the wing where the help stays. Half a dozen stablemen had put it out with the garden hose, and were finishin' the job by soakin' one of the cooks, when I showed up.

I watched 'em for a while, and then started back to my room. Somehow I got twisted up in the shrubbery, and instead of goin' back the way I came, I gets around on the other corner. Just about then a ground-floor window is shoved up, and a female in white floats out on a little stone balcony. She waves her arms and begins to call for help.

"You're late," says I. "It's all over."

That didn't satisfy her at all, though. Some smoke and steam was still comin' from the far side of the buildin', and it was blowin' in through another window.

"Help, help!" she squeals. "Help, before I jump!"

"I wouldn't," says I, "they've gone home with the life net."

"The smoke, the smoke!" says she. "Oh, I must jump!"

"Well, if you've got the jumpin' fit," says I, "jump ahead; but if you can hold yourself in a minute, I'll bring a step-ladder."

"Then hurry, please hurry!" says she, and starts to climb up on the edge of the balcony.

It wa'n't more'n six feet to the turf anyway, and it wouldn't have been any killing matter if she had jumped, less'n she'd landed on her neck; but she was as looney as if she'd been standin' on top of the Flatiron Buildin'. Bein' as how I'd forgot to bring a step-ladder with me, I chases around after something she could come down on. The moon wasn't shinin' very bright though, and there didn't seem to be any boxes or barrels lyin' around loose, so I wasn't makin' much headway. But after awhile I gets hold of something that was the very ticket. It was one of these wooden stands for flower-pots. I lugs that over and sets it up under the window.

"Now if you'll just slide down onto that easy," says I, "your life is saved."

She looks at it once, and begins to flop her arms and take on again. "I never can do it, I know I can't!" says she. "I'll fall, I'll fall!"

Well, it was a case of Shorty McCabe to the rescue, after all. "Coming up!" says I, and hops on the thing, holdin' out me paws.

She didn't need any more coaxin'. She scrabbled over that balcony rail and got a shoulder clutch on me that you couldn't have loosened with a crowbar. I gathered in the rest of her with my left hand and steadied myself with the other. Lucky she wasn't a heavy-weight, or that pot-holder wouldn't have stood the strain. It creaked some as we went down, but it held together.

"Street floor, all out!" says I, as I hit the grass.

But that didn't even get a wiggle out of her.

"It's all over," says I. "You're rescued."

Talk about your cling-stones! She was it. Never a move. I couldn't tell whether she'd fainted, or was too scared to let go. But it was up to me to do something. I couldn't stand there for the rest of the night holdin' a strange lady draped the way she was, and it didn't seem to be just the right thing to sit down to it. Besides, one of her elbows was tryin' to puncture my right lung.

"If you're over the fire panic, I'll try and hoist you back through the window, miss," says I.

She wasn't ready to do any conversin' then, though. She was just holdin' onto me like I was too good a thing to let slip.

"Well, it looks to me as though we'd got to make a front entrance," says I; "but I hope the audience'll be slim," and with that I starts to finish the lap around the house and make for the double doors.



One of her elbows was tryin' to puncture my right lung.

I've carried weight before, but never that kind, and it seemed like that blamed house was as big around as a city block. Once or twice we butted into the bushes, and another time I near tumbled the two of us into the pool of a fountain; but after awhile I struck the front porch, some out of breath, and with a few wisps of black hair in my eyes, but still in the game. The lady hadn't made a murmur, and she hadn't slacked her clinch.

I was hopin' to slide in quiet, without bein' spotted by anyone, for most of the women had gone back to bed, and I could hear the men down in the billiard room clickin' glasses over an extra dream-soother. Luck was against me, though. Right under the newel-post light stood Pinckney, wearin' a silk pajama coat outside of a pair of black broadcloth trousers. When he sees me and what I was luggin' he looks kind of pleased.

"Hello, Shorty!" says he. "What have you there?"

"It might be a porous-plaster, by the way it sticks," says I, "but it ain't. It's a lady I've been rescuin' while the rest of you guys was standin' around watchin' a wet cook."

"By Jove!" says Pinckney, steppin' up and takin' a close look. "Miriam!"

"Thanks," says I. "We ain't been introduced yet. Do you mind unhookin' her fingers from the back of my neck?"

But all he did was to stand there with his mouth corners workin', and them black eyes of his winkin' like a pair of arc lights.

"It's too pretty a picture to spoil," says he. "So

touching! Reminds me of Andromeda and What's-his-name. Just keep that pose a minute, will you, until I bring up the rest of the fellows?"

"You'll bring up nothin'," says I, reachin' out with one hand and gettin' a grip on the collar of his silk jacket. "Now get busy, or off comes your kimono."

With that he quits kiddin' and goes to work on Miriam's fingers, and in about a minute she gives a little jump, like she'd just heard the breakfast bell.

"Why!" says she. "Where am I?"

"Right where you landed five minutes ago," says I.

Then she shudders all over and squeals: "Oh! A man! A man!"

"Sure," says I, "you didn't take me for a Morris chair, did you?"

Miriam didn't linger for any more. She lets loose a holler that near splits me ear open, slides down so fast that her bare tootsies hit the floor with a spat, grabs her what-d'ye-call-it up away from her ankles with both hands, and sprints down the hall as if she was makin' for the last car.

"Say," says I, gettin' me neck out of crook, "I wish that thought had come to her sooner. I feel as if I'd been squeezed by a pair of ice-tongs. If she can hug like that in her sleep, what could she do when she was wide awake?"

"Shorty," says Pinckney, with his face as solemn as a preacher's, "I'm pained and astonished at this."

"Me, too," says I.

"Don't jest," says he. "This looks to me like an attempt at kidnapping."

"If you'd had that grip on you, I guess you'd have thought it was the real thing," says I. "But here's a little tip I want to pass on to you: Don't go spreadin' this josh business around the lot, or your show'll be minus a star act. I'll stand for all the private kiddin' you can hand out, but I've got my objections to playin' a public joke-book part. Now, will you quit?"

He was mighty disappointed at havin' to do it, but he gave his word, and I makes tracks up stairs, glad enough to be let off so easy.

"It was a queer kind of a faint, if that's what it was," says I to myself. "I'll bet I fights shy of anything more of the kind that I sees comin' my way. This is what I gets for strayin' so far from Broadway."

But a little thing like that don't interfere with my sleepin', when slumber's on the card, and I proceeds to tear off what was due me on the eight-hour sched., and maybe a little more.

I didn't get a sight of Miriam all day long. Not that I was strainin' my eyes any. There was somethin' better to look at—Sadie, for instance. 'Course Pinckney was bossin' the show, but she was bossin' him, and anyone else that was handy. They were goin' to pull off the racket in the ball-room, and Sadie found a lot to do to it. She's a hummer, Sadie is. Maybe she wa'n't brought up among bow-legged English butlers and a lot of Swedish maids, but she's learned the trick of gettin' 'em to break their necks for her whenever she says the word.

All the forenoon more folks kept comin' on every train, and there was two rows of them big, deep-breathin' tourin' cars in the stables. By dinnertime Rockywold looked like a Saratoga hotel durin' the racin' season. Chappies were playin' lawn tennis, and

luggin' golf bags around, and keepin' the ivories rollin', while the front walks and porches might have been Fifth-ave. on a Monday afternoon, from the dry-goods that was bein' sported there.

I stowed myself away in a corner of the billiard-room and didn't mix much, but I was takin' it all in. Not that I was feelin' lonesome, or anything like that. I likes to see any sort of fun, even if it ain't just my kind. And besides, there was more or less in the bunch that I knew first-rate. But I don't care about pushin' to the front until I gets the call.

So everything runs along smooth, and I was figurin' on makin' a late train down to Primrose Park after I'd done my little turn. I didn't care much about seein' the show, so I stuck to the dressin'-room until they sends word that it was my next. We'd had the punchin'-bag apparatus rigged up in the forenoon, and there wasn't anything left to be done but hook on the leather and spread out the mat.

Pinckney was doin' the announcin' and the jolly he gives me before he lugs me out was somethin' fierce. I reckon I was blushin' some when I went on. I took just one squint at the mob and felt a chill down my spine. Say, it's one thing to step up before a gang of sports in a hall, and another to prance out in ring clothes on a platform in front of two or three hundred real ladies and gents wearin' their evenin' togs.

There I was, though, and the crowd doin' the hurrah act for all it was worth. When I gets the bag goin' I feels better, and whatever grouch I has against Pinckney for not lettin' me wear my gym. suit I puts into short-arm punches on the pigskin. The stunt seemed to take. I could tell that by the buzz that came over the footlights. No matter what you're

doin', whether it's makin' campaign speeches, or stoppin' a comer in six rounds, it's always a help to know that you've got the crowd with you.

By the time I'd got well warmed up, and was throwin' in all the flourishes that's been invented—double ducks, side-step and swing, shoulder work, and so on—I felt real chipper. I makes a grandstand finish, and then has the nerve to face the audience and do a matinée bend. As I did that I gets my lamps fixed on some one in the front row.

Say, if you've ever done much on the platform, you know how sometimes you'll get a squint at a pair of eyes down front and can't get yourself away from 'em after that. Well, that was the way with me then. There was rows and rows of faces that all looked alike, but this one phiz seemed to stand right out; and to save me, all I could do was to stare back.

It belonged to Miriam. She had her chin tucked down, and her head canted to one side, and her mouth puckered into the mushiest kind of a grin you ever saw. Her eyes were rolled up real kittenish, too. Oh, it was a combination to make a man strike his grandmother, that look she was sendin' up to me. I wanted to dodge it and pick up another, but there was no more gettin' away from it than as if I was bein' followed by a search-light. Worst of it was, I could feel myself grinnin' back at her just as mushy. I was gettin' sillier every breath, and I might have got as far as blowin' kisses at her if I hadn't pulled myself together and begun to juggle the Indian clubs, for the second half of my act.

All the ginger had faded out of me, though, and I cut the rest of it mighty short. As I comes off, Sadie grabs me and begins to tell me what a hit I'd made, and how tickled she was, but I shakes her off.

"What's your great rush, Shorty?" says she.

"I've got a date to fill down the road," says I, and I makes a quick break for the dressin'-room. Honest, I was gettin' rattled for fear if Miriam should get another look at me she'd mesmerize me so I'd never wake up. I skins into my sack-suit, leaves word to have my bag expressed to town, and was just about to make a sudden exit when I bumps into some one at the front door.

"Oh, Mr. McCabe! How did you know where to find me?" says she.

Say, I'll give you one guess. Sure, it was Miriam again. She was got up expensive, all real lace and first-water sparks, and just as handsome as a towel rack. But the minute she turns on that gushy look I'm nailed to the spot, same as the rabbits they feed to the boa-constrictors up at the Zoo.

"You didn't think you could lose me so easy, did you?" says I.

"What a persistent fellow you are!" says she. "But, after you behaved so heroically last night, I suppose I must forgive you. Wasn't it silly of me to be so frightened?"

"Oh, well," says I, "the best of us is apt to go off our nut sometimes."

"How sweet of you to put it that way!" says she, and then she uncorks a giggle. "You did carry me so nicely, too."

That was a sample. I wouldn't go on and give you the whole book of the opera for money. It's somethin' I'm tryin' to forget. But we swapped that kind of slush for near half an hour, and when the show broke up and the crowd began to swarm towards the buffet lunch,

we was sittin' out on the porch in the moonlight, still at it. Pinckney says we was holdin' hands and gazin' at each other like a couple of spoons in the park. Maybe we was; I wouldn't swear different.

All I know is that after a while I looks up and sees Sadie standin' there pipin' us off, with her nose in the air and the heat lightnin' kind of glimmerin' in them blue eyes of hers. The spell was broke quicker'n when the curtain goes down and the ushers open the lobby doors. 'Course, Sadie's nothin' more'n an old friend of mine, and I'm no more to her, but you see it hadn't been so long ago that I'd been tellin' her what a sweat I was in to get away. She never said a word, only just sticks her chin up and laughs, and then goes on.

Next minute there shows up in front of us a fat old lady, with three chins and a waist like a clothes hamper.

"Miriam!" says she, and there was wire nails and broken glass in the way she said it, "Miriam, I think it was high time you retired."

"Bully for you, old girl!" I sings out. "And say, I'll give you a dollar if you'll lock her in until I can get away."

Perhaps that was a low-down thing to say, but I couldn't help lettin' it come. I didn't wait for any more remarks from either of 'em, but I grabs my hat and makes a dash across lots. I never stopped runnin' until I fetched the station, and it wasn't until after the train pulled out that I breathed real easy.

Bein' safe here in the Studio, with Swifty on guard, I might grin at the whole thing, if it wasn't for that laugh of Sadie's. That cut in deep. Two or three days later I hears from Pinckney.

"Shorty," says he, "you're a wonder. I fancy you don't know what you did in getting so chummy with Miriam under the very nose of that old watch-dog aunt of hers. Why, I know of fellows who've waited years for that chance."

"Back up!" says I. "She's a freak."

"But Miriam's worth three or four millions," says he.

"I don't care if she owns a bond factory," says I. "I'm no bone connoisseur, nor I don't make a specialty of collectin' autumn leaves. Do you know what I'd do if I was her aunt?"

"What?" says he.

"Well," says I, "I'd hang a red lantern on her."

CHAPTER XIV

You never can tell, though. The next thing I hears from Sadie is that she's so tickled over that Miriam mix-up that she wakes up in the night to snicker at it.

That makes me feel a lot easier in my mind, and just by way of bein' reckless, I starts out to buy a bull pup. I'd have got him, too, if it hadn't been for Doc Pinphoodle. Seein' the way things turned out, though, I don't bear no grudge.

It was the Doc I met first. I'd noticed him driftin' up and down the stairs once or twice, but didn't pipe

him off special. There's too many freaks around 42nd-st. 'to keep cases on all of 'em.

But one day about a month ago I was sittin' in the front office here, gettin' the ear-ache from hearing Swifty Joe tell about what he meant to do to Gans that last time, when the door swings open so hard it most takes the hinges off, and we sees a streak of arms and legs and tall hat makin' a dive under the bed couch in the corner.

"They've most got the range, Swifty," says I. "Two feet to the left and you'd been a bull's-eye. What you got your mouth open so wide for? Goin' to try to catch the next one in your teeth?"

Swifty didn't have time to uncork any repartee before someone struck the landing outside like they'd come down a flight of foldin' steps feet first, and a little, sharp-nosed woman, with purple flowers in her hat, bobs in and squints once at each of us. Say, I don't want to be looked at often like that! It felt like bein' sampled with a cheese tester.

"Did Montgomery Smith just come in here?" says she. "Did he? Don't lie, now! Where is he?" and the way she jerked them little black eyes around was enough to tear holes in the matting.

"Lady—" says I.

"Don't lady me, Mr. Fresh," says she, throwin' the gimlets my way. "And tell that broken-nosed child stealer over there to take that monkey grin off'm his face or I'll scratch his eyes out."

"Hully chee!" yells Swifty, throwin' a back somersault through the gym. door and snappin' the lock on his side.

"Anything more, miss?" says I. "We're here to please."

"Humph!" says she. "It'd take somethin' better than you to please me."

"Glad I was born lucky," thinks I, but I thought it under my breath.

"Is my Monty hiding in that room?" says she, jabbin' a finger at the gym.

"Cross my heart, he ain't," says I.

"I don't believe you could think quick enough to lie," says she, and with that she flips out about as fast as she came in.

I didn't stir until I hears her hit the lower hall. Then I bolts the door, goes and calls Swifty down off the top of the swingin' rope, and we comes to a parade rest alongside the couch.

"Monty, dear Monty," says I, "the cyclone's passed out to sea. Come out and give up your rain check."

He backs out feet first, climbs up on the couch, and drops his chin into his hands for a minute, while he gets over the worst of the shock. Say, at first sight he wa'n't a man you'd think any woman would lose her breath tryin' to catch, less'n she was his landlady, and that was what I figures out that this female peace disturber was.

Monty might have been a winner once, but it was a long spell back. Just then he was some out of repair. He had a head big enough for a college professor, and a crop of hair like an herb doctor, but his eyes were puffy underneath, and you could see by the *café au lait* tint to his face that his liver'd been on a long strike. He was fairly thick through the middle, but his legs didn't match the rest of him. They were too thin and too short.

"If I'd known you was comin', I'd had the scrub lady dust under there," says I; "but it won't need it now for a couple of weeks."

He makes a stab at sayin' something, but his breath hadn't come back yet. He revives enough though, to take a look at his clothes. Then he works his silk dicer up off'm his ears, and has a peek at that. It was a punky lid, all right, but it had saved a lot of wear on his koko when he made that slide for home plate and struck the wall.

"Was this a long-distance run, or just a hundred-yard sprint?" says I. "Never mind, if it comes hard. I don't blame you a bit for side-steppin' a heart to heart talk with any such a rough-and-ready converser as your friend. I'd do the same myself."

He looks up kind of grateful at that, and sticks out a soft, lady-like paw for me to shake. Say, that wasn't such a slow play, either! He was too groggy to say a word, but he comes pretty near winnin' me right there. I sets Swifty to work on him with the whisk-broom, hands out a glass of ice-water, and in a minute or so his voice comes back.

Oh, yes, he had one. It was a little shaky, but, barrin' that, it was as smooth as mayonnaise. And language! Why, just tellin' me how much obliged he was, he near stood the dictionary on its head. There wa'n't no doubt of his warm feelin' for me by the time he was through. It was almost like bein' adopted by a rich uncle.

"Oh, that's all right," says I. "You can use that couch any time the disappearin' fit comes on. She was hot on the trail; eh, Monty?"

"It was all a painful, absurd error," says he, "a mistaken identity, I presume. Permit me to make

myself known to you," and he shoves out his card.

Rasmulli Pinphoodle, J. R. D.—that was the way it read.

"Long ways from Smith, ain't it?" says I. "The first of it sounds like a Persian rug."

"My Hindu birth name," says he.

"I'd have bet you wa'n't a domestic filler," says I. "The Pinphoodle is English, ain't it?"

He smiles like I'd asked him to split a pint with me, and says that it was.

"But the tag on the end—J. R. D.—I passes up," says I. "Don't stand for Judge of Rent Dodgers, does it?"

"Those letters," says he, makin' another merry face, "represent the symbols of my Vedic progression."

"If I'd stopped to think once more, I'd fetched that," says I.

It was a jolly. I've never had the Vedic progression—anyways, not had enough to know it at the time—but I wasn't goin' to let him stun me that way.

Later on I got next to the fact that he was some kind of a healer, and that the proper thing to do was to call him Doc. Seems he had a four-by-nine office on the top floor back, over the Studio, and that he was just startin' to introduce the Vedic stunt to New York. Mostly he worked the mailorder racket. He showed me his ad in the Sunday personal column, and it was all to the velvet. Accordin' to his own specifications he was a head-liner in the East Indian philosophy business, whatever that was. He'd just torn himself away from the crowned heads of Europe for an American tour, and he stood ready to ladle out advice to statesmen, tinker up broken hearts, forecast

the future, and map out the road to Wellville for millionaires who'd gone off their feed.

He sure had a full bag of tricks to draw from; but I've noticed that the more glass balls you try to keep in the air at once, the surer you are to queer the act. And Pinphoodle didn't look like a gent that kept the receivin' teller workin' overtime.

There was something about him, though, that was kind of dignified. He was the style of chap that would blow his last dime on havin' his collar 'n' cuffs polished, and would go without eatin' rather than frisk the free lunch at a beer joint. He was willin' to talk about anything but the female with the gimlet eyes and the keen-cutter tongue.

"She is a mistaken, misguided person," says he. "And by the way, Professor McCabe, there is a fire-escape, I believe, which leads from my office down to your back windows. Would it be presuming too much if I should ask you to admit me there occasionally, in the event of my being—er—pursued again?"

"It ain't a board bill, is it, Doc?" says I.

"Nothing of the kind, I assure you," says he.

"Glad to hear it," says I. "As a rule, I don't run no rock-of-ages refuge, but I likes to be neighborly, so help yourself."

We fixed it up that way, and about every so often I'd see Doc Pinphoodle slidin' in the back window, with a worried look on his face, and iron rust on his trousers. He was a quiet neighbor, though—didn't torture the cornet, or deal in voice culture, or get me to cash checks that came back with remarks in red ink written on 'em.

I was wonderin' how the Vedic stunt was catchin' on,

when all of a sudden he buds out in an eight-dollar hat, this year's model, and begins to lug around an iv'ry-handled cane.

"I'm glad they're comin' your way, Doc," says I.

"Thanks," says he. "If I can in any measure repay some of the many kindnesses which you have—"

"Sponge it off," says I. "Maybe I'll want to throw a lady off the scent myself, some day."

A week or so later I misses him altogether, and the janitor tells me he's paid up and moved. Well, they come and go like that, so it don't do to feel lonesome; but I had the floor swept under the couch reg'lar, on a chance that he might show up again.

It was along about then that I hears about the bull pup. I'd been wantin' to have one out to Primrose Park—where I goes to prop up the weekend, you know. Pinckney was tellin' me of a friend of his that owns a likely-lookin' litter about two months old, so one Saturday afternoon I starts to hoof it over and size 'em up.

Now that was reg'lar, wa'n't it? You wouldn't think a two-eyed man like me could go astray just tryin' to pick out a bull pup, would you? But look what I runs into! I'd gone about four miles from home, and was hittin' up a Daddy Weston clip on the side path, when I sees one of them big bay-windowed bubbles slidin' past like a train of cars. There was a girl on the back seat that looks kind of natural. She sees me, too, shouts to François to put on the emergency brake, and begins wavin' her parasol at me to hurry on. It was Sadie Sullivan.

"Hurry up, Shorty! Run!" she yells. "There isn't a minute to lose."

I gets up on my toes at that, and I hadn't no more'n climbed aboard before the machine was tearin' up the macadam again.

"Anybody dyin'," says I, "or does the bargain counter close at five o'clock?"

"Aunt Tillie's eloping," says she, "and if we don't head her off she'll marry an old villain who ought to be in jail."

"Not Mr. Pinckney's Aunt Tillie, the old girl that owns the big place up near Blenmont?" says I.

"That's the one," says Sadie.

"Why she's qualified for an old ladies' home," says I. "You don't mean to say she's got kittenish at her age."

"There's no age limit to that kind of foolishness," says Sadie, "and this looks like a serious attack. We've got to stop it, though, for I promised Pinckney I'd stand guard until he came back from Newport."

I hadn't seen the old girl myself, but I knew her record, and now I got it revised to date. She'd hooked two husbands in her time, but neither of 'em had lasted long. Then she gave it up for a spell and it wa'n't until she was sixty-five that she begins to wear rainbow clothes again, and caper around like one of the squab octet. Lately she'd begun to show signs of wantin' to sit in a shady corner with a man.

Pinckney had discouraged a bald-headed minister, warned off an old bachelor, and dropped strong hints to a couple of widowers that took to callin' frequent for afternoon tea. Then a new one had showed up.

"He's a sticker, too," says Sadie. "I don't know where Aunt Tillie found him, but Pinckney says he's been coming out from the city every other day for a

couple of weeks. She's been meeting him at the station and taking him for drives. She says he's some sort of an East Indian priest, and that he's giving her lessons in a new faith cure that she's taking up. To-day, though, after she'd gone off, the housekeeper found that her trunk had been smuggled to the station. Then a note was picked up in her room. It said something about meeting her at the church of St. Paul's-in-the-Wood, at four-thirty, and was signed, 'Your darling Mulli.' Oh, dear, it's almost half-past now! Can't you go any faster, François?"

I thought he couldn't, but he did. He jammed the speed lever up another notch, and in a minute more we were hittin' only the high places. We caromed against them red-leather cushions like a couple of pebbles in a bottle, and it was a case of holdin' on and hoping the thing would stay right side up. I hadn't worked up much enthusiasm about gettin' to St. Paul's-in-the-Wood before, but I did then, all right. Never was so glad to see a church loom up as I was that one.

"That's her carriage at the chapel door," says Sadie. "Shorty, we must stop this thing."

"It's out of my line," says I, "but I'll help all I can."

We made a break for the front door and butted right in, just as though they'd sent us cards. It wasn't very light inside, but down at the far end we could see a little bunch of folks standin' around as if they was waitin' for somethin' to happen.

Sadie didn't make any false motions. She sailed down the center aisle and took Aunt Tillie by the arm. She was a dumpy, pie-faced old girl, with plenty of ballast to keep her shoes down, and a lot of genuine store hair that was puffed and waved like the

specimens you see in the Sixth-ave. show cases. She was actin' kind of nervous, and grinnin' a silly kind of grin, but when she spots Sadie she quit that and puts on a look like the hired girl wears when she's been caught bein' kissed by the grocery boy.

"You haven't done it, have you?" says Sadie.

"No," says Aunt Tillie; "but it's going to be done just as soon as the rector gets on his other coat."

"Now please don't, Mrs. Winfield," says Sadie, gettin' a waist grip on the old girl, and rubbin' her cheek up against her shoulder in that purry, coaxin' way she has. "You know how badly we should all feel if it didn't turn out well, and Pinckney—"

"He's a meddlesome, impertinent young scamp!" says Aunt Tillie, growin' red under the layers of rice powder. "Haven't I a right to marry without consulting him, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, yes, of course," says Sadie, soothing her down, "but Pinckney says—"

"Don't tell me anything that he says, not a word!" she shouts. "I won't listen to it. He had the impudence to suggest that my dear Mulli was a—a corn doctor, or something like that."

"Did he?" says Sadie. "I wouldn't have thought it of Pinckney. Well, just to show him that he was wrong, I would put this affair off until you can have a regular church wedding; with invitations, and ushers, and pretty flower girls. And you ought to have a gray-silk wedding-gown—you'd look perfectly stunning in gray silk, you know. Wouldn't all that be much nicer than running off like this, as though you were ashamed of something?"

Say, it was a slick game of talk that Sadie handed out

then, for she was playin' for time. But Aunt Tillie was no come-on.

"Mulli doesn't want to wait another day," says she, "and neither do I, so that settles it. And here comes the rector, now."

"Looks like we'd played out our hand, don't it?" I whispered to Sadie.

"Wait!" says she. "I want to get a good look at the man."

He was trailin' along after the minister, and it wa'n't until he was within six feet of me that I saw who it was.

"Hello, Doc!" says I. "So you're the dear Mulli, are you?"

He near jumped through his collar, Pinphoodle did, when he gets his lamps on me. It only lasted a minute, though, for he was a quick recoverer.

"Why, professor!" says he. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

"I guess some of that's right," says I.

And say, but he was dressed for the joyful bridegroom part—striped trousers, frock coat, white puff tie, and white gloves! He'd had a close shave and a shampoo, and the massage artist had rubbed out some of the swellin' from under his eyes. Didn't look much like the has-been that done the dive under the couch at the Studio.

"Well, well!" says I. "This is where the private cinch comes in, eh? Doc, you've got a head like a horse."

"I should think he'd be ashamed of himself," says Sadie, "running off with a silly old woman who might be his mother."

The Sullivan temper had got the best of her. After that the deep lard was all over the cook stove. Aunt Tillie throws four cat-fits to the minute, and lets loose on Sadie with all kinds of polite jabs that she can lay her tongue to. Then Doc steps up, puts a manly arm half-way round her belt line, and lets her weep on the silk facing of his Sunday coat.

By this time the preacher was all broke up. He was a nice healthy-lookin' young chap, one of the strawb'ry-blond kind, with pink and white cheeks, and hair as soft as a toy spaniel's. It turns out that he was new to the job, and this was his first call to spiel off the splicin' service.

"I trust," says he, "that there is nothing—er—that no one has any valid objection to the uniting of this couple?"

"I will convince you of that," says Doc Pinphoodle, speakin' up brisk and cocky, "by putting to this young lady a few pertinent questions."

Well, he did. As a cross-examiner for the defense he was a regular Joe Choate. Inside of two minutes he'd made torn mosquito netting of Sadie's kick, shown her up for a rank outsider, and put us both through the ropes.

"Now," says he, with a kind of calm, satisfied I've-swallowed-the-canary smile, "we will proceed with the ceremony."

Sadie was near cryin with the mad in her, she bein' a hard loser at any game. "You're an old fraud, that's what you are!" she spits out. "And you're just marrying Pinckney's silly old aunt to get her money."

But that rolls off Doc like a damage suit off'm a corporation. He just smiles back at her, and goes to

chirkin' up Aunt Tillie. Doc was it, and knew where he stood. He had us down and out. In five minutes more he'd have a two-hundred-pound wife and a fifty-thousand-dollar income.

"It strikes me," says he, over his shoulder, "that if I had got hold of a fortune in the way you got yours, young woman, I wouldn't make any comments about mercenary marriages."

Well, say, up to that time I had a half-baked idea that maybe I wasn't called on to block his little game, but when he begins to rub it into Sadie I sours on Doc right away. And it always does take one or two good punches to warm me up to a scrap. I begins to do some swift thinkin'.

"Hold on there, Doc," says I. "I'll give in that you've got our case quashed as it stood. But maybe there's someone else that's got an interest in these doin's."

"Ah!" says he. "And who might that be?"

"Mrs. Montgomery Smith," says I.

It was a chance shot, but it rung the bell. Doc goes as limp as a straw hat that's been hooked up after a dip in the bay, and his eyes took on that shifty look they had the first time I ever saw him.

"Why," says he, swallowin' hard, and doing his best to get back the stiff front he'd been puttin' up—"why, there's no such person."

"No?" says I. "How about the one that calls you Monty and runs you under the couch?"

"It's a lie!" says he. "She's nothing to me, nothing at all."

"Oh, well," says I, "that's between you and her. She says different. Anyway, she's come clear up here to

put in her bid; so it's no more'n fair to give her a show. I'll just bring her in."

As I starts towards the front door Doc gives me one look, to see if I mean business. Then, Sadie says, he turns the color of pie-crust, drops Aunt Tillie as if she was a live wire, and jumps through the back door like he'd been kicked by a mule. I got back just in time to see him hurdle a five-foot hedge without stirrin' a leaf, and the last glimpse we got of him he was headin' for a stretch of woods up Connecticut way.

"Looks like you'd just missed assistin' at a case of bigamy," says I to the young preacher, as we was bringin' Aunt Tillie out of her faint.

"Shocking!" says he. "Shocking!" as he fans himself with a hymn book. He was takin' it hard.

Aunt Tillie wouldn't speak to any of us, and as we bundled her into her carriage and sent her home she looked as mad as a settin' hen with her feet tied.

"Shorty," says Sadie, on the way back, "that was an elegant bluff you put up."

"Lucky my hand wa'n't called," says I. "But it was rough on the preacher chap, wa'n't it? He had his mouth all made up to marry some one. Blamed if I didn't want to offer him a job myself."

"And who would you have picked out, Shorty?" says she.

"Well," says I, lookin' her over wishful, "there ain't never been but one girl that I'd choose for a side partner, and she's out of my class now."

"Was her name Sullivan once?" says she.

"It was," says I.

She didn't say anything more for a spell after that, and I didn't; but there's times when conversation don't fit in. All I know is that you can sit just as close on the back seat of one of them big benzine carts as you can on a parlor sofa; and with Sadie snuggled up against me I felt like it was always goin' to be summer, with Sousa's band playin' somewhere behind the rubber trees.

First thing I knows we fetches up at my shack in Primrose Park, and I was standin' on the horse block, alongside the bubble. Sadie'd dropped both hands on my shoulders and was turnin' them eyes of hers on me at close range. François was lookin' straight ahead, and there wasn't anyone in sight. So I just took a good look into that pair of Irish blues.

"What a chump you are, Shorty!" she whispers.

"Ah, quit your kiddin'," says I. But I didn't make any move, and she didn't.

"Well, good-by," says she, lettin' out a long breath.

"By-by, Sadie," says I, and off she goes.

Say, I don't know how it was, but I've been feelin' ever since that I'd missed somethin' that was comin' to me. Maybe it was that bull pup I forgot to buy.

CHAPTER XV

Flag it, now, and I'll say it for you. Yes, you read about it in the papers, and says you: "Is it all so?"

Well, some of it was, and some of it wasn't. But what do you expect? No two of the crowd would tell it the same way, if they was put on the stand the next minute. Here's the way it looked from where I stood, though; and I was some close, wa'n't I?

You see, after I woke up from that last trance, I gets to thinkin' about Sadie, and Miriam, and all them false alarms I've been ringin' in; and, says I to myself: "Shorty, if I couldn't make a better showin' than that, I'd quit the game." So I quits. I chases myself back to town for good, says hello to all the boys, and tells Swifty Joe, if he sees me makin' another move towards the country, to heave a sand bag at me.

Not that there was any loud call for me to tend out so strict on the physical culture game. I'd been kind of easin' up on that lately, and dippin' into outside things; and it was them I needed to keep closer track of. You know I've got a couple of flat houses up on the West side, and if you let them agents run things their own way you'll be makin' almost enough to buy new hall carpets once a year.

Then there was ripe chances I was afraid of missin'. You see, knockin' around so much with the fat wads, I often sees spots where a few dollars could be planted right. Sometimes it's a hunch on the market, and then again it's a straight steer on a slice of foot front that's goin' cheap. I do a lot of dickerin' that way.

Well, I'd just pushed through a deal that leaves me considerable on velvet, and I was feelin' kind of flush and sassy, when Mr. Ogden calls me up, and wants to know if I can make use of a gilt edged bargain.

"Oh, I don't know," says I. "What's it look like?"

"It's The Toreador," says he.

"Sounds good," says I. "How much?"

"Cost me forty thousand two years ago," says he, "but I'm turning it over for twenty-five to the first bidder."

Well, say, when old man Ogden slings cold figures at you like that, you can gamble that he's talkin' straight.

"I'm it, then," says I. "Fifteen down, ten on mortgage."

"That suits me," says he. "I'll have the papers made out to-day."

"And say," says I, "what is this Toreador, anyway; a race horse, or an elevator apartment?"

Would you guess it? He'd hung up the receiver. That's what I got for bein' sporty. But I wa'n't goin' to renig at that stage. I fills out me little blue check and sends her in, and that night I goes to bed without knowin' what it is that I've passed up my coin for.

It must have been near noon the next day, for I'd written a letter and got my check book stubs added up so they come within two or three hundred of what the bank folks made it, when a footman in white panties and a plum colored coat drifts through the Studio door.

"Is this Professor McCabe, sir?" says he.

"Yep," says I.

"There's a lady below, sir," says he. "Can she come up?"

"It ain't reg'lar," says I, "but I s'pose there's no dodgin' her. Tell her to come ahead."

Say, I wa'n't just fixed up for receivin' carriage comp'ny. When I writes and figures I gets more mussed up than as if I'd been in a free-for-all. I'd shed

my coat on one chair, my vest on another, slipped off my suspenders, rumpled my hair, and got ink on me in seventeen places. But I didn't have sense enough to say I was out.

In a minute or so there was a click-click on the stairs, I gets a whiff of l'Issoir Danube, and in comes a veiled lady. She was a brandied peach; from the outside lines, anyway. Them clothes of hers couldn't have left Paris more'n a month before, and they clung to her like a wet undershirt to a fat man. And if you had any doubts as to whether or no she had the goods, all you had to do was to squint at the big amethyst in the handle of the gold lorgnette she wore around her neck. For a Felix-Tiffany combination, she was it. You've seen women of that kind—reg'lar walkin' expense accounts.

"So you are Shorty McCabe, are you?" says she, givin' me a customs inspector look-over, and kind of sniffin'.

"Sorry I don't suit," says I.

"How odd!" says she. "I must make a note of that."

"Help yourself," says I. "Is there anything else?"

"Is it true," says she, "that you have bought The Toreador?"

"Who's been givin' you that?" says I, prickin' up my ears.

"Mr. Ogden," says she.

"He's an authority," says I, "and what he says along that line I don't dispute."

"Then you *have* bought it?" says she. "How exasperating! I was going to get Mr. Ogden to let me have The Toreador this week."

"The whole of it?" says I.

"Why, of course," says she.

"Gee!" thinks I. "It can't be an apartment house, then. Maybe it's an oil paintin', or a parlor car."

"But there!" she goes on. "I suppose you only bought it as a speculation. Now what is your price for next week?"

Say, for the love of Pete, I couldn't tell what it was gave me a grouch. Maybe it was only the off-hand way she threw it out, or the snippy chin-toss that goes with it. But I felt like I'd been stroked with a piece of sand paper.

"It's too bad," says I, "but you've made a wrong guess. I'm usin' The Toreador next week myself."

"*You!*" says she, and through the gauze curtain I could see her hump her eyebrows.

That finished the job. Even if The Toreador turned out to be a new opera house or a tourin' balloon, I was goin' to keep it busy for the next seven days.

"Why not me?" I says.

"All alone?" says she.

Well, I didn't know where it would land me, but I wa'n't goin' to have her tag me for a solitaire spender.

"Not much," says I. "I was just makin' up my list. How do you spell Mrs. Twombley-Crane's last name—with a k?"

"Really!" says she. "Do you mean to say that *she* is to be one of your guests? Then you must be going just where I'd planned to go—to the Newport evolutions?"

"Sure thing," says I. I'd heard of their havin' all kinds of fool doin's at Newport, but evolutions wa'n't one of 'em. The bluff had to be made good, though.

The lady pushes up her mosquito nettin' drop, like she wanted to see if I was unwindin' the string ball or not, and then for a minute she taps her chin with them foldin' eyeglasses. I wanted to sing out to her that she'd dent the enamel if she didn't quit bein' so careless, but I held in. Say, what's the use eatin' carrots and takin' buttermilk baths, when you can have a mercerized complexion like that laid on at the shop?

All of a sudden she flashes up a little silver case, and pushes out a visitin' card.

"There's my name and address," says she. "If you should change your mind about using The Toreador, you may telephone me; and I hope you will."

"Oh!" says I, spellin' out the old English letters. "I've heard Pinckney speak of you. Well, say, seein' as you're so anxious, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll just put you down for an in-vite. How does that hit you?"

I had an idea she might blow up, at that. But say, there was nothin' of the kind.

"Why," says she, "I'm not sure but that would be quite a novelty. Yes, you may count on me. Good day," and she was gone without so much as a "thank you kindly."

When I came to, and had sized the thing all up, it looked like I'd got in over my head. I was due to stand for some kind of a racket, but whether it was a picnic, or a surprise party, I didn't know. What I wanted just then was information, and for certain kinds of knowledge there's nobody like Pinckney.

I was dead lucky to locate him, too; but I took a chance on his bein' in town, so I found him at his special corner table in the palm room, just lookin' a dry Martini in the face.

"Hello, Shorty!" says he. "Haven't lunched yet, have you? Join me."

"I will," says I, "if you'll answer me two questions. First off, what is it that Mr. Ogden owns that he calls The Toreador?"

"Why," says Pinckney, "that's his steam yacht."

"Steam yacht!" says I, gettin' a good grip on the chair, to keep from falling out. "And me dead sure it was a bunch of six-room-and-baths! Oh, well, let that pass. What's done is done. Now what's this evolution stunt they're pullin' off up at Newport next week?"

"The naval evolutions, of course," says Pinckney. "You should read the newspapers, Shorty."

"I do," says I, "but I didn't see a word about it on the sportin' page."

He gave me the program, though; how they was goin' to have a sham torpedo battle, windin' up with a grand illumination of the fleet.

"You ought to run up and see it," says he.

"It looks like I had to," says I.

"But what about The Toreador?" says he.

"Nothin' much," says I,—"only I've bought the blamed thing."

It was Pinckney's turn to grow bug-eyed; but when I'd told him all about the deal, and how the veiled lady had stung me into sayin' what I had, he's as pleased as if he'd been readin' the joke column.

"Shorty," says he, "you're a genius. Why, that's the very thing to do. Get together your party, steam up there, anchor in the harbor, and see the show. It's deuced good form, you know."

"That's all I want," says I. "Just so long's I'm sure I'm in good form, I'm happy. But say, I wouldn't dare tackle it unless you went along."

I found out later that Pinckney'd turned down no less than three parties of that kind, but when I puts it up to him, he never fiddles short at all.

"Why, I'd be delighted," says he.

With that we finishes our cold fried egg salad, or whatever fancy dish it was we had on the platter, and then we pikes off to the pier where he says the yacht's tied up. And say, she was somethin' of a boat. She made that Dixie Girl, that Woodie and me brought the Incubator kids down in, look like a canoe. She was white all over, except for a gold streak around her, and a couple of dinky yellow masts.

I didn't go down stairs. We plants ourselves in some green cushioned easy chairs under the back stoop awnin', and I sends one of the white-wing hired hands after the conductor.

"It's the sailing master you want," says Pinckney.

"Well, bring him along, too," says I.

But there was only the one. He was a solid built, quiet spoken chap, with a full set of red whiskers and a state of Maine accent. He said his name was Bassett, and that he was just packin' his things to go ashore, havin' heard that the boat had been sold.

"The shore'll be there next month," says I. "What'll

you take to stay on the job?"

Well, he didn't want no iron worker's wages, bein' content with a captain's salary, so I tells him to take hold right where he left off and tell the rest of the gang they could do the same. So inside of half an hour I has a couple of dozen men on the pay roll.

"Gee!" says I to Pinckney, "I'm glad the yachtin' season's most over when I begin; if it wa'n't I'm thinkin' I'd have to go out nights with a jimmy."

But Pinckney's busy with his silver pencil, writin' down names.

"There!" says he. "I've thought of a dozen nice people that I'm sure of, and perhaps I'll remember a few more in the mean time."

"Say," says I, "have you got the Twombley-Cranes and Sadie on that list?"

"Oh, certainly," says he, "especially Sadie." And then he grins.

Well, for about four days I'm the busiest man out of a job in New York. I carries a bunch of railroad stocks on margin, trades off some Bronx buildin' lots for a cold water tenement, and unloads a street openin' contract that I bought off'm a Tammany Hall man. Every time I thinks of that steam yacht, with all them hands burnin' up my money, I goes out and does some more hustlin'. Say, there's nothin' like needin' the dough, for keepin' a feller up on his toes, is there? And when the time came to knock off, and I'd reckoned up how much I was to the good, I feels like Johnny Gates after he's cashed his chips.

Yes, indeed, I was a gay boy as I goes aboard The Toreador and waits for the crowd to come along. I'd made myself a present of a white flannel suit and a

Willie Collier yachtin' cap, and if there'd been an orchestra down front I could have done a yo-ho-ho baritone solo right off the reel.

Pinckney shows up in good season, and he'd fetched his people, all right. There was a string of tourin' cars and carriages half a block long. They was all friends of mine, too; from Sadie to the little old bishop. And they was nice, decent folks. Maybe they don't have their pictures printed in the Sunday editions as often as some, but they're ice cutters, just the same. They all said it was lovely of me to remember 'em.

"Ah, put it away!" says I. "You folks has been blowin' me, off'n on for a year, and this is my first set-up. I ain't wise to the way things ought to be done on one of these boudoir boats, but I wants everyone to be happy. Don't wait for the Who-wants-the-waiter call, but just act like you was all star boarders. Everything in sight is yours, from, the wicker chairs on deck, to what's in the ice box below. And I want to say right here that I'm mighty glad you've come. Now, Mr. Bassett, I guess you can tie her loose."

Honest, that was the first speech I ever shot off, in or out of the ring, but it seemed to go. They was all pattin' me on the back, and givin' me the grand jolly, when a cab comes down the pier on the jump, someone waves a red parasol, and out floats the veiled lady, with a maid. I'd sent her an invite, just as I said I would, but I never thought she'd have the front to take it up.

"We came near missin' you," says I, steppin' up to the gang plank.

But say, she was so busy shakin' hands and callin' the rest of 'em by their front names, that she didn't see me at all. It was that way all day long, while we was

goin' up the Sound. She cornered almost everyone else, and chinned to 'em real earnest about somethin' or other, but I never seemed to get in range. Well, I was havin' too good a time to feel cut up about it, but I couldn't help bein' curious.

It wa'n't until dinner time that I got a line on her. Say, she was a converser. No matter what was opened up, she heard her cue. And knock! Why, she had a tack hammer in each hand. They was cute, spiteful little taps, that made you snicker first, and then you got ashamed of yourself for doin' it.

"Ain't she got any friends besides what's here?" says I to Sadie, after we'd got through and gone up front by ourselves to see the moon rise.

"I'm not so sure about even these," says Sadie.

"Then why didn't someone cut in with a come-back?" says I.

"It isn't exactly safe," says she.

"Oh!" says I. "She's that kind, is she? You'd think from her talk that she knew only two sorts of women: them that had been divorced, and them that ought to be."

"I'm afraid that's her specialty," says Sadie.

"Sort of a lady muck-raker, eh?" says I. "Well I hope all she says ain't so. How about it?"

Well, that was the beginnin' of a heart to heart talk that lasted for a good many miles. Somehow Sadie and I'd never had a real quiet chance like that before, and it came out that we had a lot to say to each other. I don't know how it was, but the rest of 'em seemed to let us alone. Some was back under the awnin' and others was down stairs, playin' whist.

There was singin' too, but we couldn't make out just who was doin' it, and didn't care a whole lot.

Anyway, it was the bulliest ride I ever had. The moon come up over Long Island, as big as a bill board and as yellow as a chorus girl's hair; the air was kind of soft and warm, like you gets it in the front room of a Turkish bath place; and there wa'n't anything on either side nearer'n the shore lights, way off in the dark. It wa'n't any time for thinkin' hard of anyone, so we agrees that the lady muck-raker must have been born with a bad taste in her mouth and can't help it, lettin' her slide at that.

I forgot what it was we did talk about. It was each other mostly, I guess. You can do that when you've known anyone as long as we had; and it's a comfort, once in a while.

After a bit, though, we didn't say much of any thing. I was just lookin' at Sadie. And say, I've seen her when I thought she looked mighty nice, but I'd never got just that view of her before, with the moon kind of touchin' up her red hair, and her cheeks and neck lookin' like white satin.

She has a way, too, of starin' off at nothin' at all, sometimes, and then there's a look in her eyes, and a little twist to her mouth corners, that just sets me tinglin' all over with the wantin' to put me arm around her and tell her that no matter who else goes back on her, there'll always be Shorty McCabe to fall back on. It wa'n't anything new or sudden for me. I'd felt like that many a time, and as far back as when her mother ran a prune dispensary next door to my house, and she an' I used to sit on the front steps after supper. She'd have spells of starin' that way then, 'choppin' off a laugh in the middle to do it, and maybe finishin' up with a giggle. I guess that's only

the Irish in her, but it always caught me.

She must have been lookin' that way then, for the first thing I knows I'd reached out and pulled her up close. She never kicks, but just snuggles her head down on my shoulder, with them blue eyes turned so I could look way down into 'em. At that I draws a deep breath.

"Sadie," says I, husky like, "you're the best ever!"

She only smiles, kind of sober, but kind of contented, too.

"And if I had the nerve," says I, "I'd ask you to be Mrs. Shorty McCabe."

"It's too bad you've lost your nerve so sudden," says she.

"Wha-a-at!" says I. "Will you, Sadie; will you?"

"Silly!" says she. "Of course I will."

"Bless the saints!" says I. "When?"

"Any time, Shorty," says she. "You've been long enough about it, goodness knows."

Well say! You talk about your whirlwind finishes! I guess the crowd that was bunched there in the cabin, sayin' good night, must have thought I'd gone clear off my pivot, the way I comes down the stairs.

"Where's the bishop?" says I.

"Right here, my boy," says he. "What's the matter?"

"Matter?" says I. "Why, it's the greatest thing ever happened, and nobody to it. Folks," I says, "if the bishop is willin', and hasn't forgot his lines, there's goin' to be a weddin' take place right here in the main tent inside of fifteen minutes. Whoop-e-e!" I yells. "Sadie's said she would!"

That's the way we did it, too; and for a short notice affair, it was done in style; even to a weddin' march that someone feeds into the pianola and sets goin'. Pinckney digs up a ring, and the bishop gives us the nicest little off-hand talk you ever listens to. I blushes, and Sadie blushes, and Mrs. Twombley-Crane hugs both of us when it's over. Then I has the steward lug up a lot of cold bottles and I breaks a ten year drouth with a whole glass of fizz water.

Right in the middle of the toast the sailin' master shows up on the stairs and says: "We're just makin' the harbor, sir."

"Forget it, Bassett," says I. "I want you to drink to the health of Mrs. McCabe."

And when he hears what's been goin' on, he's the most flabbergasted sailor man I ever saw. After that we all has to go up and take a look at Newport and the warships, but they was all as black and quiet as a side street in Brooklyn after ten o'clock.

"Say, it's a shame all them folks ain't in on this," says I. "Bassett, can't you make a little noise, just to let 'em know we're celebratin'?"

Bassett thought he could. He hadn't made any mistake, either. In two shakes we had all the lights aboard turned on, and skyrockets whizzin' up as fast as they could be touched off.

Did we wake up them warships? Well, rather. First we hears a lot of dinner gongs goin' off. Then colored lanterns was sent up, whistles blew, bugles bugled, and inside of three minutes by the watch there was guns bang-bangin' away like it was the Fourth of July.

"Great Scott!" says Pinckney, "I never knew before

that the United States navy would turn out in the middle of the night to salute a private yacht."

"It depends on who owns the yacht. Eh, Sadie?" says I.

By the time the guns got through bangin' we had a dozen search-lights turned on us, and a strong lunged gent on the nearest warship was yellin' things at us through a megaphone.

"He wants to know, sir," says Bassett, "if we've got the Secretary of the Navy on board."

"Tell him not guilty," says I, and Bassett did.

That didn't satisfy Mr. Officer though. "Then why in thunder," says he, "do you make such a fuss coming into the harbor at this time of night?"

"Because I've just been gettin' married," says I, in my Bosco voice.

"And who the blazes are you?" says he.

"Can't you guess?" says I. "I'm Shorty McCabe."

"Oh!" says he, and you could hear the ha-ha's come across the water from all along the line. There was a wait for a minute, and then he hails again. "Ahoy, Shorty McCabe!" says he. "The Commodore presents his compliments and says he hopes you liked your wedding salute; and if you don't mind, the gun crews want to give three cheers for Mrs. McCabe."

So Sadie and I stands up by the rail, with more lime light on us than we ever had before or since, and about six hundred Jackies gives us their college cry. There wa'n't anything slow about that as a send off for a weddin' tour, was there? But then, as I says to Sadie: "Look who we are."

And say, if you'll be on the dock when we come back

from Bar Harbor, we'll take you along down to Old Point with us. Eh? Think it over.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SHORTY MCCABE ***

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