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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, THE MIDNIGHT PASSENGER *****

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THE MIDNIGHT PASSENGER

A NOVEL

By RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

THE MIDNIGHT PASSENGER

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BOOK I.

UNDER THE ARCH.

CHAPTER I.

THE DANUBE PICTURE.

There was no air of uncertainty upon the handsome countenance of Mr. Randall Clayton as he stepped out of the elevator of a sedate Fourteenth Street business building and approvingly sniffed the April morning breeze.

On this particular Saturday of ninety-seven, the shopping multitude was already pouring from the Scylla of Simpson, Crawford & Simpson's on Sixth Avenue--and its Charybdis of the Big Store--past the jungles of Altman's, Ehrich's and O'Neill's--to dash feebly upon the buttressed corner of Macy's, and then die away in refluent, diverted waves, lost in the fastnesses of McCreery's and Wanamaker's, far down Broadway.

The pulses of the young man were vaguely thrilled with the coming of spring, and so he complacently took in the never-ceasing tide of eager women, on the street's shady side, with one comprehensive and kindly glance.

For six long years he had cautiously studied that same sea of always anxious faces! He well knew all the types from the disdainful woman of fashion, the crafty daughter of sin, the vacuous country visitor, down to the argus-eyed mere de famille, sternly resolute in her set purpose of making three dollars take the place of five, by some heaven-sent bargain.

Countless times he had threaded this restless multitude, with an alert devotion to the interests of the Western Trading Company. He was, to the ordinary lounge, but the type of the average well-groomed New York business man.

And yet, his watchful eyes swept keenly to right and left, as he breasted the singularly inharmonious waves of the weaker sex.

His left hand firmly gripped a Russian leather portmanteau of

substantial construction, while his right lay loosely in the pocket of his modish spring overcoat.

To one having the gift of Asmodeus, that well-gloved right hand would have been revealed as resting upon the handle of a heavy revolver, and the contents of the tourist-looking portmanteau been known as some thirty-eight thousand dollars in well-thumbed currency and greasy checks of polyglot signatures.

It was the "short day" of the week's business, and the usual route for making his bank deposit lay before him. Down University Place to Eighth Street he was bent, thus avoiding the Broadway crush, and over to the shaded counting rooms of the Astor Place Bank.

Clayton's mind was concentrated, as usual, upon his important business. Few of the neighbors in the great office building knew of the vast interests represented by the modest sign "Western Trading Company."

Certain gray-bearded bookkeepers, a couple of brisk correspondents, a stony-faced woman stenographer, with a couple of ferret-eyed office boys were the office force, besides the travelling manager and Mr. Randall Clayton, the cashier and personal representative of the absent "head," who rarely left his Detroit home to interfere with the well-oiled movements of the "New York end."

But daily, rain or shine, Mr. Randall Clayton himself took his way to the bank to deposit the funds to meet their never-ceasing outflow of Western exchange. There was an air of grave prosperity in the sober offices of the great cattle company which impressed even the casual wanderer.

Silence and decorum marked all the transactions of the weekly messengers, paying in the heavy accounts of the hundreds of New York butchers who drew their daily supplies from these great occidental cattle handlers. The various departments of the great business were always kept as sealed books to each other, and only Emil Einstein, Clayton's own office boy, knew how much treasure was daily packed away into that innocent looking portmanteau.

Mr. Somers, the head accountant, with a grave bow, always verified the sealed delivery slip of the funds, and compared it with the returned bank books, carefully filing away all these in his own private safe with Clayton's returned list of Western and Southern exchange.

On the sunny April morning, Randall Clayton was weary of the confining life of the silence haunted office rooms, where he patiently bore the strain of his grave duties, with a cautious avoidance of useless communication, fencing him even from his fellow employees.

As he strode along the crowded street, his jaded soul yearned for the wild majesty of the far off Montana mountains, and the untrammelled

life of the Western frontier, given up perforce, when his father's death had left him, twelve years before, alone in the world.

"The same old daily grind," he murmured. "Oh! For one good long gallop on the lonely prairies--a day in the forest with the antlered elk, an afternoon among the gray boulders of the McCloud River."

He sighed as he recalled his drudging rise in business, since his father's old partner had set his life work out before him, when the lonely boy had finished with honor his course at Ann Arbor.

Four years at college, two with "the chief," under his own watchful eye, and then that six years of a dragging upward pull in the New York office had made a man of him; but, only a self-contained and prematurely jaded man.

"It's too much to lose," he muttered, as he thought of his hardly earned promotion, his four thousand a year, and--the future prospects. He was the envy of his limited coterie, even though his few intimates looked with a certain awe upon a man who was obliged to file a bond of fifty thousand dollars for his vast pecuniary handlings.

For the great association of Western cattle men were hard taskmasters and only the head lawyers in Detroit knew that Hugh Worthington had annually sent in his own personal check to the Fidelity Company to pay the dues of the bond of the son of a man to whom he had owed his own first rise.

"It's too hard," mused his patron, "to spy on the lad and then make him pay for it. But it has to be," he sighed. "There are the snares and pitfalls."

Many an eye approvingly followed the stalwart young man still in the flush of his unsapped vigor, at twenty-eight, as the tall form swept on through the crowds of polyglot women.

There was a healthy tan on Clayton's face, his brown hair crisply curled upon a well-set head, his keen blue eye and soldierly mustache finely setting off a frank and engaging countenance.

The grave sense of gratitude, his place of trust, the stern admonitions of his sententious patron, Worthington, and the counsel of his only chum--a hard-headed young New York lawyer--had kept him so far from the prehensile clutches of the Jezebel-infested Tenderloin.

Clayton had fallen judiciously into the haven of a well-chosen apartment, sharing his intimacy only with Arthur Ferris, the brisk-eyed advocate whose curt office missive always enforced the lagging collections of the New York branch.

Simultaneously with his last promotion, however, there came to Clayton the knowledge that he was continuously and systematically

watched by the unseen agents of the Fidelity Company.

And, yet strong in his own determination, he bore as a galling chain, growing heavier with the months, the knowledge that the eye of the secret agent would surely follow him, in all the "pleasures" incident to his time of life and rising financial station.

The sword hung over his defenceless head!--too busy for the gad-fly life of the clubs--a strong, lonely swimmer in the tide of New York life, he was as yet a comparative stranger to Folly and her motley crew of merry wantons in gay Gotham.

The theater, some good music, his athletics, and the hastily snatched pleasures of vacation, together with the limp reading of an overweary man, afforded him such desultory pleasures as fell in his path.

On his way now to a luncheon engagement with his comrade Ferris, at Taylor's, his mind was busied only with the care of the daily treasure trust.

Serenely confident, he swung along, his two score thousand of dollars being a mere ordinary deposit, in a business which, in holiday seasons, and at times of monthly settlements, often stuffed the portmanteau with sums rising the hundred thousand.

His callous eye vainly rested on the peopled loneliness of the bustling crowd, intent only upon the possibility of a sudden dash of some sneak thief, or the chance malignity of some swell "mobster."

Suddenly Randall Clayton paused in his swinging stride. For a face, rapt in its intense earnestness, broke in upon his gnawing loneliness. A lovely vision, a very Rose of Life's Garden!

"By Jove!" he murmured, as with a new-born craft he lingered for a moment before a window with an "art" display, only to watch the receding form of the unknown beauty, whose single glance had left him standing there spellbound.

There was an exquisite artist proof of a romantic scene upon the Danube displayed in the place of honor, a view of one of the grandly witching defiles where the mighty stream immortalized by Strauss breaks out of the smiling Austrian plains, dashing along into the Iron Gates of gallant Hungary.

He could not, as yet, tell what manner of woman she might be, but his spirit burned within him as he felt the lingering spell of those dark, witching eyes, for they had rested upon his own, in an instant, unguarded glance of sympathy.

Mechanically following on, Clayton noted the refinement of the daintily cut dark dress, veiling a form of ravishing symmetry. There was a single red rose in the Polish toque, and that one touch

of color guided him as he followed the gracefully gliding unknown beauty.

Strangely stirred at heart, he marked the distinction of the lady's bearing, her well-gloved hand, clasping a music roll--and even the natty bottines had not escaped him. He saw all this before he was aware that he had passed on beyond University Place, with no other purpose than to gaze into those sweetly earnest eyes again. "Twenty-three--no, twenty-five," his keen perception told him, by right of the supple and imperially moulded form of womanly ripeness. And he wondered vaguely what daughter of the gods this might be--what heiress of the graces of the laughter-loving goddesses of old!

He quickened his pace in the narrow space between University Place and Broadway, fearful that he would lose that dark-eyed vision in the human breakers at the Broadway curve. But his grasp mechanically tightened upon his treasure, his right hand clutched the pistol butt more firmly, as his cheek reddened with an involuntary blush.

He had seen just such faces on the Prater in sparkling Vienna, and in the antique streets of Buda-Pesth on the one summer European run, snatched from the Moloch worship of the Almighty Dollar!

Such eyes, now soft and dreamy, then lit up with a merry challenge, had rested on the handsome young American tourist in the vaulted halls of the Wiener Cafe, where the Waltz King's witching melodies ruled the happy hour.

And supple forms like this he had often seen flitting among the cosses of the Margarethe Insel, when the yellow sunset rays shone golden on the gleaming Danube, and the purple shadows began to steal over the old fortress high uplifted there above Hungary's capital. Here was a truant beauty escaped from a land of dreams.

Clayton had followed the unknown over Broadway's dangerously choked throat, before the music roll gave him his clue. He was now in the musical center of New York, and in proximity to the modest foreign theaters where a conscientious art flourishes, as yet unknown to the garish play-houses of upper Broadway.

Some visiting singer, some transplanted "Kunstlerinn," he conjectured as, never ceasing that queenly stride, the unknown crossed Fourth Avenue toward the vicinity of Steinway's and the Irving Place Theater.

As yet he had not seen that bewitching face again, for he was a laggard in pursuit, his coward conscience smiting him for his first errant detour.

It seemed as if the money in that portmanteau rustled a portentous warning, but "a spirit in his feet" led him to execute a quick left-flank movement as he sped first across the triangle, passing under the shadow of the Washington statue (pride of the job brass

founder), and, with a stolen side glance, he surveyed the lady once more, as she leisurely mounted the steps of the "Restaurant Bavaria."

His eyes dropped in a strange confusion as he once more met the sweetly serious glance of those wonderful eyes, now resting upon him with a gleam of vaguely timid inquiry. The delicately moulded arm and slender hand were revealed, as with a graceful sweep the lady lifted her rustling drapery and disappeared within the doors of the one foreign cafe lingering reluctant on Union Square.

With a sigh, Randall Clayton turned back toward the south, for a hasty glance at a clock face told him that there was left him but fifteen minutes wherein to reach the Bank, before the brazen bells would clang high noon. His heart was beating strangely as he retraced his steps, for the ichor of young blood was boiling in his veins at last.

He was lost in a clouding day dream, as he recrossed Fourth Avenue and only dimly saw the foxy face of his office boy flash out of the jostling crowd on the corner before he darted over.

As he resolutely stemmed the tide pouring eastward, he had turned down Broadway before he realized that there had been a half smile of recognition on those rich red Hungarian lips, a wordless message in the dark splendors of the gleaming eyes.

Could it be? They had lingered but a few moments together gazing on the pictured glories of the distant Danube. Clayton felt that some new influence had suddenly loosened all the pent-up longings of his ardent nature. He was above all the vulgar pretenses of the "boulevardier." He now realized in a single moment the hollow loneliness of a life made up only of so many monthly pay days and so many dull returns of the four unheeded seasons. For his life had only been a heavy pathway of toil up an inclined plane of manifold resistances.

He recalled, how on his one European voyage, the distant gleam of a single silver sail far out on the blue rim of the pathless ocean had suddenly broken in upon the eternal loneliness of that watery waste.

And now, in all the peopled loneliness of all New York--hitherto a human desert for him--the glance of these same alien eyes had suddenly awakened him to yearnings for another life.

He was half way down the bustling Broadway to the bank before he dared ask himself if the bright, shy glances of these unforgotten eyes were meant for him.

"Perhaps," he muttered, and then his whole nature stifled the unworthy suggestion. No! On that fair face only truth and honor were mirrored. He was left alone absently checking up his deposit

list before he recalled all the proud and womanly bearing of the beautiful unknown.

There was in her every motion the distinction of an isolation from the contact of the meaner world! How hungrily he had watched her onward path he only knew now.

And, with a secret pride, he recalled how daintily, like the swift Camilla, she had sped onward through all those human billows heaving to and fro, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

He pocketed all his deposit slips, then glanced mechanically at the bank-book's entries, and wearily parried the badinage of the bright-faced young bank-teller.

Clayton slowly wandered over toward Taylor's, and he was still lost in his day-dream when he joined his chum, Arthur Ferris, finding the modest feast already on the table.

"By Jove, old man! You're 'way behind time," began the nervous lawyer. "I've got to hustle. I leave for Detroit on the evening train."

"What's up, Arthur?" demanded the laggard.

"I've just had a wire from Worthington," seriously replied his room-mate. "He is going to take a trip around the world, via San Francisco. It seems that Miss Alice's health is precarious. And, the 'Chief' is going to put me in special charge of all his personal interests during this stay of six or nine months. I am to go out for my instructions, travel on to the Pacific Coast with them, and then, returning, inspect all the cattle ranches on my way back to Detroit."

"I'm right glad to hear it, Arthur," said Clayton, warmly grasping his friend's hand. "I know Hugh Worthington's mental processes well! He wants some one to watch over all his home business machinery while he makes the grand tour. And he has selected one not in the local ring. It means a substantial promotion for you."

"I fondly hope so," replied Ferris. "He must have some such ideas, for I'm to turn over all my New York matters here to the senior in our firm, and I'm also to have a special power of attorney from the Chief. The annual election comes off before his return."

The two young men had finished their luncheon before Clayton thought of the loneliness which his chum's absence would entail upon him. There were many matters of detail to talk over, and Clayton hastened his return to the office to deposit his bank-book in order to be free to give the afternoon to his departing friend.

"I've only my office desk to clear up; it's a short horse and soon curried," laughed Ferris. "I'll run over to my place and then meet

you at our rooms, so you can see the last of me. We can talk things over while I pack up."

Ferris was busied with the cashier as young Einstein darted into Taylor's. The lad's face brightened as he saw Clayton.

"I brought you down this telegram marked 'Rush,'" he said, all out of breath. "I feared that you might go away for the afternoon." He was off like a shot, before Clayton tore open the yellow envelope.

It was a private despatch from Hugh Worthington announcing his own impending departure, and then directing all his mail to be forwarded to the Palace Hotel, San Francisco.

The last words were: "Kindly send me a private letter by Ferris, and give me any personal suggestions for handling the firm's business in my absence. Will write you fully on private affairs from San Francisco."

When Clayton parted with Ferris at the door of Taylor's, the two young men wended their separate ways, each busied with the vision of a fair woman.

Arthur Ferris, the dark "Pride of Columbia," as his college-mates fondly called him, now dreamed of nothing but Alice Worthington's golden hair and sapphire blue eyes, as the cable-car bore him swiftly downward to the office of Hatch & Ferris, at 105 Broad Street.

Seven years older than Clayton, the already successful lawyer recalled on his way the first confidences of the great capitalist, when Clayton was sent into Manhattan Island business whirlpool.

The silver-haired Detroit widower had forgotten that even New York City lawyers have hearts, when he had frankly admitted to Ferris the reasons for detaching Randall Clayton from his own household.

"You see, Ferris," reminiscently said the money magnate, "I owed my own rise to Clayton's ambitious father. When he retired from the old firm of Clayton & Worthington, Everett Clayton had a cool million. It was 'big money' in the days of seventy. But, plunging into a new railway with an end left hanging out on the wild prairies, the panic of '72 soon carried Clayton down.

"When he died, out West, I helped the orphan lad along. There was no trouble until Randall became an inmate of my household, after his graduation.

"I woke up, however, one day to find that my little Alice had leaped into womanhood at a bound. And so I have decided to push Clayton's fortunes from a safe distance. For, the social freedom of the college lad and the schoolgirl in short frocks cannot be allowed to the man of twenty-four and the blossoming girl of sixteen."

Hugh Worthington, giving over his protege to the watchful care of Arthur Ferris, old beyond his years, never realized the boundless ambitions of the aspiring New York lawyer.

Ferris, with an eye ambitiously fixed upon the Senate of the United States, had quickly become a living spirit of boundless energy in the Western Trading Company's service, and Miss Alice Worthington, on her New York visits, a girlish tyro, saw only the man, and not the lawyer, in her accomplished metropolitan cavalier.

And so the coming young advocate's heart bounded with delight at the six-weeks' future companionship of the woman whose unguarded heart had silently drifted toward him "along the line of least resistance."

Arthur Ferris burned now to make his calling and election sure, before this "round the world" trip should present an endless succession of fortune hunters to the gaze of the Detroit heiress.

Clayton, hastening back toward the office, was only intent upon the answer to his chief's despatch and he never noticed, across the street, the progress of Emil Einstein, threading the crowds swiftly, and yet furtively watching his master's progress. He reached Fourteenth Street two blocks in advance of his unsuspecting employer, and then paused for a moment in the shaded corridor of a photographer's atelier.

With a whispered word, the young spy slipped, eel-like, into the crowd and had regained his desk long before Randall Clayton reentered the office. The lad's face glowed with a secret triumph.

Clayton's countenance was flushed by some strong emotion as he absently entered the private office of the head accountant. The sharp clang of his bell brought the office boy at once to his side, when, ten minutes later, the young cashier handed to Einstein a telegram.

The doors of the various rooms were now clanging with the snap of the locks as the boy respectfully said, "Anything else for this afternoon, sir?" Clayton carelessly nodded for the lad's dismissal and then bowed his tired head upon his hands, as the nimble youth eagerly sped away to the telegraph office and his half holiday.

The office staff were all filing out, wearied with the week's work, and Robert Wade, Esq., the chief manager, stared in surprise as Clayton passed him without a word, in answer to his stately greeting. He watched the young man, who slowly descended by the stairway, forgetting the ready elevator service. "What's up with Clayton?" murmured the pompous official. "He forgot his manners!"

All unconscious of his strange actions, Randall Clayton slowly sought the street level, waiting until his collaborators had all departed. He then moved along again toward the window where the Danube view

still charmed the passerby.

Then, turning abruptly, he hurried away to a Broadway car, seeking the solitude of the cosy apartment in the still respectable "Thirties," which he had so long shared with Ferris.

He dared not, as yet, ask himself why Fate had shown him, a second time, at that very window, the graceful figure of the beautiful unknown.

But, there, with the slender music roll still clasped in her delicate hand, she stood, lingering a beautiful Peri in his path, on his return from the meeting with Ferris.

And he was not deceived this time. For the blush of semi-recognition, the womanly embarrassment as their eyes met in a sudden surprise, told him that she also had lingered for a moment at their involuntary trysting place.

It was in vain that he sought for any cogent reason for the reappearance of the unknown dark-eyed beauty.

There was no veiled suggestion in her wistful eyes, no lure of the fisher of men in the restrained mien of the lovely unknown. He paced his room for half an hour, until the arrival of Ferris brought about an active discussion of all their personal and business affairs which lasted until the coupe arrived to bear them to the station.

In the long examination of their mutual interests, Clayton had strangely forgotten to even mention the name of Miss Alice Worthington, for he was still keenly aware of the gradual fading away of the ties of friendly family intimacy which had once bound him to the Detroit household.

Moreover, loyal to his chum as he was, he could not forget how often, in the past two years, he had seen letters lying on Ferris' table, bearing the superscription of the woman who had been graduated by Fate from that dangerous rank of "Little Sister."

Before Ferris finally turned over his keys, the cool lawyer laid his hand gravely on Clayton's shoulder.

"Randall, my boy!" he said. "It's only fair to you to tell you that the Fidelity Company makes private reports to Hugh Worthington upon the inner life of all the bonded employees. Some of these documents have always been forwarded through me. Evidently there have been some new directions given on this matter.

"Worthington is a man who forgets nothing. You will be left alone. You know your dangerous trust. Be always on your guard!

"For, even though born in its whirl, there are dangers in New York which are sealed books to me, even now; and, you are a stranger

here, after all.

"Take care of yourself! Be watchful! There will be many jealous eyes spying upon your every movement, and strange eyes at that."

They entered the carriage in a constrained silence, in the early nightfall, and were soon whirled away toward the Forty-second Street Depot. Some overhanging shadow seemed to dampen the ardor of that friendly farewell, when the gliding train bore the lawyer away from his friend's sight.

At that very instant the office boy, Einstein, darted out of the great depot's main entrance and mingled with the passers by. "Now for Fritz Braun," he chuckled. "She has caught on at last! He followed her to the 'Bavaria.' The lawyer is gone for good! The field is clear. There's a twenty now in sight, and many a twenty to follow."

CHAPTER II.

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY.

While Randall Clayton was lingering moodily over a lonely dinner at the Grand Union, his office boy was dallying with a cigarette on the front platform of a Fourth Avenue car.

Emil Einstein had safely sized up the friendly adieu of the two room-mates, and was now hastening down to report his successful infamy.

"Too late for Sixth Avenue!" the hard-faced boy muttered. "Catch him at 'the Bavaria,' sure."

The round, gloating eyes of the young New York-nurtured Jew were ablaze with a fierce thirst for pleasure.

Round shouldered, strongly built, his Semitic countenance was all aglow with a superabundant vitality, and the pleasure-loving mouth alone belied the keen intelligence of the wide set Hebraic eyes.

An eleve of the gutters of New York's East-Side ghetto, dangerously half educated at the free public schools, Einstein, now nearing seventeen, joined the dashing villainy of the Bowery tough to the crafty long-headed scheming of the low-grade Israelite.

He had drank in all the precocious wiles of the Manhattan urchins quickly after his sturdy Odalisque mother had dragged him, a squalling urchin, out of the steerage confines of a cheap Hamburg steamer.

A reckless, resolute, conscienceless sinner was the handsome Leah Einstein; already, when, on the voyage, she fell under the influence of a man who found his ready tool in this greasy but symmetrical Esther, clad in her Polish rags.

When the decamping Viennese pharmacist had wearied of his low-life Venus, their joint operations soon made the East Side too hot for the man who boldly dared all, and who now yearned for a share of the fleecing of the fatuous New Yorkers.

The Austrian criminal fugitive, after some years of varied adventure, had circled back to New York City at last, and rejoiced to find in Leah's son, now a burly youth, a fit companion and second for his own craftily laid villainies. It was a capital for him, the legacy of her nurture and his own training.

Mr. Fritz Braun's broad white brow was gathered in an impatient frown as he strode out of Magdal's Pharmacy on Sixth Avenue and paced with dignity past all the minor notables of the street.

Hulking policemen, loquacious barber, marketman and newsdealer, small shop-keeper, and the saloon magnates, all knew the stolid reticent German who presided over the veiled mysteries of Magdal's.

The whole region of Sixth Avenue, between Twenty-third and Thirtieth, had its floating contingent of "sporting" men and women who well knew the crafty wisdom lurking behind the blue spectacles which veiled the pharmacist's piercing glances. Fritz Braun's "contingent" were a brood of the Devil's own children.

Fritz Braun was strangely three hours late upon this especial evening, but his step was evenly sedate as he entered Zimmermann's for his before dinner Kummel. A prosperous figure was he in his mouse-colored top-coat of fashionable cut, his immaculate silk hat, with the red dogskin gloves, and the heavy ivory-headed cane.

With his antique cameo scarf pin, his coat collar turned up around his flowing golden beard, he was the very type of the sedate burgher of Dresden or Leipzig. And yet many a dark secret lurked in that busy brain of his.

A dozen necks were craned after him, though, as he silently left the saloon and caught the down-town car.

For from Greely Square to Eighth Street, from the cork room of Koster & Bial's to the purlieus of old Clinton Place, all the "off color" men and women of New York's "fly" circles knew and feared

the steady eyes gleaming through the cerulean lenses.

"He's a deep one, the Professor," grunted the Hanoverian barkeeper. "Vat a lot 'e knows!" The Teuton rinsed his beer glasses with a vicious swirl as he exclaimed: "Like as not, choost so like, he's up to some new devilment! Niemand know vere 'e hangs out! He's a wonder, he is, dat same Fritz!"

But the pharmacist lost all his sedateness as he sprang out of the crosstown car after his transfer at Fourteenth Street and Fourth Avenue.

He was the nimblest crosser of the busy corner, and then gazed anxiously up and down the street, in front of the Restaurant Bavaria.

Wasting but a moment he smartly entered the cafe and then, with an air of proprietorship, entered a curtain-shaded alcove.

The waiter silently placed the carte du jour before him, and merely shook his head when Braun sharply demanded, "Any one here for me?"

A luxurious dinner was ordered, and the silent man was busied scanning the convives when Emil Einstein, cautiously entering without haste, furtively regarded all the diners.

They were the better class of artists--musical virtuosos, and floating foreigners of the Teutonic business circles of lower New York.

Frank, pleasure-loving continental women mingled freely with these materialistic Romeos, who preferred the comforting cuisine to the fiery and seductive cocktails of "The Opera" on the corner.

The artful Einstein was warily assuring himself that he was quite unknown to the convives before making his report to his real master and evil genius. For, young as he was, Emil Einstein well knew that the tyrant master, who had been his mother's cruel lover, might some day lure him on to the electric chair.

A guilty pride thrilled the depraved boy's heart to feel that he, alone, in all the crowded ward, knew what manner of human devil lurked behind those innocent-looking blue spectacles.

He had seen the ferocious grin which relaxed Fritz Braun's bearded lips into a cruel grin, as the sly lad made a gesture which indicated tidings of great joy. Einstein's dress and bearing was fully worthy of his respectable business station. He might well be taken for the precious "only son" of some well-to-do Jewish-American merchant.

Quick to learn, he had aped the mien of his American fellow employees, and his "educational evenings" at the "Irving Place," the "Thalia," and the "Germania" had given to his bearing what he

fondly deemed an "irresistible social swing."

Greedy of pleasures, gluttonous and covetous, the young Ishmael ardently looked forward to a comfortable ill-gotten revenue at the hands of the man, who--through a skilful manipulation of the German janitor of the Western Trading Company's office--had obtained the place of office boy, "with substantial references," for the son of his cast-off paramour.

Leah Einstein had long forgotten the face of the reckless Polish country noble who was the real father of this budding criminal, and the lad himself but dimly discerned the drift of his Mephistophelian patron's proposed villainy.

Timid and cowardly at heart, the young waif would have shuddered had he known of the callous-handed and desperate murders which had shocked Vienna just before Hugo Landor, a talented and handsome young chemist, disappeared forever in flight, lost under a cloud of scandal caused by drink and a maddening devotion to a baby-faced devil of the Ring Strasse Theater chorus, a woman at whose feet the hungry-eyed aristocrats had knelt to sue, a man-eater, a hard-hearted, velvet-eyed, reckless and defiant devil.

At an almost imperceptible nod Einstein drew near to his patron, taking the vacant place in the little alcove, a deux, with his back prudently screening him from any chance visitor who might know the Western Trading Company's personnel. Braun was eager for his spy's report now.

"All right, at last!" the youth huskily whispered. "I watched him meet her, at the picture window, you know. I had posted her! And then he slyly followed her over here and went three blocks out of his way to pipe her off here! So, after his lunch at Taylor's, I put her again onto his homeward way! And he's caught on! No matter! She will tell you the rest herself!"

When the eager lad had finished, Fritz Braun growled under his breath, "You are sure you made no bungle?"

"Dead sure," gaily answered the boy, draining his bock of Muenchner, "I followed him to the bank and to Taylor's, and he is unsuspecting of any plant, I know."

Braun's face relaxed as he pushed over a twenty-dollar bill to the young Judas. "Come in Monday, about ten," he said, carelessly. "You can go, now! I must hurry over to the river. I am late!"

There was a shifty light in Einstein's eyes as he mumbled, "I can tell you something else, if you'll do the right thing." Braun searched the young villain's face. "Go ahead! I'll pay you."

Emboldened by his success, Einstein loudly rapped to replenish his glass. He was now panting to escape for certain tender engagements

of his own.

"The firm's lawyer, Ferris, the man who lived with Mr. Clayton, has gone West for six months, so he will be left alone! I followed them and saw Ferris off on the train. I took a telegram to the office for Ferris and Clayton, so Clayton will be alone in the rooms. He's going to keep them, and I'm to go around there Monday and pack up all Mr. Ferris' little things."

"Good, capital!" said Fritz Braun, his eyes gleaming. "You must manage to get me a duplicate key of Clayton's rooms!"

"Easy enough," proudly answered the young rascal. "Mr. Clayton trusts me in all things, and often gives me his latch-key and the room keys when he wants anything from the apartment. Anything else?"

"Yes," stammered the lad, surprised at the stern glare of Braun's expectant eyes. "The Fidelity fellows have been piping off all Mr. Clayton's movements. They watch him on account of the big money that he handles every day. I know the man who shadows Clayton, twice a week, regular, on all his evening trips. They've got their spotters, too, in all the big bar-rooms, and all around the gambling houses, the race courses, Wall Street and the Tenderloin.

"Now, after Clayton left, to-day, Ferris the lawyer came in and told Mr. Robert Wade, that's our chief manager, that the Fidelity Company would make their, written reports twice a month to him, while the lawyer's gone."

"I must have these reports!" cried Braun, forgetting the raised pitch of his voice, but the Venus and Tannhauser coterie around were all now fondly busied with each other.

"I can get them! I have a key to Wade's own desk," glibly mouthed the young spy.

"How did you get it?" eagerly demanded the astonished Braun.

"I had it made to get at his cigars," proudly boasted the unabashed lad. "Wade keeps a couple of boxes of the best Havanas on Company account, for the 'big customers.' Yes, and a drop of good old cognac, too.

"There's often a bit of fun behind the ground glass partitions. I've scraped a little eye hole."

"You are your sly mother's own darling imp," growled Braun, bringing out his pocketbook. "She was the devil's own, too, before she got old and lost her good looks," he sighed.

"Tell me," said he, selecting a note with grave deliberation, "how much did Clayton deposit to-day?"

"Only thirty-eight thousand," contemptuously answered the boy, as he clutched the note now held out to him. "Sometimes it's a round hundred thousand," continued Emil, eager to show off his knowledge, "and on the annual settlements, July 1 to 4th, last year we put in two hundred thousand into the Astor Place. That's our biggest monthly settlement. I always help Mr. Clayton pack it up, in his own room, after he verifies the accountant's tabs."

Fritz Braun suddenly awoke from a reverie. "Get out of here now, and see that you post me on all that this Clayton is up to at night, on his Sundays and vacations. I'll give you a third twenty for the two keys. I may want to take a look at his rooms some Sunday when you are sporting out of town.

"And watch the spotters, too! You might do a good turn in pocket money by posting him, but only as I tell you, mind that! Now, don't go to the devil too fast. Do you ever give your mother any money?"

Einstein's vicious leer was a silent answer. "Tell her she shall have a new silk dress from me, if you keep your wits about you. Remember, Monday!"

The lad sped away at a curt nod of dismissal, and was soon lost in the devil's whirlpool of the Bowery.

But, as Mr. Fritz Braun sedately finished his cosy dinner, he saw strange golden gleams in the blue, wreathing smoke mists of his Perfectos.

"Two hundred thousand; that would be a stake. And July, too; this lawyer fellow gone. What a chance! There must be no mistake now! He must lead himself on, now. One prick of the hidden hook and this fat trout would be off forever I must see Irma and coach her. Donnerwetter! It's too good to be true. After all this waiting. And now I've got to keep my eyes on both the spider and the fly. Irma is such a tempestuous devil. If Leah only had her years and looks and dash, she would twist any man in the world around her finger. But I can never teach this Hungarian madcap, Leah's velvet softness and never-tiring patience."

The prosperous pharmacist gleefully paid for his dinner and nimbly chased an East-side ferry-bound car. He laughed in spite of himself at Emil's unflagging deviltry. "He is a credit to Leah's Polish blood and my Austrian nurture," mused Braun. "The young wretch might be dangerous, too. He must know nothing of my deep game."

"If this Clayton will only break into the flirtation in the right way, the victory is assured. But, if he were to show her off around town, or try and dodge these spotter fellows in New York, then I should lose a year's time, my expenses, and this heavy money stake. It's the one chance of a life time."

In half an hour, Fitz Braun, crossing on the Tenth Street Ferry to

Greenpoint, was soon lost, as was his wont, in the human hive of Brooklyn toilers. Men had seen him go over for years invariably on this ferry, his burly figure was always seen on the Fulton Ferry daily at half-past eight each morning, but not a soul among the thousand clients of Magdal's Pharmacy knew where the human fox, Fritz Braun, laid his head to rest at night.

From nine till four he lurked behind the high dispensing screen of Magdal's Pharmacy, his inner life and antecedents a sealed book to all the sleuth-eyed votaries of vice on Sixth Avenue.

And yet, for all his craft, on this balmy night of spring, the man who had buried Hugo Landor's stormy past forever under staid Fritz Braun's impenetrable mask, shivered while plotting his new iniquities lest the panther-footed pursuer might even now demand at his hand a life in return for those victims who had lain, staring eyed, cold in death, mute witness against him in far away Vienna. The terrible record of his past evil days haunted his every footstep now. He saw these avenging eyes even in his dreams.

There was but one who could lift the veil of the awful past. On this eventful night Fritz Braun hid, within his heart, an awful resolve, born of the fear of the disguised felon, floating uneasily in the maelstrom of a great city. "If she should betray me, and women are women, after all," he mused in his cowardly ferocity. "If she pulls this off for me, I'll"--he ceased, with an inward shudder, for he dared not give the awful thought its fitting frame.

"Only at the last," he murmured, as he sped along in Brooklyn's dingy water streets to take on another mask to veil his wolfishly evil life.

While snares and pitfalls were being laid for Randall Clayton's careless feet, that gentleman sat in a wrathful mood, pondering over Arthur Ferris' half-hearted disclosures. Clayton's face had frankly disclosed his displeasure at the false attitude of his chum, when Ferris reluctantly disclosed the fact of the secret financial espionage.

The three years of their past intimacy now took on a different color, at once, to the jaundiced eyes of the young cashier.

He had almost abruptly declined Ferris' invitation to spend Sunday at Seneca Lake, with the prosperous lawyer's mother and two sisters.

A feeling of bitter envy gnawed at Clayton's heart as he counted up the rapid rise of his quondam friend.

"So, he has been playing this double game for years; it must have been at Worthington's bidding. And why?"

It began to dawn at last upon Clayton that his Detroit patron had certainly followed a singular course in his apparent beneficence.

All unused to social intrigue, Clayton ignored the possible effect of his further presence in Worthington's household as an attractive young man when little Alice, at a bound, passed through the gates of girlhood and became the beautiful Miss Worthington. He had never seen the angel at his side, and yet Ferris, clearer eyed, had conquered in silent craft a golden future.

Clayton lingered at his table in the Grand Union cafe long after the waiter had removed his half-tasted dinner. He ordered an unaccustomed "highball" as he pondered over some means of circumventing the social treason of his dethroned "friend."

Clayton easily found a valid reason, for the semi-treason of Ferris.

"He is, after all, a stranger to me. His ambition leads him onward and upward. He would tread on my body gladly in mounting to the great monopolist's confidence. It is easy enough to see why Ferris has played both the spy and lickspittle. It has paid him well. Here's a jump to handling Worthington's power of attorney. Of course, Ferris seeks the position of the one Eastern lawyer of the great Trust.

"But," and a wave of anger swept away all the grateful memoirs of his youth, "why did this cool old badger, Worthington, take me to his home, later back me through college, and then, and there railroad me off here to be fenced around with his spies? He could have easily dropped me at any time. If he really cared to advance me, why not have made me a lawyer and breed me up to share his secrets?" There came no answer to his troubled mind as he sat there, alone, despising Ferris and doubting even Worthington's candor.

He had revolved several future plans of action in his mind before reaching the vitreous substratum of the generous high-ball. His first indignant impulse was to give up the joint apartment in a fortnight.

May the first was rapidly coming on by Nature's calendar of leaf and bird, of deepening green in the park and light-hearted woman's smartening attire.

"No," he resentfully cried, as he threw his cigar away and paid his bill, "that would only show them my hand. I'll make no open enemy of Ferris."

"But I will dodge Worthington's spies and then lock up my heart. I will keep on good terms with Worthington's lickspittle and try and later reach the secret of all this strange behavior. The old man seems unwilling to let me go out of his control, and yet he has tied me down to this ironclad money mill--as a slave rubbing the lamp for him." It opened a gloomy future to him, this dreary hour of introspection.

Randall Clayton had not lost all the opportunities of his New York life for a peep behind the metropolitan scenes. He knew that there was an inside view to be had of the clubs, the great hotels, the show life of the smart set, the pretentious apartment houses, the banks and theaters, the ambitious schemes of business and professional men.

One by one the shams had yielded to his prying gaze, and, but too well, he knew the truth of Tom Moore's trite remark, "False the light on glory's plume!"

But, straightforward and sincere, he had never watched his own environment. The loss of his mother in his childhood and his father's lonely struggle to retrieve his fallen fortunes had left the boy without happy memories of boyhood, with no family history to aid him, and the embarrassment of his dependence upon Hugh Worthington had robbed him of the confidences incident to young manhood.

Only in his books had he learned of the passionate, hot hearts beating behind the silken armor of womanhood.

For who had noticed the dependent, the poor, plodding college boy?

Worthington's Detroit home was a mere social machine-shop, a place of vanished glories during the adolescence of Miss Alice, and no Diana had stooped to kiss the forgotten young Endymion sleeping in the Lethe of a New York business obscurity. Clayton's life had been gilded by few joys.

His whole nature rose up in a sudden rebellion against this "personally conducted" career in life. "I am to be a mere hoodwinked worker in this millionaire's treadmill. A bond slave to one of the great Trusts which are chaining the whole American population to the galley-oar for life.

"I must be fairly paid, decently dressed, sufficiently fed, to play my part as a decent workman; that is all. We will see!"

He had now crushed out all lingering remnant of a friendly feeling for Ferris.

Even the last social invitation rankled in his mind. "I suppose that he wanted to pump me, at ease, under the guise of a homelike hospitality. If there is any little game being played around me, I will now take a hand in it."

As he moved to the door, the memory of that bewitching woman's face rose up once more to thrill the very core of his lonely heart. "She looked lonely. Perhaps she is, like myself, a solitary sail on Life's lonely ocean. And I shall never see her again! Lost in New York's human flood. But I'll buy that picture, if I live till Monday. It will call her back to me; bring back her vanished loveliness."

A motley crowd was pouring into the various doors of the huge hostelry, for the evening trains were depositing the flotsam and jetsam of humanity into busy Gotham.

Prosperous tourists, crafty schemers, brazen politicians, overdressed drummers, and flashy sporting men were pouring in to seek the "first aid to the weary," which the nearest available hotel affords to the cramped and jaded traveler.

Even the sidewalks were now thronged with anxious-eyed women, some of them with wildly-beating hearts, awaiting the kind "gentleman friend" who so often mysteriously appears at the cross-roads of Life.

From the Forty-second Street Station the "new departure" of many a life has begun, the radial lines often curving downward into the sheer depths of ruin of the Morgue, or the darkened abysses of the Tenderloin.

Alas! That no angel with a flaming sword stands ready to warn away the helpless from the gates which close behind the unwary with a deadly clang.

Randall Clayton drew back as a stalwart traveler jostled him, only to spring forward in the ardor of mutual recognition.

"Jack Witherspoon, by all the gods," cried the delighted New Yorker. "What brings you here?"

"The Chicago Limited, my boy!" coolly answered the jovial Westerner as he dragged his friend back into the cafe. "I do confess the need of an 'eye-opener' after my meal of cinders."

In ten minutes Clayton knew all the salient facts of Jack's career.

Their lives had diverged at the college gates, and the bustling Witherspoon, now the lawyer of a great Michigan railway company, was on his way to Europe for a six-months' tour.

Clayton's spirits vastly rose in their reminiscent chat, and, in ten minutes, the two ex-collegians were on their way to Clayton's apartment. Members of the same fraternity, it was natural that Witherspoon should gladly accept the offered hospitality of his old-time comrade,

"I am tied down to business," said Clayton, "but I can put you up here far better than Room 999 of any Broadway hotel. We can have our nights together, at least, until the 'Fuerst Bismarck' takes you out on the blue."

They had returned from a jolly supper, after dismissing the carriage, and the pipes were lit before Witherspoon found time to

go into his friend's affairs. The memories of old days were still upon them when the Detroit lawyer, after a close study of his friend's face, demanded flatly, "And are you satisfied here?"

"You see my surroundings, Jack," replied Clayton. "I've told you about where I stand."

"But," protested his friend, "your life is too lonely. You know what a genial circle we have in Detroit. You would have already risen to be a man of mark among us! And our old set are now rising to be the men in power. You were easily our leader."

Clayton uneasily replied, for he saw the questioning glances of his friend's eyes, "I have very little time to throw away. And I have had Arthur Ferris with me here."

"In your position you should have already married and settled down," resolutely contended Witherspoon. "Besides, you'll lose Ferris soon. He's slated to marry Alice Worthington, I hear."

The smoking-table between them went over with a crash as Clayton sprang to his feet.

"Impossible!" cried the cashier. "Ferris never told me anything of it."

"Certainly not," calmly replied Jack Witherspoon, as Clayton busied himself with the wreck and ruin. "It's not in his game to do anything but hoodwink you. What did he tell you now of this Western trip?" Clayton frankly unbosomed himself to his visitor, pacing up and down in a sudden indignation.

"All that story of Miss Worthington's illness is mere moonshine," confidently answered the Western lawyer. "Hugh Worthington is one of the coldest business calculators in America."

"Our road and its allies are naturally inside of all the secrets of the big cattle trust. I have watched the old Croesus' career for years. It's only since I got into possession of the law business of this branching-out railroad that I have been able to fathom old Worthington's designs.

"He has used young Ferris for years to quietly gather in all the loose stock of his unsuspecting partners. You may not know that Arthur Ferris is the favorite nephew of Senator Durham, Chairman of the Committee on Interstate Commerce.

"This Western visit of old Worthington's is only a betrothal trip for Ferris and Miss Alice. The Senator and his friends will put up the legislation.

"Worthington is craftily frightening out all his Western partners and Mr. Arthur Ferris will bob up at the annual election with a

stack of proxies and a power of attorney from Worthington.

"The new deal will follow the annual election, old Hugh captures the whole concern, Mr. Ferris will be not only Hugh's son-in-law but the new managing vice-president in the East. The trick will double old Hugh's fortune. Once husband of the old miser's only child, he can be trusted to guard his own. So, look out for yourself!" Clayton's eyes burned with a sudden anger.

"You asked me why I did not marry," he fiercely cried. "I have a fair salary. True; but at a word, on a single telegram from old Hugh, out I go. Dropped, cast off like a squeezed lemon." Clayton's eyes gleamed in a sudden rage.

"Have you saved much?" demanded his friend. Clayton shook his head. "I have a couple of thousand in bank, that's all."

"Then you are dependent upon this old skinflint's bounty," answered the lawyer, "for you have no profession, no backing, no capital. He wished to leave you helpless in his hands; I see it all. The crafty old fox! To watch you during your boyhood, to railroad you away from Michigan, and to hoodwink you as to your possible rights. Never mind, old man; I will be back in three months, and if you will confide in me, we may frighten a good sum out of Worthington.

"But you must let this annual election go on undisturbed. Smile and keep your counsel. Let this sleek ferret Ferris, go on and marry the girl, for I, alone, can aid you. Worthington fears me. I know too much of his secret operations.

"When I get you a slice of your lost patrimony, you can break loose, find yourself a fitting mate, and lead the life of a man, and not a galley-slave. Oh! It has been a beautifully worked scheme. The parchment-faced old wretch!"

"What do you mean? Explain yourself! Have I been tricked like a dog my whole life?" cried Randall Clayton, the hidden espionage and Ferris' duplicity returning to arouse him into a glow of rage.

"I mean only this," coolly answered Jack Witherspoon, "our railroad has just agreed to pay Hugh Worthington two millions of dollars for two hundred acres of outlying city lands, to be used as our lumber and ore and stock-handling depots. The lake commerce has increased a thousand fold.

"I had still supposed it was only railroad rivalry which caused our people to keep the purchase secret and to record only a ninety-nine year lease, when they had Hugh Worthington's guarantee deed in their possession.

"He takes the whole purchase price out in freights, paid in to him by your cattle trust, and with this same money he buys the majority of the outlying stock."

"How does this touch me?" cried the now thoroughly angered Clayton.

"Because your father deeded all the real estate holdings of Clayton & Worthington to his partner before the old trouble came on. Only this, a then valueless, tract was forgotten.

"In honor and equity you are entitled to one-half as Everett Clayton's heir."

The young cashier clenched his fists in anguish, as Witherspoon sadly said: "But he has had twenty-one years' unbroken possession. You were of age seven years ago, and he allowed it to be sold for taxes every year, and has also secretly bought up all the tax titles. It is too late. But wait, keep silent, and trust to me."

CHAPTER III.

IN MAGDAL'S PHARMACY.

Randall Clayton and his friend heard the "chimes at midnight" after the disquieting disclosures. Witherspoon finally allayed Clayton's sudden distrust. The Detroit lawyer succeeded in lamely explaining his own delay in making the fraud known.

"You see, Randall," he finally said at parting for the night, "I must live my life in Detroit under the heel of these great operators.

"I intended to take this long hidden matter up on my return from this trip, but I have been carried on, into a premature confidence.

"Just take care of yourself and bide your time! I want Worthington to consummate the whole deal. I wish the marriage and the election to take place undisturbed by clamor. For Worthington has put a fancy price on the land. It is to-day only worth a million at market rates. We, however, get immediate possession and pay in hauling, but the real extra million comes out of the pockets of the Cattle Trust, for as President, Worthington sells his own land really to the Cattle Company for two million dollars.

"He has duties as a Trustee to all the stockholders of the cattle association. When all is over, when Ferris is his son-in-law, I will have Senator Durham connected with this matter. The young couple will set up in royal style.

"I will then open out on Hugh Worthington, lay all the uncontested facts before him, and bring him to bay! I will soon squeeze out of him a fortune for you and also one for me. I only want twenty-five per cent. of the recovery. That will be a guarantee against my losing my place as railroad attorney. But old Hugh will never dare to "squeal." He wants social quiet, and he does not care to have his toga of respectability ripped up."

"Your motive?" agnostically demanded Clayton. I am poor, friendless; you will risk much in this."

"There's a sweet little dark-eyed French-descended angel in Detroit, whom I will then marry at once," smilingly answered Jack Witherspoon, "that is, as soon as Papa Worthington has given me the sinking fund. Any college man is a fool now who marries in these days unless he has the assured income on the principal of a quarter of a million."

"Money is the one thing, my boy," sighed Jack. "Without it, Venus herself, ever young and ever fair, would be a millstone around any man's neck, in these later days. Great God! How you missed it! If I had only stumbled on this discovery sooner. You could have antedated Ferris' crafty game.

"You could have easily married Alice. She has often told my Francine that you were the noblest of men."

But the moody Randall Clayton had tired already of hearing Miss Francine Delacroix's praises in divers keys.

"Poor Little Sister," muttered Randall Clayton. "Traded off to a senator's nephew, for an illicit government pull. Damn all treachery!" he growled, as he stalked off to bed.

He felt that he was powerless in his calculating friend's hands, and yet, the possibilities of a coming future swept him from his feet. He wanted money now but for one purpose--revenge upon Arthur Ferris.

"Of course," he growled, "the dog knew the whole deal, and has been a secret guardian over me, in the interest of the thief who has robbed my father's grave. Poor, dear old Dad! If he had only remembered these cheap lands and set them aside for me. It was the only real estate holding forgotten in the hard-driven bargain which vastly enriched old Hugh. But old Hugh shall pay; yes, to the last farthing. I will lock up my heart. I will circumvent his spies, and then await my own hour of triumph. It will be a fight to the finish and no quarter asked or given. I swear it!"

A thorough confidence was reestablished between the two collegians before the coming of Monday morning took Randall Clayton back to his money mill. His first impulse to give up the apartment had

returned to him. He now loathed the memory of Arthur Ferris as the slimy snake in the grass; and yet he resisted his desire to shove all the traitor's traps into a storage warehouse.

"Be ruled by me, Randall," urged Jack Witherspoon, as he set out on Monday morning for his last business conferences with the New York end of his railroad employers.

"I will surely make Hugh give up the million. You shall have your three-quarters, for it would be ruin to Worthington to drag out his relations with Durham."

"Play the honest lingo. Keep your counsel. Dismiss this from your mind. Make love to some pretty girl, amuse yourself. Do anything but drink or gamble. Keep up a jolly mien. Go in to the summer pleasures a little. It will throw these two crafty ones off their guard. The weeks will soon roll around. I will cable you of my return.

"Then we will jointly descend upon this new combination of Worthington, Durham, and Ferris. But I must first be in Detroit, back in my impregnable railroad law fortress. Then, at my nod, he settles or down come the gates of Gaza on him! Remember that you have no one in your matrimonial eye. I want to win Francine Delacroix's home from these robbers. And then install the little dainty therein. I will go in and win for you!"

The college comrades had now unravelled all the past, and their Sunday outing had after all been a jolly one. Thoroughly reassured, Clayton had given Jack Witherspoon his whole history, and the future campaign was laid out in all its details.

"As for these Fidelity Company men," said Jack, "you can give them the go by in only frequenting secluded places.

"As long as you avoid the public resorts of New York, they cannot reach you. But keep your eyes always open. And, remember, secrecy above all. If Hugh Worthington should divine our plan to unveil his devilment, you might be the victim of some 'strange accident!'

"Money has a long arm in these days," ominously said the lawyer, "and, it can strike with remorseless power. So, keep on here, but look out for yourself.

"I shall not come back to your rooms. I will send for my luggage; go down to the Astor House, and you must not be seen in the streets with me. I want Worthington to think that I have dug up his villainy all alone.

"Otherwise you would suffer in some strange way.

"When I open my battery, you must publicly resign your place by a simple telegram. And then jump out of New York to some secret haunt

until I telegraph you to come to Detroit and make your deeds for the stolen property."

Clayton saw the cogency of his friend's reasoning, and, after agreeing to meet Witherspoon in the Astor Rotunda each evening until the sailing of the "Fuerst Bismarck," he proceeded to the office to take up the white man's burden.

Swinging down Fourteenth Street from Broadway, he paused once more to look at the lovely Danube scene smiling out from the window of the Newport Art Gallery.

It was an exquisite artist proof and bore the name of the Viennese artist and a pencilled address. "I'll buy it at once," thought the man whose memory now brought back that lovely, wistful face.

As his foot was on the doorstep he paused. "No! It may bring her back to me! When I go out to the bank I can step in and secure it. It can remain on exhibition in the window for a few days. She may be there again to-day, who knows?"

He was under the spell of the unknown beauty again, as he absently exclaimed, "Pardon me!" when he rudely jostled a sedate-looking gentleman emerging from the gallery. "My fault, sir," courteously remarked Mr. Fritz Braun, beaming benevolently through his blue glass eye screens.

The pharmacist turned and raised a warning finger as Clayton hastened away to resume his morning duties.

In the doorway, following Braun's mouse-colored overcoat, as he mingled with the "madding crowd," stood Mr. Adolph Lilienthal, the proprietor of the "Art Emporium."

Briskly rubbing his hands, the art dealer murmured "Vot devilment is Fritz up to, now?"

He was only one of the many comrades in evil of the Sixth Avenue chemist, for Mr. Lilienthal boasted a "private view" room, in rear of his pretentious "Art Gallery," where many conveniently arranged interviews habitually took place.

Not one in one hundred of his patrons knew the secret of that room with its cosy divans and a private entrance to the stairway of an adjoining fashionable photograph gallery.

But the dealers in the "queer," the handlers of lottery tickets, the pool-sellers, the oily green-goods man, and many a velvet-voiced, silken clad Delilah knew the pathway to that inner room.

Benevolent-looking old capitalists with gold-rimmed spectacles; soft-eyed sirens of the Four Hundred, and the splendid Aspasia of the apartment-house clique, brisk clubmen, and the reckless jeunesse

doree, were all in the secret of the "private view" rooms.

A meek, furtive cat-like connoisseur was Mr. Adolph Lilienthal, and the "diamond coterie" of smugglers often hastily exchanged in the safe retirement of the "art parlors" packages of glittering gems all innocent of Uncle Sam's imposts. The "Newport Art Gallery" was a gem, a very gem in itself and judiciously protected.

Mr. Fritz Braun enjoyed the crystalline spring air as he hastened along to catch his avenue car. There was a gleam of triumph behind the blue shields as he murmured, "If she only plays her part as I laid it down yesterday, he is a hooked fish, sure enough."

Randall Clayton sat for an hour in his office, dispatching his accumulated two-days' mail, all unobservant of the cat-like tread of Einstein, the office boy, moving in and out. He lingered in a gloomy reverie, after checking up his correspondence, and a half hour's sharp dictations, absorbed in the cautious letter of Hugh Worthington, Esq., the man who had robbed him of his birthright.

It was in vain that he tried to be cool. Every drop of blood in his heart now throbbed through his pulses in an eager unrest. He had suddenly lost faith in all men. "Wait, only wait," he murmured, and then started up as Einstein touched his arm.

"Mr. Somers has the deposits all ready, now, sir. It's a quarter of twelve," the boy remarked, with a veiled scrutiny of the restless-eyed cashier. Clayton sprang to his feet and then, with lightning rapidity, packed up the treasure which the old accountant had gathered out of the morning mail, and received from the prompt and timorous debtors fearful of having their "credit cut."

He was fifteen minutes late as he stepped out upon Fourteenth Street, valise in hand and the ready pistol once more in his pocket. The day's "haul" was rich in checks and light in cash, but the total was a considerable fortune.

"Serve the old brute right if I'd bolt some day with a good stake," wrathfully murmured Clayton. "He would be in for fifty thousand dollars' bond! Damn his famed benevolence. He wished to anchor me here for life, and, so cover his tracks. He might even put up a fancied theft on me if I quarrel. I'll be out of this slavery the very moment that Jack opens his guns. And he shall pay the last score, to the last stiver!"

In a vain effort at self deception Randall Clayton avoided glancing at the art window where he had seen the mysterious beauty until he was abreast of it. But his beating heart told him already that she was not there. He paused a moment, once more to feast his eyes upon the picture which he proposed to order reserved for him on his return from the Astor Place Bank. It was gone!

He started back in surprise as he saw the place of honor vacated.

There was only a mawkish color reprint of "Mary Stuart and Rizzio" parading its faded romance in the show window. Resolutely entering, he quickly called for the proprietor.

In his momentary excitement, Clayton failed to notice the sly twinkle of Mr. Adolph Lilienthal's crow-footed eyes. "You had a beautiful artist proof of a Hungarian scene in your window this morning," began Clayton.

"Sold, sir; you are but a few moments too late," blandly replied Lilienthal, in his best manner. "We are just packing it up for a lady. An exquisite thing; sorry I cannot replace it, sir," remarked the vendor, "Show you anything else?"

"You could not order me another, could you?" blankly demanded Clayton, with a baffled sense of losing both the lady and the art gem.

"It was a unique proof," volubly continued Lilienthal. "I might, however,"--he briskly turned to an assistant, and after a few words, led the annoyed Clayton back to a counter.

There a packing case was lying, plainly marked 'Fraulein Irma Gluyas, No. 192 Layte Street, Brooklyn.'

"I might open it," hesitated the dealer, "and yet, the lady might not like it. She paid a round price for it, a hundred dollars. And some persons do not like to have a proof duplicated. Still, I could get the artist's name and address, and then my agents in Vienna perhaps could get one. I might see the lady. She is a patron of mine. This is Mr. Randall Clayton, is it not?"

The young man started in surprise, as his hand involuntarily closed upon the handle of his portmanteau. "Oh, we are neighbors," laughed Lilienthal. "Your Mr. Robert Wade frequently drops in here to pick up an etching or a bit of French color. I do a good deal of business with the gentlemen of the Western Trading Company."

Clayton dropped his hand, instantly mollified. "I wish you would see what you can do," he cordially said. "Perhaps the lady only purchased it to fill a place on the walls of her drawing room. I, at least, would like to be allowed to open it and have you take the particulars. If she has no objection, you might be able to order me a replica."

Lilienthal stood musing for a moment with his ferret eyes gleaming under their bushy brows. "I might try! Suppose you look in here after your lunch. The fact is," laughed the dealer, "Fraulein Gluyas only took a sudden fancy to the Danube view a few days ago. And she has gone down to the bank to get the money to gratify her whim. She seemed to think some one else might claim it, and she dropped in a half an hour ago, and ordered it packed up. She will take it home in her carriage, as such a proof can be easily injured."

Randall Clayton's eyes were fixed on the floor, as he nodded an assent. "I'll be back in half an hour. See what you can do," he pleasantly said. "And at any rate, I'll be thankful to be allowed to have the data."

"I think I can fix it all right," genially remarked Lilienthal. "Fraulein Gluyas is a Hungarian prima donna of rare merit, an artist, too, of no mean order. She may be heard here in grand opera this winter. She is living in retirement until Mr. Grau's return, as she does not want to be heralded before the public."

Clayton tried to appear unconcerned as he asked, "Is she married?"

"She is single," carelessly remarked Lilienthal, showing Clayton to the door. "And I am told she has refused some very eligible offers at home. But she is a Magyar of an old and noble family and they detest the Austrian nobility, who have now all the fortunes and privileges of the old Hungarian noblesse."

With crimsoned cheeks Randall Clayton was speeding away to the bank before he had digested the crafty dealer's story. He was reassured at the mention of Robert Wade's name and, hemmed in, all in ignorance that his grave-mannered superior often met a bit of very lively "French color" in the luxurious solitude of the "private view" room, as yet a terra incognita to the young cashier.

For Mr. Robert Wade had a "Sunday-school reputation" to support, and was dignified, worldly wise, a pillar of a fashionable church, and hence, duly sly. His left hand often wisted not the doings of his right hand, and Lilienthal found in Mr. Robert Wade a judicious and accommodating patron.

"This is a simple-minded youth," grinned Lilienthal, as he turned away. "He has swallowed my story, and--I fancy I see Mr. Fritz Braun's little game. I wonder if the Vienna witch is still over there. I must hurry up and post her. This young chap may be a good customer, for he handles plenty of money." And the brisk Figaro darted away, his eyes gleaming in the ardor of the undying covetousness of the Israelite.

While Mr. Adolph Lilienthal was cautiously conducting a Philadelphia money magnate into the "Private Gallery," a closely veiled lady was entering that sanctum from the photographer's hall. The secret of the two double rings of the push button admitted her to the "packing room," where an innocent-faced young German lad stood guard over the complicated system of letter boxes, telegraph racks, and telephones in that jealously guarded "packing room."

It had been a busy morning with the astute Lilienthal, and the sudden arrival of the "big fish," a wary "customer" from the Schuylkill, caused the dealer to temporarily forget Randall Clayton. He scented only an ordinary amorous intrigue in the young man's ardent desire

to make that particular "artist proof" his own.

Besides, the postman had just staggered in with a considerable bundle of letters all addressed to the Newport Art Gallery. There was a good hour's work for the rosy-faced graduate of a Viennan cafe in removing the decoy wrappers and assorting the private correspondence which alone paid the rental of Mr. Lilienthal's "emporium."

Randall Clayton was already hastening back from the Astor Place Bank, forgetting his own luncheon in his eagerness to hear once more of Fraulein Irma Gluyas, when Mr. Fritz Braun had at last disposed of the morning swarm of "privately attended" customers at Magdal's Pharmacy.

The blue-spectacled chemist had been working with lightning rapidity behind his effective screen, following the whispered directions of his depraved London assistant. It was for him an anxious morning.

His heart would have leaped up in a wild joy had he known how carefully Randall Clayton had already entered the accidentally found address in the little silver-clasped address book, in which he had recorded, with judicious cabalistic cloudiness, the combinations of his safes and certain vital private business memoranda.

These secrets were all hidden in a mass of artfully inserted characters so as to defy the curious eye of any stranger in case of mishap, but the young cashier's fingers trembled with eagerness as he had paused on his way in a corridor to boldly enter an already beloved name.

"I can easily find her out over there," Clayton murmured. "She shall not drift out of my life. I must some day read the secret of those wistful eyes."

But Fritz Braun, anxiously waiting in his den on Sixth Avenue, was chafing until his labors of the day should cease. "I'm all right," he mused, "if that sheepshead Lilienthal does not blunder. I do not dare to tell him too much. And then, if only Irma follows my instructions.

"But the wild-hearted witch may speculate in love a little on her own account. She is only to be trusted as far as any other woman." He snorted in disdain. "And the fellow is young, eager, good looking. At any rate, I shall steer them both out of Lilienthal's clutches. The game is too risky for 'mein frent Adolph.' He is wrapped up in his greed, his blackmail schemes, his 'sure thing' villainies.

"Here is the prize of a life to fight for, and--the electric chair to face--should I be betrayed. Neither of them shall ever know my little game." The master plotter was busy with dreams of an ill-gotten harvest soon to ripen.

Braun peered out into his shop, sneeringly glanced at two shop girls lingering at the soda fountain, drew up a chair, picked up the Staats-Zeitung, and lit a cheroot, while he waited for the advance guard of the afternoon customers.

"I dare not go over to the 'Bavaria' until three o'clock," mused the chemist. "It will never do to let Clayton see me with either Irma or Lilienthal. Once hooked, though, I can give him plenty of line, and play him, in the shadows of water too deep for him. Einstein has given me a fair insight into his character and habits. I must go and see Leah and take her that promised dress. I need that boy, for he is true to Leah, his dam, and she at least loves me as fondly yet as the dumb dog that licks the hand. The other one, I can never rule that way. Never mind, you proud-hearted Hungarian devil, I'll tame you yet." There was an ugly cloud on his broad brow as he dreamed of a yet unshapen crime.

Fritz Braun, gliding out behind the high sample cases, swept the morning's receipts out of the large bill compartment of the cash drawer. "Seventy-five dollars. Not so bad," he grinned, as he clutched the only thing on earth which he loved.

The crumpled, greasy green bills! Passed from hand to hand, as the hard wage of toil, the prize of infamy, the badge of shame! Tossed from the fingers of the spendthrift, dragged from the reluctant miser, filched from yokel and rounder, slyly stolen by thieving domestic or dishonest clerk, still the "long green" was as sacred to Fritz Braun as Mahomet's emerald banner hanging over the pulpit of magnificent Saint Sophia to the Moslem heart.

Magdal's Pharmacy was an innocent enough looking place of business. Few of the neighboring shopkeepers dated back to the time, long years ago, when the real Magdal ran upon the breakers of bankruptcy and disappeared in the "eternal smash" of a final pecuniary ruin.

The crafty Braun, once a co-laborer with Magdal, had jumped eagerly at the opportunity of burying the identity of Hugo Landor, the criminal fugitive, under the banner of the hopelessly wrecked Magdal.

Fritz Braun had been a good enough name to use until the crafty employee had robbed drunken old Magdal's till of money enough to purchase the now valueless fixtures.

Magdal, the victim of an expensive liason with a dashing neighboring French modiste, had tried to keep up a "regular" business.

All this was foreign to the ideas of the quick-witted Braun, safe now under his humble alias, and his flowing false beard and the never absent blue glass eye screens. Braun duly closed the doors for a "reopening."

A few dollars spent in paint and gilding, a "gorgeous" soda fountain "on lease," had soon transformed the dingy interior. A couple of dozen cheap red plush stools wooed the tawdy Phrynes of Sixth Avenue, and the light-headed shop girls to a repose from the crash and roar of the shopping street.

From a dealer in "fake" goods, Braun cheaply obtained the empty packages, the jars of colored water, and the stacks of imitation "put up" goods, which gave to the pharmacy its air of rosy prosperity. To cater to his natural patrons, cheap perfumes, confectionery, gaudy nostrums, theatrical make-up, and a round of disguised narcotics and "headache" medicines were always at hand.

Braun picked up a waif of the street, an ex-Prussian soldier, who for a pittance and his daily "rum," slaved in the "Pharmacy" like a dog, polishing and cleaning until it was the smartest show place of the neighboring blocks.

But the citadel of the real business was the huge marble soda fountain, with its bewildering array of gaudy silver-plated faucets. Above the rows of bottled "bitters," the fiery drink of the temperance frauds, high over the three score jars of "nervines" and pick-me-up preparations, towered a life-size marble statue of Hygeia, glowing in a voluptuous Parian nakedness.

Behind the fountain counter, with its serried rows of crystal glasses in artistic silver holders, there lurked on watch, now, the factotum, the thieving London-bred drug-clerk who had escaped "transportation," at Her Gracious Majesty's behest, by slipping over to New York City disguised as a stoker.

To him alone was entrusted the traffic in slops and the flimsy produce of the soda fountain, to him the drudgery of the illicit Sunday liquor trade, when the "regulars" entered by the side door from the hall, bearing the portentous sign, "Hugo Adler, M.D., Physician and Surgeon."

No mortal had ever gazed upon the legendary Adler, but Timmins the cockney, and Braunschweiger the ex-Prussian grenadier, gaily dispensed from jugs and bottles the "spiritual comforts" stacked up in the "dark room" every Saturday against the Sunday of legally enforced thirst and resultant sadness.

But while these minor villains slaved for the master who greedily snatched every bill from the till, and held them up to a keen return for every measured drink in the stock of the Sunday "bar" of the mock drug-store, it was the taciturn Fritz Braun himself who murmured in confidence to the important patrons of the den.

The morning run beginning at nine, embraced the haggard-eyed devotees of pleasure--Wall Street men, clerk and financiers, habitués of the Tenderloin--actors and men about town.

In subdued murmurs the skilful Fritz Braun trafficked with these "shaky" mortals, while Timmins covered their "prescriptions" with an innocent layer of Vichy.

Sometimes the favored few entered behind Braun's screen, until the chemist solved their varying problems by manipulating his vials in the closely locked cabinet, the key of which never left his person.

There were little packages by the gross ready in that capacious lock box. Opium, hasheesh, chorodyne, sulphonal, cocaine, "dope," all the life-stealing narcotics in every form.

There were medicines the traffic in which leads even the innocent behind the bars.

And it was from the sale of these "nervines," forbidden medicines, and poisonous agents that the runaway Vienna criminal drew his increasing revenue. There was an aristocracy among the motley customers.

From the "hypodermic" regulars, men and women, laying down their syringes to be filled with the soul-stealing morphia solution--faded men and trembling women, down to the shattered wretch, with his pitiful twenty-five cents for a bit of "dope," no one with money was turned away.

Yet all of these passed under Fritz Braun's watchful scrutiny. The disguised criminal trembled lest some ugly-minded detective or crank journalist might entrap him into the meshes of the law.

Alas! Nearly all the customers bore the seal of safety in their imploring eyes. By the freemasonry of the degenerates, Magdal's was a known haven of refuge to all the weaklings of Manhattan.

The frequent ringing of "Doctor Adler's" bell admitted to the little dimly-lighted rear room the sullen-eyed visitors who bore away the colorless vials of "knock-out drops," for which five- and ten-dollar bills were eagerly thrust into Braun's itching palm.

This important traffic was confided to no one but the real proprietor. And stealthily-treading, matronly-looking women often found their way into the den, where nameless "remedies" were sold, often for their weight in diamonds, the weapons of that hidden guild which paves New York's streets with the bones of ignorant and martyred women. For all the thirty-third degree trade of the "consulting-room," an "introduction" was stiffly demanded.

Thanks to his craft, to his fear of the awful doom hanging over him from the unpunished Viennese murders, Hugo Landor had so far defied detection and avoided all awkward inquiry. Mr. Fritz Braun always had a prime cigar and a drop of "medicinal cognac" at the disposal of the visiting policeman. His perfunctory "loans" had gladdened the hands of several minor officials, whose argus eyes

had noted the Sunday run of Dr. Adler's many friends.

All these dangerous wares were distributed in unlabelled vials, and no witnesses had ever verified the transfer of the felonious knock-out drops. Each week brought to Braun customers from adjacent cities, many of whom, disguised or veiled, hurried away with the means of cowardly crime to work the devil's charms at a safe distance.

Taciturn, morose and keeping his own counsel, Fritz Braun was a cautious trader with the great supply houses. His bills of purchase were made out to the welcome "Mr. Cash," and the old prescription books of Magdal were ostentatiously displayed with a few family orders dropping in now and then from some befogged physician. The bond between Lilienthal and Braun had been strengthened by the aid of the "picture dealer" in smuggling from Hamburg and Bremen much of the dangerous ware of this mind-wrecking business.

And so, peddling the means of murder, filling his yawning pocketbook, Fritz Braun had thrived in solitude until Irma Gluyas sought the refuge of New York City.

For the discovery of her picture in the stiffened hands of a suicide, a young noble officer, ruined by her extravagance, had caused the Viennese siren to flee the vengeance of a powerful Austrian family.

And so the lives of these two, linked by folly, sin, crime and mad extravagance, had run together again far from the scenes where, led on by her dark eyes, Hugo Landor had stumbled along on the dark road from theft and forgery to callous murder.

On this particular April early afternoon, the eager plotter was willing to leave his afternoon customers to the sly Timmins. The actresses and lazy demi-monde queens fluttered in always before sunset, together with a bevy of quacks, whose doubtful prescriptions were always put up by Timmins, easily capable of brazenly swearing to "a mistake," or denying upon oath the sale of any clumsy weapon of medical butchery.

It was also the time when the floating "shopping women" drifted in to reinforce their luncheons with Timmins' artfully veiled alcoholic preparations.

His row of bottles labelled "Vin Mariani," "Moxie," and "Nervura" were never empty, and the oldest toper would have found them veritable "well springs of joy in the desert."

All the simple machinery of the mock pharmacy was so well oiled that even an expert could detect no commerce more dangerous than Lubin's Powders, crimson lip salve, or a powder puff.

"Fritz Braun, Manager," came and went with regularity, no man knowing of his home or family ties; the old golden sign of "Magdal's Pharmacy" covering whatever mystery was not hidden behind those

gleaming blue glasses.

Save for his regular luncheon at the Cafe Bavaria, no Sixth Avenue habitue had ever seen Mr. Fritz Braun at concert, theater, or any of the places of local or suburban amusement.

As to woman, he seemed to be sternly indifferent, Save to the semi-professionals who were as anxious to escape Sing Sing's gloomy embrace as the man who supplied them with the drugs for their various "Ladies' Homes." These were welcome "Greeks bearing gifts" of the coveted "long green" which was Fritz Braun's god.

Braun was never in the pharmacy after six o'clock, and from that evening hour when all well-conducted men and women turn to dinner as the day's culmination, no one had ever set their eyes upon the bustling manager.

Friendless he seemed, yet ever cheerful, a man distantly respected for the open frankness of his business dealings, the order and quiet of his shop, and his rare capacity for minding his own business.

It was only in the evening that Mr. Ben Timmins' reign was uncontested. The flashy young fellows of his caught-up friendships then lurked around Magdal's Pharmacy where Timmins dispensed complimentary drinks and lorded over his fluctuating harem of unemployed "soubrettes" and light-headed shop girls freed from their daily toil.

In a rough average at a half-way honesty, Timmins "turned in" habitually about half of the evening's receipts of the "joint," which, to use his own language, he "ran for all it was worth."

He had soon lost all fear of his stern employer visiting him at random, and the clever London rascal now laughed detection to scorn.

For he always kept in hand one day's stealings so that, if suddenly "called down," he could glibly explain, "Slipped it in my pocket in my hurry! The shop was full!"

While Timmins, returning from his breakfast on this busy Monday, wondered at Mr. Fritz Braun delaying his comfortable luncheon, Mr. Adolph Lilienthal was anxiously awaiting his secret partner in villainy at the "Newport Art Gallery."

Perhaps the crowning secret of Braun's remarkable success was his clear-headed avoidance of mixing up the details of his various schemes.

Lilienthal knew nothing of Braun's whereabouts as to a real residence, and the colloquies and settlements of the two always took place in Lilienthal's little private office, proof against all eavesdroppers.

The Art Emporium, thronged with the curious, was the safest place in New York City for casual meetings, and, with a keen suspicion

of his man, Lilienthal never visited Magdal's Pharmacy. He realized that there might be danger and deception in his fellow villain's hospitality.

A doubt of Braun's ultimate end as a citizen had caused the smug dealer to always avoid Braun at the jolly Restaurant Bavaria, where the good-natured foreign convives often joined each other over a stein.

The "private interests" of the Newport Art Gallery were as jealously guarded as the inner secrets of Magdal's Pharmacy; furthermore, the hidden post-office, telegraph exchange, and "private room" busied the dealer from morn till eve.

Lilienthal was in a particularly good humor when he at last dispatched the Danube "artist proof" by an especial messenger to Mr. Randall Clayton's own rooms. It had all fallen about in a spirit of graceful courtesy. And three hearts bounded with a hidden delight when the happy incident occurred.

When Randall Clayton returned from the Astor Place Bank he had discovered Mr. Adolph Lilienthal in a particularly cheerful frame of mind. The young cashier had hastened to his office and delivered over his bundle of exchange and checked-up bank-book. "I shall be out for an hour," he sharply called to Einstein. "Wait here in my office and let any callers return at two o'clock!"

There was a glow of expectancy on the handsome face of the customer as Lilienthal rubbed his hands. "I have been fortunate enough to carry out your wishes, Mr. Clayton," he obsequiously said. "Fraulein Gluyas has called and paid for her picture. I have told her of your longing for a replica, and, by telephoning down to my importer, I have learned that I can get a duplicate in six weeks.

"She is not altogether satisfied with the framing of this one, and I have begged her to allow me to sell you this one, so that I can import one for her framed in our own Viennese manner.

"The lady awaits your wishes, through me. It certainly is very courteous on her part. I have done her certain little business favors and she is kindly willing to oblige."

"If I could only meet her," murmured Randall Clayton, with lips dry with all the eagerness of a newly born passion. He was in a defiant mood now, his whole being stirred with the treason of the friend of years and the unmasked villainy of his pseudo-benefactor. This fair mystery allured him strangely.

"Nothing easier," smiled the dealer, reaching out for his silk hat. "The Fraulein is taking her usual luncheon at the Restaurant Bavaria, and I agreed to notify her of your wishes, as she may travel, and would be willing to wait for the arrival of my Vienna importation. I will be very glad to present you to her."

The world took on a new brightness as Randall Clayton passed out of the shop with the dealer. He scarcely dared to trust himself to bring up the subject now nearest his heart.

But the careful directions of Mr. Fritz Braun had given Lilienthal his cue. The dealer babbled on of pleasant trivial things as they stemmed the tide of the crowded streets. "I hope that Fraulein Gluyas will soon appear in opera and achieve the success which she deserves. She is really here incognito, and spends all her time in private musical practice at Chickering Hall and the study of languages."

"Why this secrecy?" asked Clayton.

"Ah! My dear sir! These are the ways of impresarios. If Grau does not secure a certain great operatic star with whom he has quarrelled, then Fraulein Gluyas will be brought out with a great flourish of trumpets under a stage name to be selected later. She will then be heralded as a 'wonder of the world.' It will pay Grau, and he will also have his revenge!"

"And if the great star relents?" smilingly asked Clayton, as they neared the Restaurant Bavaria.

"Then," cheerfully answered the dealer, "the lady will make a grand concert tour, adequately supported. It is for that contingency she is studying English ballads and the language."

Clayton suddenly remembered the unromantic address of 192 Layte Street, Brooklyn. "Fraulein Gluyas resides in Brooklyn?" he said, with a fine air of carelessness.

Lilienthal's eyes swept obliquely the young man's distrustful face.

"Fraulein Gluyas ordered the picture sent to the rooms of her music master, 192 Layte Street, Brooklyn. Poor old Raffoni was once a world-wide star, a velvet tenor. Now he is literally a voice maker, a master of technique for Maurice Grau. The Hungarian nightingale studies there, and only takes her hall practice here in the off season, in Chickering's empty salon. There is a jealous professional mystery in this secrecy. The summer is the opera's off season, just as the winter is the same for the great circus and travelling shows. The hardest work is thus veiled from the public. The impresario is always a wily individual."

"And the lady's real residence?" impatiently queried the budding lover. "That is an absolute secret, for Grau carefully hides away his coming stars. Somewhere on Long Island an old Hungarian noble family have had a retreat since the days of Kossuth.

"The Fraulein is their guest, and, for other reasons than complete faith with Grau, she receives no one. She is as proud and haughty as she is beautiful, and rumor has it that the pursuit of an Austrian

Archduke drove her to the safety of our shores. All this I have gathered from my old friend, Signore Raffoni."

Clayton mutely followed Lilienthal to the door of a private room in the "Bavaria" and, with a wildly beating heart, was bowing low before the woman whose shining eyes had brought to his bosom such strange unrest.

"It is like a page from a novel," the flute-like voice murmured, "that this lucky picture should have brought us together again, as it strangely did once face to face."

Randall Clayton's ears drank in that soft, wooing accent, and all the ardor of his eyes betrayed the instant recognition which lay behind the diva's merry words.

When he had murmured his thanks, the presence of Lilienthal seemed to be a bar to any rapprochement. Clayton was fain to accept Fraulein Gluyas' courtesy in allowing him a choice as to the handling of the picture or its replica.

"If Mademoiselle will allow me," said Clayton, "I will give Mr. Lilienthal my cheque for the coming proof, and retain in my possession the one framed in our American manner."

This was soon settled, and then, with a glance at his watch, the dealer, bowing low, hurried away.

"We artists have to be unconventional," frankly said the Magyar beauty.

"I await Madame Raffoni here for a little tour of the wonderful New York shops."

It was a natural passage from the picture to the memories of the Danube, and then, under the kindling glances of the diva, Randall Clayton talked, with spirit, of his happy summer ramblings through Austria and Hungary.

Irma Gluyas' magnetic eyes burned into his soul as she followed the young stranger in his itinerary. It was only when the maetre d'hotel entered, announcing Madame Raffoni as in waiting in her carriage, that Randall Clayton's castle in Spain came crashing down around him.

The Magyar witch dropped her eyes when Clayton took her hands in adieu. "You have made me forget time, and my workaday world," he said. "I have now something to live for--to hear you sing! It seems so hard to meet only to part. I may never see your coming picture; you may never see mine again. But I cannot lose you from my life. It seemed, Fraulein Irma," he said, earnestly, "when I first met the glance of your dreaming eyes, that I had known you in some other world."

"I receive no one; I am a recluse," murmured Irma, with eyes smiling through down-dropped lashes; "but, if you care, you may come, a week from to-day, and breakfast with me here! Dear old Raffoni will play propriety. As for the singing, I am pledged to be mute, parole d'honneur. But you must be in my first audience. I must keep an artist's faith with my manager."

"I shall have the loge d'honneur at your debut," enthusiastically cried Clayton, as he lingered over her frankly extended hand after murmuring his acceptance.

The woman who sat, with her head bowed upon her hands, listened to his receding footsteps. "Il Regalantuomo," she murmured. "It is a pity, too! What does Fritz want of him?"

Then gliding serpent-like from the darkened corridor, she joined the waiting woman in the carriage below, a woman whose form was but dimly defined beyond the half-lowered silken curtain of the carriage as Randall Clayton sped along to his money mill.

Some indefinable impulse kept Clayton from speaking of his breakfast engagement as he strode into the Newport Art Gallery. His cheque for one hundred and twenty-five dollars was soon transferred to Lilienthal in return for the coveted picture, which was dispatched to the young man's lonely apartment.

"Not a bad turn," mused Adolf Lilienthal. "I raised him seventy-five dollars! He paid like a prince, and, if I mistake not, this is his first and last transaction here. The picture that he wanted is burned into his heart now."

It was but one of a hundred similar intrigues to which Lilienthal had been the successful Leporello, and he calmly betook himself to the continued villainy of his daily life. He feared also to follow on the footsteps of the crafty Fritz Braun, for in the years of their illicit dealings the weaker nature had been molded by the daring master villain into a habitual subjection. "He has some little game of his own," chuckled Lilienthal. "Friend Fritz is a sly one."

But the man, now burning with a new purpose in life, the puppet of strange destinies, dreamed only of a golden future as he lingered late that night at the Astor House with Jack Witherspoon.

It was two o'clock before he returned to his lonely rooms to gloat over the picture and its promise of the future meeting.

"I shall be rich," he mused, "and I will follow her to the end of the earth until I read the secret of those wonderful eyes."

He little dreamed that even before he had paid Lilienthal the cheque, a carriage had stopped for a moment before Magdal's Pharmacy,

and Mr. Fritz Braun had heard, with a wild delight, the whispered words, "The game is won; he will come!" The busy devil prisoned in Braun's heart laughed for very joy.

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER THE SHADOWS OF THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE.

When the "Fuerst Bismarck" moved grandly away from her wharf and glided down the stream, Jack Witherspoon paced the deck with clouded brows. The acute Detroit lawyer had rightly estimated the crushing effect of his disclosure of Hugh Worthington's treachery.

The two college mates were now banded together, however, by a secret compact, and both of them realized the craft of the foe whom they were fighting. "Not a letter, not a cable, not a single scrap of paper," said the wary Jack. "And you must keep away from me and be sure to dissemble all your wrath."

Clayton appreciated the prudence which had separated them in the last three days of his friend's stay, and minutely followed Witherspoon's final descriptions of the hidden plans of the great syndicate. "You must be ever on your guard," said the new champion, "and remember the annual election and this strange wedding must be allowed to take place without suspicion."

"On my return I shall frankly mingle with the 'upper ten' of the Trust. You are never to be seen alone in my company. But you can meet me over in Jersey City; there we can arrange a simple cipher for future use, and, when the blow falls, you are then to demand a month's leave of absence. So no word to any one of your destination."

"If Hugh Worthington lurks on the Pacific Coast until he has made the coup, I will find him out there. You can be in hiding near, ready to appear, and then boldly claim your rights. Arthur Ferris will probably be back in New York City in charge, and Worthington will yield rather than have the world, his beloved daughter, and all society know of his inward baseness. I shall delve further into the old records, under pretense of following up the title to our purchase. Perhaps we may even now unearth other un conveyed property."

Randall Clayton, brave as he was, shuddered when Witherspoon solemnly said: "Remember! Your life is in your own hands. For God's sake,

be prudent! One little self-betrayal in sudden anger, and then either Worthington or Ferris would surely compass your death for this tempting million. You will fight for your birthright, and I for the future happiness of darling Francine Delacroix."

When they wrung each other's hands in the last good-bye, "each heart recalled a different name."

For, burning on the altars of that lonely heart of Clayton's was the fierce fire which bound him now as the worshipper of the velvet-voiced Magyar witch. He, too, had some one to fight for now, and his ardent fancy painted her in every glowing color of the passion of young manhood.

Left alone to his daily affairs, Randall Clayton now lived behind an impenetrable mask. He knew not which of the higher employees was charged with that secret espionage so necessary to the final success of the Worthington, Durham and Ferris conspiracy.

Was it the pale-faced Somers, the smooth old accountant, his pompous chief, Mr. Robert Wade, or some one of those who had broken his bread and drank his wine in the occasional friendship of the business coterie. And now Clayton hated the old money-lover who was foisting a husband on his only child merely to chain a Senator to the wheels of the money chariot.

Seated alone, in the evening, watching the treasured picture, and waiting for the day of the diva's breakfast, a fierce desire for stern reprisals took possession of Clayton. "I have it!" he murmured. The pathway seemed clear at last. And the next day, following out his self-protective scheme, he directed the bright-faced office boy Einstein to report at his rooms on the ensuing evening.

There was a broad grin on the young rascal's face when he finally left his master. He darted away with a ten-dollar bill in his purse, the earnest of a secret monthly stipend. "Some strange fellows are following me, spying upon me, my boy," said the man who now doubted all men but one, on earth, and who was fast falling under the spell of his dreamy adoration of an utterly unknown siren.

"It matters not who they are or what they want. I wish you to follow me up, with a good deal of care, in my evening wanderings, and shadow these spotters.

"There is a new hundred-dollar bill ready for you when you find who they are, and where they come from, and who they report to. You can keep hovering around at a safe distance, and never address or notice me. Spend what money you like in following my evening rounds. I'll repay it all. I am going to lead them a merry dance. Every day, before I leave the office, I will give you a different rendezvous, up to midnight. You are simply to hover around, ignore me, and then skilfully shadow my pursuers."

The service of the Western Trading Company now galled Randall Clayton like the galley slave's chain. And yet Jack Witherspoon's counsel had been most wise. For Clayton knew not who had replaced the treacherous Ferris in that secret espionage, so necessary to Worthington until the great "deal" had been consummated.

"Lies, lies, all lies," muttered Clayton, as he read the friendly, almost fatherly, letters of Hugh Worthington announcing his intended tour around the world. "The old fox," sneered Clayton, as he read the "rider" to the capitalist's letter.

"Ferris will have my power of attorney, and he alone will communicate with me. If Alice's health demands it, I may vary my route and look around in the Sierras, or take the summer run to Alaska. I fear the heat of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. But all will depend upon the doctors and their advice.

"Report only to Ferris as to any thing you wish to reach me. He will have my private cipher. All the rest is mere routine."

But the words of the old money-grabber angered Clayton less than Ferris' effusive friendly epistles from Detroit.

"I can excuse Worthington," growled Clayton, as he paced his private room like a caged tiger. "He has his old crime to cover up, his only daughter to shield, his vast plans to further. I am only a poor pawn in his fevered game of life; but Ferris, 'mine own familiar friend,' he is a traitor, a needless traitor, to his black heart's core.

"For it is the sale of a soul, his dirty traffic in my heart's secrets, a Benedict Arnold of the heart, for mere dirty gain. And his cold ensnaring of this innocent girl is an outrage; it is a crime to make her the hostage of Senator Durham's corrupt friendship."

And yet, mindful of Jack Witherspoon's counsel, he took up the trade of an honest lingo, and hid his raging hatred behind the mask of an olden gratitude to the one, a loyal friendship to the other.

The searchlight of his mind was turned only on the Western conspirators, and he feared no villainy in the world save the Detroit schemer who had robbed him of his birthright. "By Heavens! I'll give up trade, the service of this greedy octopus. I will go abroad and so escape Worthington's vengeance, and Ferris' duplicity."

He began to secretly watch every one of the leading New York officials of the company in order to detect Ferris' successor in the hidden watch upon his movements.

It was with a secret longing for the coming Monday of the breakfast that Clayton passed Lilienthal's window, three days after Jack's sailing, in company with the grave-featured Robert Wade. His runaway heart was all unsuspecting now.

Thank Heaven! There was no longer the graceful woman lingering there fascinated by the picture whose sunset glories lit up in gold and purple the lonely man's rooms. But the suave dealer, waiting at his door, salaamed with effusion as the manager passed. His salute distantly included Clayton, and the action was not lost upon Robert Wade.

"Do you know Lilienthal?" somewhat sharply asked Wade.

"Not at all," carelessly answered the younger man. "I happened to drop in and buy a bit of a landscape from him the other day. He mentioned when I gave him my cheque that you occasionally patronized him."

"He is a rare art connoisseur," musingly said Wade, "and I've picked up a few pretty bits of etching now and then at his shop. You must come up and see my collection some day."

Clayton, busied with his day dreams, did not notice the sudden paleness of the pompous manager. In his own ignorance of the mysteries of the "private room" and its secret "facilities for patrons," he never dreamed that the man at his side was "light of foot, fierce at heart" as the tiger when he stole to the rendezvous arranged by Lilienthal, who had indeed offered many "choice bits" to the astute manager. Clayton had stumbled along in New York, blinded to its dual existence, its gilded shams.

"I will never set foot in that place again," remarked Clayton, as he strode alone down University Place to the bank. "Lilienthal must never know of my further acquaintance with the Fraulein."

And so, each keeping his own secret hugged closely to an anxious heart, the two men went along on their different paths, each drawn along by the invisible threads of life--the one dragged on by a sudden romantic, resistless passion, the other by the glowing links of the iron chains of habit, the ruling appetite of a remorseless lust. And yet both of them were only blinded fools of passion.

The dragging days until the trysting time for the breakfast were filled up with business cares, but Randall Clayton had roamed the streets of New York at night, restlessly, since Witherspoon's sailing. In a feverish unrest, he had visited concert halls, theaters, and searched the now deserted club-rooms for a familiar face.

A Sunday drive in the Park, and late excursions among the kaleidoscopic crowds of midnight New York filled up his time until he should again meet Irma Gluyas.

He had always turned away in disgust from the painted faces of the leering sirens of the Tenderloin, and now he sat gloomily eying the vacuous stare of the rabbit-faced stage beauties capering in their

mock diamonds. For a higher womanly ideal reigned in his lonely bosom.

Back, back to the speaking silence of his lonely rooms he wandered, to gaze through the smoke wreaths upon that picture which had so strangely brought Irma Gluyas into his life. Gloomily recalling the past, he went over all the brief memories of his boyhood, and tried to recall his stern father's few confidences, or picture to himself the mother whom he had never known. All was a gray blank of toiling days and carking cares. And Worthington had robbed him and made him eat the bread of dependence.

He lived now only to wreak a vengeance upon the man who had shared his father's early speculations and deserted him in his time of need. The ruin of Everett Clayton was now explained. And but one gracious memory lingered with him to lighten the gloom of his dependent boyhood.

Golden-haired Alice Worthington, the child-angel of the house, the frank girlish little playmate, the slim, shy school girl, the "Little Sister" of his striving college days. And now she was doomed to be the deluded prey of a vulgar money conspiracy--sold, body and soul.

He groaned as he thought of the deliberate sacrifice of the girl's glorious young womanhood to the vicious ambitions of her father's mad race for wealth and power.

"Shall I warn her?" he bitterly mused. And then all his manhood rose up against discovering a father's shame. "Never!" he cried. "I have eaten his bread and salt. My quarrel is with him alone! Ferris is to be the coming bridegroom. He is like all the rest--greedy of money and power. He will surely make her a "good husband" of the plutocratic code. Her money, his uncle's influence, bartered off for each other, will tie them firmly together. She shall never know from me. But I will fight Hugh Worthington a silent battle to the death. It will be a life and death struggle under the Black Flag."

It was this oath which made Clayton resolve to now hide his own private life slyly from all his colleagues. And it was a most needful precaution. For one single imprudence would give to his enemies the secret of his devotion to the dark-eyed woman whose eyes seemed to shine through all the clouds around him.

And, strange to say, the watchful Einstein had as yet made no report, though each night during the week Clayton had seen the youth hovering afar, at varied times, and in strangely incongruous changes of external adornment.

It was while Clayton was hastily packing up his bank deposits, upon the Monday morning, which had at last arrived, young Einstein glided into the room and drew Clayton to the door, left slightly ajar.

"There, quick," he whispered. "Those two fellows at the elevator, now. They have just come out from reporting to old Wade. I was in the office, waiting for Mr. Somers to give me the last mail deposits.

"Get out and follow them," whispered Clayton. "Come to my rooms at eight to-night. Your hundred dollars await you." The agile lad nodded and stole out, springing down the stairs to await the slowly-descending elevator.

"Now," growled Clayton, as he viciously snapped the lock of his portmanteau. "I will hide my every movement from you, my marble-faced old sleuth. You are the heir of Ferris' infamy."

And yet, as Clayton descended in the elevator, he realized that he had no claim whatever upon Robert Wade's friendship. "He has not betrayed me," murmured the now defiant cashier. "He is only the human 'transmitter' in Hugh Worthington's 'long-distance telephone' of villainy."

But, deep down in his angered heart, Clayton swore an oath to lead them all a merry dance. "No man among them shall ever have my confidence, and I will find a way to hide my every movement."

He would have made a total change of residence at once but for Jack Witherspoon's friendly caution. And so he sadly dismissed a plan to follow Irma Gluyas, to find out her real residence, and to be near her in the hours which she could make a paradise.

He smiled as he thought of the magnificent corbeille of flowers which he had already sent over to the Restaurant Bavaria to be placed in the breakfast-room. He had stolen away for a quarter of an hour to give his own directions to the grave-faced "Oberkellner," who was all discretion, as he pocketed Clayton's ten-dollar bill and said, "I perfectly understand. Madame already ordered the breakfast on Saturday. The same apartment. And you can trust to me." The suave politeness of the well-greased palm.

There was a mild-eyed wonder in the eyes of the dashing attaches of the Astor Place Bank as Randall Clayton entered on this fateful Monday morning. For, with that unconscious desire to please of the lover, Clayton's attire bespoke an unaccustomed elegance.

And yzt a discreet silence was observed as the sixty thousand dollars was transferred, and the flying fingers of the lynx-eyed clerks filled up the dozen drafts which Clayton impatiently awaited.

In his haste Clayton hailed a passing coupe, dashed away to the office, and quickly snapping his door after delivering over his trust, glided down the stairs. "To the Irving Place Theater," ordered the impatient lover, and then the minutes seemed hours till he had paid off his man, and then, by Fourteenth Street, hastily entered the darkened hallway of the Restaurant Bavaria.

He was but vaguely aware of the presence of Madame Raffoni, as he bowed low before his hostess. The incognito diva was a dream of beauty in her ravishing Viennese morning dress. Randall Clayton drew a new courage from Fraulein Irma's murmured remark, "Madame Raffoni, unfortunately, speaks no English," and the young enthusiast only noted that the ex-professional still possessed splendid eyes, and showed the remains of a considerable personal beauty.

His whole cares fell away from him as Clayton joined in the merry mood of his beautiful enchantress. The little dejeuner was a perfect rapprochement, in the light-hearted happiness of the hour.

Clayton had cast aside all suspicion when he left the doors of the Western Trading Company, and over the Liebfrauenmilch and Tokayer he found a new eloquence. His Western stories, his European experiences vastly interested the dark-eyed enchantress, and, led on by the spell of those wistful eyes--Othello-like--he told her the whole story of his life. For he stood before her, all unarmed in his sudden love fever.

Two hours sped by in a lingering day dream, until, yielding to his murmured entreaties, Irma Gluyas sat down at the piano, and in thrilling half voice, sang him the songs of the far off Magyar land.

As Merlin forgot his wisdom before the wily white-bosomed Vivien, so did the stormy-hearted American yield to the charm of the woman who sat there, with the choicest flowers of his offering clustered over her sculptured breast. Love's old, old story of a total surrender.

And then, as the last melody died away, the Hungarian witch softly sighed, "The shadows are already stealing in! We have stolen a few happy moments, mon ami. Ships that meet, and speak, and pass. I will not say Adieu! I will only say that I hope to meet you again. But your world and mine are so different. I have my career to make, and you must go on and be a money prince. There are no other princes in your workaday America!" Madame Raffoni was nodding in an alcove when the enraptured Randall Clayton caught the diva's hand. For he could not bear to lose her now; his heart clamored for her love.

His kisses warmed its veined marble as he whispered, "I must see you again. We two are alone in the world. I owe you a return of your gallant hospitality."

Her bosom was heaving in a tumult of vague emotion as she whispered, "I am fenced off from the whole world. My career depends upon my fidelity to those who trust me. I am absolutely incognito. I live apart from the world, and I dare not take you to my home. There is no way. The artist has no home life, no heart life. The world claims us; all our youth, beauty, talent, even our last energies

are given up to the insatiate public.

"You must call me back when you look at our Danube picture, and, when the ban is lifted, if I succeed, you will hear of me. If I fail," she brokenly murmured, "then, forget me--think of me as only one who, a stranger in a strange land, has shared Life's cup with you, in a gleam of passing sunshine." There were bright tears trembling upon her down-dropped lashes.

"And I shall have nothing of you! Not even a picture," hoarsely murmured Clayton. "I will not be denied. I shall see you again. I will follow you!"

He was startled by the ashen pallor of her face.

"You must not! You dare not!" she cried, in a sudden agitation. "It would mean our eternal parting! For I will not have my plighted honor forfeit. Promise me, if you ever hope to see me again, that you will not follow me!"

There was the ring of truth in her words, and even the accent of fear in her appeal.

Catching at a last straw, Clayton pleaded before the word of dismissal should fall from her trembling lips.

"I must see you again," he begged. "I leave all to you, and I swear to obey you in all things."

The beautiful woman bowed her head in her hands.

"See how I trust you," she brightly said, meeting his glance frankly at last. "Be at the arch in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, next Sunday at two.

"If you have a closed carriage we can drive an hour in the park. If we must say farewell, we can say it then. For even when I met you first, in that crowded street, I felt that in some strange freemasonry of Life, we were to be friends."

A single frightened, warning gesture recalled him to his senses, as Irma pointed to her nodding companion. "You do not know how jealous artists are.

"One single imprudence would be my professional ruin; my career would be blasted. Trust to me! Obey me; swear that you will not follow me, and we shall meet again, for I would not lose you from my life." He took the roses from her bosom and kissed them.

"Go, now," she whispered, "but only that we may meet again! I have your promise."

"Loyal to the death," swore Clayton, as he kissed her trembling

hands and then stole away, leaving her there alone with pallid lips and a wildly beating heart.

Clayton had taken up the burden of his unfinished day's business before the carriage left the "Bavaria," and swiftly traversing Fourth Avenue, passed along to the Thirty-fourth Street ferry.

There was but one occupant, however, for Madame Raffoni had silently disappeared before the diva, heavily veiled, entered the vehicle.

Clayton wondered at the protracted absence of his office boy, ignorant that the young double spy was standing before the Restaurant Bavaria watching Leah Einstein's furtive disappearance.

And neither the lad, astounded as his mother's unaccustomed finery, nor the love-blinded Randall Clayton ever knew that "Madame Raffoni" hastened to Magdal's Pharmacy to whisper to Mr. Fritz Braun tidings which brought a surging swell of triumph into that arch plotter's heart.

"Leah! You are a wonder, after all," was the comment of her old lover. "Keep this whole matter quiet. Hoodwink them all! And that pair of diamond ear-rings you dreamed of may fall your way at last!" The poor cast-off woman swore a blind obedience to her lover once, her tyrant still.

The adroit Timmins laughed in his heart when his employer, deliberately closing his cabinet, left the shop an hour earlier than usual on this particularly auspicious afternoon.

Fritz Braun's eyes gleamed viciously behind the blue glass screens as he sedately boarded his car. "Things are coming my way at last," he said. "I must not hurry, I must make no mistake, and I must let that Magyar devil fancy that she is playing this game herself, for one false step would ruin all." And he vowed to deceive the daring woman whom he feared to curb. "She shall work my will and not know the finale in the third act."

The office doors of the Western Trading Company closing, one by one, with a resounding clang, awoke Randall Clayton from day dreams which he dared not break off.

The office boy had not returned when Clayton, now on guard against every one in the employ of the Western robber baron, went out into the crowds pressing homewards.

He had given up, in a mad impulse, the whole faith of his unspent life to the woman who had whispered, "Go now, that we may meet again."

The thrilling accents of her voice, sweet and low, seemed to vibrate in his soul, and so, hugging his darling secret to his heart, he vowed to baffle Worthington's spies. "For her," he murmured, "I

will outwit them all."

No shade of suspicion rested upon the lovely image dwelling now on the throne of his heart. For in the matchless beauty of her delicate face he saw only the royal mint stamp of a noble soul. He had called her to his side out of all New York's thronging thousands, by the mute appeal of his lonely, longing eyes. It was Nature's mesmerism.

And as that grand hailing sign had been answered by Fate's decree, he was blind to the pathway leading on. For, in his fond conceit, he only knew Worthington and Ferris as enemies.

With a restless impatience, he awaited the coming of his office boy after he had trifled the time away over his dinner at the Imperial. Leaning back in his chair, he keenly watched the voluble lad, in a growing wonder, as Einstein triumphantly recalled every detail of his master's evening movements of the past week.

"I didn't get on to them well, sir," concluded Emil, "but the last two nights one or the other of them has kept you in sight all the while.

"Daly's, the Imperial, Hammerstein's, the Waldorf, up where you bought your outing goods, down to Proctor's, up the Boulevard to the Colonial Club, they piped you off. You see I only got familiar with them after a few nights. But now I have them dead to rights."

"And where did they go from there?" growled Clayton. "After they reported to the old man," irreverently answered Einstein, "they went together down to the Fidelity Company. I followed them in and brought away a card. That's all, sir!"

Randall Clayton paced the floor in silence a few moments. Then, taking out his pocketbook, he handed the eager youth a hundred-dollar bill. "Keep this matter all to yourself, Emil," he gravely said.

"I will let you off now for a couple of weeks. Then I will take you on again and will see if these 'spotters' are still on duty. I will look out for you, and see you promoted."

When the boy had departed, Randall Clayton sank back in his chair. "Whatever happens," he musingly decided, "I will never expose Irma to the dangers of this espionage. They may have other agents by day, who knows! And, if I wish to safely meet her, it must be over there."

His thought were wandering far away across the black, flowing tide of the East River, where the Brooklyn Bridge was now traced in line of living light against the darkness of night.

Over there, beyond the gloomy river warehouses, with their forests of masts, across the swiftly rushing tide seeking the unknown sea, the graceful Queen of his awakened heart was hidden from him. "I shall find her out; nothing shall part us; she shall hear me yet;

she shall learn to look for my coming, and she shall open the gates of her home to me. Her heart shall beat against my own."

For, in all the sweep of a lover's imagination, he only saw her, at the end of the veiled pathway, with love lighting her softly shining eyes, and her beloved hand waving him on.

While he still wandered in a Fool's Paradise, the crafty office boy was hastening across the great span which hangs its curving arch from Manhattan to Long Island.

Einstein was driven on by his gnawing greed of money. "Fritz must know this at once," he muttered. These business detective fellows are dangerous, and could easily break up his little game.

"For if Clayton gets into any trouble, out he goes! There's no money in him then, and he's no good to Fritz Braun, no more to me. This news ought to fetch me a couple of twenties if well played."

It was ten o'clock when Emil Einstein sprang down the stairway of the eastern terminus of the Brooklyn Bridge. The lad was blithe at heart as he turned to the left and, passing through the seething press of the crowds congested under the electric lights of Sands and Fulton Streets, carefully reconnoitered a gorgeous saloon on the corner of Layte and Dale Streets.

Einstein peered in through the two swinging doors of the front, and then betook himself to the side entrance on Dale Street, where the "Family Entrance," the private corridor, and one or two halls admitted him to the restaurant, card rooms and private rooms of the ground floor of the five-story corner brick building. The youth recoiled, after a peep through a ground glass door left ajar, at the glories of the main hall of the famous "Valkyrie" saloon.

"What am I to do?" he mused, as he lit his cigarette in a dark doorway outside, parrying the coarse advances of two fleeting Cyprians with a retort which brought the blood to their cheeks, leaping up under the plastered rouge. "I've been forbidden to call him out of 192; he and my mother are both now fooling the Duchess; I am playing a double game with Clayton, and, by Hokey, old Wade's watchful men may drop on to me. I may lose the best job in New York if these people get all tangled up. What the devil is going on, anyway?"

He crossed the street and gazed up at the glaring red pressed-brick walls of the Valkyrie corner. All the two score of windows on Dale Street, and the score on Layte Street were closely guarded with solid shutters of a green hue.

"God knows what devilry is going on here," muttered the lad, a coward at heart. There were fleeting figures of veiled women gliding past him through the dim entrances, the refluent stream of the Devil's daughters.

Down the gloomy side street the blue gleam of the pitiless river showed light against the somber night, the yellow blinking lights of the tugs flitting about like corpse candles.

In the dark shadows of the involved angular corners, thug and ghoul lurked until midnight should bring them their prey, the careless roysterer, or the belated prosperous citizen. Out on Layte Street the flashy throng was still pouring toward the Fulton Ferry.

"I wonder if I dare," mused the lad, as he walked around the corner and paused before No. 192 Layte Street. The sober splendor of the richly decorated old five-story brownstone told of the vanished glories of the ante-bellum days.

A stately mansion in whose halls there had been royal cheer in the departed days when Brooklyn had its proud burghers and New York its simple citizens of worth. But the pressure of commerce, the havoc of the bridge construction, the onrush of warehouse, shop, and the pressure of the street railway octopus had left the sedate mansion a relic of better days in an incongruous medley of little shops, doubtful lodging-houses, vile man-traps, and clustering saloons.

Here the Juggernaut car of King Alcohol was rolling on remorselessly, crushing out all life save the frenzied dream of the dipsomaniac.

But the lad paused and shook his head as he noted the windows of the old English basement tightly barred. The parlor floor, bearing the gilded sign, "Parisian Millinery Repository," was darkened, and, above, the three upper floors presented only an array of undraped windows solidly shut off by white-enamelled inside folding blinds. The decorous-looking main entrance bore but one card, in script, "Raffoni, Musical Director."

For years the neighborhood had forgotten its curiosity over the foreign-looking men and women who passed the vigilant Cerberus at the stately oaken door. No daring book-agent, no pedlar of indurated cheek, no outside barbarian had ever crossed that guarded portal, for a brass chain of impregnable strength prevented any intrusion, and only a glimpse of the old tessellated marble floor rewarded the frightened interloper.

It was "No Thoroughfare" to the multitude, and the quaint visitors were either personally conducted or used latch-keys.

The over-fed policeman sucking his club in front of 192 Layte only smiled in answer to vague inquiry, "Private house, belongs to old family estate, people in Europe," and then with a leer would drop into the "Valkyrie" for a fistful of good cigars and a flask of the very best.

The timid young scoundrel lingering before 192 on this fresh, starry night was the only "outsider" who knew what deadly master mind controlled the mysteries of the "Valkyrie" saloon and 192

Layte Street, its sedate neighbor.

The particular use of the "fake" millinery repository, the hidden life of the upper floors of the old mansion, were only known to the man whom Emil Einstein feared to meet in anger.

But in the Devil's auction of the corner building, man, woman and child were knocked down to the highest bidder, for the hell-minted price of human souls.

Gambler, crook and thief; wanton, decoy and badger; racing tout, fugitive, smuggler, and counterfeiter; lottery sharp and green-goods man, all welcomed the white, red and blue lights gleaming over the "Valkyrie" saloon as the harbor-lights of their safe port in any storm.

"I have it," muttered Einstein, as he boldly threw open the swinging half door of the "Valkyrie." Shading his eyes in the flood of garish light, he gazed around at the twenty round tables. Six alert barkeepers lurked in front of the superb mirrors behind the rich walnut counters gleaming with crystal and silver.

The music of the Orchestrion bore away on its flood of Strauss waltzes the shrill chatter of women's laughter in the inside hell of the private rooms.

Opening doors admitted fragments of poker gabble as the white-aproned waiters rushed around with their trays of drinks.

With artful geography of arrangement, gaudy women from the side street, at tables, were parading their too evident charms before the crowd of clerks, men about town, warrant officers, railroad employees, old roués, sporting men and belated "slummers" who leered at every arrival of "fresh fish."

Young Einstein, scribbling the single word "Emil" on a card, approached the parchment-faced German lad who sat in state, manipulating the bewildering keys of the "Cash Register."

"Send this to the boss at once," said Einstein in a low voice.

"You can't see him," contemptuously announced the insolent Jack-in-office, tossing back the card. He scented a possible successor in this vulpine-looking young stranger. But Einstein resolutely came back to the charge. "It's his business, and he'll jerk you out of your job if you throw me down. I will not stir a step till I see him. Send it up."

And Emil made a significant gesture with a defiant thumb.

Audacity carried the day! Young Einstein, coolly purchasing a Regalia and seating himself at a table, grinned a last defiance as a "Kellner" finally touched his arm and led him into a vacant

card-room.

Down a stairway came the sounding tread of a heavy man, and Einstein was in the presence of Mr. Fritz Braun.

"It's about him, Clayton," faltered the boy, awed at his employer's lowering face.

"Come with me," harshly said Braun, as he led the lad up to the third floor. When they had entered a rear sleeping-room, Braun locked the door. "Tell me all," he anxiously cried. "Out with it. If you lie you'll never leave this house, remember!"

With chattering teeth, the lad delivered himself of his discovery. It was only after half an hour of cross questioning that Braun was satisfied with the details of Robert Wade's espionage of Randall Clayton. "You've done well, for yourself," said Braun, at last, handing the boy a roll of bills. "But never come here again. I'll give you an address to-morrow where you can call, telephone or telegraph, and a name. Post me on all. Keep this from your mother. I'll handle her myself. Now, by day you can slip over to the store, by night use the new address. Get home now. Go over the ferry." He filled the boy's hand with loose silver. "I'll stay here. Speak to no one. Get out quickly by the side door."

Emil Einstein was safely across the Fulton Ferry before he had realized the startling change in Fritz Braun's appearance. The flowing golden beard, the blue glasses, the padded clothes of middle-age cut were gone. Fritz Braun, lithe, sharp-faced, with piercing eyes, a dashing cavalry mustache, and dapper Wall Street tailoring, was twenty years younger, and another man.

His diamond jewels, rakish air and "loose fish" manner bespoke the flush book-maker or the flashy "boss."

"Here's for a night on the Bowery," gleefully cried Einstein, counting his Judas gains, while he tried to forget Fritz Braun's lightning change.

That dapper gentleman, stepping into a closet, passed swiftly through the door from the Valkyrie into 192 Layte Street. His hidden pool-room, gambling den and exchange for soul and body was temporarily forgotten by "Mr. August Meyer," owner of the peerless "Valkyrie Saloon."

"I'll get a carriage and drive over to Irma," he growled. "She must never cross the river again. We must lead him over here; but how? Perhaps the pretty devil can help me. I must throw Wade off the track. Irma can fool this young greenhorn. The job must be done over there. For a fortune, for his life or mine; and he must be teased along till the July holidays."

Then Mr. August Meyer of Brooklyn proceeded to leisurely array

himself as a clubman of fashion.

CHAPTER V.

BREAKERS AHEAD! CHECKMATE! MR. ARTHUR FERRIS WORKS IN THE DARK.

Randall Clayton was an enigma in his altered personal bearing to his old confreres when he entered the manager's office at his summons on a balmy afternoon of the dying days of June.

The two months since Jack Witherspoon's departure had changed the frank young fellow into a taciturn man of feline secretiveness. The discovery of Worthington's treachery, the knowledge of the dogging spies at his heels, had been a suddenly transforming influence. He now ardently burned for the return of his one confidant, for the annual election was but a few days distant.

The ripening summer was coming on fast. On Fifth Avenue the delicate, haughty-faced young Princesses of Mammon now bore the June blush roses in their slender pitiless hands. The annual hegira pleasureward was beginning.

And as yet only Randall Clayton's burning eyes marked the conflict raging in his soul. But he longed to leap into the open, and boldly defy Worthington. For a new purpose had stolen upon him in these weeks--the sudden desire for wealth.

He craved money for but one object--to cast it at the feet of Irma Gluyas and then to bear her away from a world of lies to the storied Danube, where woman's rosy lip rests in clinging transports upon lips speaking the wild love of the gallant Magyar land. He now knew the power of wealth. Clayton had become as secretive as the young Pawnee on his first warpath. He was now watching the enemy's camp and awaiting the moves of both the guilty employer and false friend.

Through the still subsidized Einstein he knew that the bootless espionage upon his leisure hours had been given up at last. He had baffled his enemies.

It had not been done by fear of the clumsy artifices of Robert Wade, but a desire born of his overmastering love for Irma, to guard her every footstep. His heart melted in its memories of that crowning hour of the avowal of his love, when she had whispered,

"I dare not take you to my home! Wait, Randall, wait, and trust all to me."

Two months past had seen him plunging deeper into the mad love, more blindly, every day, sinking into the hungry passion, waxing into a fond delirium, under the artful orders of a veiled Mokanna. "You must lead him on, far as you can; make him forget everything in the world but yourself; promise him all, and grant him nothing."

A thousand plans had been revolved by Clayton for the future, but the delicious thralldom of his love drew him to Irma Gluyas as the moon draws the sea.

It had been his own jealous lover heart which bade her meet him in all distant places, but to always shun the city with Wade's baffled spies still on the watch.

For once, the orders of the double traitor Einstein were identical, as neither the artful Braun nor the anxious lover cared to risk the dangers of Irma's face meeting the gaze of the watchful Wade.

In a guarded silence the young cashier awaited Mr. Robert Wade's official action on this June afternoon. He was only vaguely aware by rumor that Hugh Worthington and Miss Alice still lingered somewhere on the Pacific Coast.

There had been no further word from Arthur Ferris, and the all-important election was but a week distant now. Clayton keenly watched the solemn-faced manager as he drew out some papers from a bulky envelope. There was but one phase in his now double life of which Clayton naturally feared the exposure.

Warned by Witherspoon, Clayton had watched the steady rise of the Western Trading Company's stock, week by week, during the absence of the arbiter of its destinies. His veins were filled with the tide of a new-born passion.

Clayton had boldly risked all his savings in the margining of large blocks of the stock, dealing constantly through a Wall Street friend.

Three times he had fortunately turned over his capital since Witherspoon had unveiled the scheme to draw in a majority of the shares, and he was now sixteen thousand dollars to the good. Even after lavishing a goodly part of his gains upon the mysterious diva, in every fantastic way possible, in their stealthy meetings, Clayton still had pyramided his capital and now was sure of another harvest. And he only wondered at the reluctance with which the lovely Hungarian accepted the jewels thrust upon her.

"I will sell out the day before the election," mused Clayton, as he awaited the manager's slow mental processes. "Then I can even stand a discharge," he defiantly thought.

The young man's face paled suddenly as Wade handed him a telegram addressed in the care of the manager. "When you have carefully read this," said Wade, "I will give you Mr. Worthington's own ideas, from his confidential instructions to me."

Conscious that he was now environed in the house of his enemies, Randall Clayton sat for some time there, silently pondering the suddenness of a proposal which affected his whole future career.

"You are wanted as general superintendent of all of our Western ranches. Headquarters at Cheyenne. Please telegraph acceptance, and meet Ferris at Cheyenne in four days. He leaves to-day. Answer. Wade has my full instructions."

The blood surged back to Randall Clayton's heart in a defiant flood. "They know nothing; but I'll hear him out."

It was twenty minutes before the manager had finished the explanation of the measure proposed and had dilated upon the advance of salary, the future prospects, and all the ultimate benefits of the parties to this autocratically suggested change. "He has been secretly coached up by Ferris," thought the suspicious Clayton. But he gave no sign of his secret distrust.

"Of course," purringly remarked Robert Wade, "it is a little sudden; but I am authorized to make you a half year's salary allowance for first expenses and outfit, and so you can easily get away to-morrow night. That will bring you out to Cheyenne in time to meet Ferris, and then get your instructions. He is coming on to look at the annual accounts and give Mr. Worthington's views as to your successor."

Wade pushed over a telegraph blank. "Just write out your telegram, and I will send it on at once. You will accept, of course."

Randall Clayton had schooled himself since Jack Witherspoon's departure in every defensive measure against the secret plotters. And so his voice was suave and measured as he simply said, "I think, Mr. Wade, that I shall have to regretfully decline this promotion. I am perfectly well satisfied as I am. I know nothing of the details of our great Western business. I have forgotten the frontier now."

The lines in Wade's face hardened. "Is that your only reason? You will soon pick up the technique!"

Clayton stood the fire of the vulpine gray eyes without a quiver. Jack Witherspoon's warning injunctions returned to his mind. "Look out, my boy, that they don't get you sidetracked in some lonely place. They would kill you like a rat if our design to uncover the past was ever discovered."

Clayton but too well knew how easily a man could be lost forever out in the Black Hills, or along the lonely Platte. "It is their grand

final move before bringing out Ferris as the new-made capitalist. My life would not be worth a pin-head. And Witherspoon would be far away out of reach. Irma lost to me forever!"

The jealous lover could almost see the crowded opera-house and hear that now familiar witching voice. He knew that men would bow before her beauty; that flowers, jewels, flattery and fortune would be showered upon her. The hungry "upper ten" pine for new victims with unsatisfied maw. He had already dedicated his coming fortune to her; she should be his heart-queen, and together they would go back and buy the old family castle, whose legends had fallen from her lips in the stolen hours of the long love trysts of the last two months.

"I cannot accept this flattering offer, Mr. Wade," resolutely said the young man, who now saw a steely anger in the manager's eyes. "I have given the flower of my youth to Mr. Worthington's service; but this is a total change, a sudden break-up of all my private plans. I beg that you will at once telegraph him my respectful declination."

Clayton rose with a look on his face which completed Wade's thorough annoyance. "Stop, sir; stop! Think before you throw away all your chances in life! You can have a whole day to think this over. Would you forfeit Mr. Worthington's regard and so lose your place?"

There was a strident anger in the manager's harsh voice. But Clayton, realizing that he had even till now not been able to gain Irma's pictured face, looked forward to the heart-wreck of this enforced absence. "If I am to be cast out like a dog after my faithful service, then you must do it, sir," gravely said Clayton, Witherspoon's warnings returning to stiffen his resolution. "Why not await Mr. Ferris' arrival? I may be able to reach Mr. Worthington's second thoughts through him." The agent of the two far off conspirators lost his self-control at last.

"I'll await nothing," roared Robert Wade. "That will do, sir!" And as the defiant Clayton retired, the manager rang for a telegraph boy.

"I have given them checkmate," mused Clayton, as he snapped his door behind him. "Their plans probably included making away with me, out West, after Ferris has done his work and returns to openly claim Alice's hand. It is a fight for my life now. I must reach Irma at once. I must tell her all."

Suddenly he thought of the future. His heart sickened. "Wade will undoubtedly recommend my discharge. If Jack fails me, I am then to be cast out in the streets, and the influence of the Trust will surely keep me from holding any other position longer than they can find out where to reach me."

He absently broke the seals of a couple of letters dropped on his

desk in his brief absence.

He sprang up, a new man, as he read Jack Witherspoon's few words. The missive was dated from Paris. It bore in its light-hearted chatter a few words which sealed his fate in life.

"Am coming home at once. Will be with you in ten days. Let nothing prevent our meeting in New York. Will act instantly in your matter. Have had private news. They were secretly married a month ago at Tacoma. Be on your guard!"

Seizing his hat, Randall Clayton hurried away to the nearest telegraph office, where he felt safe from Robert Wade's spies.

"Thank God for Irma's wit," he said, in his heart, as he sent the veiled words which would bring her to that quiet hotel on Staten Island, where, among Richmond's leafy bowers, they now defied all possible detection. It had been her own plan. The long weeks of Clayton's complete self-surrender had brought about no forward step in Irma Gluyas' intimacy.

The still silent Madame Raffoni was the careful guardian of the veiled beauty, and Clayton, loyal to a frenzy of romantic faith, had never broken his promise.

For he lived only now in Irma's whispered promise, "Wait, and trust to me. You shall come to me as soon as I can break my bonds. It shall be then you and I, for the rest of our days, if Love still holds the helm."

It was long after midnight when the defiant lover returned to his apartment. The Magyar witch had finally learned the last secret of his honest heart, and with clinging arms had whispered through her kisses, "If you leave me, Randall, it is the death of our love." And, trusting blindly to his honest love, Clayton wagered his life upon a woman's faith.

Under the door of his room lay a yellow envelope, and as the now resolute man read it he smiled grimly. "Victory!" he cried, for Ferris' words assured him of a coming triumph, a crown of life and love. It seemed that Irma's love had conquered after all.

"Await me in New York. I think that we can arrange all for your remaining as you are." The signature was that of the artful Ferris. "And I think that Jack and I can handle you, my false friend!" sneered Clayton.

While the young lover read the words which gave him a new hope, far across the Brooklyn Bridge, Mr. Fritz Braun, in his own private lair, was pondering over the words of Madame Raffoni, who had just left the man who was the iron tyrant of her soiled life.

"I must give him a little more line! And I must either land the

fish now or lose him forever."

There was a steely gleam in the sleepless eyes of him who pondered upon his clouded pathway. "It must be done! And she must help in some way. She holds the winning cards now. Nothing else will draw him!"

The masquerading criminal was almost desperate. It had been his by-play for years to play at hide and seek with humanity, using his duplex characters at first to throw off any pursuit of the Vienna police; and, later, to hide his nefarious operations on the New York side.

Greedy for money, before Irma Gluyas had been driven to his arms by adverse fortunes, Fritz Braun had at first made his refuge at the "Valkyrie," then owned by Ludwig Sohmer, whose passion for "playing the races" had at last dragged him down.

The Viennese fugitive diligently plied his erstwhile patron with drink and smilingly enmeshed the brutish peasant-bred Sohmer in a series of compounded loans.

It was not long until all the employees recognized in the alert "August Meyer" the mainstay of the decaying fortunes of the half bankrupt Sohmer.

Every evening, without fail, the sharp commands of Fritz Braun were now conveyed to the responsible underlings! Sohmer, staggering homeward with his greedy Aspasia from the Waterloo conflicts of the race-track, sullenly assented at last to the chattel mortgages and bills of sale which placed the "Valkyrie" and the whole building under August Meyer's name. Then, taking the downward road, Sohmer tried to drown himself in drink, and succeeded.

When Sohmer was found dead in his bed, the millionaire brewer who backed the "Valkyrie," and the owner of the ground on which the building erected by Sohmer stood, gladly took on the active August Meyer in loco the departed Sohmer.

The solidity of the new tenant's finances was vouched for by the agents of the old estate from whom Fritz Braun had already leased 192 Layte Street, in his Brooklyn name of "August Meyer."

Strange to say, the keen-eyed officials of the German Consulate-General had issued to the acute pharmacist a regular passport, upon the military and family papers of Braun's poor soldier drudge at the Magdal Pharmacy.

It had been an exchange acceptable to both parties: an ocean of drink, a weekly pittance of food and raiment, for the valuable attested documents which gave the disguised Viennese fugitive the right to boldly claim the Kaiser's official protection as "August Meyer." It was the very citadel of Braun's rising fortunes!

And so, with Sohmer soundly sleeping, whether well or illy, "after life's fitful fever," the foxy Viennese rejoiced in his assigned ground-lease, Sohmer's business, and the gold mine of the hidden pool-room, gambling den and disguised harem of No. 192 Layte Street.

Fritz Braun had allowed a few months to pass before he secretly opened the party walls between the two buildings to allow his choicest patrons to enter No. 192 Layte Street all unobserved; but, for reasons of his own, he had made one or two private alterations in the two buildings which enabled him to enter the different floors by his own judiciously veiled private entrances.

The cellar of No. 192 Layte Street had been piped for cold-storage of the wines and beer of the "Valkyrie" under Fritz Braun's own supervision when he gave up the basement of the "Valkyrie" to the kitchens of the restaurant, which drew the attractive women of the quarter into the safest possible association with their victims crowding the "Valkyrie" saloon.

A vigilant business man, August Meyer came each evening to settle the days' affairs and personally watch the money mill next door, which ran noiselessly on golden wheels from nine o'clock till midnight.

No one had Meyer's confidence; he left no tell-tale papers to connect him with the gruff pharmacist of Sixth Avenue, and at midnight he always vanished to his own private home, a diligently guarded terra incognita to all men.

A sphinx-like "Oberkellner" received the orders of the proprietor each evening; a steward of equal taciturnity "ran" the restaurant, and August Meyer himself, with autocratic power, directed the villainous operations of No. 192 Layte Street.

Popular with the police, exact in his monthly settlements with the ground landlords and the despotic brewery king, Fritz Braun avoided both the failings which had wrecked the golden fortunes of the dead Sohmer.

But, alas! no man is equally strong against all temptations. Deaf to woman's wail; brutal and heartless; too fearful of his past record to give himself up to the bowl, Fritz Braun, blase and tired of every side of human life, had drifted easily into the desperate craze of the insatiate gambler.

It was months after he had found No. 192 Layte Street to be a never-failing mint, when Braun became fascinated with the whirr of the roulette ball, the varying chances of the faro box, and, at last, the fine peculiarities of "unlimited poker" swept away his once callous prudence.

Night after night, in the grim quartette of a ruinously high game,

August Meyer "held his hand" recklessly, while a street railroad magnate, a millionaire importer, and a reigning politician swept away the revenues of the "Valkyrie." He was rolling the stone of Sisyphus up hill now. He had forged his own ruin.

Alone in the world, a desperate Ishmael, Fritz Braun needed the secret protection of these powerful plutocrats. Silently he had suffered his huge losses, waiting for the luck to turn, and now, on the eve of his great coup of criminal sagacity, he awoke at last to his own imperiled fortunes, and yet he feared to own that he dared not cease gambling, that he could not "throw up his hand."

And, by one of the fantastic turns of luck which haunt even the safest "dealing" games, he had seen the tide of Fortune turn viciously against his banking dealers several times. The "bank" had been broken at several of his tables until he had hypothecated all his reserve securities. Ruin stared him in the face, for it had come at last.

Possessed of his regular passport, safe now in any voyage in Germany, the Low Countries, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, in Russia, Fritz Braun had long desired to break off his slavery to the "painted ladies" of the cards.

He had always kept some jewels of great value with him as a final reserve, and a nest-egg of a few thousands deposited in a Frankfort banking-house, with whose New York agents he had effected many clearings of considerable size.

Fate was now swiftly sweeping him along, he knew not whither, and on this night of discontent he bitterly calculated the chances of a stormy future.

"Ten thousand dollars only left, and whatever more my jewels will bring," he growled. "I am safe enough, though. Timmins can run the pharmacy, and the brewery will put an agent in here if I say that I need a few months' rest abroad."

"But there's Irma to be got rid of! If she does not help me to this one crowning stroke of luck, then I've either got to put her out of the way or take her with me. She knows my one dangerous secret."

A busy devil in his heart whispered an excellent suggestion. He grinned in self-satisfied malignity. "Yes! That's the trick! If I win we'll take a Hoboken steamer together. Any one of our smuggling stewards and agents over there will take care of us on the way over.

"If I lose, she must go with me; and there are a few lonely lakes in Norway, a few deep fiords with leaping waterfalls. I might lose her there, and only that coward Lilienthal would perhaps suspect. He would have to keep his mouth shut, for he has his own tracks

to cover, and he would easily believe that the pretty jade has run off and left me. And he fears publicity.

"As for Leah, she loves me blindly, with a dog's fidelity; her boy will be true to his dam and drift on in silence--a sharp scoundrel! The world is an easy oyster for him to open.

"If--if I lose Irma, I'll have Leah over there with me. My passport as August Meyer makes me invincible."

And the scheming villain threw himself down to dream of a stroke of luck which should make him safe in Northern Europe, in the assumed character of "August Meyer," a second self which fitted him like a Guardsman's uniform. "I can easily play off a long sickness, turn over the leases, and the brewer will run the 'Valkyrie.' My one hope and fear is Irma. If she pulls this off I'll fix her; yes, I'll fix her!"

He drifted away into a land of dreams, a far-off land, where, under the black shadows of the Norway firs, he could see the gleam of white hands thrown up despairingly in the icy waters. It was a fiend's prophecy of a nameless horror to come.

When Randall Clayton noticed the returning suavity of Manager Robert Wade's demeanor on the days ensuing the abortive attempt to lure the young cashier out West, he vowed to redouble his own crafty policy of secret resistance. It all seemed so clear to him now. "Wade and Ferris wish to conceal the marriage until the election is over. I would be exposed, perhaps even here, to their deadly resentment if I openly rebelled.

"But once that Jack Witherspoon is back, and Ferris anchored here, Jack can go on and face old Worthington. I will affect ignorance, and then a brief campaign of victory will put Irma in my arms."

Startled by Einstein's revelations, Randall Clayton had carefully removed every scrap of his private papers from his apartments, and his little fortune, his stocks and personal archives, were all safe in a down-town Safe Deposit.

The address and all the details of the Trust were lying in a sealed envelope in the safe of Jack Witherspoon's club, in Detroit, awaiting that legal champion's return.

And so, his heart thrilled with the fear of losing the Hungarian singer, Randall Clayton made friends with all in the office until his friend and enemy should pass each other in New York City.

The business and social atmosphere had visibly cleared before the day of the annual election came on.

Clayton's eyes were now fixed only on his friend Witherspoon, whose steamer was now picking him up at Boulogne. The approach of

the Fourth of July, with a triple holiday--Saturday, Sunday and Monday--caused Clayton to toil, early and late, in the vast annual settlements of the end of the fiscal year. It was upon the basis of the settlement of June 30th that the reports of July 1st, the annual election, were to be made.

But one thought now filled Clayton's agitated heart.

It was Irma Gluyas' future. Her resolute policy of holding him off had inflamed Clayton's lover ardor to an overmastering passion.

Gallant and loyal, he had taken her at her own word. The unconventional artist life, her romantic early history, her foreign birth, her carefully veiled coming debut, all this conspired to cover the singular reticence of the diva as to her home life.

He never had demanded her whole heart confidence, for he had been forced to veil from her his hopes of winning a fortune by one fell swoop upon the astounded Worthington.

"And then," murmured the passionate, heated lover, "I can tell her all. I can give her a home, the power of wealth to set my jewel off, and there shall be nothing hidden between us."

From first to last he had concealed nothing from her, save the mechanism of the short, sharp struggle which was to make him almost a millionaire, if Jack Witherspoon's bold plan succeeded.

It had been for her sake as well as his own that the veiled star, Irma Gluyas, had laughingly searched the map of New York and vicinity to find places of safe meeting.

To avoid Robert Wade's spies, to preserve Irma's incognito, they had exhausted the "lions" of every Long Island, Staten Island, and New Jersey village. They had canvassed every place of resort within fifty miles of New York City.

With a dumb fidelity Madame Raffoni had accompanied her beautiful charge. There was a wholesome innocence in these strangely arranged stolen interviews.

Clayton often searched that lovely face to read what malign influence kept her from opening her whole life to him.

But it all seemed so clear. Her wild artist nature yearned for the honors of a world's applause; it was agreed between them that, be it opera season or concert tour, that, once success was achieved, the eclipse of Love should hide her from the eager moths who flutter around the risen star.

"She trusts me; I have not told her all. When I can give her my whole life and a fortune," thought Clayton, "then I shall say, 'Irma, open the sealed books. There must be nothing hidden between

us."

With a serene confidence in Madame Raffoni, Randall Clayton always came home alone and by circuitous routes, artfully varied, from these strange trysts.

This stolen time seemed all too short to speak of their future, gilded by a love which thrived strangely in the difficulties besetting the strangely-met couple.

Clayton's mind was unclouded by suspicion. He had given his whole destiny over to the keeping of the small blue-veined hands, which lingered so lovingly on his heated brow. His watchfulness was only turned upon Robert Wade's disgruntled spies.

From the heavily subsidized Einstein, Clayton gleefully learned that the weekly "report" of one or the other of the Fidelity Company's men consisted of a morose shake of the head and the single word, "Nothing!"

The cashier laughed at Emil's report of Wade's accidentally overheard angry growl, "Where the devil does he keep himself, any way?"

For Love had taught Clayton a strange, new craft, and he easily outwitted the two brutes who always came to "report" during his bank absences, and had vainly rifled his deserted rooms during his long Sunday and evening absences.

There was no tell-tale clue in the lonely apartment, where the dust of many long weeks had gathered in Arthur Ferris' vacant rooms.

Unable to absent himself on the near approach of the great annual settlement, driven at last to extremity, Randall Clayton arranged his last meeting with Irma, before the return of Ferris and Witherspoon, at Manhattan Beach.

For the summer boats were already running, and, on the broad piazzas of the Oriental they could safely meet.

It was so easy for Madame Raffoni to pilot the incognito diva by the railway to the Manhattan Hotel. A double veil and a judiciously fringed sunshade would make Irma Gluyas impregnable to the flaneur.

"Alas! The days of Aranjuez are over," sighed Clayton, for this tryst of Thursday was to be followed by the election on Friday.

As yet Arthur Ferris had given no sign of his impending arrival. Some gloomy foreboding weighed down Randall Clayton's soul with a fear of coming disaster. He felt how powerless he was in the hands of the cruel conspirators who had robbed him of his fortune.

He never doubted that Senator Durham and the treacherous Ferris both possessed Hugh Worthington's dastardly secret, and that they

all stood ready to crush him.

The innocent four-line advertisement of the annual election had been duly inserted in the obscure corners of certain fourth-class journals, "as required by law."

There was an oily grin upon Robert Wade's self-satisfied face, and, with no single word from Worthington or Ferris, Clayton felt the toils closing around him. He was left out of the game--a mere poor pawn.

It was on the night before his five-o'clock tryst at the Manhattan, when Clayton suddenly sprang from his chair. "By God! I have it!" he cried. "Old Wade has failed to trap me. Ferris, the smug scoundrel, will glide back here and try to steal into my intimacy. He can post his slyly posted spies. I cannot then keep him off. And he will reiterate Worthington's plans, cling to me, and run me to earth. He will take up his Judas trade, and either trap me or else, baffled, will telegraph Worthington and have me discharged. Why has he concealed this secret marriage? And, damnation! I cannot ever meet Jack Witherspoon in private without giving myself away. I must have some one meet Witherspoon at the steamer and arrange for one meeting out of town. He must go over to Philadelphia and await me. I can take an evening train over, and be back here, even if Ferris hangs on my track. I will go out alone, as if to the theater, and then turn up belated. Ferris must not know. It is for my life, for Irma, and for my fortune that I struggle now. My God! Whom can I trust now, and they have poisoned Alice's mind against me. I see their damned villainy. Poor Little Sister! Another man's wife now. She will never know."

In his lover's second sight Randall Clayton had really stumbled on the artful measure by which the old Croesus had deliberately shifted Alice Worthington's love for her old-time playmate.

Over his gold-bowed spectacles, Hugh Worthington, the "surviving partner," had sadly read aloud the details of Randall Clayton's "New York career." "Forget him, Alice," the old man sternly said. "He has fallen on evil ways." "And yet you still keep him in your employ, father?" answered the clear-eyed girl, her wondering glances gleaming out under a brow of truth.

"Yes, yes!" harshly said the startled old miser. "But it must soon come to an end. I have delayed the inevitable. But he must go. You are right; he must go."

And with this colloquy by the far Pacific, the old man dropped Randall Clayton's soiled memory, while the despoiled heir had turned at bay to fight for his own.

While Randall Clayton paced his lonely rooms in Manhattan, gazing sadly on the glowing Danube scene, there was a woman seated in a shaded corner of the old library of the lonely mansion on Layte

Street. The second drawing-room and library on the ground floor were a dream of luxury. It had once pleased Mr. Fritz Braun to make them worthy of a Sultana.

And he stood there now, regarding the graceful figure of one whose head was hidden in her hands.

The diamonds on the adventurer's bosom flashed fitfully in the yellow gaslight, as he slowly said, "And now you know all your part. Will you play it?"

Irma Gluyas sprang to her feet and clutched his arms with a despairing clasp. "Swear to me that no harm shall come to him!"

Fritz Braun growled an assent. "Not a hand shall be laid on him. I swear it!" And then, through falling tears, the Magyar witch gave her word to do her master's bidding. She had glided from the room before the man started, as the street door clashed and the roll of wheels was heard. He poured out a draught of brandy and threw himself into a chair. "One week more and I would be too late. I must hoodwink her!"

BOOK II.

AN INSIDE RING.

CHAPTER VI.

DREAMING BY THE SEA.

Five o'clock on Thursday afternoon found Mr. Randall Clayton hovering around the grounds of the more democratic Hotel Manhattan, while the early birds of fashion sought the more pretentious splendor of the Oriental.

There was an anxious look upon the young man's face, and deep hollows under his eyes told of unaccustomed vigils. A couple of wandering peris gazed wishfully at the hand bundle carefully enveloped in silvery tissue paper. It was true that dark blue Russian violets,

the starry forget-me-not, and the peerless lilies of the valley were therein hidden, but a keener emotion than expectant love shone in the young man's haggard eyes.

He was anxiously gazing around for the now well known form of Madame Raffoni. Clayton dared not exhibit himself before the couple of hundred staring eyes upon the pavilion and broad porticos.

An unknown fear of being entrapped drove him restlessly about.

"Would to God that Jack Witherspoon had arrived!" muttered the lover. "I may have the trap sprung on me at any moment. Another week; a long, long week! And God knows what may not happen in that time." Some burning fever gnawed at his unquiet heart, some veiled danger weighed him down.

Clayton was waiting for the approach of the wife of that mysterious musical director whom he had never seen.

A fortunate sort of lingua Franca had been patched up between the unsuspecting Clayton and the dark-eyed duenna. A few words of German, a little scattered French, and a bit of gibberish English enabled the two to hold occasional brief and amiable intercourse.

"What language does she really speak?" often cried the baffled Clayton to the mocking Irma.

"Only pure Czech, my comrade," laughed the diva. "And I will teach you the softest language of Love myself when we wander back into the blue Bohemian mountains to proud old Georgsburg. My father was a Magyar, my mother," she softly said, "a Czech princess."

While Clayton moved around, cautiously exhibiting himself as agreed upon, his mind was agitated with a hundred unknown fears. He knew not the designs of his panther-footed enemies.

To his astonishment, Robert Wade was absent the whole last business day of the year from the Western Trading Company's offices, and this, too, when every pen was busied up to five o'clock.

And, the momentous election was to occur in the morning!

He had lingered with his own annual summary until three o'clock, when the dejected face of Somers, the head accountant, had appeared at his office door. "I have a telegram that Mr. Wade is sick in his bed. I am to take the consolidated accounts up to him to-night."

And so Randall Clayton handed over his papers without a word. "It will probably be the last account I will ever render here," he savagely mused, as he clashed his roll-top desk. "I wish that I had broken it all off when Wade brought on the half quarrel. I should have taken a friend with me, drawn out my little hoard, gone West and faced Worthington before he successfully works this infamous

deal.

"Now I am powerless. He may tell us both to go to the devil."

And then Clayton sadly remembered that he depended only on Jack Witherspoon's mere hearsay for any proofs of wrong-doing. "Yes! I've only Jack's eagerness to marry that dainty Francine Delacroix to thank for my fortune--if I ever get it. A woman whom I never have seen decides my whole destiny, while I would give my life up, my last drop of blood, for Irma!"

Ah! All unknown to him, a dozen busy minds were weaving snares for his wandering feet. While Clayton, at last, saw Madame Raffoni cautiously approaching, in his superb Fifth Avenue residence, the sick man, Robert Wade, was closeted with the wolfish-eyed Arthur Ferris, the parchment-faced Somers, and four of the seven directors of the Trading Company.

On guard, lingering around Clayton's apartment, two mercantile agent's spies were waiting to pipe him off and report his every movement secretly to the returned Ferris, now breathless with anxiety for the greatest financial coup of the season.

Mr. Fritz Braun was artfully busied at Magdal's Pharmacy with giving Timmins a few last directions, and with the quiet destruction of a few necessary professional memoranda which he did not care to leave behind as dangerous weapons in the hands of the law or any thieving clerk.

In the pocket of Mr. Fritz Braun's well-known brown overcoat now reposed a bulky envelope, with a passport for Mr. and Mrs. August Meyer, his Frankfort bank exchange, and several letters of introduction to responsible merchants in Upper Germany. He was, at least, armed for flight, and fortified beyond all attack.

Ben Timmins looked forward, with delight, to a six-months' suzerainty of his master's drug business. "I have given Mr. Lilienthal my power of attorney," said Braun soberly, and I figure that you should turn him in at least two hundred dollars a week profit, and also keep the stock up. He will look in once or twice a week. If you need help, he will get you a man. If you don't do your duty, he will promptly kick you out."

"Thank you, sir," submissively remarked Timmins, who felt sure of declaring himself an equal cash dividend every week.

"Now remember," said Braun, "I am going over to see Lilienthal. If any one asks for me, I have gone over the water, that's all.

"For how long, is nobody's business, and you can refer all inquiries to Lilienthal direct. All that you have to do is to mind your business and mine. Lilienthal will let you know when I am coming back, and advise you."

The two lovers had met, far away at Manhattan Beach, after Madame Raffoni had discreetly piloted Clayton over to a sandy hollow where a half-burned spar gave a convenient resting-place, before Fritz Braun and Lilienthal had finished an acrimonious settlement of some private money matters.

"I'm not a wolf," growled Braun. "You square up as if you were never going to see me again. You need me more than I need you."

They were in the safe seclusion of the "Private Room" of the Newport Art Gallery, judiciously vacated for the occasion, when a strange fear took possession of the sly pleasure pander, Mr. Adolph Lilienthal.

"See here, Braun," he huskily said, a mean suspicion seizing upon him, "You're not cutting stick for good! You're not going to 'blow on me' and 'give me away!' By God! I believe it," he said in fright, as he noted Braun's pale face.

"It's two months since I've seen Irma Gluyas. Damn you! You've sent her over to the other side, and got all your papers safe! You've turned revenue spy! I see your game!"

Before the words were out of his mouth, Braun had dragged the venal scoundrel down in a strangler's grip. Planting his knee on his chest, he hissed, "One more word and I'll throttle you here! I can go out by the side entrance! You dare not scream! You fool! Don't you know Irma, the pretty baggage, cleared out six weeks ago with a New York millionaire whom she picked up?"

"Swear to me that you'll keep your mouth shut or I'll go out and denounce you now. I have nothing to lose. You have. You have robbed me in our past dealings. You are rich and I am poor. I am going to follow that woman over the world till I find her, for I loved her. That's all! Swear that you'll keep my secrets or I'll kill you now. I've burned every paper I have in the world."

When Braun's desperate mood had passed, he allowed the pleading man to rise, and then listened morosely as Lilienthal, the veriest coward at heart, begged for a reconciliation. "I didn't know of your trouble," gasped Lilienthal. "See here, if you'll go on to Hamburg and Bremen and fix up that 'phenacetine' business for me, I'll advance you five thousand dollars now. I didn't know you were so hard up." He whispered an address in the victorious druggist's ear.

The half-crazed gamester felt that he had gone too far, and in half an hour he departed richer by a cheque for five thousand dollars.

But his mind was far away on Manhattan Beach, with the wandering lovers, as he told Lilienthal that he should not call again. "I'll jump on the first steamer I can catch! Timmins knows all. Just

watch him, and don't put yourself in his power, till I return. He can run the shop to a good profit in 'dope' and drinks till I am with you again. I'm damned near crazy at losing that woman." And the cowardly Lilienthal believed his rugged master.

When he had stalked away through the snaplock-guarded private entrance, there came over Lilienthal's face a spasm of deadly hatred. "The dirty dog!" he growled, as he unlocked a cabinet and drank heavily. "It must be true. This young fellow Clayton is here on duty every day; he looks wolfish, too. I wonder if he really loved the girl. Well, I shall soon have my day. If Braun ever presents that letter in Hamburg the friends there will have received my secret message by our No. II, who goes over this trip. A walk around the docks, and a knife stab in the back will settle Braun. He knows too much to be allowed to run loose in Europe. He would like to spoil our game; he shall spoil his own." And the traitor hastened away to entrap Braun, little dreaming that the acute druggist would never trust himself to the hands of the "gang" at Hamburg.

Randall Clayton had been startled by Madame Raffoni's eager disclosure as he approached the place of rendezvous. He had studied the still handsome face of the disguised Leah Einstein when she told him that the Fraulein was really ill and most unhappy. He managed to pick out from her dialect that the diva had been plunged in some secret sorrow.

Quietly restraining himself, he watched the voluptuous form of the Jewess mingle with the crowd of guests on the hotel terrace. "That poor woman, a worn-out theater beauty, is without guile. What can this mean?"

He had rightly judged the good-hearted Leah's concern, and he never knew of the long hours of the discarded mistress' ministrations to the "reigning beauty."

Timorous at heart, Leah Einstein's evil career had been only one of petty wheedling craft, and an easy self-surrender.

Violence she both feared and abhorred, and now, in the wane of her beauty, she was easily content with such crumbs of money profit as could be picked up by an easy code of a plastic surface morality which covered only her petty intrigues.

Loyal to Irma Gulyas, Randall Clayton dared not question the poor mock duenna; in fact, her jargon vocabulary would have failed her, but there had been no deceit in the sympathetic tears which clung to Madame Raffoni's eyelids.

Seated on a half-burned spar, there where the roar of the restless waves reached their ears, with her face veiled, the Magyar witch awaited her all unsuspecting lover. The golden sunset faded now far in the west, the piled up purple clouds were turning blacker, and around them

"The mists arose, the waters swelled,"
"Gulls screamed, their flight recalling."

The woman's heart was racked with the deceit which had entrapped a man she now madly loved.

The freshening wind was driving the black smoke of the steamers, far out at sea, in long funereal wreaths, athwart the foaming wake, and the silver-sailed schooners began to reef, in anticipation of the coming storm.

An infinite tenderness seized upon Randall Clayton as he motioned to Madame Raffoni to leave them, and then took that beloved head to its shelter upon his breast.

His heart panted for the day when they could be all in all to each other. He felt the clouding spell of some mysterious enmity descending upon them, and clouding their love as he kissed the white and trembling hands which had so nervously clasped his own. For Irma Gluyas feared for her own life. She dared not betray the tiger-like Fritz Braun, whose veiled scheme of plunder or blackmail she could not fathom.

Hitherto all had gone well with them, in their merry will-o'-the-wisp game with Irma's jealous unknown guardians, with his concealed enemies.

But Clayton well knew that no mere pretense would baffle Arthur Ferris' thorough knowledge of all of his past social habits.

He dared not openly quarrel with Ferris until Jack Witherspoon's return. He only lived now to see the Detroit lawyer speeding west, far on ahead of the deceitful Ferris, who would be detained in New York by the quiet consummation of the big deal.

Clayton was but too well aware that his only weapon was his knowledge of Ferris' secret marriage--an outrage upon Alice Worthington's unguarded girlhood.

And yet he dared not openly use that weapon; how easy for the old capitalist to frame a suave excuse for the "maimed rites" of that Western bridal.

One longing burned now in Clayton's heart, the honest wish to find some dignified and safe place of meeting with the woman upon whom he would shower the gold soon to be his own.

"If anything should happen," he thought.

Of course, his own face was too well known to adopt any mere hiding

tactics. Irma was ever fearful of her jealous artist guardians, and in this lovely evening hour the lover's heart rose up in all its stormy tenderness to beg her to lift the veil from her incognito.

Even while they murmured again their vows and drifted away into dreams of the unclouded future, the heavens were blackening around them.

Irma seemed strangely frightened as she cowered in her lover's arms, while he begged her to lift the veil of her privacy.

"I must be with you--near you," he cried. "Listen! I have even now grave matters hanging over me which may summon me suddenly away from you. You know not my abode. You cannot write or telegraph safely to my office.

"There are veiled spies, jealous rivals, there, who would rob me of place, power, and the money which will yet be ours, in the dear far-off Danube land.

"You have been ill, distressed," he fondly said. "Nay, do not deny it! Madame Raffoni has told me all."

"My God!" whispered Irma. "She has told you"--

"Only that you have suffered, my darling," said Clayton, folding her to his breast.

"Ah! I must make an end of it!" the loyal lover cried, as Irma lay sobbing on his breast. "If I could only come to you; how shall I know? Can you trust no one? There is Madame Raffoni," said Clayton.

"She knows where my office is. I have bribed her, with flattery and a few little kindnesses, to come and tell me of you, several times, when we have been separated in these long weeks. We have not even gone to the 'Bavaria'; I have shown her my office. I care not to force myself upon your loyal secrecy. I respect the promise upon which your artistic future depends; but think of me. If you were ill, and we were separated by Fate, I should go mad! I could not live! Can you not trust her to bring me to you?" Fear and love were striving now in the singer's throbbing heart.

The Magyar witch clasped her arms around her gallant lover in a mad access of tenderness. "And you do love me so, Randall," she cried, in a storm of tears.

"More than my life," said the man who now felt her heart beating wildly against his own.

"Ah! God!" sobbed Irma. "If we had only met in other days, in another land, in my own dear country!"

"Listen, Irma," pleaded Clayton. "I will soon take you away, far

over the seas."

"In a few weeks I shall be free, and you shall be my own, my very own! For I will then come to you, free to give you all that life and love can give.

"But promise me now that Madame Raffoni shall lead me to you if you need me. You can trust her. I will come to her home. I cannot bear this agony, and I am watched, also!"

Even as he spoke, the heavens blackened and a stormy drift of rain swept athwart the sky. There was a muttering roll of thunder. The white-crested waves dashed menacingly upon the shore!

Irma Gluyas clung to her lover as the affrighted Madame Raffoni came rushing toward them for shelter in the storm. The red lightning flashed, and the fury of the storm was upon them. It was a wild tempest which raged around them. The women were helpless with fear.

In despair, Randall Clayton gazed at the distant hotels; there was shelter and safety. But now a new fear beset him. His well-known identity, Irma's marked beauty, the strange attendant duenna, there would be certain discovery and scandal. And he would be Ferris' easy victim if discovered.

Irma Gluyas shrieked as she clung to her lover and bade him save her as the wild lightning bolts rent the darkness. It was a horrid elemental tumult!

A few hundred yards away a heavy closed carriage was slowly creeping along the drive between the hotels. "Run for your life!" shouted Clayton to the eager Madame Raffoni. "Stop that carriage. Offer him anything, everything! I will carry her. I must save her."

Bending himself to the task, Clayton raised the fainting form of Irma Gluyas. Her long hair lowered, swept around her in the storm; her sculptured arms clung to him, and her warm heart thrilled him as he sped on through the driving torrent. He was possessed with Love's last delirium.

In the violence of the storm, Clayton could only motion "forward" as he closed the door of the carriage and the frightened horses set off at a mad gallop. The inmates of the carriage never saw the bridge as the vehicle swayed from side to side in the blue-flamed lightning flashes.

They were nearing Brooklyn when, in the still driving storm, Clayton descended and procured some restoratives at a pharmacy.

He poured a draught of strong wine between the affrighted woman's pallid lips, and then whispered, "You must tell me where to take you. It is life or death now."

And then Irma Gluyas, her head resting on Madame Raffoni's bosom, feebly whispered, "To my home, 192 Layte Street."

There was not a word spoken as, in the midnight darkness of the storm, the horses struggled along until, under the shelter of the high houses, the carriage stopped before the desolate-looking old mansion.

There was a look of terror on Madame Raffoni's face which was not lost upon Clayton. "Get the door open," he hoarsely cried. "I will carry her in. Then, I swear to you, I will leave her at once."

The strong man sprang from his place, and in a few moments he stood within the veiled splendors of the old drawing-room.

Kneeling by the bed, wherein he had deposited the senseless woman, Clayton chafed her marble hands in an agony of despair.

But, even in his lover's exaltation, he listened to Madame Raffoni, who knelt before him in passionate adjuration. "Go, go!" she cried in broken pathos. "I will come to you to-morrow."

And she dragged him to the door. "I will all do; everything! I swear! Yes! Yes!! Yes!!!"

With one last despairing look, raining passionate kisses upon the marble lips of the woman he loved, Randall Clayton left the dusky magnificence of the superb apartment, and only halted at the door long enough to whisper to the Raffoni, "Bring me to her to-morrow, and I will make you rich!"

And the poor woman dumbly covered his hands with obedient kisses. "Go, go!" she cried. "I will come!"

And, touched with the woman's frantic fears, Randall Clayton sprang into the carriage. Through the blinding storm he had reached the New York side before he thought of his own movements, of the morrow, of his coming friend, and of his wary enemies.

Then he resolutely made up his mind to fight the warring Fates to a finish.

He drove to the Astor House, dismissed his driver with a ransom fee, and there hid himself in an upper room.

When he presented himself at the half-deserted office of the Western Trading Company, upon the next morning, he was clad in unfamiliar garb.

His blood-shot eyes told of a vigil of mental suffering, and he dared say nothing as he gruffly bowed when Mr. Somers told him of Robert Wade's continued illness.

"I am going down to the election," said the old accountant. And so you will be in charge, as Mr. Ferris has not been heard from. There is no one here but you to represent the management."

"Trapped," muttered Clayton, who listened every moment for some tidings of the woman whose silken hair had wound its delicate meshes around him in the storm. "Dying; dead, perhaps," he groaned, in an agony of excitement, and then and there he swore that, upon the arrival of Witherspoon he would leave the cave of his enemies, await his fate, and bear Irma Gluyas away to farther and fairer lands.

The long morning dragged on in a semi-stupor as he sat there listening to the hollow footfall of the casual passers-by.

And yet there was no word from Madame Raffoni, the only holder of the secret of Irma Gluyas' life. His foot was on the threshold to leave at last, when Arthur Ferris calmly entered.

Randall Clayton mastered himself with a mighty effort, as Ferris glibly murmured, "I am only here for a few moments! Come into the private office."

The few minutes before they were at their ease in Robert Wade's impregnable sanctum enabled Clayton to steel himself against the secret bridegroom's duplicity. Clayton's quick eye noted Ferris' satchel, his top-coat and umbrella carelessly thrown down on Wade's reading-table.

"Have you been at the rooms?" carelessly remarked Clayton, tossing Ferris' private keys upon the table. "No," curtly replied Ferris.

"I came here directly from the train. I wished to stop and see my mother and sister; but Wade's illness has upset all my plans.

"I have to go on to Philadelphia at once on some private business for the Chief. You know he is a very heavy stockholder in the Cramp Shipbuilding Company. I will not be back for several days."

"And what about the election?" deliberately replied Clayton, now anxious to draw his enemy out. "I have nothing to do with that," said Ferris, dropping his eyes to veil a slight agitation. "Wade has all that in charge, and he has given Somers his proxy."

"I thought that you held Worthington's private power of attorney," stoutly said Randall Clayton.

"Only for his outside matters, Clayton," coaxingly said Ferris.

"The fact is, we may expect many changes. Hugh has several plans of great importance in his mind.

"Yes; I have lived in an atmosphere of change for some time, Ferris," said Clayton, bluntly. "I have only been waiting for your return to consult with you about giving up our joint apartment.

"I reserved that privilege on May 1st, and you can either keep the rooms or sublet them. I have paid the rental for the last three months in your absence."

"See here, Clayton," sharply said Ferris, throwing off the mask. "I am not a man for any mysteries. I don't know why I should be forced to tell you things that I do not know myself."

"Now, I will be several days busy with these outside matters at Philadelphia. You had the one opportunity of your life the other day."

"I expect that you will have reconsidered your refusal to Wade, to obey Hugh Worthington's orders by my return."

"So you know all about it, do you?" fiercely retorted Randall Clayton. "I fancied that Wade was dealing directly with Hugh, himself, by the tone of the Chief's letters and the telegrams which I have received."

"The matter has been referred to me," hotly answered Ferris, who dared not openly use his new power. "But I will not wait here to discuss this matter. I may miss my train."

Arthur Ferris sharply rang a bell, and then, with a nod of recognition, directed the young Einstein to take his traps down stairs and call him a carriage.

The door clanged and the two secret enemies were left facing each other.

"I had fancied," said Clayton, bitterly, "that a lifetime spent in Hugh Worthington's service would at least win me a dismissal at first hands."

"Wade has tried to force me to throw up a position for which I was previously named by Worthington. I imagined that the Chief was really going abroad. He seems to have changed his plans. I have no means of reaching him direct."

"And now, sir, you will find the keys of our rooms with the janitor on your return. All that I wish to know is whether I shall deal with you or Wade in giving my final answer to the suspended orders for me to go West."

"You stand ready to throw up a life position?" harshly cried Ferris, white with secret rage pausing with his hand on the door.

"I shall certainly wait until I hear from Mr. Worthington," gravely answered Clayton. "It matters little about me. Your own life position is secure!"

"What do you mean by that?" cried Ferris, springing forward in a

sudden anger which made him forget all his plans of crafty concealment.

But the tall Westerner, with one wave of his arm, swept Ferris' delicate form away from the door and passed out of the presence of the budding capitalist.

Arthur Ferris cast stealthy glances to right and left as he sought the elevator. He breathed freer when he reached the sidewalk.

Fortunately, no one had overheard the unseemly quarrel.

His hand was on the carriage door when his glances fell upon the questioning face of Emil Einstein.

"Anything further, sir?" demanded the eager office boy. "Yes! Jump in with me and ride down to the Pennsylvania Ferry. I may need you."

Ferris' brain was in a whirl. He had intended to double around and reach Wade's house, where he was a secret guest, during the excitable ordeal of the election.

Too well he knew the dangers of setting his own foot in Wall Street. Keen brokers, great operators, lynx-eyed newspaper reporters would soon corner him.

His slightest word would be misconstrued, and there was still time for some unforeseen plot before the polls of the stockholders' election closed at three o'clock.

Clayton's defiant manner had aroused his jealousy to a keen rage. "Does the fool know anything of my marriage?" he mused. "How could he?" Ferris smiled, for his girl wife was still in Tacoma, by her father's side, and the marriage had been a secret one.

The crafty lawyer hated Clayton, at heart, for too well he knew that no word clouding Clayton's character could be uttered unchallenged in Alice Worthington's presence.

Once he had tried, to probe her opinions, with faint sneers, but his voice had died away under the indignant protest of the heiress.

"I do not know who has poisoned my father's mind," resolutely said the Little Sister, "but Randall Clayton has been the brother of my heart, and always will be. If he had never left us we would all be happier to-day."

The clear-browed woman did not know how truly this arrow had sped to its mark. It silenced forever Arthur Ferris, and lent a new caution to the scheming plans of the old money grabber.

"If I only had my cipher book," was the first thought of the excited Ferris, "I must telegraph to Hugh and put him on his guard. What

the devil can Clayton have picked up?"

There was yet two weeks before the final arrangement of the "great deal," and the repayment of the two millions could be substantially arranged.

As the carriage dashed along to the Christopher Street Ferry, Ferris rapidly made up his plan of action. "I can go over to Taylor's Hotel at Jersey City. Old Somers will cast the majority vote at a quarter of three.

"I can call him up at the down-town office by telephone, and then telegraph direct to old Hugh at Tacoma.

"And Wade must come over to me at Philadelphia and spend a day or so, for appearance's sake. But a light rein is needed for this wild ass of the West, Clayton. Oh! to have him out there in Cheyenne for one month.

"Yes! By Jove, I have it! Hugh must invite him to meet him there. I will telegraph him, and the old man can smooth Clayton down."

A sudden desire to know of Randall Clayton's private life seized upon Ferris, who already contemplated a sweet revenge. "Damn him! I must keep him and Alice apart. She would side with him, on sentimental grounds. But, as soon as I get back, I can cipher Hugh that he must settle this fellow, in some way, on that Western visit. The old fox can find a way, and both Alice and I will be out of it."

Deliberately selecting two one hundred dollar bills from his wallet, Arthur Ferris held them up to the astonished gaze of Einstein. "Mr. Clayton has been a little strange in his behavior lately," he said. "In some tiff he has thrown up his old rooms, and is going to move. I will be away three or four days. When I come back, I want to know just where he is located, and--all about him; who his friends are, and so on. There is more where this came from."

"I understand," smoothly answered Emil, pocketing the bills with a grin.

In the meantime Ferris had scribbled a few words on a card. He stopped the carriage. "Jump out and take a coupe, and get instantly down to Wall and Broad. You'll find Mr. Somers waiting in the election-room. Tell him not to leave there till I get him on the 'phone from Jersey City. And my address you can give him as Lafayette House, Philadelphia. I'll be there three days." The lie was deliberate, and even the triple spy believed him.

The long hours crawled away while Randall Clayton resolutely paced his lonely office. Only the busy under-accountants came in now and then for a word of directions, and the ticking of the office clock sounded like the hollow tapping of hammers upon coffin-lids to the

solitary man who was crazed with his loving anxiety to hear from the woman who now ruled his every thought.

He forgot the absence of Einstein in his eager waiting for some intelligence of the woman whom he had shielded from the storm. Poor Madame Raffoni had mumbled some obscure words about "die herz-krankte."

"Heartsick, my God! I am heartsick," cried Randall Clayton. "And, she may be alone; there may be no one to send."

Clayton tried to recall the last directions which he had given to the disguised Leah Einstein. All that he could recall was the murmured pledge, "I will come, I will come!"

The lover's heart told him that Ferris' spies would now follow in his every movement. He lingered, in a trance of agony, until long after the parchment-faced Somers had returned from Wall and Broad Street.

"It was a very quiet election," murmured Somers, who started at the appearance of the young man's haggard face. He was astonished to see Clayton lingering there to the confines of darkness.

The faithful old tool of Mammon had crawled back to turn all his combination knobs and cast a last glance over the rooms into which his life had grown as the silkworm into its cocoon.

"You must go away, my boy," kindly said old Somers, "you need a long rest."

"Yes, yes," mournfully replied Clayton, thinking of the five days of agony before Jack Witherspoon would arrive to run the gauntlet of the treacherous Ferris. "I must go away--go away--and, have a long, long rest!"

The old accountant watched his listless steps as he departed. "Head or heart--which?" he murmured. "That man is in a bad way."

CHAPTER VII.

"THIS MAY BE MY LAST BANK DEPOSIT."

There was an air of supreme content upon the usually impassive face of Arthur Ferris when he hung the receiver of the public telephone

up upon its hook, at precisely fifteen minutes past three o'clock, in the office of Taylor's Hotel.

The astonished girl gazed admiringly after the young lawyer, when he dropped a two-dollar bill into her hand, saying, "Never mind the change."

"It's my lucky day," murmured Ferris, as he sought the telegraph office. The measured words of Accountant Somers were still ringing in his ears:

"A very quiet election; no opposition to our ticket. Directors' meeting pro forma. Vice-President Selden cast majority vote for new officers. Reports endorsed. Selden, president; yourself, vice-president; Hugh Worthington, managing director. New officers published to-morrow. Too late for afternoon press. Will go and report to Mr. Wade."

The first official act of Vice-President Arthur Ferris had been to order Accountant Somers to send a cheque for one month's extra salary to each of the office force, and then to add, "I shall be in Philadelphia for some days, remember; Lafayette House. Use telegraph business cipher only. I will be too busy to come to the telephone. Shall be at Cramp's yards taking a look with a view to further investments there."

No flush of triumph colored Arthur Ferris' pale face as he pondered over his dispatch to Hugh Worthington. He suddenly paused, with his pencil in the air.

"By God! I have it! We will soft-soap this fellow. Violence in quarrel is always a clumsy mistake. I need to keep in touch with Clayton; at least, until old Hugh gets his claws upon him. What if the fool resigns and throws all up in a huff? There is no way to lure him out West then. It would not do to have anything happen to him here. And I'll ring in the Auld Lang Syne a bit, also."

He smiled artfully as he read over his two telegrams before handing them to the waiting operator. The anaemic girl was sadly disappointed in their tenor. She had scented an intrigue in the presence of the dapper young lawyer with his distinctly clubman air.

"Pshaw! only business," she murmured, as she dashed her hand into the cash till for the change of a five-dollar bill.

But Arthur Ferris' resolute eyes recalled her to duty, as he impatiently said, "Repeat them both back to me, at Lafayette House, Philadelphia. Take out the extra charge, and please give me a press copy of each."

"I'll run over to Philadelphia, drop in at the clubs, have a good time, and then disappear via Pittsburgh 'for New York,'" he said. "It will give time for Randall Clayton to cool off. And, after

all, the smooth way is the best way. I can hold him over till Hugh works him 'on the easy pulley.'"

He was proud of these two telegrams, as he sat at his carefully-chosen early dinner. He read them over with a secret glee.

"He is ours. No one can snatch him from our clutches. The old man can cajole him with Alice's wish that he should join the family party. That'll fetch him. Fool! that he did not make the running while she was at his side. The 'Sister' business is always a rank failure. But he has made me a millionaire for life."

Arthur Ferris had no pity for the man whose life secrets he had sapped in those four long years of treason to friendship. He recalled with a secret complacency the steps which had led him, bit by bit, into Hugh Worthington's confidence, through the frank disclosures of Clayton.

And so, fortified by the single-hearted man's intimate relations with the Detroit household, Arthur Ferris had taken up every thread as it slipped through Clayton's busy fingers.

The knowledge that he would enjoy Randall Clayton's real patrimony; that he had stolen a charming wife from the man who was bound by an unearned gratitude to Worthington, made this hour of triumph a most delicious one.

"Old Hugh needed me; he needed a man who would be a safe intermediary with Durham; one who was a Safe Deposit for both senator and millionaire.

"Now I hold every trump in life, and Clayton, the dolt, has thrown away his fortune and made mine."

Then the thin-lipped lawyer recalled Balzac's remark, "One, in order to succeed, must either cut one's way through life like a sword, or glide through the world quietly like a pestilence."

"I'll let Hugh use the sword," he laughed, as he enjoyed his well-warmed Chamberton. "I am beyond all the storms of Fate now.

"What more could I desire? On the road to a million, a charming girl wife, one whom I can mould like clay, and Durham and Worthington can easily send me to Congress." He saw the Senate chamber opening to him, through the rosy light of the wooing Burgundy.

And again his eye sought the telegrams. "Not a word to alter," and he smiled as he read.

"Hugh Worthington,

"Palace Hotel, Tacoma:--

"A quiet election. All arranged. New officers published to-morrow. Telegraph Clayton to meet you at Cheyenne for conference. Have Alice join. Suggest month's vacation. He is irritable and suspicious. Full code telegrams to you at Cheyenne. Will wait here until you have met him and disposed of his case."

Ferris had added a key-word, which no one would suspect meant "Imminent danger," and signed an alias known to Hugh Worthington alone.

But to Randall Clayton his Judas words of brotherly cordiality were as frank and open as the unsuspecting nature of the defrauded man demanded.

The unhappy Clayton was troubled at heart as he opened this yellow paper, livid with its living lie, as he waited aimlessly at his rooms for some tidings from Emil Einstein, whose long absence had astonished him.

In the lonely rooms, with his eyes fixed on Irma Gluyas' superb artist proof, Clayton gave himself easily up to Ferris' crafty subterfuge.

He had already repented the violent quarrel. "This marriage may be a mere rumor," he mused. "Jack Witherspoon must make his words good when he comes."

He had already half determined to frankly meet Hugh Worthington with a demand for a clearing up of the whole mystery of his youthful dependence.

The telegram from Jersey City disarmed all his resentment. It was addressed:

"Dear Old Boy: Forget hasty words. Am tired with travel; worn out. Remember the old friendship. Stay in our rooms. Will return in three days. You shall choose your way to arrange with Worthington. If you wish to stay on here, I'll telegraph jointly with you. Meet me at dinner Monday night, Century Club."

When he had read the last words, "Answer, Lafayette House, Philadelphia," Randall Clayton went out into the early evening and listlessly dispatched the words, "All right. Will stay on as requested," and then he slowly returned to his rooms. On his return he found Emil Einstein awaiting him before his door.

Clayton's beating heart told him that the unusual had happened. "Speak! What is it?" cried the half-crazed lover. And the boy then hurriedly told him of his late return to the office, after executing many errands for the absent Ferris.

"There was a woman--a lady," hesitated Einstein, "trying to find your office. The elevator man told her that you had gone. She only

spoke a little English, and, as I speak German, I tried to keep her"--

"She dared not stay!" almost shouted Clayton.

"She left word your friend is very ill, and that she cannot leave her. You cannot go there to-night, but the lady may come back to-morrow morning for you if anything happens. She was very much frightened."

"And you?"--demanded Clayton, grasping the boy's arm. "Why did you not bring her here?"

"She could not stay. She had waited a long time before I came back. And I told her it was a half-holiday to-morrow, the three-days' holiday coming on"--

"Would you know her again?" anxiously demanded Clayton.

"Certainly," murmured the sordid liar, speaking the truth for once.

"Describe her," hastily ordered the excited man. And Master Emil Einstein gave a not too glowing description of the charms of his own mother.

"Listen," said the half-demented Clayton. "You must watch all to-morrow morning, down below, upon the sidewalk, and around the entrance.

"If that lady comes, just detain her down there, and I will join her at once. Not a word to a living soul. Swear that you'll keep this secret, and I'll make your fortune yet."

"I swear on my life," said the startled boy, frightened at the ghastly pallor of Clayton's face.

He hastened away, leaving the cashier disturbed at his last disclosure.

"I forgot to say that she fears they may move your friend to-night, some place, God knows where: perhaps to some hospital, and then, of course, she couldn't come."

Randall Clayton sank into a chair with a smothered groan. For the one haunting fear of his last three months was proving true. Here was the separation from Irma Gluyas, and on the verge of his fortune.

"My God! It is terrible," he cried. He waited until the boy had scuttled away.

"He must not know. One false step now would ruin all," thought Clayton. "My love for Irma once suspected, and she would be spirited off to Europe or lose her artistic future. If she were cast out, I have nothing to offer yet, nothing but castles in Spain."

But the lad, hidden in a dark doorway, was greedily counting the

loose bills which Clayton had hastily thrust into his hand. "Paid for not giving away my own mother's secrets," the boy laughed viciously. "The old girl is safe, but what the devil is she up to?" He decided that he would cautiously watch over Clayton, but he feared to report this last entanglement to Fritz Braun, whose gripsack and office luggage he was to remove from the pharmacy.

Before Einstein had reached the pharmacy, driven on by a mad unrest, Randall Clayton threw on a loose top coat, slipped a loaded pistol in his pocket, and then, hailing the first empty carriage, dashed down to the Brooklyn Bridge. It was only by taking up his course on the evening of the storm, on foot, that the restless lover could make his way over to the corner where the pretentious newness of the "Valkyrie" building shamed the rich old mansion sheltered under its lee.

At the Magdal Pharmacy, Mr. Fritz Braun suspended his last looking over his private desk, just long enough to whisper a few final directions to Emil Einstein. The boy had nothing special to report. But the crafty pharmacist well knew how to reach the softest spot of the young Hebrew's indurated heart.

"See here," he said, as he drew the boy into a dark corner. "After all said and done, your mother is the only human being in the world that I trust. For Leah has always been true to me. I'm getting a bit old. I'm going to settle down after I've made this trip. If you watch my interests while I'm away, your mother may have a home for life with me, in charge of my home; and you, you young rascal, I'll push your fortune. So, a shut mouth; look out and don't babble to Lilienthal. He is a chatterer. Timmins, here, is a drunken loafer, and will burn the block up some night, but I need him a little while yet.

"I may even give you this place, and set you up with a good pharmacist, if I can find a man over there. Timmins can show him the secret side of the business; then, we can throw this London cockney out, and you'll find Magdal's to be a gold mill. I shall have something else to do, my boy. Now, be off with my traps."

"Take them to 192 Layte Street. Ring the front bell three times; you'll find your mother there. Give her the traps, but do not enter the house. She will tell you anything I wish to-morrow; and, so, remember I can make your fortune. Obey your mother; there's one thing about her, she has got some head and heart." The boy hastened away on his quest.

Fritz Braun, left alone, stooped and picked up a little piece of paper which had fluttered down on the floor at his feet. He was careful to "leave no black plume as a token."

And now there was not a vestige left of his past nefarious traffic.

"Timmins can do no harm now," sneeringly laughed Fritz Braun. "For I carry these things in my head, and he must trust to some member of

the craft. What blockheads these fat-witted English practitioners are."

Braun's hollow laugh echoed from behind the flowing false beard, as he read over the faded prescriptions he had idly picked up. It was a powerful agent of evil--a tool of the deadly thug.

"By God! I may need this old friend. How did I come to forget it? It may purchase my safety, or else give some poor devil peace and rest."

"My last appearance on any stage," he muttered, as his hands were soon busied with the familiar phials around him. "I'll have a few doses of this 'Sinner's Friend' with me," he muttered. "Who knows where I may not need it. It is the only paralyzer."

Seizing a three-ounce flask, he cast aside his blue goggles for a moment as he measured his ingredients. One by one he carefully added them, until the small bottle was filled with a colorless mixture.

He read the innocent-looking scrawl a last time, and then burned it at a fluttering gas jet. The words seemed burned in upon his brain. His practiced glance ran over the bottles on the shelves ranged there like soldiers in their silent ranks. His eye gleamed vindictively as he murmured: "First, my old friend chloral hydrate--there you are. Now, your reliable brother, chloroform"--He shook up the growing mixture with a secret pride. "Just the right amount of muriate codine"--There was a pause, as the codine dissolved with the other ingredients. "And now," he gaily murmured, "distilled water," the last element needed to bind these together as a water of death. It is a royal secret of the rogue's pharmacy--the best garment for a flitting soul, tasteless and painless.

"Warranted to fit the largest man or the smallest boy," laughed the scoundrel, replacing his goggles, as he fitted a ground-glass stopper tightly to the flask. "I am not particularly anxious to be caught with this on me. It would mean two to five years of 'voluntary assistance' to the State at Sing Sing. But one little well-regulated dose of this soothing charm, and the strongest man drops helpless at my feet."

Braun slipped it in an inner pocket, and passed out, with a careless nod to the overjoyed Timmins. "Remember, Lilienthal is your only adviser. Six months from now, I'll put a new life into things here."

When Braun had disappeared, Ben Timmins drained a brandy and soda to his eternal discomfiture. "'Ere's 'oping the bloomin' ship founders with the old beggar," growled the Londoner, who had noted Braun sweep away the last thirty dollars in the till. "'E might have left me a few pennies."

It was ten o'clock when Randall Clayton, pacing up and down the

street, nervously eying the darkened front door of 192 Layte Street, saw a lad nimbly dart up the front steps, touch a bell-push, and then vanish in a few moments, as the door closed. Clayton could only distinguish vaguely the bundles with which the boy had been loaded down. He lingered there in agony, afraid to approach that portal.

But, a half-hour later, a portly man, in a light-colored coat, with easy leisure, strolling up the steps, inserted a latch-key, and the baffled lover could only see that the hallway was dark, with one half-turned-up gas jet.

Clayton cautiously explored the rear of the house, finding an alleyway suitable for unloading the bulky wares of the "Valkyrie" saloon.

A broad flight of steps led down to the cellarway of the "Valkyrie," and a similar one to the basement of the old mansion.

"The basement is used for business storage, evidently," mused the puzzled Clayton; but even with his brief experience of the night before, he could tell that the great rear drawing-room and library were the rooms into which he had borne the senseless form of the woman he madly loved. Through a chink of the enamelled white shutters a faint pencil of light shone out in the gloomy darkness.

"Good God!" he groaned, "I would give my life to be within that room." For his heart told him that Irma Gluyas lay helpless within there, and he only wandered away at midnight, when a stray policeman suspiciously eyed him lingering in the alley.

"Einstein is my only hope," he despairingly cried, as he wandered back to the bridge and sought his lonely rooms. The silky-gray dawn found him still dressed, lying on a chair, with his eyes fixed upon the picture, the first sight of which had been the beginning of his fevered dream.

And then, suddenly recalling himself, he put out the flaring lights, bathed his throbbing temples, and went out to seek an early-opening coffee-shop. "I must be myself to-day," he muttered, after the drowsy waiter had forced some breakfast upon him.

"For the three-days' holiday begins at noon, and I shall be free then. I must do my bank business alone, and keep Einstein on the watch."

By sheer force of habit, he had opened the damp morning--paper thrust upon the swell customer.

"Some young fly by night, throwing his money and his life away," mused the experienced Celtic attendant. "Give me the Tenderloin for fools. And there's a new crop every year!"

Suddenly Randall Clayton started. There was the confirmation of Jack Witherspoon's prophetic warnings. The words "Important Financial Changes" met his eye, with the announcement of the "cut and dried" election of the Western Trading Company. "So, Mr. Arthur Ferris, you are the new vice-president, and Mr. Hugh Worthington the managing director." He saw how he had been duped.

Throwing a few coins on the table, he sped homeward and made a careful toilet. "Jack will be here in three days, now! I will meet them and beat them at their own game. Craft for craft, and I can wait. For Irma's sake!"

On his way to the office for the first time he steadied his nerve with the bar-keeper's aid. The blood bounded in his pulses under the unaccustomed stimulant.

He was devil-may-care in his manner as he listlessly turned over his morning mail, thrusting his pistol back into the bank portmanteau. The sight of the familiar case recalled to him his dangerous position.

"I must play my policy game softly now," he mused. "Whatever happens, I must meet Ferris smoothly; but once that Jack Witherspoon is safely out of town to the West, I'll have him face up old Hugh. It's either life with Irma, or death without her!"

Mechanically carrying on his routine, he opened his mail, after exchanging a few careless words with Somers over the "new deal" in the company's management.

"I shall get your bank deposits ready early," kindly said old Somers. "I'm glad to see you looking better. I go away at noon for the three-days' holiday. You can keep the bank-book, and we can get the exchange Tuesday at noon.

"I will finish my trial balance papers while I'm up at Greenwich. I'm only a stray few cents out."

And then Ralph Somers told Clayton of the month's gratuity. "I guess I'll go in for a gay old Fourth!" cheerfully said Clayton, who picked up a telegram just brought in by a boy.

His face softened strangely as he read words which waked all the happy memories of his lonely boyhood.

Here, at last, was a message from the woman who had been the "Little Sister" of the few bright years of his shaded life. And her truthful, girlish face rose up before him again, as he read the words which touched his wavering heart. The dispatch was from Hugh Worthington at Tacoma, and the old fox had well chosen the only way to disarm Clayton's watchful suspicions.

The words seemed frank enough, and Randall Clayton's fingers trembled with a certain pleasurable thrill as he read.

"She still thinks of me, poor Little Sister, after all these years of estrangement. Perhaps only the greed of gold lies behind the whole thing. He seized a telegraph blank and studied over his reply.

"What shall I wire to him?" the puzzled man vainly demanded. He tried to mark out the false and true between the words of father and daughter. It all seemed fair enough in a way, according to their different natures.

"Tacoma, July 2, 1897.

"Come at once to Cheyenne. Am leaving here to join you. Alice wishes to see you particularly before she sails for Japan. Take a month's leave. Turn your cash business over to Secretary Edson. You can go back to Pacific Coast with me after seeing our ranches. If you don't like assignment out West, you can go back to New York. Telegraph me to Cheyenne date of your arrival, and also answer Alice. Palace Hotel, Tacoma. Don't fail. Imperative."

Randall Clayton was left without lights to guide. "By Heavens!" he cried. "Jack has surely been deceived as to the marriage. I must answer Hugh. I dare not leave Alice without an answer. And Jack only three days away!"

After a half-hour's study he sprang from his chair.

"Eureka!" he muttered. "There's Doctor Billy Atwater, the only man I know of Jack Witherspoon's college fraternity, and of my own Chapter here. I can have him meet Jack at the steamer and give him a sealed letter to follow me on to Cheyenne. I can telegraph Jack at Detroit. Arthur Ferris will be busied here."

"Ringing a bell, he sent a boy up town to his stable to order a carriage to wait for him at the corner of Fourteenth Street and University Place. When I go to the bank I can drive up and be sure to catch him at his office. He may be going off for a three-days' holiday, also. I must not miss him."

Then he resolutely traced his telegram accepting Hugh Worthington's offer, and penned a few lines to "Miss Alice." "What a sham our modern plutocratic life is," bitterly murmured Clayton. "Is it really Miss or Mrs.? Where does the truth lie? I'll stake my life that Alice has not deceived me!"

The hoodwinked Clayton never knew of the fierce secret battle at Tacoma, in which Arthur Ferris had flatly refused to come East and make the great quiet coup de finance until Worthington had agreed to a private ceremony before his departure. "Give what reasons you wish to Alice; you can even take her over to Japan and back as Miss Worthington; but I will be made safe, or I'll not turn the cards for you."

"Very good, then," growled old Worthington, to whom Senator Durham's friendship was the one factor of success. "You put Durham into our partnership; I my daughter; but she remains Alice Worthington, and does not leave my side until you have brought Durham into line on the Inter-State Commerce. Then I've got my senatorial partner, and you your wife."

"Yes, and I am only sure of my life position when the marriage has taken place," placidly replied Ferris. "I care not for any publicity, but I know you will deal fairly with your daughter's husband. Then we can trust each other, for we must!"

It had been even so, and Arthur Ferris left his girl wife, still a stranger to him, in the care of the father who demanded the New York deal with the senatorial ally as the price of the strangely deferred honeymoon joys.

The girl bride, with a tranquil heart, awaited the return of Ferris for the Japanese voyage which was to be a married lovers' wandering in fairyland. She had taken the dross of Ferris' heart for minted gold, led on by a father's lure.

Clayton's words were laconic, but his faith went with them. To the millionaire he telegraphed:

"Will start for Cheyenne Monday. Must go to Bay Ridge to see Edson. Will telegraph arrival from Omaha."

But to Miss Alice Worthington, Palace Hotel, Tacoma, he dispatched:

"I am coming West, but only to see you, after many years. Your wish is my law. You are still my 'Little Sister,' and I am, as of old, your

"BROTHER HUGH."

These telegrams copied in his manifold book, into which he had carelessly thrust Hugh's dispatch, he picked up a letter in Arthur Ferris' well-known hand-writing.

It seemed to be a few frank words following his telegram, and was dated from Jersey City. Randall Clayton's brow grew grave as he followed these seemingly candid lines:

"We parted in anger, old chum and comrade. I cannot tell you all that I hear in gossip as a lawyer or as Worthington's special agent. You should try and yield to Hugh's whims. He is old, and has vast plans afoot. I can now safely explain his recent changes. I simply staid away from the annual election to prevent jealousy among our old employees. Hugh means as well by you as he does by me. He is now the master of the Trading Company. Meet him, if he sends for you, or writes you, in a yielding spirit. I tell you this because,

in my absence, he has had reports of your changed life. The Fidelity Company fear that you are either speculating or gambling. They have reported your altered behavior. Now, all this can be cleared up. If you have any little private side to your life, confide in me. I can square all with Hugh. He only wished to get you out West to break off any possible entanglement. You are not in Wall Street, are you? It is a seething hell. Now, forgive, forget; meet me frankly at the Century for dinner, and I may be able to make your fortune and save your friendship. Burn this; don't answer, even by wire, as I shall be swinging around by Pittsburg. Wade is your only critic. He wants the place for his nephew, Tom. We can't blame him. Blood is thicker than water, after all; but we'll beat him at his own game. Rely on me till death."

"This man is either a true friend or else the damnedest villain alive," muttered Clayton, as he tore the letter into a thousand fragments. "In two weeks I will know all. The game is made; once that Jack Witherspoon faces my quondam guardian, I will soon know whether I am to be prince or pauper."

It only lacked a quarter of eleven when the silver-haired Somers called Randall Clayton into his wire-screened den, and opened the door of the high-walled private compartment with its ground-glass sides.

"Here's your deposit, an unusually large one, Mr. Clayton," murmured Somers, awed by the concrete wealth lying before him. "You can run over the cheques. The money I will give you an invoice tag for a clean one hundred and fifty thousand. The cheques go nearly a hundred more.

"Here's the list and tag total; they are all endorsed.

"Just have the whole put on our book as cash and cheque deposit. I must be off! By the way, should you not take a man with you to-day?"

"I have a carriage below," quietly said Clayton, "so I'm all right. No one will know what's in my bag. I will drive back and put the book in my own safe. It may be late when I do, as there'll be a hundred heavy depositors at the Astor to-day. No one wants to keep funds locked up three days."

Sweeping the bundled bills into the portmanteau, and then locking up the great wallet of cheques, Randall Clayton absently shook hands with the fidgety old accountant, now eager for his leave. "Must catch my train. Take care of yourself," was Somers' hearty adieu, as he vanished with his ten-year-old umbrella in hand.

Clayton walked across the hall, with the concealed fortune locked in the travelling bag, and then remembered his pistol thrown into his desk drawer.

He had just slipped it in his pocket when Emil Einstein glided

into the room.

"Come down," he eagerly whispered, "She's there,--and--there's some bad news, I fear."

Never waiting for the elevator, Clayton grasped his hat, hastily donning his top-coat, and snatching the bag, cried, "Lock up my desk and keep my keys till I come back. Don't leave; remember!"

Everything but Irma Gluyas faded from the excited lover's mind as he saw the portly form of Madam Raffoni lingering in the darkened hallway of the ground-floor entrance.

There were tears in the woman's eyes as she sobbed, "She is dying! Kommen sie schnell!"

The golden daylight turned to darkness before Clayton's eyes, as he reeled and staggered.

Then, a mental flash of hope allured him.

"Where?" he hoarsely cried. The woman's jargon made plain that the beautiful singer still lay in the darkened rooms whither his loving arms had borne her.

"The carriage, yes; my God, we must hurry!" was Clayton's first returning thought; and then, motioning to the woman to follow, the cashier darted along Fourteenth Street.

He was already within the vehicle when Leah Einstein timidly entered.

"To the Fulton Ferry. Hurry!" called out the excited Clayton, as the burly policeman drove away a knot of "extra"-peddling urchins.

"I can easily reach the bank by two o'clock; they never shut the side doors till three," murmured Clayton, as his eyes rested upon the Russia-leather portmanteau. He instinctively gripped his revolver. It was all right.

And then, with a sinking heart, he essayed to gain some connected story of the Magyar songbird's grave peril.

But, the woman sobbing there was all too overcome for a connected story.

There was only death in the air--there was the open grave yawning for the woman he loved, and the brightness had gone out of Randall Clayton's life forever when, with white lips, he asked himself, "Will we be in time? Irma! My God! Irma, my own darling!"

He had only time to dismiss the carriage and drag Madame Raffoni on the ferry-boat when the chains barred out a score of the rushing

crowd.

Twenty minutes later, his heart beating a funeral knell, Randall Clayton, portmanteau in hand, passed within the portals of the old brownstone mansion. As the woman softly closed the door, which she had opened with a pass-key, she laid her finger on her lip.

Then Clayton, on tip-toe, stole softly after her into the darkened chamber where a white-robed form lay motionless on the great canopied bed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRANGE TUG'S VOYAGE.

"Dead, dead, my darling!" almost shrieked Randall Clayton as he cast himself down on his knees at the side of the woman whose faintly fluttering eyelids alone told of the vital spark of life. The dark eyes of Madame Raffoni gleamed pityingly as she drew the young man, almost by force, away.

With an agony of sudden terror she pointed to the hallway, and laid her finger upon her lip. And then, in a hoarse whisper, the woman told, in her patois, broken with sobs, of the alternate spells of fainting and exhaustion which had brought Irma Gluyas nigh to Death's door.

The darkened rooms were closed, and the air redolent of the pungent narcotic drugs of the sickroom. Utterly unmanned, Randolph Clayton stole back to the old drawing-room, whose rich gilding and frescoed beauties mocked the pale, silent face lying there below.

Forgetting all prudence, he covered the limp, helpless hand with burning kisses, gazing into the drooping eyes where he would fain call back a glance of life and love. In this supreme moment she belonged only to him, by right of his loyal love. In the arched doorway of the library stood the timid woman messenger with her hands pressed to her panting bosom.

Suddenly Irma Gluyas opened her eyes and a faint murmur broke the silence.

"Go, go; for God's sake. They must not find you here. Go! FOR YOUR LIFE!" Her head fell back, but her fingers were closed upon his

hand in a despairing clutch. Then Randall Clayton staggered to the library window for breath of air.

His heart was beating wildly. Was this the end of all. Life seemed to have fled those beloved eyes; he could see Irma's motionless form lying there, the very apotheosis of Love. He threw himself in a chair, and his pent-up nature gave way at last.

Mechanically he swallowed the glass of wine handed him by the watchful Leah, and yet before she had stolen behind a curtained alcove the room seemed to whirl around him.

He made a last desperate effort to rise, but reeled around unsteadily and then fell prone upon the tufted carpet. A danger signal had aroused him at last, the sliding of heavy doors which cut off the room where the Magyar witch lay now helpless in the stupor of the criminal's deadliest narcotic. And the frightened Leah Einstein fled away upstairs. She only divined Fritz Braun's purpose as an intended robbery, or some audacious blackmail. Murder had never entered her mind!

The strong man lying there upon the floor, with glazing eyes, saw in his last gasps a wolfish face lit up with the fires of hate bending over him. Clayton struggled to draw the pistol which had been his faithful guardian of years.

One last flush of expiring reason showed him his life, honor, and a future betrayed into the hands of nameless thugs.

But there were sinews of iron in the arm of his unknown assailant now throttling him. A hand of steel grasped his relaxing wrist and the weapon was hurled far away.

Standing there, a triumphant Moloch, the unmasked Hugo Landor watched the last struggles of the man relapsed into a helpless insensibility. "Fool, the powder in those cartridges was drawn weeks ago," muttered "August Meyer," as he growled, "This first!"

He seized upon the bank portmanteau and then disappeared for a moment. Darting back, he dragged the prostrate form of Randall Clayton out from the corner where it lay.

With one mighty effort he raised the heavy body and stealthily descended the stairway into the long-unused basement.

Alone, in the darkened horrors of that grewsome cellar, the triumphant criminal hastened to strip the body of the man whom he had lured to a horrible death.

The deadly poison in the drugged wine had killed the unfortunate lover almost instantly.

Braun hastened up the stairway with the plunder of the corpse,

and yet he paused a moment as three light taps resounded upon the closed folding doors. "She is sound asleep; I cannot waken her now," whispered Leah Einstein. "Then help me to carry her upstairs. You must not leave her for an instant till I am done."

Meyer sprang into the room, and in five minutes returned with a grin upon his hardened face. "Leah is safely locked in the second story. Fear will keep her mouth shut, and she can quiet the other light-headed fool."

The temporary eclipse of the gambling-rooms gave the disguised criminal an opportunity to work in perfect safety.

With lightning rapidity he had examined all the spoil of his victim's pockets. A horrid silence had settled down over the deserted old mansion.

In his stocking feet the scoundrel stole down-stairs, and there toiled alone, with the inanimate thing, once a stalwart man, lying there helpless and prone in death before him.

"The chloroform finished him!" muttered Meyer, as he sought fresh air from an open grating leading into a sunken window opening. It was in the old unused laundry-room that "Braun, the specialist," hastily burned all Clayton's clothing in a long-idle furnace.

"His hat and shoes can go in with my trash; the pistol I can drop overboard," murmured the cowardly wretch. He cast a callous glance now and then at the body of his victim, cut off in the flower of life and hope.

"No body marks, no tell-tale finger rings; that's good," the crafty villain mused. "He is stone dead now; he will need no watching," was the brute's final verdict.

And then he stole cat-like up the stairs to gloat over the contents of the bank portmanteau. He hastily transferred the ill-gotten fortune to a heavy black valise and, cutting the rifled portmanteau in pieces, he sought the furnace-room once more.

There was no sound in the rooms above as the villain toiled on, but Leah Einstein, closeted there with the drugged woman who had been used as a fatal decoy, could hear the sound of hammering below. She fancied that Braun was preparing to escape, having removed the dazed victim of the knock-out drops by the help of confederates from the saloon.

It was nearing sunset when Fritz Braun himself brought food and wine to his frightened accomplice.

He cast a searching glance upon the sleeping beauty and then said roughly: "Eat and drink. You can surely trust me. The job's done. The poor fool is miles away now, in a safe place."

But Leah Einstein's pallid lips were silent. She was awed into a stupor by the haunting presence of an unknown majesty. For the King of Terrors ruled in the sickening atmosphere of the deserted mansion house, and Leah feared only for herself now! Braun saw the woman's helpless terror and so left her alone with her helpless charge. "I won't need the useless fool to help me," he mused as he stole away.

A horrible suggestion seized upon him. "Why don't I make sure of her?" In a few moments his nerve returned.

"She saw nothing. She knows nothing. She thinks I only robbed him, and she has a neck to save. She shall come to me--over there. But Irma--she follows her lover, by and by."

It was nine o'clock, the streets were dark and dismal, and a heavy rain was falling, when a carriage drew up before No. 192 Layte Street.

The driver was huddled up in his oilskins and scarcely glanced toward the muffled form of the woman who was tenderly assisted into the vehicle by the sturdy Leah and her male companion.

As the door closed, Fritz Braun sharply gave the driver his last injunction. "Follow the express wagon down to Atlantic Basin. I will ride on it."

Standing on the steps, Braun saw the hackman drive a few doors away into the shadows of the neighboring houses and halt awaiting the baggage team. He tightly locked the door on the inside.

"Lucky the front shop was closed for the holidays," he mused as he made a last examination of the rooms above and below. There was nothing left to betray him.

"Leah is a cunning one," he gleefully said, as he slipped on the well-remembered brown top coat of the "pharmacist," and adjusted anew his false beard and goggles. He felt for Clayton's useless pistol and placed it in his outside pocket.

"Overboard you go, my friend, as soon as I reach the dock." Then seizing his black valise, he passed out of the cellar entrance in the rear and clambered upon the high seat of the great luggage van.

"Where to?" gruffly demanded the waiting driver, who, with his burly mate, was drenched with rain.

"To the Atlantic Basin," sharply said Braun. "I've an extra ten dollars in my pocket for you. It's a wild night." His only task now was to rid himself of the stripped body of his victim, and he had acted with a devilish ingenuity of forethought.

Then, turning the corner of the "Valkyrie," Fritz Braun led the

way along to where a snub-nosed tug lay with her hissing steam escaping, as she tossed up and down on the frothy waves of the yacht mooring.

The ringing of bells in the engine-room, the heavy trampling of feet, aroused the helpless, half-dazed Irma Gluyas, as Fritz Braun tenderly ordered the men to bear her into the little cabin.

"Give her a spoonful of this mixture," significantly said Braun, "I must look out for the luggage."

With a delighted grin, the two expressmen received Fritz Braun's liberal donation.

"Happy voyage, boss," they screamed, as the stout little vessel twisted around on her hawser and moved out on the blackened waters, throwing the yeasty spray high up with the saucy thrusts of her blunt bows.

"Never mind that old trunk," cried Braun, as the sailors busied themselves with throwing tarpaulins over the traveller's half dozen boxes.

It was a heavy package left dangerously near the gunwale of the boat. Mr. Fritz Braun was in a fever of good humor. He had dropped overboard something which glittered a moment as it disappeared under the black surges of the freshening waves. The faithless pistol of the dead cashier now lay twenty fathoms under the dark tide.

While the tug's crew busied themselves with their duties and hastily cast off the lines, the two women were crouching in the dingy cabin.

Fritz Braun, his cigar gleaming out a red defiance, watched the light of the Battery glide by him. He had taken a deep draught of brandy as a final libation to Fortune. "What fools those brewery fellows are," chuckled Braun. "They imagined that I was only dodging a few unwelcome legal papers."

"By Heavens! I have turned over a gold mine to them, and they won't kick. If it had not been for my damned gambling craze I would have had a cool hundred thousand more.

"And they will surely keep the secret of 192 Layte Street, for they wish to run their own 'joint' there. All they want is silence, to change it a little, and no police interference. They are bound to play my game to save themselves from police interference."

The villain laughed aloud in his glee. "And Emil and Lillienthal, even Timmins, know nothing. It has been a great stroke of nigger luck. This fortune is safe. Now for the last touch."

He groped his way aft to where the cheap heavy-looking package lay with one side balanced upon the rail. It was a huge coarse packing

trunk. The crew were busied in watching the light of the South Ferry and avoiding the floats and tugs groaning along in front of Governor's Island.

There was no one aft as the muscular scoundrel seized a handspike and tilted the rough-looking packing trunk overboard. It sank instantly, though Braun started as he fancied he heard a crash. "If the propeller struck it, no matter," he growled. "There's a hundred pounds of broken stairway irons lashed on him. And I will soon be thousands of miles away."

He shook the rain off like a burly water dog as he glanced in at the cabin window of the tug. There was Irma Gluyas, lying sleeping peacefully, with her head upon Leah Einstein's lap.

"Safe enough," he muttered, as he sheltered himself under the overhanging deck roof.

But as the murderer's eye fell on the black valise, he smiled with an infernal glee. "There it is landed--this prize--after months!

"And they will think that the fool cleared out with it. Thank God! Steward Heinrichs is on the 'Mesopotamia.' He will look out for us; but if he knew what was in that valise I'd have to fight for my life."

The tug now swung around into the North River, and the driving spray forced the absconding scoundrel into the Captain's little stateroom. "How long now?" shouted Braun, in the whistling tempest. "I'll have you alongside the 'Mesopotamia' in twenty minutes," answered the skipper. "The 'Falcon' is the fastest tug on the Brooklyn front."

He pushed out a black bottle, which Braun, in his character of "jovial tourist," liberally sampled. "You take an expensive way of getting to Hoboken," smilingly said Captain Jake Ashcroft. "Ah! My wife has been very ill since the loss of our child," was Braun's ready response. "So feeble that I did not dare to drag her across New York. At least, she has some comfort in this way. Poor thing! She is fast asleep! We have to give her sedatives; her nerves are simply wrecked. I hope that a couple of years abroad will restore her."

Braun handed the Captain fifty dollars. "I have a five for your crew," he said, good humoredly, "if we make a neat landing alongside."

It was eleven o'clock when the stout tug ran alongside the 'Mesopotamia.' The old ex-liner was an "occasional" now, and all ready to depart for Stettin.

On Braun's hail, a burly chief steward descended the companionway, with a half dozen assistants.

In the pelting rain, Irma Gluyas, an unresisting bundle, was safely borne by willing arms to the bridal stateroom of the huge steamer, once the pride of the German merchant navy.

The luggage was hastily hoisted on board, and Mr. August Meyer heartily shook the Captain's hand. "Here's the men's beer money. It has been a famous voyage," said the happy villain, as he personally examined the tug's cabin.

"Nothing left! So good-bye to you!" And away churned the tug, dashing out into the midnight darkness, the red light gleaming like the eye of some angry sea monster.

In a couple of hours the creaking donkey-engines ceased their rattle, and Mr. August Meyer bounded up the gang-plank of the "Mesopotamia." A burly Hoboken hotel-keeper stood waving the solitary adieu to the victorious murderer.

They had seen Leah Einstein depart for New York City, her velvety eyes glistening with joy, for Braun had, in the seclusion of the Hoboken Hotel, handed her three five-hundred-dollar bills.

A handful of small change was tossed to her as a last offering. "Remember, Leah," whispered Braun. "The driver is paid, drink money and all. Let him set you down on Fourth Avenue. Get home, dream of me and of our happy meeting next spring. You have the address. Never forget it. Don't even give it to the boy. And never trust it to paper."

"I'll not forget," cried the frightened woman, as she clung to him in her frenzied "Good bye. You'll take care of me!" "For your whole life," answered Braun. "You need me, and I need you. I'll soon get rid of this baby-faced fool! She actually loved that fellow, damn him! But she will remember nothing. She was too well doped. The knock-out drops muddled her; but he went down like a log. And he is disposed of! All you have to do is to keep your mouth shut forever. I will make you rich."

As Leah clung to her partner in crime, Fritz Braun gave her a handful of gold--his last peace offering. "Never go back again to Brooklyn," he hoarsely whispered. "Remember, and keep ready to come to me."

Braun stood alone on the deck of the "Mesopotamia" as the huge bulk slowly swung around and gathered headway. The yellow lights of Hoboken gleamed out faintly to the right, and to the left New York's irregular skyline was lit up with a lurid reflected glow.

But he shuddered as he saw the airy line of the arch of Brooklyn Bridge and the gleaming beacons below, where vice and virtue, craft and candor, stupid drudge and lazy child of luxury had all forgotten the cares of the weary day.

He started in alarm as the hoarse siren of the "Mesopotamia" screamed out its bellowing note of departure.

A spasm of rage shook his trembling frame. He challenged some dark spectre seemingly floating on the midnight winds. "Down, down," he growled. "You are gone forever, under the black waters. Never to rise, and there's not a weak joint in my armor. I defy the very devil himself! With Heinrich's help I can evade all customs' search at Stettin; a few thalers will fix that. The whole New York lot are powerless; and as for Leah, poor devil, love will keep her faithful, fear will lock her tongue, even if she wished to speak."

Stealing down the stairs, he went into Irma Gluyas' superb room. A jaded stewardess sat watching faithfully over the sleeping woman. He touched her arm. "I will fill your purse for you," he kindly said. "See that my wife wants nothing. You must watch her like a child.

"She is sadly broken in health. Don't mind her babblings!" He touched his forehead significantly.

He had already carefully bestowed his valise of treasure under the cosy lounge berth by the great portholes, and his rugs and wraps covered it.

Leaving the ox-eyed woman there on watch, Fritz Braun hastened to join the steward, an old friend of the days of the pharmacy and its secret international smuggling trade. He had tossed his false beard overboard and tied a sea-cap with ear-flaps upon his head. "Just as well to drop 'Fritz Braun' forever now," he laughed. "Mr. August Meyer' has his passports in his pockets! So, here's for a new life. I am born to a new name and safe, even in Germany."

It was only when Sandy Hook light was far astern that August Meyer gave up the wild potations which even astounded Heinrichs. "One doesn't go away on a vacation every day," joyfully cried August Meyer. "One more bottle of the Frenchman's sparkling wine, and then to turn in and wake far out on blue water!" The fool, safe in his own conceit, forgot the curse of Cain branded upon him now. But the vengeance of God was following him out on the dark waters!

The lonely gulls, screaming and soaring at daybreak, skimming the waters of New York Bay, dipping and struggling over each bit of flotsam, rested upon the fragments of a broken trunk floating idly along upon the sunlit waters.

There was nothing to indicate the previous contents of the package which had been shattered by the screw of a passing vessel; there was neither mark nor token of its past history.

And so it floated idly up and down, borne hither and thither by the veering tides, while far below, on the ooze, the heavy irons still weighted down the corpse of the man who had been lured to

his death by the noblest impulses of the human heart.

And the sun came gaily up, upon the day of repose, God's own appointed day of rest, the glittering beams played upon the closed windows of the stately old mansion, where nothing remained to tell of a "deed without a name" save a heap of dead ashes in the blackened grate of the laundry furnace. The pathway of the criminal seemed covered to all mortal eyes.

The cautious patrons of the "Valkyrie," stealing in by the side entrances, talked in whispers of the re-opening of the pool-room, and the sleeping "blind tiger."

"Come around any evening next week, after the Fourth," was the message given to the "safe" patrons, "and we will be happy to accommodate you."

There was no human being in the offices of the Western Trading Company save the janitor, busy at his semi-annual clean-up, and the Monday holiday approached with no suspicion of Randall Clayton's disappearance.

"All New York" had hied "out of town" with its usual unpatriotic snobbishness, and only the attendants of Mr. Randall Clayton's rooms noted his absence.

"Singular young fellow," said the janitor to his sturdy wife. "Comes and goes like a ghost; no friends, and has no life of his own. Good-looking young fellow, too. Ought to have a wife and family around him.

"It's the old story: hotel and flat life are crowding out the American family. Men and women live on the single, and prey on each other. One half are sharks, and the other half are their victims!"

But there were two persons in New York City who now feared to approach each other. Emil Einstein, after a whispered conference with his pale-faced mother in her shabby den on the East Side, hastily called a wagon and transported all his slender effects to the little room in rear of Magdal's Pharmacy, where the bogus doctor had had his Sunday conferences with his bibulous patrons--the regular "sick people"--sick of a thirst, beginning officially with Saturday midnight and ending, providentially, on Monday morning.

Bob Timmins and Emil Einstein were already secret allies and the Don Juans of a coterie of haphazard Sixth Avenue beauties. There was a usefulness to both in the new alliance, and Einstein was already the destined secret patron of the degraded Timmins.

"It's a good shelter for me," mused the adroit Hebrew, "but I'll never tell him a word of the old man."

The parting between Leah and her hopeful son had been a wild access

of maternal tenderness. "You see, I've got to," growled the boy. "You don't want to go to the chair, or get into Sing Sing, if this fellow Clayton turns up a stiff. I don't know what the 'old man' was up to."

"You do! And I don't ever want to! The only way we can meet is once a week in the crowd around the Germania Theater on Astor Place."

"I'll come there afternoon or evening each Saturday, and hang around till I see you. You can take a seat in the theater. I'll go up in the gallery, and nobody will drop on us. If any one asks for me, say I've gone away by myself to room. That I'm going to be married."

"And at the business?" timidly sobbed Leah. "Oh! I've got to stay on there," the boy stoutly answered. "I know nothing; just keep a shut mouth. There'll be hell to pay now. Remember, don't you ever dare to look me up. If you should be sick, send word to Ben Timmins at the Magdal Pharmacy. He will give me the message, and then I'll find a safe way to see you. It's a life and death matter, remember."

The boy was eager to get away, for he feared his mother's plaint for money. He knew nothing of the three five-hundred-dollar bills now sewed up in the buxom Leah's corset.

"If they've buncoed him or done him up, there'll be a great run! Holy Moses! The papers!" Emil Einstein fled away from the wrath to come, and, even in his high-rolling evening hours with Timmins that night he trembled.

For he had slyly gone to Mr. Randall Clayton's apartments. The old janitor of the apartment-house met him with an anxious face. "Here's Mr. Ferris, back from the West, hunting Mr. Clayton all over town. They were to dine together. Where is he?"

The startled boy lied glibly, after the fashion of New York office boys. "I don't know. Gone off on some trip, I suppose. He sent me away on an errand yesterday, and I didn't get my week's salary. I suppose that he has it. The pay clerk always gives it to him. That's what I came for."

And then, whistling a rakish air, but with a nameless terror in his heart, Emil Einstein hied himself off to Magdal's as a safe haven.

There was not a human being in all Manhattan who had seen Mr. Randall Clayton on his hasty departure, save the smart-faced policeman, Dennis McNerney, who had noted Clayton put the hesitating Leah Einstein into the carriage on University Place.

"Something new for him," smilingly thought the policeman. "But he's not beauty hunting; that's no charmer. Looks more like somebody's housekeeper."

And yet, shake it off as he would, the guardian of the peace recalled

that night that he had seen the woman lingering in conversation with one of the Western Trading Company's office boys, as he made his circuit of the block. "It is a little singular, this new departure."

With a smile he dismissed the suspense, murmuring "Young men all have their little 'side issues.' Half New York would go crazy if it knew what the other half does, and how they dodge each other, God alone knows."

It was merry enough in Magdal's Pharmacy that Fourth of July night, while Arthur Ferris, rage in his heart, at last descended at Robert Wade's mansion and spent the evening with that sly old financier. He dared not bring up Clayton's name, for Mr. Robert Wade was now his inferior, and all ignorant of the dark bond between Worthington and his unacknowledged son-in-law.

But in the pharmacy Einstein hazarded a test question. "Where's the old man, Ben?"

"Took one of the cheap Saturday afternoon boats from Hoboken for the other side," said Ben, handing Miss Daisy Vivian a "slight refreshment."

"Go alone?" said the curious Emil.

"Certainly," smartly said Timmins. "He is too mean to pay a woman's passage over the ferry, much less to the Old Country!"

Whereat, in the general laugh, the frightened Emil gladly observed that Timmins really knew nothing.

They were both, however, on their guard when the oily face of Adolph Lilienthal suddenly appeared at the soda fountain.

The picture-dealer's crafty face shone with a benevolent smile as he said to Timmins, "I've mislaid Mr. Braun's address, the last one he gave me!" The two young men exchanged startled glances, but Timmins resolutely answered, "You must find it out for yourself. The boss didn't even tell me what steamer he sailed on. I was to see you about all."

And finally Adolph Lilienthal retired crestfallen. He dared not admit to the clerk the quarrel which had left him in Braun's power. "You'll have a letter surely, from him in a week or so," smoothly answered the cockney, finally.

And then the owner of the Newport Art Gallery sadly departed.

"I am in his power," he musingly said. "He knows all about me; and I nothing of him. He is a fiend, that fellow; and he will perhaps keep clear of my friends on the other side. He is too smart to commit himself." The only clue possible lay in watching the doltish London clerk. And on his way home the picture-dealer gave that up

as hopeless. "Braun would never trust that fool. He's only a human sponge, a confirmed soak."

Far out on the waters the "Mesopotamia" was plowing along, the blue water curling merrily away from her bows. Mr. August Meyer, blithe and light-hearted, gaily waved his cigar in answer to the lights of a passing steamer bound homeward. "My compliments to Mr. Randall Clayton!" he laughed, as he strode along the quarter deck, the only cabin passenger. "We have given Fate a clean pair of heels. I defy the Devil to touch me now. It was simply to hold the bag open. That fool ran his head into it. The stroke of a lifetime!

"God! What a row there'll be; but it will take a month to find out that he has not skipped. I will be in hiding; but to-morrow I must face this Magyar fool. What shall I tell her?"

Mr. August Meyer tramped the deck alone until he hit upon a plausible explanation of the awakening which would arouse the Magyar songbird's gravest suspicions. "When she awakes and finds herself far out at sea, there will be a devil of a racket, unless I can find a way to control her. Should she denounce me, I might be detained by the Captain, subject to an examination. And the money; it would have to go overboard or else I would go to the electric chair."

He gave up his surest way of stopping the unruly woman's mouth. "No!" he mused. "That would never do here--on shipboard. The steward, old Heinrichs, is too smart for all that. I must get her away into some lonely place abroad. For only in that way can I hide Clayton's fate from her. They never reprint American news in Poland or Eastern Prussia and Silesia. Perhaps Russia will hide me. First, to quiet her; next, to make the money safe; lastly, to get rid of her."

But friendly devils aided him with adroit whispers. His brow was unruffled as he bade his carousing chum, the steward, adieu at midnight. The good ship dashed merrily on breasting the Atlantic waves.

It was long after eight bells the next morning when Irma Gluyas slowly opened her eyes and wonderingly gazed at her tyrant master watching her with steadfast eyes. Neither spoke until the pale-faced woman realized the onward motion of the sturdy old liner, and her deep-set eyes had wandered over the nautical surroundings. Then she buried her face in her hands and a flood of stormy sorrow shook her frame.

The acute-minded Fritz Braun knew that he had her at his mercy, for the regulated doses of the narcotic had brought about a profound reaction. Helplessness, coma, stupor, hallucination, dejection; she had passed through every phase.

Turning her wan face toward him at last, the singer, in a hollow voice, curtly said, "Explain all this!" There was a glance in her recklessly brave eyes which made the soi disant August Meyer

relapse into a whining tenderness. "The high hand won't do here," he quickly resolved.

"You have been ill, my poor comrade," he tenderly said. "It's all right now. That thunder-storm drove you frantic; you had a heart seizure, and I had all I could do to get you away from New York in secret." The woman eyed him doubtfully. "Whither are we going?" she resolutely asked. "To any safe retreat in north eastern Europe you choose," coaxingly replied Braun.

"Why?" demanded Irma, raising herself on one arm and pointing an accusing finger. "If you have broken your oath, God forgive you! It's your life or mine, then!"

"She does love him," was Braun's inward comment. "Stop your high dramatic play-acting," soberly said Braun, holding a glass of Tokayer to her lips. "Lilienthal was pounced down upon for smuggling phenacetine. My own drug-store was searched. Thank God! none was found there. He gave bail, the honest fellow managed to telegraph me the agreed-on tip. I was watching over you in Brooklyn.

"I bundled you in a carriage, as you were so ill, caught a tug, ran around to Hoboken, reached this ship just as it sailed! He knows not who betrayed him, but the staunch old boy got five thousand dollars to me, and the 'brotherhood' over here will take care of me.

"I will lie by in hiding for a season, and I can send the usual goods in by Norwegian tramp steamers. I have a square friend on board here, the head steward, one of the Baltic smuggling gang's best men. So, my dear girl, look your prettiest when we land in Stettin."

It was only by a grand effort of will that he faced her coldly searching gaze. "And Clayton; what was your hidden purpose with him, you devil?" she boldly said, but half convinced by his smooth story. "I may as well let the cat out of the bag," laughed Braun, taking a deep draught of the golden wine.

"I wanted to lure him over to Brooklyn and let him fool his time away with you from Saturday to Tuesday morning. I intended you to lead him a will-o'-the-wisp dance out on Long Island. For Lilienthal and I had learned from the office boy that a quarter of a million would be locked up in the Trading Company's vaults. Only guarded by the janitor and the special policeman. The janitor was with us, that devil of a boy got us the combination, bit by bit; but you went out of your head after the storm, and Lilienthal was half betrayed by a drunken underling in our smuggling company. I had to clear out. I could not leave you to starve. It's the fifth of July, and we sailed the third. I lost the chance of my life!"

"You swear this is true!" murmured Irma. Braun bowed his head. "I will only believe it," she said, "when I have a letter from Clayton.

I love him. I would die for him. God help him; he would marry me!" She was astounded when Braun said, kindly, "All in due time. You shall have your letter through Emil. The boy is one of our gang!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE LIGHTNING STROKE OF FATE.

While the "Mesopotamia" skimmed along over the crisp, curling seas upon this sunlit Tuesday morning, she bore onward a man whose breast was now filled with a vague unrest. The robust passenger known as "Mr. August Meyer" was unusually jovial at breakfast, when he informed the bluff Captain that Mrs. Meyer was rapidly recovering and would soon be able "to grace the deck," in the language of the society journals.

The absconding murderer was delighted that Irma and himself were the only first-class passengers, although accommodations for fifty had been retained in making a "freighter" of the one-time "record liner."

Leaving Irma, at her wish, to dream of a future meeting with Clayton, Fritz Braun was left free to retire to his own capacious cabin.

"Take the whole twenty staterooms," cried the jolly old skipper, highly propitiated with Braun's wine-opening and the druggist's superb cigars. And this Tuesday afternoon Braun proposed to devote to a careful examination of his rich plunder.

As yet he had not verified the whole stolen treasure. When all his own luggage was arranged in his own double room, he carefully threw overboard all of the murdered cashier's private articles. The hat and shoes, which he had feared to burn, were cast into the foaming wake of the vessel, and even the veriest trifle of the contents of the deceived lover's pockets.

Braun, greedy at heart, shut his eyes as he tossed the watch-chain and locket overboard, and even the scarf-pin, links and studs of the victim. It was an hour after he had locked himself in when he threw over the last shred of paper and the emptied pocketbook and purse.

Braun smiled grimly as he carefully transferred to his wallet the double-month's pay which had been handed to the cashier by accountant

Somers when he hastened away on his furlough.

"Nearly seven hundred dollars," laughed Braun. "My dead friend pays my way over." There was, moreover, a few dollars in change in the purse, which was tossed away to follow the other tell-tale objects, after Braun had extracted Somers' test slip of the deposits. It brought a frenzy of joy to the murderer's heart to read the lines, "Currency, \$150,000; cheques, \$98,975."

He smiled grimly. "The last thing which could betray me is overboard. I'm safe now! No fool to be caught, even by a tell-tale ring!" He had hurled poor Clayton's college pin and seal ring far out into the sapphire blue, and then resolutely screwed up the porthole.

"Now to see if my cashier's tag lies!"

Braun stopped, with his hand on the straps of his valise, a glooming foreboding seized him. "I must watch this devilish woman! She was far too placid. She has not swallowed all my story. If she should try to cable, or to communicate." He paused, and the cold sweat gathered upon his brow. "I'll closely watch her. I'll rush her through Stettin. I'll hide her in some little hole on the Polish frontier. If she tries to follow up her mad love for this fellow, I'll finish her."

Already he looked forward with longing to the time when he could safely call Leah Einstein to his side. "She will be true as a dog to me, poor wretch! And I must get Irma out of the way. Perhaps in some Polish marsh; they would not find her bones. There's the wolves, too.

"But, my lady, you are only sleeping with one eye shut. Your first false movement means"--He gloomily ceased, and then feasted his eyes on the green bundles in the common-looking valise. "I am a prince for life," he murmured, "if I can realize on these cheques." He opened a bundle; they were all flat endorsements.

"About half of these are good anywhere," he mused. "Our gang can handle them; and for the others, we may get a reward to return them later," he grimly smiled.

But as he busied himself, the inscrutable face of Irma Gluyas returned to madden him.

"She does suspect!" he growled. "She only plays policy because she is in my power. Never mind, my lady; you are knitting up your own shroud."

Seven hundred and fifty miles away, the streets of New York City were filled with the reflux crowd of holiday absentees. The great Babel had again taken up its round of toil and pleasure, its burden of care and crime, its chase for the bubble "reputation," its hunting away of the urban wolf from the door.

In inverse order of importance, the shutters had come down, the toilet had been out, dinner-pail in hand, for hours, when Milady yawned over her morning coffee and the magnates of finance appeared in their triumphal procession down Broadway to Wall Street.

There was a careworn look on Arthur Ferris' brow as he sprang out of a coupe at Randall Clayton's deserted apartments at nine-thirty. He had sullenly enjoyed Mr. Robert Wade's Fourth of July cheer, his mind haunted with Randall Clayton's strange breach of social faith. In vain he reassured himself. "He could not know where to reach me with a 'phone or a wire," and his agitation increased when the house janitor gravely said, "Mr. Clayton has not been here since Saturday morning, sir. It's very strange. He took no travel bag with him. I just took a peep at the room. The bed's not been slept in, and here's a lot of mail. He's most regular.

"May be sick somewhere, sir. He looked very strange when he went out Saturday. He'd been up in the night. I heard him moving around very late."

"Let no one open the room till I return," sharply ordered Ferris, and he then started his coupe off on the run for the Western Trading Company's office. Bidding the man wait below, Arthur Ferris took the elevator and, darting along the hall, smartly rapped at Randall Clayton's door. It was locked, but the agile Einstein was at once at his beck and call. "Mr. Clayton's not down yet. I fear he's ill, sir," respectfully said the lad. "Here's all his office mail in the ante-room."

Arthur Ferris sharply ordered the lad to watch over the closed rooms. "Let no one open those rooms," he said. "You'll find me in Mr. Wade's private office. Let me know the very instant Mr. Clayton arrives."

Ferris at once rang on Mr. Robert Wade's private telephone, and was relieved when he learned that the manager had just left his Fifth Avenue home for the office. There was a crowd of the senior employees waiting around the door to congratulate the new vice-president, when old Edward Somers tottered in, his face ashen with fright. Ferris dropped the telephone ear-cup and sprang forward.

"Speak! What's gone wrong?" he cried. He feared to learn that within that locked office the moody Clayton lay cold in death--a suicide.

But the old accountant only raised his head and babbled, "There's something gone wrong with Mr. Clayton. The bank has just sent me a messenger."

"Our Saturday deposit never reached the bank! He's in there now. Oh! My God!"

Rapidly turning on the District call for the police, Ferris darted

into Secretary Edson's room.

"Wallace," he cried, "take two of your best men; get pistols. Shut the offices! Let no one leave! There's been a gigantic robbery here; perhaps a murder!"

Wallace Edson sprang up, brave and resolute, as Ferris dashed back to the broken old man.

"How much?" he sharply demanded. "Nearly a quarter of a million!" the old accountant faltered.

"Where's the bank-book?" cried Ferris, his presence of mind returning.

"Clayton has it," the bookkeeper sadly said.

Opening a door, Arthur Ferris called in the treasurer. Frank Bell, jolly and debonnaire, had just returned from "no end of a good time."

"Look out for Somers, here," he ordered. "There's been a great disaster. Let no one speak to him." And then the young vice-president went out to meet the arriving police.

Mr. Robert Wade, slowly pacing along Fourteenth Street, had stopped to whisper a few words in Lilienthal's attentive ear. There was a delectable "private view" which was arranged for two o'clock on this happy afternoon.

As the smug "dealer" bowed, his mind reverted to Mr. Wade's handsome employee, Randall Clayton, and then the picture episode, and the entrancing Magyar witch.

"I wonder, now," mused Lilienthal, "if young Clayton stole that pretty devil away from Fritz Braun! Braun was really crazy over her, it seems, and he, the black-hearted wretch, has gone over to Europe to hunt for her. The pretty minx may be in hiding somewhere up on the West Side, with Clayton. And yet I never saw or heard of them together again. It may be he only wanted the picture, not the woman!"

Mr. Lilienthal's laughter at his own joke was cut short by the racing past of four policemen and two detectives. He was still standing gaping in wonder when Robert Wade forced his way into his own office and found all in an uproar.

Only Arthur Ferris was cool and collected, as he stationed the police and called two stenographers into the room where old Somers and Emil Einstein awaited the opening of an inquisition.

"There's been a robbery of a quarter of a million of our company's funds, Wade," sharply cried Ferris. "We want to find out where

Clayton is. Take hold now and get these men's statements. I'll bring in the bank messenger, and then try and hold Hugh Worthington on the telegraph. The Chief should be even now nearing Cheyenne."

Ferris grasped Einstein's arm and drew him out of the room, as Wade pompously began his Jupiter-like procedure. "I'll send for the detective captain, and the Fidelity Company's people," said Ferris; but he dragged Einstein into a vacant room. "You can open his office, you young devil?" he whispered.

"Yes; side door key," said Einstein, conscious now of a protecting friend.

"Get me in there, quick!" said Ferris, his eyes aflame. In a few moments they stood in the vacant room. Ferris pointed to the desk.

"Remember what you told me!" he sternly murmured. And as the lad drew out his stolen key, Ferris watched the roll-top desk slide open. He grasped the bundle of telegrams and lone papers on the pad, and motioned for the trembling boy to lock it.

Then, darting back into the ante-room, he dashed off two telegrams, the first addressed to his secret partner at Cheyenne, and the other to his wife in fact, but not name, "Miss Alice Worthington, Palace Hotel, Tacoma."

"Not a word of this to any one; I'll pay you," said Ferris, as he stuffed the papers in his pocket and rang for a telegraph boy. "Come in, now, and tell your story--all but this!"

Holding the shivering lad while he sent a brace of messengers for the detective chief and the Fidelity Company's expert, Arthur Ferris muttered, "Is it murder or a daring robbery? Is it flight? Has he discovered his rights and robbed Peter to pay Paul? Old Hugh must come, and until then, silence!"

When the noonday sun burned down upon Manhattan Island, a thousand offices had received the message:

"Look out for Randall Clayton, absconding cashier of the Western Trading Company. Age 28, height 5 feet 11 inches; gray eyes, brown hair, well built, weight about 170; speaks French and some German; born Detroit; slight Western accent. Missing since Saturday noon, July 2, with \$150,000 currency and \$100,000 endorsed cheques. Watch all trains and steamers. Photographs by mail to-morrow. Presumably alive; no woman in the case."

And in the spacious rooms of the Western Trading Company the usual business was now moving on, while a detective sat on guard in Clayton's office, and another in his deserted rooms, where the Danube picture smiled down upon the callous stranger, who murmured, "The old story, 'Cards, women, the Tenderloin, Wall Street, and fast life!' Another man gone to hell with his eyes open."

But in the mob of reporters now filling the affable treasurer's room there was the ball of angry contention tossed vigorously too and fro.

Reporter Snooks of the Earth coldly bluffed Sears of the Ledger with a bet, "Two to one on his skipping out; even money on a murder; even money on a bunco."

And so "lightly they spoke" of the man who had yielded up his unstained honor in a mad chivalry for the sake of a woman whose love had innocently led him to a horrible taking off!

Within the manager's room, the preliminary inquisition was rapidly moving on. Arthur Ferris, with burning eyes gazing intently as each word fell from the lips of the frightened witnesses.

It was while this drama was being played that the "Fuerst Bismarck" swept grandly up the North River, and the returning lawyer tourist, Jack Witherspoon, hastened up town, eager to meet his client.

"I will prospect a little," mused the cautious Witherspoon, as he registered at the Hoffman House. "Somebody may know me; and no human being must see Clayton and I together in New York! One chance spy and Hugh Worthington would be on his defense, and I would then lose my place in a jiffy and all power to make him disgorge."

He was pondering over the best way to reach Clayton, and had just decided to wait after dark at the rooms for his old class-mate, when he remembered the annual election.

"By Jove!" mused Witherspoon, now burning to with Francine Delacroix's dowry from the enemy.

"Ferris will surely be nosing around here. I must not show myself at Clayton's rooms. There are two ways: one to call him by telephone, and the other is to telegraph to the Detroit Club and have the Secretary then telegraph to Clayton to call at once at Room 586, Hoffman, on 'Alpha Delta Phi' business. They might have a clerk on at the telephone over at the office. and if I was asked who wants Mr. Clayton, I might be trapped."

He suddenly remembered his last agreement with his prospective client, that if anything unforeseen occurred, Clayton would write or telegraph to his comrade at the Detroit Club, and so, Witherspoon added a few words of direction to the secretary, to his request that Clayton be bidden to an "Alpha Delta Phi" secret reunion at Room 586, Hoffman.

Witherspoon had already purchased a week's file of the New York journals in order to follow up the financial columns, and was moving toward the elevator from the telegraph stand, when a boy thrust an extra into his hand.

"Heavy Robbery by Absconding Cashier! Randall Clayton Lets the Western Trading Company in for a Quarter of a Million. Another Case of a Double Life!"

With a supreme effort the Detroit lawyer mastered himself and sought the seclusion of his room. In ten minutes he had recovered his legal acumen. The two columns of the extra gave a list of the new officers of the company, and the statement that Mr. Hugh Worthington was at Tacoma with his invalid daughter, was supplemented by the statement that Arthur Ferris of Heath & Ferris, 105 Broad Street (the recently elected vice-president), was in charge of the whole situation.

When Jack Witherspoon had cooled his heated brows, he swore a deep and mighty oath of vengeance. "I don't believe a word of this whole rot," he stoutly said to himself. "Either Clayton has been frightened off, and is waiting for me near Detroit, or they have trapped him in some way. Something has brought things to a crisis. And yet, I must handle Mr. Arthur Ferris with velvet gloves!"

He reflected now upon the imprudence of his registration at the Hoffman. The railroad attorneyship had brought him in close contact with Ferris. "I must go around there and show up at once! They would surely see my arrival in the papers!"

He had just finished his professional toilet when a telegram was brought to his door. He tore it open with a wild anxiety.

"No news of friend here. Have sent dispatch as agreed. There is sealed box of valuables here for you, deposited a month ago by your friend; sent by special express commission. Telegraph your directions."

He sought the telegraph office and wired orders to have the deposit instantly expressed to him, at Adams & Co.'s general office. "Take receipt in my name for twenty-five thousand dollars' value," was his last prudent order.

And then, jumping into a coupe, he departed for the Western Trading Company's office. "They will have the telegram," thought Witherspoon. "Thank God! Ferris is a Columbia College man, and no member of our 'frat.' I can tell him that some of our New York chapter proposed to celebrate my return, unknown to me. There's Doctor Billy Atwater. I must look him up to-night. I can leave him here on guard while I go and face Hugh Worthington. Either Hugh or Ferris has put up this job!"

Suddenly an awful thought came to him.

"My God! Have they made away with him?"

He saw his course plainly now. The untiring pursuit of the wolf, the silence of the crouching panther!

"Never!" he proudly declared in his heart. "Randall Clayton a thief! Never! I will be the second shadow of Mr. Arthur Ferris. If any one has the key of this mystery, he has. Clayton never went away willingly. It would be his ruin for life to let his name be blackened. And, the money! Who has it?"

The prominence of Mr. John Witherspoon as the Detroit counsel of the Trading Company's great syndicate carrying agents insured his instant admission to the general manager's room. There was a sober gathering of a dozen magnates, and Arthur Ferris sprang up, somewhat disconcerted, when he saw Witherspoon's anxious face.

The young vice-president left the detective captain, Manager Wade, the haggard old Somers, and two great lawyers, and drew Witherspoon away into Randall Clayton's deserted rooms.

"Where did you drop from?" curtly demanded Ferris. "I've been some months in Europe," simply said Witherspoon, now wearing the oily mask of his profession. "I arrived on the 'Fuerst Bismarck' to-day, and was going to take to-night's train West. But some fellows of my college 'frat' had fixed up a 'surprise banquet' for me at the Hoffman.

"So, after all they had to tell me to hold me over, I was just opening my accumulated mail, when by accident I picked up an extra. I thought poor Clayton was away on a summer vacation."

"He's away on a devilish long one!" snarled Ferris. "Took French leave with a quarter of a million. Who, in God's name, would have taken him for a thief!" The mournful ring of Ferris' voice almost deceived his secret adversary; but Ferris was, in secret, pondering over the Detroit dispatch to the absent Clayton, which he had opened and secreted.

"This man knows nothing," decided the wary Ferris, for Witherspoon's face was frankness itself.

Jack looked around at two men vigorously working away at a huge safe standing in the corner. "They're now opening Clayton's safe," bitterly said Ferris. "Of course, there will be nothing found there. No! It's either a case of secret gambling, mad Wall Street plunging, or a crazy woman intrigue."

"What do the detectives say?" soberly queried the Detroit lawyer. "Case of sharp thief, got three days' start of us by clearing out Saturday at eleven. I've suspended that old fool, Somers, for trusting such a deposit to one man alone! It's a crushing disgrace to the New York management. I shall sweep it all away as soon as I can get Hugh's orders. I'll take charge myself, now!

"I suppose you go on to Detroit at once. We are readjusting our whole freight schedules!"

"Yes," gravely said Witherspoon, "unless I can help you here. I'll telegraph my people at once. Will you telegraph Hugh and see if he might need me here? I suppose he will come on at once."

"I can hardly say," replied Ferris, caught off his guard. "He was to have met Clayton to-day, in Cheyenne!"

In an instant Ferris regretted the lapse, and hastily added, "Of course, you might wait a couple of days. Worthington can give you his ideas, and then you can save time in closing the railroad deal. Old Hugh has a clear majority of our stock now."

Though Witherspoon had instantly grasped the significance of Ferris' dropped hint, he stilled his beating heart. "What have you done with Clayton's rooms?" he quietly said. "You had an apartment with him. You should search it."

Ferris started. "By Jove! Yes! I forgot all about that. I've two men watching them now."

After a short pause, Witherspoon said calmly, "There may be some sudden sickness, some accident in the country, some mysterious happening. His rooms should be carefully examined."

"You are right," answered Ferris, "and I have my duplicate keys. Let us drive up there, you and I; we will take a look and then seal them up till the detectives examine them. We are getting at facts here; we are awaiting now to hear from Hugh. As you knew Clayton at college, I'd like to have you represent the fair thing at the searching of the rooms, particularly as I lived with him. But he has not been there since Saturday morning, and the money is gone. That tells the whole story. It's impossible to keep it quiet now, and I wash my hands of the whole thing. It occurred three days before I took charge."

The two young men silently made their way to the street. As they seated themselves in the first carriage they saw idle, Witherspoon calmly remarked, "If I know Worthington's mind, he will make very radical changes here now. Do you suspect any collusion?"

Ferris shook his head. "Poor old Somers has Clayton's tag receipts for the currency and cheques as usual. I'm sorry for the old man. We'll retire him, at any rate, pension or no pension. It was Wade's silly system, to trace all our money down with two sets of custodians, and then send it to bank by ONE man!"

"You don't think Clayton can have been made away with? Followed by those who have accidentally dropped on his secrets, or some one informed by some member of your office staff?"

"No; that's all far-fetched and speculative," gruffly said Ferris. "But the whole damned lot, from old Wade down, are under secret

espionage now. I ordered that on at once. Besides, the Fidelity Company have their own people at work."

"Ah! There was a bond?" questioned Witherspoon. "Fifty thousand, only," growled Ferris, "and they probably will only pay a half. They'll make us prove our loss in open court, and you know we don't care to haul out our books. But the recovery goes really to old Hugh; he paid all the dues on Clayton's bond."

They halted in a watchful silence at the fashionable apartment-house, and Ferris, calling the janitor as a witness, using his own keys, opened the vacant rooms. At the door he paused to give a few sharp directions to the watchers, and so Jack Witherspoon stepped into the room first. By a mere accident he felt a small object under his foot, and then quickly secured it in his hand, having carelessly dropped his hat. He felt a little card-case in the hand which remained thrust idly in his pocket.

Together the two young men searched every corner of the double apartment. The careful housewife's summer shroudings of Ferris' rooms were still undisturbed.

As for Clayton's apartment, it was left in the careless disorder of a young man about town. "I will touch nothing," said Ferris, awed into a dismal silence. Jack Witherspoon keenly followed Ferris' every movement. There was nothing to indicate any idea of departure.

Even Clayton's trunk-keys were in the scattered packages in the ante-rooms. The closets, dressers, and wardrobes showed no gap, as the young men explored.

"That's the only new thing I see--that picture," casually said Ferris, pointing to the Danube view. "I never saw that before, and he was not much of an art collector."

A sharp knock on the door drew Ferris to the door, where an office clerk awaited him with a telegram. Witherspoon still stood eyeing the picture, when Ferris said, "Look out for things here. I've got to answer a telegram. Hugh is not at Cheyenne. I must call him at Tacoma. Alice can forward the dispatch."

Left alone in the room, Jack Witherspoon redoubled his energies, knowing that he might never see the interior again. Ferris' remark about the picture had strangely attracted his attention. "That means something," mused the excited Jack. His hand was on a closet door, and by a strange impulse he opened it quickly. A picture-case of heavy pasteboard stood there, upright in a corner, and a half-detached label caught his eye. The Detroit lawyer tore it off and hastily secreted it. He was seated at a table in the room when Ferris reentered.

"Now," said he, bolting the doors between the two apartments, "I wish to have you see these rooms sealed up! I must get back to

the office. You would do me a great favor if you would be here and represent me as well as Clayton's interests when the detectives search to-morrow. For nothing more can be done till I hook on to Worthington, or the police may have a report from the outside.

"Twenty tramp steamers and fifty sea-going boats have left since Saturday noon. I am afraid Clayton has shown us a clean pair of heels. What do you think?"

But Jack Witherspoon only clutched the objects in his pocket, and slowly shook his head. "I think nothing! It is a sad business, and I will help you all I can! I will wait here until you hear from Hugh, at any rate. You can drop me at the Hoffman."

At the hotel Ferris said, on parting, "Come over at ten o'clock to-morrow. I'll give you a stenographer and one of our assistant cashiers. Then you can verify the whole contents of Clayton's rooms with the detectives. The lawyers and head police will look through his safe and office papers under my eye."

At the parting, Ferris, worn out by the day's excitements, murmured, as if seeking a confirmation of his theory, "Clayton has been acting very strangely of late. Old Hugh wanted me to give him a talking to!"

"There'll be a reward offered, of course," said Jack, anxious to lead Ferris out.

"Certainly," was the rejoinder. "I think fifteen thousand for him, and ten more for the money or cheques. But all depends on Hugh!"

"I'll meet you at ten," gravely answered the stranger lawyer. "This will break up our dinner, I am sick at heart."

Once in his room, Witherspoon drew out the two articles which he had concealed. The first was a little red morocco card-case, evidently dropped as the supposed fugitive had left his room! Jack's fingers trembled as he drew out the few visiting cards. With a wildly beating heart he examined them.

He sprang excitedly to his feet as he read the faintly pencilled lines traced on the back of one, "Irma Gluyas, No. 192 Layte Street, Brooklyn."

It was the work of an instant only to glance at the label torn from the picture-case. The printed words, "Newport Art Gallery," were visible above the words, "Fraulein Irma Gluyas, 192 Layte Street, Brooklyn," and the adjuration, "Handle with care," completed the marks upon the tell-tale paper.

The anxious lawyer saw the magnificent castle in the air which he had builded crumbled at his feet. "This is for me alone," he swore in his heart, and it was only after an hour's cogitation that

he resolved upon his course. "I must hunt up Doctor Atwater; but, first, wait for the wishes of Worthington. The package from Detroit may tell me something. And I must examine that picture and see that no tell-tale inscription is on the back. Here is the key of the mystery."

Seated alone, with his nerves strained to the utmost, a sudden inspiration came to the loyal friend of the missing man. "I am too late. They have killed him!"

He cursed the evil hour when he left for Europe without placing Randall Clayton in a place of safety. "I should have taken him with me, or else gone West with him and braved old Hugh. Yes; they have lured him away! Killed him, and hidden this money. It will all come out of the stockholders. It goes back into old Hugh's own pocket. He has made his title safe!

"In some way poor Clayton has babbled, and they have swept him from the face of the earth. But for some fatal imprudence, he would have come into his stolen fortune. And, after my settlement, Hugh Worthington would have feared to attack Clayton."

In half an hour Mr. John Witherspoon was on his way to Brooklyn. He had already deposited the two precious articles in the massive safes of the Hoffman, and he began his weary quest with a glance at the "Newport Art Gallery," whose Fourteenth Street address was printed upon the label.

"This remains for a future examination," was Jack's rapid conclusion. "The picture was procured here within three months, and the shop looks like a permanent one." A glance at a Directory, in a drug-store, proved that the Emporium had been there for a year, certainly.

It was four o'clock when the lawyer resolutely rang, the bell at No. 192 Layte Street. He had consumed an hour in scanning the quiet exterior of the stately old mansion. The ignoble use of the parlor frontage as a modiste's shop, attracted him as he vainly waited for a reply to his repeated ringing.

All that he could gain from a pert shop-girl was the news that the house was shut up, and that no one lived there.

The judicious use of a two-dollar bill brought as a harvest the news that it had been used as a private club for men and that it had been recently closed. "Ask in the saloon--the "Valkyrie"--next door. They are the landlords," said the girl as she returned to her ribbons. The acute lawyer, whose years of active practice had opened his eyes to many of the mysteries of the inside life of New York, Detroit and Chicago, was not deceived by the decorous white enamel shutters.

"I have done enough for one day," he mused. "I have kept my temper, and Ferris suspects nothing. Poor Clayton never betrayed me; he

only betrayed himself. And he has been trapped; BUT BY WHOM? God alone knows!"

Once safely back in the Hoffman, Jack Witherspoon leisurely dined. His self-commune had taught him the need of a perfect control of every faculty. "I will not linger here to embarrass Ferris; but the Newport Art Gallery, the mysterious woman of 192 Layte Street, and the picture's secret history shall be my property alone. I will not betray myself. Arthur Ferris may, perhaps, unbosom himself!"

As the lonely night hours advanced, Witherspoon sat in his room, vainly striving to reconcile the dozen theories of the flaring editions of the evening papers. There was not a single suggestion of foul play; not a word to point the direction of the supposed fugitive's evasion; not a clue from the baffled police.

It was the old story of a double life, the wreckage of a promising career. "Just a plain, ordinary thief was Mr. Randall Clayton," said one acute observer; "his case is only extraordinary from the amount taken. And it seems that he robbed for the lucre itself, as the most careful inquiry divulges no stain upon his private life. Another case of the 'model young man' gone wrong."

Witherspoon had thrown the journals into his trunk as a precaution, and was smothering his disgust at their heartlessness, when Arthur Ferris, white-faced, dashed into his room.

"What has happened? Have you found his body?" cried the Detroit man, springing up. "I may have to leave you here to represent me privately," gasped Ferris, as with a shaking hand he extended a telegram. "Read that!" Witherspoon gasped, in a sudden dismay, as he read the crushing news. The dispatch was simply signed "Alice," and the young men were speechless as Witherspoon falteringly read the words:

"Ellensburg, Washington, July 5, 1897. "Father lying dying at Pasco. Railroad accident. Join me there. I arrive six o'clock morning."

"I have ordered all the Tacoma dispatches repeated to her," muttered Ferris.

"He did not get this news about Clayton." Ferris' eyes were averted. In his craven heart there was but one burning question, "My God! Did he remake his will after our marriage? I may be left a pauper on Alice's bounty."

And Ferris, with a mighty effort, controlled his knowledge of the secret wedding. "This is horrible!" he cried, as he sank into a chair.

And while they were mute, a ghastly, gleaming corpse was whirled hither and thither, under the blackened waters rushing inward from the sea, under the arch of Brooklyn Bridge, a mute witness of the

curse of Cain, waiting God's awful mandate for the sea to give up its dead.

CHAPTER X.

A CRUEL LEGACY.

Randall Clayton's name was being bandied scornfully by thousands of sneering lips as Arthur Ferris evaded his New York friends in the crowded lobby of the Hoffman. The crafty lawyer bridegroom was happy at Witherspoon's promise to remain and aid him.

The secret antagonists had, however, lied to each other with all possible show of candor. Ferris returned rapidly to Robert Wade's private office, having engaged a temporary resting place at the Fifth Avenue. "Let no cards be sent to my room--from the press or any other people. You can easily understand why!" he ordered.

The suave head clerk convoluted in sympathy with the financial disaster, now the theme of the wildest gossip. But his heart was as cold as the gleam of his gigantic diamond stud (real), as he smoothly greeted the next customer. What is human suffering or disgrace in a New York crowd?

Ferris calmly refreshed himself at the Fifth Avenue's historic bar, and then, hastening away to the Trading Company's office, sharply dismissed the timorous Wade. That fat functionary was visibly rattled when Ferris sent him home for the night. "I shall personally direct all important matters now. You may as well notify Bell and Edson that (for your own sake). I allow you and Somers, as well as them, to remain on duty. But you four men can consider yourselves practically suspended until Hugh Worthington arrives. You officials can sign no single paper, from now on, without my counter endorsement. There's my warrant for this action. I shall have this letter spread on your confidential letter-book, so consider me as the real manager until I put you on duty again."

Robert Wade turned ashen pale as he read Hugh Worthington's carte blanche powers given under his own hand to the new vice-president.

"As I hold this, his power of attorney, and all his proxies, I presume that you recognize my authority," coldly remarked Ferris. "I will take charge of all here. I will be either here or at Parlor C, Fifth Avenue."

"When do you expect Worthington?" stammered the deposed manager.
"I don't know," sharply said Ferris.

"For God's sake, consider my family, my business future, my reputation," cried Wade, with tears in his eyes.

"Pooh!" angrily rejoined Ferris. "Make that by-play on old Hugh. It's all lost on me!"

And, as the door closed, he sharply locked it, and, after examining the rooms to prevent any Peeping Tom observing his actions, Ferris sat down to study Clayton's telegraph book, and the messages which he had rifled from the dead man's desk.

"I am safe so far," muttered Ferris. "No one knows of my big secret deal. But from this fellow's dispatch to Hugh, he certainly intended to go out and see Edson at Bay Ridge. Now, did he start in good faith? I must set some good outside detectives at work on that.

"Then this dispatch to Alice, I wonder if she had still left a sneaking fondness for him! Who can read a woman's heart? It's like judging the depth of water by its smoothness: all mere conjecture. Half the women are liars, and the other half hide more than half the truth under their silken breastplates. They fight with double-edged lies as their keenest weapons.

"Unless Clayton was a very deep rascal, he certainly intended to go on West. Where the devil is he? Kidnapped, and held till the swag is safe? Dead? No!"

A guilty spasm of conscience suggested that the missing cashier might have secreted the funds and fled, to make private terms later from his hiding place, with the wary Hugh.

"He knew nothing, he suspected nothing of the Detroit land deal," finally decided Ferris. "It's just a case of plain, ordinary thief!"

The ambitious scoundrel had decided to conceal the finding of Clayton's dispatches and carbon-book from all the local officials of the company.

"Now to the practical," he muttered, as he spread out his girl wife's fateful telegram.

"She will have surely received the Tacoma dispatches to the old man before I can reach her now. The Associated Press, to-morrow, will have a full account of the accident. His condition will be telegraphed all over the country. But I'll instantly send a carte blanche order to the Western Union man at Pasco for hourly reports."

The Gazetteer had furnished him the meager information that Pasco was a little railroad junction town in Franklin County, Washington,

on the Columbia River. "The old man must have been delayed on his way to meet Clayton."

"Now, for Alice!" The schemer's brow was damp with a cold moisture as he muttered: "Old Hugh hated even to hear of Death. He tabooed the subject like a Chinese mandarin."

"His will! Did he think to change that document after the formal marriage? I have not yet delivered Senator Durham! Hugh may have left this girl the whole property! Fool! That I did not take that matter up! Who ever thinks of Death, the grim shadow, stealing along at our side? I must kill off her lingering regard for 'Brother Randall Clayton!' Shall I start?"

After half an hour's cogitation, Ferris had made up his plan of operations. "I must let him drop! I cannot reach him. I will then act on a certainty. She will report to me. I will clear all up here and start West to-morrow night. But I will await her report and a second order to join her. I must let her know why I linger."

There were a dozen attendants waiting outside, for the accountants, detectives and police were to be busied, coming and going, all the night. Ferris had already called Einstein, waiting now on his own special orders, when he changed his mind. "I'll trust no one now."

He decided to go to the telegraph office himself. He suddenly remembered the influence of the robbery and Worthington's untimely death upon the value of the Western Trading Company's stock.

"Damn it!" he growled. "I may be left a millionaire or a pauper! I don't know which; and I have no ready money."

But the presence of Senator Durham at Newport gave him a gleam of light in these dark skies. "I'll telegraph to Durham (in cipher) to sell a big block of this stock short at the opening of the Board. Hugh's death will carry it down twenty or thirty dollars a share, and then it will be back to the normal in a week."

Suddenly he remembered the waiting Einstein. "Tell me," hoarsely whispered Ferris as he dragged the lad back into the private office, "What do you think of all this? You knew Mr. Clayton's ways!"

"What's my opinion worth?" bluntly said the watchful Emil. "This!" said Ferris, handing him a roll of bills. "Then," fearfully whispered the artful boy, "it ain't no case of skippin' out. I believe some of the fools in the office got a braggin' over their lunches about our heavy bank business, and some smart gang has 'done up' Mr. Clayton. I don't think he's alive. He wasn't the man to 'give up' easy. He was 'dead square.' There wasn't no woman in the case. I could tell stories of some of the other gentlemen. No! Clayton's been hit good an' hard!"

The boy trembled as he spoke. Ferris laughed contemptuously. "Here,

in New York!"

The stubborn boy answered: "Look a-here! I'm only a poor working boy! There's twenty squares within a half mile where a man's life isn't safe if he flashes a ten-dollar bill. Clayton was followed, and done up for fair. An' the gang an' the swag are hundreds of miles away! That's how!"

"But where would they hide him?" answered Ferris, shivering at the boy's matter-of-fact coldness.

"RIVER!" emphatically said Emil. "Five to six hundred floaters picked up every year. Nobody knows; nobody cares!"

"Now," sagely concluded Emil, "if Clayton could have been led off, then it's dead easy; but he started straight for the bank, and never got there. The gang may have piped him off for months, and they worked on him, right here in the heart of town."

"Keep your mouth shut. Post me, on the quiet," said Ferris, as he remembered his telegrams. When Emil Einstein was left alone, he calmly counted his bills.

"Pretty good throw-off," he murmured. "I must lie low, for the mother's sake. And--give her a wide berth. It's getting pretty warm. This fellow's a chump; but the detectives, there's another breed of rats!" The boy shivered as he thought of the gleaming handcuffs.

Arthur Ferris had now recovered from the first shock of the tidings from the West enough to look ahead for the piloting of his own interests. He smiled grimly. "Business before pleasure!" as he sent off at the Twenty-third Street general office the tidings which enabled Senator Durham to turn a cool hundred thousand. "He'll be down here to-morrow to watch over his stocks! I must wait and see him before I go West. Besides, I must see Witherspoon and give him his cue. He knows nothing! He searched the Detroit title and never even made a kick. His firm passed on the whole matter. I need him to carry out my future plans."

It seemed to Ferris that his long dispatch to "Miss Alice Worthington" betrayed too much connubial tenderness. He recast it, and, after stating that he would leave for Pasco within twenty-four hours, added:

"Open and read all dispatches sent on to your father from Tacoma. The company's affairs are paralyzed here. I am in sole control. Randall Clayton has absconded with a quarter of a million. Missing since Saturday. Police at work. Telegraph your hotel address. I will report by wire to-morrow several times. Will be guided by your telegrams. Am acting under your father's letter of instructions. Secure all his private papers in case of grave results of injury."

All the weary night Arthur Ferris tossed uneasily upon his bed, tormented with returning fears as to Hugh Worthington's testamentary dispositions. "Those old miser hunks are crafty! The girl will be wax in my hands if I am left to control the money. If she has the purse-strings I may find her ugly in harness. She has the old man's blood in her, and blood will tell."

He had not dared to reveal the secret marriage in the decorous language of his carefully worded dispatch. But one comfort was left him. "I have the whip hand of them all," he murmured. "I am in charge, and no one can displace me. Jack Witherspoon knows nothing, and I can easily placate him by making him one of the estate's lawyers." The golden crown of the millionaire seemed to have descended upon his brows at last.

Yet, while he slept, the enemy was awake and sowed tares! At the Hoffman House Doctor Atwater and Witherspoon sat in conference long after the midnight chimes had sounded. When the young men separated, Atwater heartily grasped his friend's hand. "Poor Randall," he sighed. "Fool, perhaps, even as you or I; but thief and defaulter, no; never. There is some sad solution to this mystery. You must wait till Worthington arrives, and be the champion of our missing friend. I only fear later a discovery of his murder, and, if so, thank God! it will be a cypress wreath; not the stain of dishonor, or the brand of the felon. I am yours, to the last."

As Witherspoon said "Good night" to the little picture of Francine Delacroix, which was his household goddess, he swore an oath of fidelity. "It may leave me poor, separate us for years; but Clayton, dead or alive, shall be found. The Detroit package may unravel a part of this mystery."

It was high noon the next day when Arthur Ferris had completed his arrangements for the hasty trip West. Jack Witherspoon sat in Ferris' private office, stunned with the news of Hugh Worthington's death at Pasco.

For the operator there had loyally sent on to Ferris the first news of the millionaire's demise in laconic words, "Died at ten o'clock, fully conscious. Daughter with him since four A.M. Full Associated Press reports later."

The morning journals only contained a rumor that "Mr. Hugh Worthington's private car was attached to the telescoped train."

"This leaves me in charge of all until Hugh's will is opened," evasively said Ferris. "But it is my duty to go out there. You must remain here, as my representative, until I return. I will telegraph your firm at Detroit that I need you here. They can charge a company fee. Your own honorarium will be paid 'out of the estate.' Now join me here at four. I'll have your orders ready. And you can go to the station with me. I'll wire you, twice a day, and you can report to me, on the train."

"Any clue?" sadly demanded Witherspoon. "Oh! Clayton has got clean away with his swag," said Ferris. "I've published fifteen thousand dollars' reward for him, and ten more for the cheques or any considerable part of the stolen money."

They parted in silence, and Ferris never saw the glare in Jack Witherspoon's eyes. "If he proves innocent, my poor friend, I'll make Ferris, on his knees, eat those cruel words!"

But when he left his new client, so strangely brought into his half confidence, the Detroit lawyer hastened to Adams' Express office.

For two hours he sat alone in a private room and studied over the contents of the mute message of the dead.

There were things in the package which astounded him; there were written words which melted him to tears. The little hoard of twenty-eight thousand dollars in certified cheques was there, with an order for Randall Clayton's active stocks. A duly executed will, in favor of my school-fellow and friend, Jack Witherspoon, lawyer, of Detroit, was accompanied with a letter which gave the history of the abortive attempt to decoy him to Cheyenne.

The last manly lines brought tears to Jack Witherspoon's eyes. "As they cannot lure me to Cheyenne, they may strike at me, even here, and so, before your return. I've left you the little I have. Should aught befall me, you are my sole heir, and the old matter would go to you. Punish Hugh, follow up and defeat Ferris, and win my birthright for Francine Delacroix. Make her your happy wife. We made a mistake, Jack. We should have gone West together at once, and faced old Hugh."

The young lawyer's eyes were filled with tears as he read the rest of Clayton's statement, evidently prepared to offset any attempt on his life.

But he was ready to battle within the enemy's lines, with a calm and unmoved face, when he met Arthur Ferris at four o'clock.

Witherspoon scarcely recognized the man whom he instinctively felt to be Randall Clayton's murderer. There were great furrows in Ferris' pale cheeks as he handed him a telegram. "I believe that the whole world is going mad," desperately said the baffled Ferris. "Just read those lines from a now helpless and orphaned girl."

The men who were to fight out a battle to the death eyed each other in silence. Witherspoon scarcely could credit his eyes, as he read again and again the few words of the imperative message.

"My father died this morning. Do not join me. Send no telegrams or letters. I am coming, at once, to New York. Remain in charge until I come with my lawyers from Detroit. I will have my father's

will and all his papers. I act under his last wishes. Find Randall Clayton, dead or alive.

"ALICE WORTHINGTON."

"Now, tell me, Witherspoon, is not that girl mad?" hoarsely cried Ferris. "I suppose that all the railroad people and our ranch men have gathered around her, and she has dozens of volunteer advisers. By God! I'll straighten her out when I meet her."

The young Detroit lawyer met Ferris' agonized glances squarely, and his voice rang as coldly as the clang of steel when he quietly said, handing back the papers: "I must tell you, Mr. Ferris," he answered, with decision, "that I release you from any obligation to me for my services so far. I shall decline to express any personal or professional opinion in this matter until I get further orders." Ferris sprang back like a tiger cat at bay.

"Orders! Orders from whom?" he almost yelled.

"From my seniors at Detroit," quietly answered Jack, "or from Miss Alice Worthington. I am surprised at the tone in which you refer to her! What are your claims upon her?"

"Of course, as a brother professional, you know that your power of attorney from poor old Hugh ended with his appallingly sudden death. That demise also vacates the letter of instructions given to you."

"But I am the vice-president of the company," growled Ferris, scenting a possible enemy in the imperturbable young advocate. "True, but you are not a judge on the bench. You have suspended all the officers here, usurped their powers, and taken great responsibilities. Do you control a majority of the stock of the Western Trading Company?" Ferris winced.

"Of course, you know I don't; but the Worthington estate does!"

"What power have you to represent that estate?" pursued the unpitying Witherspoon.

"It looks as if Miss Worthington would act herself, and, also, have other advisers. I now, as a friend to all parties, warn you that you will be held responsible for all your acts here. You must not ask me for any further advice."

"I suppose you will volunteer your legal acumen to the young heiress, now!" sneered Ferris. He regretted his brutal outbreak, for John Witherspoon rose with calmness.

"I own five hundred shares of the stock myself, earned as a fee, from the late Mr. Worthington.

"I shall claim my right to have access to the company's public offices, and to watch your strange floundering around here. We will drop our social and personal intercourse right here--forever. Your last remark is so vile that it is beneath contempt."

Witherspoon was at the door when Ferris laid his pleading hands upon his arm.

The Detroit man shook them off. "I warn you, Mr. Ferris," he said, "that a very reputable minority of the community, if not a majority, will believe that Randall Clayton was waylaid and murdered. Now, until you can show him up as a thief, I recommend you to use charity and forbearance. It is my belief that there has been some damnable foul play here."

The dejected Ferris sat for an hour with his head buried in his hands, before he dared to answer his girl wife's imperative telegram. "I must wait here like a tongue-tied dog," he growled.

"Has the will made her a sole legatee? If so, I must work on her feelings. I was a fool to quarrel with this fellow. He was another of the school-time playmates!"

When Ferris sneaked out to send a submissive dispatch to his wife, he was tormented by the stern words of the young orphan's telegram. "I act under his last wishes. Find Randall Clayton, dead or alive."

"There is trouble ahead," mused Ferris, "and I have made enemies of all the officials here. But Alice is mine. I hold her in the hollow of my hand. My wife! That she cannot gainsay."

When he had sent off his message he felt strangely cheered by the reflection that Worthington probably left ten to fifteen millions behind him.

"There's enough for all," he cheerily reflected. "I'll let her play 'Miss Millions' a bit, but when the probate proceedings come up, she'll find a husband is a hard thing to deal with."

He was wandering back to the office, determined to remove at once all of his private data and personal effects to the Fifth Avenue, when he stumbled over the policeman on the beat.

Sturdy Dennis McNerney flourished his club in a passing salute. "Bad business, sir, this of Mr. Clayton," said the stalwart Irish-American. "Is it true there's twenty-five thousand reward out?"

With a sudden inspiration Arthur Ferris paused. "Mac," said he, "I am deeply interested here. I'll give you personally five thousand dollars more for the first clue; mind you, no publicity."

The policeman's eyes sparkled. "Word of honor?" he said. "Yes!"

I'll write it in your presence, seal it, and give it to you--this promise, if the clue leads to Clayton, dead or alive."

The two men walked along in the streaming crowd. Ferris felt instinctively that the officer was holding something back.

"What do the reporters say?" hesitating remarked Ferris. "All in the dark--a pack of fools--unless it's a crime that gives itself away to any one. They know nothing, and the force has not picked up a pointer. Strange, strange, that the job was so neatly done!"

"What do you mean?" quickly queried Ferris.

"Oh! Any gonoph can see that the man was murdered for the stuff!" resolutely said McNerney. "He was no fellow to clear out! His life was clean as a whistle! I know all about him!"

"How can you prove that?" hotly said the excited lawyer. "Because all the men on the force, from here to his rooms, and around town, knew him for a clean, civil, honest, steady fellow--one in ten thousand. Thief, he? Never!" said McNerney. "Not on your life!"

Ferris stopped. "I will be at the Fifth Avenue, night and day," said the vice-president, "either there or at our office. You can come to my rooms at your will. I'll leave word for your admittance. You'll have your money in ten minutes if you turn up any sign of him."

As the men separated McNerney strolled down to the corner where he had seen Clayton and Leah Einstein enter the carriage. "Here the poor fellow began his ride to death," mused Dennis. "I must have that reward--all of it--and this fellow's five thousand. Had he a hand in it? I'll spot him from to-night.

"But the Jew boy has the key of the secret! Of course, he's crafty and cowardly. In a month he will throw off his fear. When I catch him with that woman I've got the right scent of the whole thing. Then, I'll hunt up the hack-driver. The boy is the key. And if the force finds out nothing in two weeks the game is mine! If the boy is arrested, I'll get in with the woman and carriage clue. I can wait!"

While Jack Witherspoon and Doctor Atwater conferred at the Hoffman, there was a private meeting at Robert Wade's mansion, which brought together all the suspended officials.

Robert Wade, with indignation against Ferris' brutal treatment, announced the policy of a united resistance, a joint appeal to Hugh Worthington, and the demand of an Investigation Committee of Directors. "We will wait for Mr. Worthington's vindication," said Wade, in an unanswerable tone.

"Then you will wait until eternity," sadly said Walter Edson.

"Here is the ten o'clock edition of the Evening Telegram. Mr. Hugh Worthington, the well-known capitalist, died at Pasco, Washington, this morning, from injuries received in a railroad accident."

When the hubbub had subsided, the voice of Wade was heard. "Gentlemen, we must act in a passive defence until the Worthington Estate sends in a man to control the situation. I shall move that three of us retain lawyers to defend us all and advise us as to our joint course, for I apprehend Mr. Arthur Ferris will be a King Shark if he rules over us."

While the endangered officials burned the midnight oil, the hollow-eyed Arthur Ferris was hidden at the Waldorf-Astoria with that sage statesman Senator Dunham. It was long after midnight when Dunham dismissed his nephew. He had half pooh-poohed away the fears of the young schemer.

"Of course, the girl is rattled. You see, no one but you and I know of the marriage. It gives you an iron hold upon her. She will undoubtedly be advised to let our Western friends escort Mr. Worthington's body on to Detroit. There, of course, she will be met by the family lawyers.

"After the necessary preliminaries there, one of them will escort her on here--and--I will be within reach. She evidently wishes to have the affair of the marriage made public, some time later. If you made Worthington do the right thing about the will, and all that, you will come out all right.

"But do not cross her wishes. You cannot spring this marriage on the public without endangering all our interests. My lawyers here will look out for the big deal. You can bring the estate's lawyer to me, and, when you have reduced your wife to a passive mood, we three can clue up all the private affairs. I will be near you. I think you are borrowing trouble. As for young Witherspoon, let him be a little huffy. I can soon whip in those railroad chiefs of his. Have little to do with him, but be civil--that's all.

"Don't antagonize him. He might prove an ugly customer."

While the tide of intrigue ebbed and flowed around the great company's headquarters, far away beyond the Rockies, on past the dreary plains and the uplifted minarets of the Columbia, seated by the coffin of her dead father, Alice Ferris gazed down in silence upon the face of the stern old man.

Among the silent watchers, gazing in the fair face of the orphaned girl, there was no one who knew her other than as Alice Worthington.

The calm majesty of Death had swept away from the dead capitalist's face all the anxious look of money cares. The pale lips were silent now, behind his broad brow the busy brain was settled forever.

To the frontier clergyman, to the company's Western superintendent, to the few care-worn women who had offered their services, the strong face and tearless eyes of the beautiful mourner were a mystery of mysteries.

The morrow was to bear Alice Ferris away to her home by the lakes, and some subtle influence seemed to have transformed the golden-haired girl into a stern, stately Niobe.

All the journals from Cheyenne to the Pacific were now teeming with fulsome praise of the man whose firm hand had guided so many enterprises past all the financial shoals and quicksands of our sweeping tide of speculation.

The whole of America now knew how the deceased millionaire had left Tacoma in the ruddy glow of health, his luxurious car attached to the eastward train.

There had been but a hurried parting between Hugh Worthington and his idolized daughter. Alice well knew the light of Victory shining out upon the old man's rugged face, as he received the brief telegrams of Ferris from Philadelphia informing him of the sweeping triumph in the election which had thrown the final destinies of the Western Trading Company unreservedly into his hands.

There was a cloud, however, chilling the hearts of father and daughter, when Hugh briefly announced that he was going on to Cheyenne to meet Randall Clayton. "You will forgive him; you will bring him on to us; he will remain here when my real church wedding and all our reunion of friends introduces me as a bride. For I am only pledged by the law now."

Then the old man's face hardened. "I have to use diplomacy with him," he briefly answered. "He has stubbornly refused to obey my orders. He might ruin my newly modelled company as an open enemy. And I have invited him West only to save trouble between Arthur and him. You know what a future you will have as the wife of Senator Dunham's only nephew. I have tried to gain wealth for you. Arthur Ferris may Himself reach the Senate. I had to choose for you. I chose well. Randall might have been the son of my old age, but"--

Then Alice Ferris, with flashing eyes, faced her father. The virginal heart of the girl was roused with a nameless terror. "And so you have made me Arthur Ferris' wife to chain the Senator to you for life! You told me that Randall Clayton led a vile life. Who told you?"

The Little Sister's heart was aflame. All her soul went out in a flood of faith in the absent man's honor. "You have been at my side, near me, father. Some one has worked upon you. I will make Arthur tell me all."

It was only after a positive refusal to take Alice on to Cheyenne

that the old capitalist left the lonely heiress sobbing in a wild grief.

And but twenty-four hours later the open switch left unguarded by a drunken laborer had sent a thundering special crashing into Hugh Worthington's special car.

Strangers had tenderly lifted his bruised and bleeding body; but no one but the mourning girl had heard the awful confession of those early morning hours at Pasco.

Alice Worthington shuddered as the dying man gasped out his fateful words, driven on by a self-torment which was a living hell. The millionaire faltered out the shameful discovery of Randall Clayton's vast birthright.

"I was forced to take advantage of Everett Clayton in the panic days when we separated. It was his ruin or mine. It was only after I had nurtured and educated Randall that I found the forgotten land had leaped into a priceless estate. The railway changes made it a princely fortune.

"I was tempted! I feared to disclose my plans of handling Dunham. I was forced to buy Dunham's influence with speculating for him. It was only another form of bribery. And so, to seal Dunham's faith, I married you to Arthur Ferris!"

The girl bride's, eyes settled into a stony stare as the wretched man grasped her hands. "It is too late now. The company has been my dream, the crown of my life. But you can make restitution. You are now nineteen. I have left all to you, in my will. Boardman and Warner are the executors. They are honest. There is young Witherspoon, too, their junior; he is Clayton's friend. You can tell him that you have discovered this property interest for Clayton.

"Spare my name. Spare yourself the public shame. You can make restitution. Tell Arthur Ferris all. He has my confidence. He knew the whole intrigue. And make him give Clayton his half of the proceeds of the land sale. You will have all my millions! Your husband is powerless to interfere. I intended to leave him a handsome sum. But you can take Randall Clayton's deed to the railroad land and give him one-half of what they pay me. Ferris has carried the whole matter through. He knows."

When the dying man recovered from the weakness of his effort at disclosure, he lay whispering, "Nemesis! Nemesis! I am punished!"

And Alice Worthington, at her dying father's side, felt herself now chained to the galley, a slave of millions. She had become twenty years older in half an hour. In low tones she asked questions to which the repentant man replied only by a feeble motion of assent.

When the noonday sun stood high over Pasco, the whole shameful

story had been revealed to the orphan. The great sighing of the mountain pines seemed to blazen the secret of a great man's cowardly crime.

And yet Hugh Worthington died with his hand feebly clasping his motherless child's, a smile upon his lips, for she had promised never to betray the blackened past.

"Give him back his own," muttered old Hugh, whose lips had feebly owned that he had allowed Randall Clayton's good name to be vilely accused. "Give him his own!" imploringly faltered the dying Croesus.

And so, the legacy of a crime came as a crushing burden to the girl wife whose clear eyes had looked into her father's darkened soul. The papers and telegrams which the lonely heiress was forced to examine told her clearly how Randall Clayton's pathway had been beset with snares.

She shuddered as she read the telegrams which proved a catastrophe which she could not avert. "And Arthur Ferris--my husband in name--knew all! This is his work!"

She roused herself to action and gave over the dead clay to kindly hands when, at midnight on the day of her father's death, she had received all the dispatches which told her of Randall Clayton's evasion. Kneeling by her father's body she vowed herself a priestess of Justice. "They may have killed him. I may be too late; but I will deal with my despoiled brother's memory as my only heritage. For he was innocent, and has been robbed of birthright, good name, and perhaps life itself."

BOOK III.

THE MESSAGE FROM AMOY.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GIRL BRIDE'S REBELLION.

For a week after the receipt of the ominous telegram from Pasco, Arthur Ferris sat, a gloomy tyrant, in the offices of the Western Trading Company. There were dark circles around the young lawyer's eyes, and his restless mind gnawed upon itself in an intolerable agony.

Left alone by Senator Dunham's departure, the open aversion of the company's officials had astounded him.

Even Robert Wade, so cringing before the death of Worthington, had received his reinstatement in a sullen silence. "Do I understand that you wish me to be responsible for the daily conduct of the company's affairs?" gravely said Wade. "Then you must restore all the officials or I will not act! Every one knows, sir, that your power of attorney from the late Mr. Worthington became valueless at his death."

Ferris, with fear and trembling, awaited the extraordinary meeting of the Board of Directors called to meet the exigencies of the demise of Worthington and the great robbery. With a heavy heart he resigned the following up of the missing Randall Clayton to the company's advisory attorneys.

Day by day he had breathlessly watched every telegram brought in, every delivery of the mails. Neither letter nor dispatch from the girl wife broke into the gloom of these days.

He dared not disobey her positive injunctions. He feared to leave New York City and go to Detroit to meet her, and only the meager results of private telegraphic inquiry, as well as the chattering journals, told him of the arrival of Miss Alice Worthington, now the greatest heiress of the Lake States, in her palatial Detroit home.

Senator Dunham's easy-going counsels had been of no comfort. To the millionaire politician, the natural ascendancy of Ferris over the girl's future and fortune seemed "to close the incident."

Secure in his "block of stock," he returned to the delights of Newport, where the Senatorial toga was duly flourished in the gayest circles.

But, a crafty scoundrel, warned by his own uneasy conscience, Arthur Ferris took alarm at the "Social items" of the Detroit Free Press.

When he learned that Miss Worthington intended to visit New York City, accompanied by Messrs. Boardman and Warner, the executors of her father's estate, on matters connected with the probate of the will, he realized that he was in imminent danger.

He used every means of rapid information, and only gleaned the meager news that the public funeral of the dead Croesus would be deferred for a month until the "various civic bodies" could "take

appropriate action."

The Detroit papers were filled with the reverberated reports of Randall Clayton's mysterious crime, "by which astounding speculation, the millionaire's estate would possibly shrink several hundred thousand dollars." And yet--no trace of the fugitive!

Ferris already scented his deadly foe in Mr. John Witherspoon, who daily visited the offices of the Trading Company, passing him with a mere formal bow, when engaged upon the books and papers.

It was with a thrill of new alarm that Ferris learned from the company's advisory attorneys that Mr. Witherspoon had been commissioned by the executors of the estate "to make a thorough investigation into the alleged defalcation of the still missing Clayton."

Ferris was baffled when he sought to spy upon Witherspoon's movements. It was easy to find out that the Detroit lawyer had left the Hoffman House, but "with no address."

And he vainly sought counsel of Senator Dunham when he was informed by the company's lawyers that Mr. Witherspoon declined to transact any business with him save in writing, and through the company's officials.

"Go out and bring your wife to terms, you young fool," roughly said the angered statesman. "You've no rights, now, save through her."

To the consternation of the secret bridegroom, the Detroit papers announced that "nothing whatever would be as yet announced as to the disposition of the late Mr. Worthington's vast estate," until the return of the executors from New York City.

With all his nerves temporarily shattered, Arthur Ferris saw all his cardboard fortifications suddenly strewn around him by adverse gales. His barren title of vice-president of the company now availed him nothing. The president, manager, and directors all practically shunned him, waiting for the word as to who would manage the controlling interest of the dead Croesus.

There was a formal evening meeting of all concerned when the detective captain finally reported that the whole department were unable to find a clue of Randall Clayton's whereabouts. Arthur Ferris gazed askance at Mr. John Witherspoon's strong face when the company's leading New York lawyer took up the word, as the French neatly put it. "Gentlemen," said he, "we may as well adjourn this meeting. We have been in secret session here, till it now nears midnight. We are all groping in the dark. Here is a remarkable phase of a great crime. Even the 'argus-eyed press' has no theory to offer."

There was a frightened hush when Counsellor Stillwell solemnly said: "Are we sure that we are on the right road? It appears that

we have lost all roads. Groping! Only feeling our way in the dark! Police and journals powerless, our rewards unanswered! It remains for us to drop the matter of theft, and--look for a murderer.

"I now move that we double the reward and seek for the murderer or murderers of Randall Clayton! Remember, not a bill or cheque, not an object, the bank book, nothing has been found to indicate either theft or flight.

"I always had implicit confidence in Clayton's honor; he was trusted by our heaviest stockholder, named by him, backed by him; and Mr. Worthington, even at his lamented death, proposed making him general manager in the West. There's not a shadow on the name of the missing man."

While the audience eyed each other, the three police officials present cried in accord: "Good; double the reward. NOW YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK."

"I second the motion," quietly said the pale-faced Witherspoon. "I do also," slowly said Ferris, "and I offer the amendment that this action takes effect when Mr. Worthington's executors arrive and authorize this important step."

In sheer impotency to quarrel, the puzzled meeting adjourned, and Arthur Ferris, now conspicuously alone, was left to chatter with Policeman Dennis McNerney on the lonely street corner below.

"Well!" said Ferris impatiently, as a fifty-dollar bill changed hands. "All I can tell you," whispered the policeman, "is that Lawyer Witherspoon is at the Buckingham. He received no visitors but his friend, a young doctor.

"Physician's name, William Atwater, M.D. Mail and telegrams he gets at down-town office, your company's lawyers. And he spends all his time running around at nights with Atwater or locked up with old Stillwell in his den down town.

"It's a poor harvest, Dennis," gruffly said Ferris.

"That's all there's in it," stolidly said the man. "Shall I keep up the watch?"

"Yes, as usual," sadly replied Ferris, as he sped up Broadway to the Fifth Avenue. The policeman snorted his contempt, when Ferris had turned the corner.

"A beggarly fifty! By God! I'll hold the boy down. Somewhere in that funny little joint of a drug-store the secret lies. In a couple of weeks I can begin work on Timmins; but the office boy, Einstein, waited personally on Clayton! When his fear wears off, I'll trap him. He is spending money too freely. Where does that come from?"

As McNerney wandered on, he was as ignorant of Einstein's continued milking of Ferris' purse, as Ferris was of Jack Witherspoon's treasured clues and as all the knowing ones were of Arthur Ferris' crafty course in robbing Randall Clayton's desk of the tell-tale dispatches.

Einstein's greedy fingers were now always in Ferris' purse, for well the Jewish boy knew that Ferris feared to disclose the theft of the private papers. And so he filled the schemer's ears with unmeaning babble about Randall Clayton's night life in New York.

"In the dark! In the dark!" muttered Ferris, as he threw himself down on his bed. "Did Clayton ever start for Bay Ridge? Did he hide the money and flee to Europe? Did he go West to meet Worthington?"

A wild idea came to him that the bank employees might have stolen the money, lured Clayton into some Bowery or Fourth Avenue dive, some room on Eighth Street, and then stolen the tell-tale bank-book. "What would not any man do for a quarter of a million?" groaned Ferris in despair.

And all these long days, while the New York community was daily forgetting the flight of Clayton, the theft, and the dead millionaire to whom all the worshippers of the Golden Calf had bowed, the "Mesopotamia" was slowly nearing Stettin, now breasting the North Sea surges.

Irma Gluyas, awakened from her narcotic stupor, felt in her wild, wayward heart that Mr. August Meyer had lied to her.

But there was an apparent peace on the liner. The passionate-hearted singer amused the captain and half deceived her watchful tyrant.

But, deep in her heart, she had evolved a plan. Once safely in Stettin, she would telegraph to Clayton.

True, she had no money; but her fingers were covered with flashing rings. Partner of some of Fritz Braun's smuggling secrets, she was free of all crime, but the desire to innocently lure Clayton away while the Cattle Trust's safes could be robbed in the holidays.

Step by step her old-time paramour had lured her on to betray Randall Clayton, and yet, at the last, the good angel struggled with the spirit of evil in that stormy heart. There was a smiling calm on Fritz Braun's face which did not deceive her. She knew that the great game had been pulled off. But how--with what golden harvest--she knew not.

And yet she marked Braun's trembling hands, the lines graven on his face, his deep potations, his fierce fever to reach the land. And so, deep in her heart, she swore, "If he has harmed him, it is his life or mine!"

Gazing out on the leaden surges of the ocean, she could see the face of her manly lover, the one man who had believed in her underlying womanhood. There was no stain on the red roses worn on her breast for him; only truth in her gleaming Magyar eyes. "He loved me, for what he saw in me--the innocent woman that I once was." And bitter tears mingled with the salt brine flashing by--the tears of a repentent magdalen.

Fritz Braun never knew that the woman who submitted to his caresses was a spirit of wrath. Fool in his own conceit, he was yet watchful. If she makes a single false move at Stettin, she seals her own fate, he darkly pledged his familiar demon. And so, stealthily eying each other, the fugitive and his fascinating dupe neared the sandy dunes of the German Baltic land.

And yet God's wrath followed them. There was the throb of guilt in both their bosoms, resting in one the betrayal of a soul, on the other the crushing weight of innocent blood crying for vengeance.

And still, as yet, they slept in peace, for the dark waters of the East River had not given up that ghastly mute witness whirling and diving in the black under eddies around the rock-hewn pyramids of the Brooklyn Bridge.

A thousand pairs of eager eyes now watched the money exchanges of America and Europe for any paltry bit of the plunder stored away in Fritz Braun's black valise. But the vengeance of God slept only while the sinners fled away from the place of the betrayal of a noble heart.

Vice-President Arthur Ferris of the Western Trading Company found in the proud and formal reserve of the reinstated officials an armor proof against all his legal acumen.

Some subtle spirit of unexpressed defiance seemed to have banded them all against him. He felt that the stately oak which had sheltered him was now fallen indeed. It was in an agony of spirit that he awaited the appearance of his unacknowledged wife.

The "private agency" which he had secretly employed brought a new discovery to his heart, when, ten days after Hugh Worthington's death, Ferris was awakened before his breakfast by a sudden report. The spy handed, in silence, to the astounded man a sealed envelope, which was the tidings of an impending Waterloo.

"Miss Worthington arrived night before last, with Boardman and Warner. They came on in a special car via the Pennsylvania road. She is at A. C. Stillwell's town house on Central Park West. The lawyers are both at the University Club. She has not left the house, and there have been many business-looking callers at the Stillwell house. Boardman or Warner is there on duty all the while, in alternation. Watch them."

Shame, rage, and fear struggled for the mastery on Ferris' pale cheeks as he dismissed the paid spy. "Tell your chief I'll call in and give him my final directions to-day," he curtly said.

In two hours Arthur Ferris had made the formal toilet for a professional duel of wits. He was the first caller when the silver-haired counselor had dispatched his morning mail.

Mr. Stillwell's frosty blue eyes gleamed with an Arctic light as Arthur Ferris opened his masked batteries. In all that long ride down Broadway, Ferris had arranged the "subject matter" evidently to his own satisfaction. But he floundered under the mute inquiry of those frosty eyes, and the floundering finally ceased.

"Do I understand that you ask or demand an interview with Miss Worthington?" icily said the old lawyer. "If you will put your wishes in writing, I will convey them to her. That is all I can say. I admit that she is my guest, and I also desire to say that she shuns all intrusion."

"Messrs. Boardman and Warner,"--began Ferris. "With them I have nothing to do," coldly replied Stillwell. "You will hear of them and from them in due time."

With trembling fingers, Arthur Ferris wrote a few lines, sealed them, and handed them to the lawyer, whose formal bow froze the words trembling upon his lips.

Two long days of mental agony passed before Ferris, seated at his desk in the Trading Company's executive offices, received a formal letter from the men whom now he most feared on earth. "Not much to speculate on here," growled Ferris, as he pondered over the curt permission.

"Our client, Miss Alice Worthington, will receive you, on business, at No. 248 Central Park West, at 2 P.M. to-day. "BOARDMAN AND WARNER, "Executors, Hugh Worthington Estate."

The signature seemed to be a fluttering banner of hostile hosts.

And yet, summoning all his trained calm, Arthur Ferris, with unmoved gravity, bowed as he was ushered into the drawing-room of the great New York pleader. He knew the flag of no surrender was flying. He saluted, in silence, the two gentlemen who advanced to meet him.

And then an angry flush stole over his pale face. It was not the chilly greeting of the massive Lemuel Boardman, not the sharp, attentive nod of Mr. Ezra Warner, which sent the blood leaping to his heart; it was the slight inclination of the head of Mr. John Witherspoon, his secret antagonist. For he scented danger when the young Detroit lawyer appeared here in the stronghold of his

rebellious wife in name.

"Miss Worthington will join us in a few moments," said Mr. Boardman.

There was the rustling of heavy, trailing robes, and Arthur Ferris scarcely dared raise his eyes as the figure of his girl bride darkened the door.

And he knew his fate at the first glance! He knew that he had lost her forever, the bride of a crime.

There was a majesty in that slight figure, clad in its sombre mourning drapery, which awed him. There was a set, marble pallor upon the beautiful face, and Arthur Ferris could not see the sapphire blue eyes veiled with their fringing lashes. He had started forward, had stretched out appealing hands, and murmured "Alice," but the youthful heiress merely glided past him in a stern silence. He could see her now, her face buried in her thin, white hands, the coronal of golden hair gleaming out over the black gown.

There was the faint sound of a sob as Ferris turned angrily to the senior, while Warner bent pityingly over the young girl.

"I demand a private interview with Miss Worthington," the husband quickly said, as he indicated the unwelcome presence of Witherspoon.

"We are here, Mr. Ferris," said Boardman, in a steady voice, "to allow you to communicate, properly, with Miss Worthington. As her legal representatives and the executors of her father's estate, we are requested to remain by her. You may proceed."

"I insist that Mr. Witherspoon shall, at once, retire. He is an interloper here," hotly replied Ferris.

"So much so," icily answered Boardman, "that he has been selected by us as the general managing director of the Western Trading Company to succeed the late Mr. Hugh Worthington."

The clock, ticking on noisily, seemed to sound the knell of Ferris' last hopes. But his affections were now only a mirage of the past.

"That gives him no power over me here," stubbornly said the defeated husband.

"True; but THIS does," quietly said Boardman, handing him a paper.

With a sickening feeling at heart, Ferris read a formal appointment, signed by Miss Worthington, and countersigned by Boardman and Warner, appointing John Witherspoon as resident attorney, in law and fact, for Miss Alice Worthington.

"If that is not satisfactory, sir," gravely concluded the lawyer, "we have named Mr. Witherspoon as special New York counsel for the executors, and he will hold the proxy to cast the vote of the

estate in the ensuing special election. I suggest that you now proceed with the matters in hand."

"One word!" cried Ferris, leaping to his wife's side, and seizing her wrists. "Do you confirm this outrage?"

"I do," suddenly cried the weeping girl, springing up and facing him with a defiant brow.

"What have you done with my brother? Where is the man whom you falsely accused of leading a vile life? You poisoned my father's mind against Randall. He has been led away and killed among you."

"Before God, I know nothing of his fate!" stammered Arthur Ferris, in despair.

"Then prove your innocence!" cried Alice Worthington, her lovely face lit with the anger of an avenging angel. "There is a gulf between us which will never be crossed, so help me, God!"

The girl fell back, weeping, in the arms of Warner, while Boardman sternly seized the trembling Ferris. "Another such outbreak and you can say adieu forever to the woman whose life you have wrecked," whispered Boardman. "Now, sir," he continued, raising his voice, "proceed! For, after to-day all your communications will be in writing, and only through us!"

"I demand your authority for all these high-handed actions," snarled the deposed autocrat of the Trading Company. His heart hardened as he reflected that, after all, he was the legal marital master of the slim girl there, hidden in her shrouding black robes.

"Nothing easier," calmly answered Boardman. "Here is a certified copy of the will of Hugh Worthington, which leaves his entire estate, real and personal, to his only child.

"As Miss Worthington has passed the age of eighteen, she needs no guardian of the person.

"We have obtained a special sanction of the Michigan courts for the appointment of Mr. Witherspoon to represent the estate here. I will leave you this copy, and Mr. Witherspoon will now deliver to you our written order to cease all functions in connection with the Trading Company except in so far as you represent your own stock.

"And, as you were not a qualified stockholder (a bona fide one) at the last election manipulated by you, your office as vice-president will be vacated at this special meeting."

Arthur Ferris' eyes flashed fire as Witherspoon, without a word, handed him the second document.

He essayed vainly to speak, but his parched tongue was powerless,

his lips were fever-glued. Finally, the man who now feared a further stroke of malevolent fortune, said, in a low voice, "I desire a few words in private with Miss Worthington."

To the astonishment of the three men, Alice Worthington arose and glided into the rear drawing-room, where Ferris sprang to her side.

In low whispers he essayed to recall his lost bride to her perfunctory duties of wife. The men in the great front hall gazed at Fashion's throng sweeping by on the avenue as Ferris led his last trumps and endeavored to develop the hidden enemy's line of reserve.

His last hope failed when his legal wife quietly whispered, "Our union was brought about by treachery, duress, and fraud. Do you wish to proclaim your own share publicly? I know all now. I have all my father's dispatches, his cipher book, his telegrams from you, and the last, from Randall Clayton."

"You are my wife," fiercely whispered Ferris.

"In name only," defiantly replied Alice Worthington. "You will learn my father's last wishes later, and to your sorrow. You lied when you said that Clayton led a vile life. You poisoned my father's mind. Thank God! I am my own mistress now.

"I have friends who will protect me and punish you. I dare you ever to claim me as your wife. Beyond that mere civil ceremony, the sale of a soul for Senator Dunham's influence, you have never laid your hand in mine."

"You cannot frighten me, Madame," bitterly retorted Ferris. "I hold your father's good name in my power."

"Stop!" coldly rejoined the angered woman. "I have the whole history of the past. My father repaired the wrong done with his own hand, before his death.

"You betrayed Clayton, as your life comrade; you stole upon me, a lonely child, with your wily flatteries. I believed you to be true, and Clayton false. You murdered his good name, you estranged him from us. You have branded his memory as a fugitive thief! And you have failed, with your police, detectives, and lawyers, to find a clue! One word of charity from you and the dead man's memory would have been cleared of the stain of theft.

"And, the prison door yawns for you! You opened Clayton's desk, stole his telegraph-book and papers, and have secreted them."

"It is false," snarled Ferris. "Too late," cried Alice Worthington. "We have the office boy's evidence who saw you rifle his desk. Touch that boy if you dare! He is under our protection! We obtained copies from the Western Union of all the last telegrams sent and received by my poor brother."

"He plotted this robbery months ago, and sent all those as a mere decoy," faltered Ferris. "I was merely holding them back to assist the police." Alice Worthington's lip curled in scorn.

"Why did you not search the roads to Cheyenne? Why did you not send detectives over to Bay Ridge? Why did you not reveal your secret find to the chief of police?"

Suddenly Ferris saw the jaws of the trap closing upon him.

"He has been murdered!" sobbed Alice. "The money may have been hidden, the bank-book destroyed."

"By some of the bank's people," hesitatingly said Ferris.

"You alone knew all of these details! You came here and secreted yourself at the time of the election," sternly answered the avenging Little Sister. "You did not even sleep once in the rooms which you professed to share with him!"

"I acted under your father's orders," boldly rejoined Ferris.

"He is dead; it is useless to say that! No one will believe you. And you are lying to me now. You know and I know that Randall Clayton was no thief. I know, in my heart, and all men now believe, that he was murdered."

Ferris' teeth chattered as he faced the accusing woman. "I am innocent of all this," he faltered.

"Then, find his murderers!" solemnly said the rebellious wife. "You know the crime of the past which leaves its dread legacy of shame now crushing you. If you can aid the police, do it! You may communicate with our company's lawyers here.

"But if you interfere at the office, if you dare to approach me, you will be apprehended under warrants for robbing the private records of the man who was decoyed to his death among you. One word against my father's memory, one single hint of our marriage, and the jail doors will close on you."

"And, the future?" whispered Ferris. "Our lives are bound together."

"The law in one year will give me a separation for desertion," said Alice. "The divorce will be quietly obtained in the West; if you resist, you know the penalty! There is a gulf between us for Time and Eternity.

"My father's murdered confidence, your Judas plots to gain a motherless girl's hand, your wrecking Clayton's life! You can purchase your safety in but one way: by obedience."

The astounded husband raised his hand as she glided by him. He followed her dumbly into the front drawing-room, where the three lawyers waited for the end of the colloquy.

"It is understood, gentlemen," said Alice Worthington, "that Mr. Ferris has intruded upon me for the last time. I leave it to you to demand and enforce the absolute protection of my privacy. Nothing can induce me to consent to another interview, or to answer any further communications."

There reigned a dismal silence in the room as Alice Worthington glided out into the great hall. Standing on the lowest stair, she turned, a desolate and pathetic figure, with the golden hair rippling over the marble brows.

She steadied herself with one arm, and a slight cry of affright trembled upon her parted lips as Ferris sprang forward, crying "For God's sake, hear me! Just one word!"

But Boardman's heavy, restraining hand grasped the deserted husband's arm. "Mr. Ferris," he gravely said. "Our future course will be dictated by your behavior. You must only communicate with the Trading Company's lawyers on these affairs. As to the Worthington Estate, there is our representative, Mr. Witherspoon. And, in the interests of justice, bestir yourself now to find Randall Clayton's murderer.

"The chief of police has his eyes specially upon you, and so, I give you a fair warning."

Ferris, with flashing eyes, essayed to speak, but Boardman significantly ushered him to the door. "It is peace or war, as you will have it! We three men have all the secrets of the past. If you attempt, in the slightest degree, to annoy our principal, we will strike, and without mercy."

As the defeated husband drove home along the leafy borders of the beautiful Central Park--the one lovely oasis in New York's scattered maze of brick and iron monstrosity--he saw his life lying sere and yellow around him, his bare uplands scorched before their time.

"Ruin, ruin," he murmured, and a craven fear now possessed him--a fear born of his ignorance of the awful remorse of the dying hours of the Croesus, the moneyed giant cut off in the midst of all his schemes!

"How much do they know?" he murmured.

Rage filled his stormy heart; he would have struck back as madly as the blind rattlesnake but for the craven fears which now assailed him.

"I must await my time for revenge," he muttered. "One touch of

publicity in this, and Senator Dunham would chase me out of America. He must, at the last, protect me, if only to save himself."

Stunned by the sudden onslaught of the girl whom he had supposed to be but a pliant, hoodwinked child, Ferris sat long pondering gloomily in his rooms at the Fifth Avenue, his head buried in his hands.

The weary hours passed in alternations of rage and despair. Haggard-eyed Ferris sprang to the door in the early evening gloom, as a sharp knock roused him. When Policeman Dennis McNerney entered, he gazed wonderingly at the young lawyer.

"What's come over you?" demanded the officer. "You have heard the news? I did not dare to go up to the office, and so I waited till you had finished your dinner."

Ferris wearily gazed at his visitor. "What do you mean? I'm sick. I'm going away for a change, and I've turned the whole thief-catching business over to Stillwell, the company's lawyer."

The policeman stepped back and softly locked the door.

"See here, Mr. Ferris," he soberly said. "You should not leave till the whole thing's cleared up. If you don't want me to follow up your private inquiry, just say so." He handed to the astonished man an evening paper. There, marked with a great scrawl, was a brief item.

"BODY FOUND IN RIVER"

"Was That of a Young Man of Evidently Good Station--No Clue as to the Deceased's Identity--Another Mysterious Crime."

"A body was found this morning in the East River off the foot of Baltic Street, Brooklyn. It was that of a young man about twenty-eight years of age. The deceased was about five feet eleven inches in height, of light complexion and brown hair. It was entirely naked and considerably bruised by the contact of the wharves and passing vessels. There was no mark found upon the body, which is that of a man of apparent refinement and one unused to labor. It was found floating by an Italian boatman and taken to the morgue. It had been in the water about three weeks."

"Well!" demanded Ferris, his hand trembling, as he handed back the paper. "I have been on the lookout for your missing cashier," quietly answered McNerney, with a searching glance at the agitated man.

"I have watched the morgue and all the police reports. When I heard of this, I captured that Jew office boy, ran him over to the morgue in a coupe, and he and I instantly recognized poor Mr. Clayton. God rest his soul, all that's left of him!"

Ferris dropped into a chair, shivering violently. "It will be featured in all the morning papers," coolly continued McNerney. "There's your problem solved. The poor fellow was decoyed in some black-hearted, cowardly manner and done up for the stuff. It was no common gang who fixed him for fair," gloomily concluded the dissatisfied officer. "There were no marks of violence upon the body."

Ferris staggered to the sideboard and took a draught of brandy. "I wash my hands of the whole thing," he huskily said. "If you wish to follow it up, go and see Stillwell."

"That's all you have to say?" cried the now suspicious policeman. "I'm sick of the whole job, and shall leave town," sullenly answered Ferris, as he opened the door and said, "Call our affair off! I'll telegraph to Stillwell, and he can handle the company's interests."

Dennis McNerney watched Ferris disappear in the swarm of Broadway's evening loungers, and then directed his steps to Magdal's Pharmacy. "I'll take that boy under my wing; and the published reward must be mine. This cold-hearted brute may have had a hand in it. I'll watch him night and day, and let the boy get over all his fears. Inside of a month I'll find that woman, the hack-driver, and perhaps this lame duck caught in the meshes. I'll lay low for a week, but that boy and that woman shall tell their story to me alone, and it's worth a fortune. I fancy I see daylight. It's a case of soft and easy. Once the boy would be frightened, I would lose this blind trail forever!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE LONELY PURSUER.

Arthur Ferris was secluded from all callers in his rooms at the Fifth Avenue Hotel until late on the morning when a million people read the "featured" details of the mysterious murder of Randall Clayton.

Exhausted by the mental struggle with his now defiant wife, he yet retained enough of his cunning to heed Policeman McNerney's roughly-given advice.

Ferris' rooms were littered with the score of newspapers over

which he had been busied since daybreak, and his breakfast stood still untasted at his side. He wavered between his desire for self-protection and his fear of the hard-featured Stillwell.

In his own heart Ferris cared not a whit whether Clayton had been waylaid by accidental thugs, betrayed at the bank, duped by some insidious woman, or slain by an inner conspiracy of the employees.

"The money is gone, the cheques will probably be replaced," he grumbled. "Damn the company's interests! I am glad of their loss. The Worthington Estate will probably make it good.

"But I must go over and show up. I cannot afford to be suspected here. God knows what game is on, with Stillwell now as chief of scouts!"

He had decided to make a brief visit at the office, and to then visit Stillwell, and resign his vice-presidency, on the ground of ill-health. "I'll lay off then, watch the game, keep silence, and frighten them."

The long, weary hours of the night had brought him one consolation. As he reached for his hat and gloves, he laughed bitterly. "She may pay a round price to be rid of me, and then I'll keep all her secrets as well as mine! A kind of armed neutrality!"

At the door, he was confronted by the grave-faced captain of detectives. "You are wanted, Mr. Ferris, at once, at the company's office," sharply said the official, with a comprehensive glance at the room.

"Stillwell is there, and we wish to take your statement. We propose to avenge poor Clayton's murder. You were probably the last person who had a confidential interview with him."

"I know it," frankly answered Ferris, "and was on my way over when you knocked." The two men soon joined a silent circle of the higher officials of the company, gathered about Counsellor Stillwell, in Manager Wade's office. Ferris felt the freezing taciturnity of the detective on the short walk, and even more the greeting of the gloomy circle.

Bowing to Stillwell, the defeated schemer said, "Before we begin, I wish a word with you in private."

"There is to be no privacy here, sir," coldly replied the lawyer, "save the actions of the police. We are all equally interested in discovering poor Clayton's murderer.

"As you branded him as a thief, you can, at least, let us all hear your whole statement now. We have stenographers, a notary, and you can send for a lawyer if you wish counsel."

"I'll not delay you a single moment," resentfully said Ferris, springing to a writing table. He handed a few lines to the astonished attorney, and said, in a ringing voice, "Read that aloud! Let the secretary give me a written acknowledgment. Then, swear me, and I will make a voluntary statement."

There was a general murmur of surprise as Stillwell read the unconditional resignation of Arthur Ferris as vice-president, director, and special counsel of the Western Trading Company.

In the awkward pause which followed, Ferris remarked boldly: "I intended to ask for an indefinite leave on account of breaking health. I shall now remain here, as an ordinary witness, subject to your orders, and with no other interest than to clear up the mystery."

In half an hour Ferris had closed his artful disclosures. "Any matters occurring between the late Mr. Worthington and myself are confidential as between lawyer and client."

In the circle, Messrs. Boardman and Warner watched with ferret eyes every movement of the man who only gazed into the faces of enemies.

"That is all, for the present," significantly said Stillwell, when the chief of police, the head detective, and himself had hurled the last questions at Ferris.

"I will then retire," defiantly remarked Ferris. "With this statement to all men, I shall now be mute to all questioners save the proper authorities. I have turned twenty reporters away this morning without a word, and the police authorities can reach me at my hotel, until they have closed their labors. Then my connection with this company and its affairs terminates forever."

He gazed fiercely at the impassive face of John Witherspoon, and rising, with a bow of general adieu, stalked into the hall.

But he turned as Boardman, Warner, and Witherspoon, following, drew him into the room where Clayton had fought out his life struggles.

"You may now deliver us the papers taken from this desk, and so, escape a prosecution," firmly remarked Boardman. Ferris sat down at the table and wrote a few lines. Handing the paper to the senior executor, he said, with a cutting sneer:

"There is my bill for one hundred thousand dollars for legal services in the last five years for Hugh Worthington. Upon its approval and payment, I will deliver over all the papers of our long intimacy, and sign clean receipts.

"I will then stipulate not to approach Miss Worthington in any manner. Here are all the valueless papers you demand. Will you give me a receipt for them?"

"You took them surreptitiously! You can well afford to trust our honor," snappishly said Warner. "Very good," added Boardman. "You will hear from us, as to your claim, in due time."

When Arthur Ferris' footfall died out upon the stair, Boardman drily remarked, as he pocketed the bill, "The price of a scoundrel's silence! Well, we will see! But the fellow really knows nothing of the murder! Let us go to work, gentlemen."

When they returned to the conference room, below them, on the street, the deposed favorite of fortune was chatting with a new officer on the beat.

"McNerney? Oh, yes," grinned the strange policeman. "He has taken two-months' leave and goes over to see his ould mother, in Oireland. His home address, sure, I don't know. Mayhap the sergeant can tell ye."

While the bluecoat sauntered away, Ferris mentally recorded another mistake. "I should have thrown the hat-box after the hat," he murmured. "A few hundred dollars would have been well spent. And yet he is probably in their ring now. His 'leave of absence' indicates a very sudden return of affection for the 'ould mother.'"

Ferris now decided upon a policy of open frankness and calm indifference. "There is no one I could have made use of, but that Jew office boy," he mused, as he sauntered up Broadway, "and they have bought him out, over my head. I will let my little bill for "legal services" ripen. I can afford to let my 'legal field' lie fallow for the summer."

And yet he cursed the memory of the innocent victim of the mysterious murder. "But for her sentimental hubbub, I could have easily managed Alice. This fellow's strange death gives him the halo of martyrdom. He is out of my reach now. The old man must have feared the 'Iron Gate' of Death! And, after all, his plans to 'efface' Clayton were only inchoate. I cannot terrify them with any hearsay projects. I must get what I can, cling to Dunham, and keep silence.

"The marriage! That means just the one hundred thousand dollars! I will save it and my good name by submitting in silence."

He signalled a passing carriage and ordered the man to drive him far "up the road," out of range of the shrill-voiced newsboys, hawking their "extras," with "Full accounts of the great murder mystery."

For a brief day the name of Randall Clayton was on every one's lips. There were hundreds clustered around the morgue, where already the mute witness who had drifted back under the arch of the Brooklyn Bridge lay in the gloomy state of death. The hasty verdict of "death

from murder committed by parties unknown," was all the record of the darkly-veiled happening.

It was a blind trail, after all, which had ended this open and honorable career in the sight of all men. The electric lights were throwing fitful gleams upon the black waters whirling past the Brooklyn Bridge, when the executors, with Witherspoon, gathered around Miss Alice Worthington in the drawing-room of the Stillwell residence.

There was also the tired counsellor, who had also vainly probed the officials of the company, the employees of the Astor Place Bank, and every reachable occupant of the huge business building.

Poor old Somers, for the hundredth time, had rehearsed his story, and yet it all ended in a blind trail.

While they talked of the dead, in hushed voices, Policeman Dennis McNerney was chatting with Emil Einstein over the counter of the Magdal Pharmacy. The keen-eyed policeman noted the efflorescent jewelry, and the resplendent garb of the too-prosperous-looking lad.

Notwithstanding the Jewish boy's sudden prosperity, there were deeply-marked dark circles about his eyes. The Bowery's delights were telling upon the frightened lad, who had sealed his glib tongue now behind lying lips. Flattered by the "cop's" familiar manner, Emil greedily swallowed the ground bait artfully scattered by the cool Irish-American.

He reeled off the story which he had told to the inquisitors of parting in the office with Clayton after Somers had given over the deposits. Before the two separated, Einstein had forgotten his Hebrew timidity.

"Let me know if you pick up any items," said McNerney, giving the lad a ten-dollar bill, with a secret sorrow at throwing good money away. "My chum, Jim Condon, and I hope to help get this reward into our Precinct Squad. Come down to-morrow night to the station, and I'll introduce you. He'll look out for you, and he can write me and keep on the trail. I take the next Cunard steamer for Queenstown."

Mr. Ben Timmins, as host, drew McNerney into the little back room, and the three smacked their lips over the "medicinal brandy," which had been Fritz Braun's pride.

"Where's the boss?" casually demanded the officer. "He went over to Germany a couple of months ago," volubly explained Timmins. "I'm cock o' the walk for a few months now. Drop in and see me, on the d. q."

Two hours later, from a dark angle opposite, Officer McNerney saw Emil Einstein, with swinging steps, cigar in mouth, speed along

eastwardly.

In plain clothes, his brow covered with a soft hat, the athletic policeman dashed along, keeping his prey in view. The lightning change of uniform gave him a clear protection, and in the thirty minutes of his necessary absence, the mustache which was McNerney's pride had disappeared.

"Either he goes to his girl, or else to meet the woman of the carriage," mused the man, who had sworn to reach a portion of the now heavily increased award. "Once I locate his 'stamping ground,' I am on the road to success."

It was twenty minutes before the excited McNerney saw Einstein slacken his determined pace down the Bowery. McNerney's heart beat, in wild hopes, as the lad, with furtive glances around, began to linger around the corner of the Dry Dock Bank.

"Is it the ten dollars burning in his pocket?" murmured the excited man. "Some cheap woman foolery?"

His practiced eye soon told him of the lad's determined purpose. For, in all the hovering movements, the office boy never left one or the other front of the bank building.

And none of the loungers, no street waif, no bedaubed siren lingered in colloquy there in the shadows of the respected fiduciary institution. "It's a poor fishing ground for the fancy," growled McNerney, as he suddenly darted forward in pursuit.

A woman, whose gliding walk and shapely voluptuousness of body indicated the Polish Jewess, paused, and bending her head, without a word of salutation, listened to the eager lad. The hands of the two met, in the darkness, and then Einstein sped back into the glaring Bowery, while the dark-robed woman pursued her way toward the East River.

"No bad walker," was McNerney's forced conclusion, as he gathered himself. The unknown had swept around the corner from the south and turned eastwardly to meet the waiting lad, with the sure gait of one who knew she was waited for.

On, onward, with undulating lissom swing, the veiled woman sped, McNerney judiciously regulating his gait. And all her settled purpose was evident in the measured flight, the head never once turned in curious gaze, and the singularity of her march.

At last, halting before a respectable-looking tenement-house on First Avenue, the woman turned into the open hallway and paused at the door of the lefthand apartment.

In an instant there was a flash of light within, and then the dimly outlined shadows of a woman moving from behind the linen curtains.

"Fairly run to earth! It's a good night's work!" laughed McNerney. "Things are going my way at last!" He hastened off and, jumping on the nearest car, sought his own home by a round-about way. "Now, Dennis, my boy," he said, as he stuffed his pipe. "One bit of hurry, and ye are ruined! I have two birds to watch. And I know her perch, their meetingplace, and the boy's own den!" He now saw airy castles of Spain gaily rising in the smoke wreaths around him.

"To-morrow," he said, "I will prospect, and I think I'll borrow Mrs. Haggerty's boy, Dan, to hunt for a tailor in that building. He is sharp and he can knock at the door by mistake, so I'll get her general description.

"If the janitor is a fair man to jolly, Dan must then find out his pet saloon, and I'll make a new friend on the East Side.

"But I must disappear, after I have met this boy Einstein at the station. I'll have to slip on a false mustache for ten minutes. Jim Condon can bring him out to me in the dark. He can tell him I don't care to run up against the sergeant."

On Central Park West there was a circle of astonished listeners, when Doctor William Atwater had closed the conference by reporting his inability to trace a single enemy of the murdered man. Counsellor Stillwell, in a grave reverie, listened and abandoned all present hope of any clue to the cowardly murder.

"All seems darkness around us, now," he sighed. "The journals, the police, the detectives, and our own private searches have failed to locate any suspicion, however fleeting.

"It only remains for us, while awaiting some unravelling of the mystery, to unite in the fitting burial of the unfortunate gentleman, when the Coroner has finished his dreary labors. He had not a single enemy in the world! It was the fatal trust of the vast money handling which caused his murder. And only after long plotting and careful daily watch was he foully done to death."

Alice Worthington's clear voice startled each listener as she said, "There is but one faint clue clinging to the past. A transaction which might have drawn upon him the vengeance of some one. I have kept this secret until all else failed.

"Before my father's death, even in those last hours of lingering agony, he signed a deed as trustee for Everett Clayton, which transfers to Randall Clayton one-half of the Detroit Depot lands, or one-half of its purchase price. This money, nearly a million dollars, goes now into the estate of the dead man!"

"My God!" whispered Witherspoon, as Doctor Atwater grasped both his hands. "If any one had an interest in concealing that vast property, we must look for them, for the plot which led to Clayton's

murder. My poor father pledged me to secrecy until I had delivered the deed and the legal acknowledgment of his property interest to Clayton. It was for this that my father wished to meet Randall at Cheyenne--to tell him of the fortune which had come to him!"

The girl's sobbing voice touched every heart as she faltered, "Judge Downs, at Pasco, drew all the papers and acknowledgments, and, after my father's death, he explained all the details to me. But father," she cried, with a gust of stormy tears, "told me himself of the discovery of the value of this property, and that he had feared to arouse poor Randall's hopes until the Railway Company had purchased the land."

Her voice died away; its accent of truth had brought the astounded lawyers to their feet; but in a corner Doctor Atwater whispered to Jack Witherspoon, who was shaking as a leaf in a storm.

"Silence, my friend," he murmured. "This makes you a millionaire. Say nothing to-night. Confide only in Alice. You and I must tell her, alone, and later, of Clayton's will. If Ferris knew of this, he is the murderer."

The grave voice of Boardman alone broke the silence. "This is matter of the gravest moment, and only to be discussed in the future, my dear child," he said. "Gentlemen, we will suspend all our labors until we have had ample time for reflection. We may find the murderer hiding under the shadow of this useless fortune. For I believe poor Clayton left no heir. Even gold can be useless at the last."

Witherspoon's temples were throbbing as Doctor Atwater hurried him away to his home. "There is a mystery of mysteries, my boy," sadly said Atwater, "in the strange turn of Fortune's wheel which throws the millions into Francine Delacroix's pretty white hands.

"Rouse yourself! We must think, act, and avenge our friend! It looks as if the finger of fate plait the noose for Ferris' neck. For he did know all; he hated and betrayed Clayton, and, I believe that he killed him."

"Yes; or had him killed, to clear the way to Alice Worthington's side," exclaimed Witherspoon. "I see it all, now! Old Hugh intended to marry this noble girl to our dead friend!"

But Jack Witherspoon only bowed his head and burst into bitter tears. "Too late; too late!" he sobbed. The golden fortune seemed stained with his dead friend's blood.

When the morning brought once more the refluxing crowds to the streets of New York, a thousand financial agencies over the world were now eagerly watching for some trace of the fortune stolen from the murdered cashier.

Police and detectives, the officers of justice in far cities and foreign lands, were eagerly striving to gain the additional reward of twenty-five thousand dollars offered by the Fidelity Company, at Alice Worthington's order, for the detection of the secret murderers.

But to Witherspoon and Atwater the night had been one long vigil of earnest conference.

Wearied out at last, Atwater decided the future policy of the two friends. "Let Stillwell have his head, Jack," gravely advised the doctor. "Keep your secret as yet. You know how that noble girl has guarded her dying father's confidence. To save you, let me tell her all, but only after the whole circle has failed to find the murderers. I will not mention your name. But I will tell her that poor Clayton left a will. I wish to see this million secured to you.

"Then, when she promises to keep my secret, I will tell her of the tell-tale Brooklyn address, and you and I can join her in hunting down the gang who lured Clayton to his ruin. She is the one arbiter of the situation; you and I must aid her. We will know all the developments of the police inquest. In this way, Ferris will not be alarmed. We may trace it home to him."

"You are right," assented Witherspoon, "and I will watch Ferris through the office boy, Einstein, and there's a fine fellow, a policeman, McNerney, down there. I've promised him a private reward for any clue, and he told me he would lay off and go on a still hunt.

"He knows how to communicate always with me," concluded Witherspoon, "and I will bring him into our circle, if you can gain Alice Worthington's confidence."

The great metropolis had almost forgotten Randall Clayton's mysterious taking off, when, a week later, there was a sad gathering in Woodlawn Cemetery, where Doctor Atwater supported on his arm the black-robed figure of the great heiress, when the red earth rattled down upon the murdered man's coffin.

There was a scanty two-score of mourners around the open grave; but Atwater felt the nervous thrill of the girl's arm as she turned away. "Justice to his memory, reparation for the past," murmured Alice Worthington. "I leave the punishment of his betrayers to the vengeance of the God above, the One who knows all."

It was with a thrill of coming triumph that Atwater listened to the heiress when she drew him aside, in the great Stillwell drawing-rooms, on their return.

"You were Randall's one true friend here," the noble girl cried. "These great lawyers are bound up in the affairs of millions. My friends, the executors, have given up all present hope; they must

return to Detroit; even Mr. Stillwell and the police authorities are in despair.

"Mr. Witherspoon will be tied to the routine of the great business; but you can aid me. Give me all your time, work with your friend, for I will follow up this mystery until my foster-brother's name is cleared of stain, and justice is done. Let us be a trinity of faithful friends."

And thus it came to pass that Mr. Arthur Ferris lingered, shunned by all his old associates, and busied about his private affairs.

Wandering about New York, he never knew of the ceaseless watch upon him, his restless heart awaiting some new blow of the hostile influence whose veiled stroke had ruined his brilliant prospects in life! To his astonishment, he learned from Senator Dunham that the entire secret programme of the company's vast interests had been successfully carried out.

He veiled his defeat, in very shame, from the prosperous statesman, and, a new disgrace, he now carried the brand of cowardice upon him, for Witherspoon passed him daily with a contemptuous scorn.

And still, he dared not abandon his uneasy flitting about the neighborhood of the company's office. His haggard face was now known, even to Mr. Adolph Lilienthal.

The startled proprietor of the Newport Art Gallery had sealed up all his vague suspicions in his guilty breast. He never dared to confide even in Robert Wade, sneaking in furtively to the "private view" gallery.

On one or two occasions, the anxious Ferris had buttonholed the reinstated Wade, when the careful manager visited the "Art Gallery."

"Do they know anything?" muttered the frightened scoundrel. He dared not even breathe Fritz Braun's name. After nights of weary cogitation, Lilienthal had buried Irma Gluyas' baleful memory forever.

"She cleared out a month before this strange murder," he was forced to admit, "and Fritz Braun was off for Europe before this deed. No; the poor fellow was either dogged from the office, or else trapped on his way to the bank."

Lilienthal saw his own profitable schemes all endangered. "If I owned up to a single scrap of information, if I were hauled into any court proceedings, my secret patrons would take French leave forever!"

And so, the prudent wretch merely adhered to his plain story that he had sold the late Mr. Clayton an artist proof of the famous Danube view. But, looking upon the unclaimed duplicate now in his

window, Lilienthal softly chuckled and rubbed his hands. "I am a good two hundred and fifty ahead on that lucky picture." For he could not find Miss Irma Gluyas to deliver to her the property which was her own property.

Far away, by the shores of the yeasty Baltic, when Hugh Worthington rendered up his repentant soul, two guilty ones stealthily regarded each other's faces in the little hotel in Lastadie, where "Mr. August Meyer" had taken refuge.

The huge "Mesopotamia" lay icily at her docks, and the graceful woman had vanished from the cabins where her would-be betrayer had watched her every movement. Fritz Braun's active mind had sounded every danger now encircling his future pathway.

There was a circle of fire around him, though, as he kept hidden in the little suburban hotel, where his smuggling confederates had found him a safe refuge as their chief. The grinning head steward had helped him smuggle his unsuspected booty on shore, and, while Fritz Braun gazed moodily out of the windows of the old hostelry, he planned his future hiding.

Neither the dangerous dupe at his side nor his hoodwinked associates of the International Smuggling Association knew of the vast fortune which Braun had artfully hidden upon his arrival.

Well he knew that his life would pay the penalty in a moment if the blood-stained treasure were suspected to be in his hands.

And so, with careful craft, he labored to throw off all his dangerous associates and quietly disappear to a retreat, already decided upon, in the sleepy environs of Breslau.

"First, to watch my lady!" he decided, for he was not deceived by Irma Gluyas' apparent quiet. His first care had been to obtain the New York journals' regularly arriving. "If there is any hubbub over there, I will be on guard, before they can reach me," he mused, as he glowered over his wine at the woman who now panted for liberty.

Two weeks after his arrival passed with no detection of the murder.

"Safe, safe!" he laughed. "The trunk is now buried a hundred feet deep in the ooze of the East River."

And he smiled in triumph at the precaution which had led to Leah Einstein's hegira to her respectable First Avenue tenement, under the decent alias of Mrs. Rachel Meyer.

He brooded, day by day, over the skill with which he had arranged for cablegrams to a safe address. The innocent cipher arranged for would warn him of all possible happenings.

And yet, at ease in his trust in the dumb fidelity of the distant

woman still his slave, he waited hungrily for the Magyar beauty to trap herself. He was a man of infinite patience. Indulging every seeming whim of his companion, he had never lost her from his sight a moment since their arrival.

It was on the fourth day after their refuge in Stettin, when Fritz Braun stole out of his rooms at a secret signal from Lena, the "stube-madchen," whose frank face had won upon the secretly imprisoned Irma.

"She gave me one of her diamond rings to pawn. I was to post this letter and to send this telegraph dispatch to America," whispered the girl. Fritz Braun smiled as he received the proofs of the Hungarian's treachery.

And then, Lena sang over her drudgery for the next week, for the grateful Braun had filled her hand with gold.

There was a strange gleam of contentment in Irma Gluyas' eyes when she followed Fritz Braun, two weeks later, into the train for Breslau. Her secret master had redoubled every tender care, and there was a brooding peace between them.

But there were gloomy projects in his busy brain as Braun watched the Baltic sand dunes fade away behind him. "She is deceived by my manufactured telegram from Clayton. She will wait for his coming."

He laughed over the cunning which had bade her write or cable no more. And, with a wildly loving heart now panting in her reassured bosom, Irma Gluyas fell into a belief in Braun's story of their flight from the revenue officials. "Thank Heaven, he is safe! He loves me beyond all," mused the dreaming woman.

"He will get the letter left for him with the faithful girl, and follow me on. Once that I am out of this man's clutches, Braun will never dare to follow or claim me. For, he fears the Vienna police as much as I."

Brave in her love, happy in her lover's safety, Irma Gluyas only lived to meet once more the man who had awakened her nobler nature. To be his slave, to drift down the years with him, was all she asked; only to see his face again! She was held in Love's bondage now!

And, wrapped in her dreams of the future, she forgot the man at her side, who now compassed her death. "I must make my treasure safe first," he craftily planned, "and then lose this hawk-eyed devil. But only when my future is secure beyond all reach!"

With all his bridges burned behind him, Fritz Braun easily threaded the network of railways of the Eastern German frontier.

For years he had studied over the hiding place upon the triangular

frontier of Poland, Germany, and Austria; and now, he only longed for a freedom from Irma Gluyas' haunting eyes.

"Leah can join me later; but even she must not know of this fool's fate!"

Safe in his own conceit, Fritz Braun drew happy breaths of relief when he was safely hidden in the little village of Schebitz, under the frowning crags of the Silesian Katzen Gebirge.

"Here we can rest in safety till the storm blows over," he said, as Irma Gluyas followed him into the arched entrance of an old half-forgotten manor house. "You shall have your books and music; we can take a run whenever we like, and you shall have nothing to fear, for my American friends will take care of me."

And then began the double duel of wits, in which, all innocent of suspicion of danger, the woman whose soul was struggling toward the light again, hid the darling secret of her heart--the coming of the man who was to free her from the tyranny of her past sins! "His love will find me out, even here," she murmured, as she listened to the wild breezes sweeping down from the pine-clad mountains. "And I shall live once more--a bond slave no longer!"

It was two weeks after their arrival when Braun felt safe to leave his dangerous charge with the peasant spies whom he had gathered as servants.

His money was safe, hidden in the old manor house; and he felt the skies were clear when he entered the money-changers at Breslau, where he cautiously sold some of his smaller bills.

On the table in the bank lay a copy of the New York Herald. His stern face paled as he gazed upon the flaring head-lines. But the audacious criminal's hand never trembled as he read the four columns which blazoned the discovery of Clayton's body.

Fast as the devil drives he hastened back to his secret lair. One friendly thrill warmed his agitated heart as he read Leah Einstein's simple cipher words, in the cable which warned him of a new danger.

"I must soon be about my business," he gloomily decided. "This Hungarian witch has some jewels left. It's only a few hours by rail to the Russian frontier. She might, with her winning appearance, easily find her way over the frontier of Poland. If she learned of the discovery of Clayton's body, she might, in her love craze, denounce me, even here. That would mean death for me; at the worst only a short detention for her."

The fear of the old Vienna crimes now hardened the heart of the man who was once the prosperous Hugo Landor. "SHE MUST DIE!" he cried as he sentenced her remorselessly. "But how? There must be no bungling!"

His whole nature was thrilling with the alarm of Leah Einstein's warning. "She may have to clear out," mused the self-tortured criminal. "Her only safe refuge is with me, and I could count on her to help me clear away this wild-hearted Magyar devil."

Fear now kept him from any further unnecessary visit to Breslau. He pondered a whole day, and then sent an unsigned cablegram, addressed to the woman he had rebaptized as Rachel Meyer.

It was the simple phrase, "Schebitz-Breslau."

"Leah will know that I am here, and in any storm can join me." With a sudden access of generosity, he sent the faithful ally of his darkest day a secretly-purchased draft for two thousand marks.

And then the murderer forgot his danger, ignorant of one lonely pursuer who followed up the blind trail of the murderer, now watching Leah Einstein night and day.

It was twenty days later when the poor cobbler Mulholland, whistling softly, went out and closed the door of his little shop opposite Mrs. Rachel Meyer's modest apartment. The frightened woman had only left her rooms at night after the publication of the finding of Randall Clayton's body.

A horrible, haunting fear now possessed her. She knew the horror of the deed. Stronger than the terror which bade her avoid the light of day was the yearning to assure herself of the unruly boy's safety. "If he is caught, God of Jacob!" she murmured, "I will end my days in prison."

Even the hammering of the strange Irish cobbler in the noisy hallway relieved her. She had never looked into that open door but a pair of gleaming eyes had followed her every movement from under the disguised policeman's bushy false beard.

"I think that I have the key of the mystery now," gleefully soliloquized McNerney. "I am tired of playing cobbler Mulholland."

In fact, he needed time for rest and study.

A five-dollar bill had procured him the privilege of copying the cablegram, when a telegraph boy had stumbled in, two weeks before, to find Rachel Meyer.

The words "Schebitz-Breslau" had given him no clue; but on this auspicious day the postman had begged him to aid him in finding the proper party to receive a valuable registered letter.

The officer's quick eye caught the German stamp, "Value 2000 marks," and the words, "Absender, August Meyer." "This is the fellow at last," muttered McNerney. "The man, August Meyer, who sends this

poor devil of a woman two thousand marks. She is preparing to skip out. Now, for Mr. Lawyer Witherspoon!"

"The next time that this woman meets the boy, he must be arrested on one corner by Jim Condon. I will seize upon her! Keeping them separate and quiet, I may get the story. But I dare not tell the chief, or I would lose the reward. Witherspoon must trust to me. I must get that man over there."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE YACHT "RAMBLER."

Four days after cobbler Mulholland had sold out his little outfit to a stranger, James Lennon, whose dingy scrawl, "Shoes Fixed While You Wait," now stared Mrs. Rachel Meyer in the face, there was a circle of three earnest conspirators plotting in the interests of justice in the library of Counsellor Stillwell.

The great house was silent on the golden afternoon, of the familie Stillwell were busied in their varied occupations. The old lawyer in his William Street legal cave, the ladies driving or chasing the bubble pleasure.

Around the library table were gathered a trinity of souls all eager to avenge the unrequited death of Randall Clayton. The tired-out executors were now on their way to Detroit, sharing with the puzzled journals and the baffled police the hope that "something would finally turn up in the Clayton mystery."

Down in the Western Trading Company's office, the urbane Robert Wade, now shining out again in full plumage, explained to the occasional disgruntled stockholder that the Fidelity Company had paid in their fifty thousand dollars; that many of the largest cheques had been stopped, and that the Worthington Estate had nobly offered to recoup the company for the final deficiency from the extra fall dividend on their own stock, which was to gladden all hearts.

"Poor Hugh Worthington!" sighed Wade. "If he had only lived to see his cherished plan for freight control in operation. Our stock has risen fifty-five points on the new deal. Mr. Ferris? Ah! His retirement was solely due to ill-health. He has resumed his private consulting practice. But, Clayton! there was an irreparable loss! Poor boy! Some momentary imprudence must have exposed him. Thugs!

Thugs! Here in New York, in broad day light! It is monstrous!"

And so the ruffled financial waters closed smoothly over the forgotten grave of the murdered cashier. It was dimly supposed that the "sleuth hounds" of the law were still peering about with their fabled "argus eyes."

But the two men gazing upon Alice Worthington's serene and steadfast face on this August afternoon wondered at the fervor of her high-souled thirst for vengeance.

The broad, Greek forehead, the clearly-shining blue eyes, the firm, resolute lips, her voice throbbing with earnestness, all spoke of a Venus armed with Minerva's panoply.

William Atwater's dark, impassioned face was lit with a fiery enthusiasm, as he said, "Miss Alice, we have met here to open the first of the seven seals.

"Witherspoon and I have recognized that you have not unfolded to Stillwell, or even the executors, all the last, sacred wishes of your father. We feel that you have knowledge, suspicions, and inferences, all your own. Now, to us, the last, the nearest friends of Clayton, your carte blanche to follow this up means everything. But we must have your directing mind with us; we need absolute secrecy, the use of money, and your aid. We do not ask you to tell us all, now. We only do ask that you will, at the right time, aid us with everything you can impart. We will give you the most important disclosures. I will give you my whole time.

"And if you sustain Witherspoon here, I will hound down the murderer, and, perhaps, fix a further responsibility on the only man to whose interest it was to blot out Randall Clayton's blameless life."

There was a joint exclamation as the three gazed inquiringly at each other.

"Arthur Ferris!"

"Yes," solemnly said the dark-eyed doctor. "He was luring Clayton to his grave! He may have tried other plans, and, perhaps foiled by Clayton's suspicions or by mere accident, have used the real murderer here as his tool."

Alice Worthington's golden hair gleamed out, as her head fell upon her hands. Her face was ashen-pale, as she faltered out, "Have you found any papers?"

The girl bride's heart beat wildly. There was the imperilled honor of her father, guilty in intent in her mind now, as she whispered, "Is any one implicated?"

"Listen!" said the young physician, rising and pacing the room.

"We have a trap set for a humble tool of the real murderer, whom we believe to be hiding in Europe. We must act somewhat outside of the law. Witherspoon must go to the Secretary of State at Washington and get an alias extradition, so that we can later hold the real criminal. We must use force, fear, even innocent fraud. We need your money aid, your authority, and your secrecy." Miss Worthington's face lit up grandly.

"There's my hand," firmly said Alice Worthington, springing up. "I have made arrangements with the executors for money. Spare nothing! Let us all act together. You shall be my brothers if you bring the cruel wretch to bay!" The young doctor bent over the girl's trembling hand and kissed it in reverence. Turning to Witherspoon, he simply said, "Call in McNerney."

A flickering rosy red dyed the young heiress' cheeks as she gazed upon Atwater's nervous, elegant figure pacing to and fro in the dusky library. "Miss Alice," said the physician, "When I dismiss Witherspoon and the officer, it will be only to send them to take two persons into custody. From them we shall be able to find our secrets which will lead us to the murderer.

"And to-morrow I will come alone, here, and tell you that Randall Clayton feared treachery; that he made a will, and left his little savings to one whom you will respect and honor.

"Of all this, not a single word, even to Witherspoon, until the two suspected ones are secretly arrested. Not a human being must know of the arrest, as we will use either one of the arrested to guide me to the hiding place of the murderer.

"I hope by to-morrow night that you will know all but the fact of the chief criminal's arrest! To effect his arrest, I myself must risk life and even my reputation. Witherspoon and I have toiled in secret since the disappearance of Clayton.

"With you, we will win; without you, the murderer may escape. One hint of danger, and he would take flight and be lost in Europe's uncounted millions, perhaps in Asia."

Alice Worthington's beaming eyes told of her new pledge of secrecy, as she stood, a beautiful Peri, finger on lip, while Witherspoon brought the stalwart McNerney into the library.

The young officer, in plain, dark clothes, with severely shaven lip, was the ideal of a resolute young Irish priest, saving his Roman collar.

But his steady eye kindled as Witherspoon tersely recounted to the astonished heiress the discovery of the pocketbook, the picture label, the secret visits to the deserted mansion, No. 192 Layte Street, and the results of all his private researches.

The policeman sprang to his feet as the lawyer logically recounted his casual visits to the Newport Art Gallery, on finding a similar Danube picture in the window.

"In my opinion," sharply concluded Jack, "this Adolph Lilienthal knows something. His glib lie that there was no duplicate of the artist proof in America fell flat when I reminded him that I had recently seen one in New York. After looking over his memorandums, he admitted that he had sold one to Mr. Randall Clayton some weeks before his unfortunate death.

"Now," the lawyer cried, with positive deduction, "that picture had been addressed to Fraulein Irma Gluyas, No. 192 Layte Street, Brooklyn. I have the very label. Her name was found pencilled on the card in poor Randall's pocketbook. Who can find the missing thread to follow on this darkened path?"

"I can," stoutly said McNerney. "Somebody who was anxious to get Clayton out of the way used some pretty face as a lure! She was thrown across his path, God knows how! The vilest crimes here are concocted often in gilded luxury. He was undoubtedly killed in Brooklyn. This woman helped to get him there! Two people must be let alone, absolutely undisturbed. One is Lilienthal, and the other, Ferris! And you must all use a thousand precautions when we act. I'll have half the truth by to-morrow night. My chum, Jim Condon, is hammering shoes as cobbler James Lennon opposite the room where one of the suspects lives. And if Lilienthal or Ferris should miss either of the parties who will be arrested, they may warn the real criminal." The plainly-spoken words carried conviction to each listener.

The three friends were breathlessly hanging on the officer's frank words as he now described the departure of the fated Clayton from the street corner in the carriage with a woman, and decoyed there by the boy.

"Why did you hide all this?" was Alice Worthington's astounded query.

"Because the time was not ripe; because it meant the escape of the real criminal; and because I want the honor of the arrests, and the double reward. It means a life of ease and promotion, as well as the glory of bringing the brute who killed Clayton to bay! Now, Jim Condon is on watch. The woman is packing to slip away to Europe; she must meet the boy again! I will shadow him; Condon will watch the woman. Within three days they will meet, probably to-night, as the German steamers sail in two days. We will soon have them both!

"I've arranged for their safe handling."

"And what do you propose to do?" anxiously cried the heiress.

"Why," simply said McNerney, "the doctor and I will take the woman, go over to Europe, and catch 'Mr. August Meyer,' who forgot that the name of the sender of a valuable package is put on the envelope by the German government. That has betrayed him."

"And Mr. Witherspoon?" the excited woman said. "Stays here and secretly holds the boy hidden, even against the law, until we have the other. Then we can trap Ferris or Lilienthal, or both."

"Is this plan your joint work?" asked Alice. The three men bowed.

"And it's the only one, Miss," stoutly said the policeman. "One word dropped to any one, and we lose the game forever! I go out of my duty. I risk my place! But I've got three-months' leave of absence. Condon has two."

"I will guarantee your future," said the heiress to McNerney. "Go ahead, and God speed you. These gentlemen will furnish all the money you need."

"Then it's a go!" bluntly answered the officer. "I feel it in my bones we'll get them to-night."

After a whispered colloquy with the two friends, McNerney offered his hand to the agitated woman. "I'll risk my life for you, Miss," he said. "There's a desperate man behind this deed. And it was no ordinary woman who drew him into danger. Don't blame poor Clayton. He may have met her as a mere fashion-plate on the Avenue. Who knows?"

An hour after the officer had departed, Alice Worthington saw the two friends disappear, walking away unconcernedly, arm in arm. She turned away from the drawing-room window, in a stormy burst of sorrow.

"My father!" she gasped. And then, seeking the refuge of her own room, she hid her tell-tale face. "Even if it leads up to the guilty past, I can defend his memory. He was guiltless of this crime; and Randall Clayton's name shall be cleared of all stain!"

Over her virgin heart came the memory of the cold bargain which had linked her name to the crafty Ferris.

"Never, never, so help me, God! shall he lay his hand again in mine!"

For the first time in her life she felt the delicious power of wealth. Only the silver-haired Lemuel Boardman knew of the armed neutrality now secretly arranged, which was to buy a legal separation after six months from her nominal husband in that obscure Western State.

"Thank God!" she cried. "The sale of his honor, his manhood, for one hundred thousand dollars will seal his lips. He will keep his

bargain; but, if he should be found guilty?"

All that night the heiress tossed upon uneasy pillows, waiting for the tidings which might in time parade her name as the innocent wife of a desperate felon.

The motley crowd pouring along the Bowery at ten o'clock swept past the Cooper Union on either side in search of the garish delights of the oblong oasis of pleasure. Down Fourth Avenue from the Square, down along Third Avenue, they swarmed.

Eager, hard-faced men; painted, hopeless-eyed women, the vacuous visitor from "Wayback," drunken soldiers, stray sailors, lost marines, all were kaleidoscopically mingled.

The strident voices of street peddlers mingled with the hoarse seductions of pullers-in.

Hebraic venders beamed alluringly from their open doors, gin palaces, shooting galleries, mock auctions, second-hand stores and brilliantly-lit "dives" awaited the unwary. "Coffee parlors," museums, cheap theaters, and music halls, as well as the "side rooms," were thronged with those pitiless-eyed Devil's children, the women of the night side of New York!

Roar of elevated train, clang of street cars, hurrying dash of the ambulance, wild onward career of the fire engine, punctuated this human maelstrom sweeping toward its duplex outlets of the morgue or Sing Sing's gloomy prison cells.

No one noted Witherspoon and Doctor Atwater seated in two different carriages drawn up under the shades of lonely buildings on the side street near the Dry Dock Bank.

The window-curtains were down in each of these waiting vehicles, and the drivers nodded upon their boxes.

In all the guilty bosoms on the bedlam-like street no hearts beat as wildly as those in the breasts of McNerney and Condon.

"It's the one chance of our lives, Jim," said McNerney, as he crouched in a dark doorway before posting his comrade. Both were now in uniform, ready for a dash, and McNerney's upper lip wore a movable prototype of his cherished mustache. "The boy comes down Fourteenth Street always and by Fourth Avenue," whispered Dennis.

"You watch the corner from this side. I'll nab the woman from the other. Remember, not till they have met and finished their talk. Then you can take the boy along with Atwater. I'll rush the woman away with Mr. Witherspoon."

It was twenty minutes past ten when McNerney saw the dark-clad form of Leah Einstein swiftly gliding along in the shade from Third

Avenue. Onward she sped, never turning her veiled face to the right or left, until she slackened her pace under the gloomy cornices of the Dry Dock Bank.

The policeman sprang into a dark hallway as she passed, holding his breath lest the shy bird should take alarm.

In a few moments Emil Einstein sauntered across the Bowery and circling around the deserted bank corner, then settled down into a slow, searching pace, threading the lonely south side of the darkened cross street.

From his hidden post, McNerney could see the woman clinging to the boy's arm and pleading, while she murmured her prayers in a low tone.

"Not yet, not yet," mused McNerney. "He must get her whole message. She must have time to get his last report."

At last, as the tiger springs upon its prey, McNerney leaped out of his hiding place, for the sobbing woman had turned alone toward the East River.

With a frightened half scream, the timorous woman staggered back speechless as the uniform of the tall officer flashed before her eyes.

In a moment she was in the carriage, and both her wrists grasped by Witherspoon's sinewy hands.

But, before the carriage started, McNerney, tearing away the rear curtain, saw Policeman Condon hustling the struggling Emil into the other carriage. When it rapidly dashed away, McNerney grimly said, "All right! Go ahead!"

The officer's quick ear caught the woman's despairing murmur, "Emil! My boy, my poor son! They will kill him!"

"Not if you are sensible, Mrs. Leah Einstein," growled the policeman. "But your boy's life depends now only on you."

"Where are you taking me to?" pleaded the woman, her storm of tears choking her voice. "That you will soon find out," menacingly said McNerney. "Where you ought to have been long ago!"

In the long ride across the great city, McNerney grew complacent over his bold stroke in borrowing an unused store-room from the armorer of the Twenty-ninth Regiment.

It was after eleven o'clock when the three entered the gloomy basement under the granite buttresses of the armory.

In the lonely arched room only a table and a few chairs relieved

the prison-like emptiness. A man with papers spread out before him scarcely raised his head as the three entered.

While McNerney drew the terrified woman into a corner, Witherspoon anxiously paced the floor. Fifteen minutes after their arrival, a messenger lad dashed into the room with a telegram.

"All right, now, McNerney!" said the lawyer, as he read the dispatch telling him: "Party on board the 'Rambler.' Set sail at once. Will telegraph from Tompkinsville."

And then, with a smile of triumph, Dennis McNerney locked the door. He placed the half-fainting woman in a chair before the notary and began his inquisition.

The look of utter despair in Leah Einstein's face softened under the velvety, wooing voice of the man who had boldly abducted her. In the whispered conference in the corner, he had skilfully played upon that inexhaustible mother's love which is the one undiminished treasure of a worn-out world.

The poor wretch at bay little dreamed that cobbler Mulholland was standing before her, and her tortured heart had forgotten all the dangers of the cablegram and the tell-tale registered letter. "If you answer all my questions," kindly said McNerney, "and make a clean breast of it, you may save your boy. Do you want to do that young man's life? He stands next to the electric chair now, for the murder of Mr. Randall Clayton!"

The heart-stricken mother was on her knees in a moment.

"Kill me! Do anything you wish. But spare him! He is innocent! He knows nothing!"

"Let us see what you know, then!" grimly answered McNerney. "The notary will swear you, and, if you tell us the whole truth, we will help your boy. If you lie to us, God will punish you both, and we will show no mercy."

Witherspoon opened his eyes in wonder as McNerney rapidly drew out the whole story of Clayton's departure from the corner of University Place in the carriage.

"You were the woman in the carriage on the day that Clayton left! I SAW YOU MYSELF!" thundered McNerney. "Your own boy brought Clayton the message. Now, where did you take him?"

Witherspoon held his breath as Leah Einstein, between her sobs, told of the fatal visit to No. 192 Layte Street.

It was half an hour when the sobbing woman had finished her recital. "By the God of Jacob! I never saw him after he went into the back room. Fritz was with him there, Fritz alone!"

The three men were as unmoved as sphinxes while McNerney led her along. "I only thought Fritz wanted him to meet the pretty woman, the one they called Irma, and then, while he was there, take his things from him. He had only a leather valise; no diamonds. I saw no money, and I was with the sick woman. Mr. Clayton loved her, and used to come and see her."

"Where does this Fritz live?" sternly said the policeman. "Everybody knows Fritz Braun, the druggist of Magdal's Pharmacy. Ask Mr. Lilienthal of the Newport Art Gallery. He is his friend."

With assumed indifference, McNerney mixed a glass of brandy and water for the woman, and walked the floor in deep thought. "Where is he now?" at last asked McNerney. "This Fritz Braun!"

There was a silence while the quick-witted Jewess caught at the protection of the far-off hiding place of her quondam lover. "He went away; I do not know where; and took the woman with him, this Hungarian woman, this Irma Gluyas! Lilienthal knows; you can make him tell."

"Look here!" sharply cried the officer, in a sudden rage. "You are lying to me! Your rooms are being searched even now! Your boy has been taken away, and he will go straight to the electric chair. He gave that poor man over into your hands. You took him to the murderer's den! BOTH OF YOU WILL DIE! You were yourself getting ready to run away to Europe! Your baggage is all packed! We will force the truth out of your boy; you shall never see him. You can't help him lie now! I was the cobbler opposite your door, and I've watched you for a month!"

For five minutes the men labored to restore the stricken woman, whose tortured nerves gave way. "I shall now search you," roughly said McNerney, "but I'll have a police matron here to do it. I want that letter and telegram from August Meyer! I want the money--the stolen money--he sent you. I'll give you just five minutes to tell me the whole truth. It's life and death for you now. They are busy searching your rooms."

With a cry of entreaty, Leah Einstein tore open her dress. She threw a packet on the table. "It's all there, all there," she wailed. "And I will tell you all. I will take you to him. You shall catch him. But spare my boy!" And, moaning and pleading, she now told the whole truth.

It was long after midnight when the woman scrawled her name in Polish-Hebrew script under the record of Fritz Braun's crime.

McNerney grasped Witherspoon's arm and led him away. "Do you see the light now?" he cried, in triumph. "The boy and woman were used by this damned fiend, Braun. You can see that she was Braun's slave in the old days. The other woman is innocent of the murder,

and was only a handsome stool-pigeon! But, behind Braun, there may lurk Lilienthal and Ferris! Braun was to get the plunder for putting Clayton out of the way. Don't you see that Clayton stood between Ferris and the millionaire's only daughter!"

"What are we to do?" gasped Witherspoon.

"You are to take the morning train and get the alias extradition papers from the Secretary of State. Make it a strict confidence. I will take this woman, the papers, and Doctor Atwater, and we will grab 'Mr. August Meyer' at Schebitz.

"Jim Condon will hold the boy on the doctor's yacht, and you will take your notary and get the boy's full confession. Let him know that he alone can save his mother's life. The moment I have nabbed this Fritz Braun I'll cable; but I want to recover the money and get the whole reward. You must get me five thousand dollars from Miss Worthington, and the letter of credit for five thousand more. I'll take an iron-handed woman along, a nurse, and police matron."

"What shall I do with Miss Worthington?" demanded Witherspoon.

"Nothing, as yet," said McNerney, with a significant smile. "Let the doctor handle her confidence! I'll get all this woman's belongings and put the matron in charge of her. The woman can work skilfully on her fears.

"To-morrow I'll take a peep at No. 192 Layte Street, then go down to Tompkinsville with the notary. We will put Emil Einstein 'through the thirty-third degree,' and in three days Atwater, the two women and I will be off for Breslau. Leave me a free hand, and I'll get your murderer and the money. But remember, one single imprudence loses both man and money; you, your vengeance; me, my reward. And I depend on this windfall to marry!"

"So do I, Dennis," sadly smiled Witherspoon. "Go in; I'll do your bidding. Count on the extradition papers and the money."

In ten minutes the armorer's room was dark. "Not a bad evening's work," said the notary, as he pocketed a hundred-dollar bill, "and another one of those 'exquisitely executed engravings' for to-morrow!"

Long before Alice Worthington had lifted her stately head from her pillow the next morning, the astonished Dennis McNerney was rubbing his eyes before the location of the Valkyrie Saloon. He had stolen over to Brooklyn with the "early birds."

The streets were as yet unpeopled when he drew the drowsy officer on the beat into the side room of the saloon where once Mr. August Meyer presided in the evening.

The two uniformed giants smacked their lips over the morning

Manhattan cocktail.

"Now, that's what I call a cocktail," said Officer Hogan, as he ordered up (on a complimentary basis) the Havanas. "This saloon used to be a German sort of headquarters. But the new fellows are our own people, the right sort. They knew it's an Irish neighborhood. So they pulled down the sign 'Valkyrie,' and put up 'The Shamrock,' drove out their Dutch kellers and put in good Irish barkeepers."

"What's become of August Meyer, who used to have an interest here?" carelessly said McNerney, affecting a familiarity with old history.

"Meyer ran a hidden dead-fall and gambling house next door, at No. 192 Layte Street," said Hogan, biting off his cigar. "That was before I came on the beat. He got to plunging on the races, betting against his own games, and the poker crowd here cleaned him up at last. So there's the Hibernia Social Club, the Democratic Ward Committee, and a lot of roomers in there. It's a new deal now, all around."

"The whole house has been ripped up and there's a China wash-house in the basement of that old mansion."

"Meyer?" interrogated McNerney, as he ordered the second round.

"Cleared out for Europe, so they say," carelessly said Hogan. "I saw him driving in a carriage a few days before he sold out, with a staving looking woman. He may have married a good thing, and skipped the town. He was a shifty sort of a devil; but he ran a square gambling den. And he had loads of money till he went crazy over cards."

It was afternoon when Miss Worthington was pondering over Witherspoon's telegram from Philadelphia, that Officer McNerney was swiftly rowed out to the yacht "Rambler," lying on the oily summer waters of the lower bay. Beside him, the notary calmly awaited the materialization of the second hundred-dollar bill.

But, busied as all her secret agents were, none of the men now chasing down the fugitive murderer were as anxious at heart as Miss Alice Worthington.

It was easy to arrange for the money Witherspoon had telegraphed for; she knew the secret object of his visit to Washington, but only that certain parties had been taken into custody, and that there was light ahead.

"My father!" she cried, as she fell on her knees and prayed that the mantle of shame should not fall upon his yet raw grave.

It was half an hour after Doctor Atwater and McNerney began to question Emil Einstein that the young scapegoat at last dropped his policy of lying braggadocio.

Confined in the cabin of the stout schooner yacht of a hundred tons, he had craftily fenced himself in with a network of lies during the night, in preparation for the ordeal which he well knew was at hand.

His coarse, defiant nature rebelled when Policeman McNerney confronted him, and he felt secure in recalling the narrow limitations of the policeman's possible knowledge of the past.

But at last the lad yielded under the hammering of the enraged officer. "I'll give you just five minutes to consider if you wish to sacrifice your mother's life, you young dog," McNerney exclaimed. "We have her confession in full, and as you decoyed this murdered man into her clutches, you are only saving yourself by a full unbosoming."

"And if I don't talk?" growled Emil, beginning to sicken over the gloomy future.

"You will be sailed around on this yacht till you weaken, till we've caught the head devil, and then it only depends on him as to whether you go to the 'chair' with him or not!" It was a frightful alternative.

With a sudden revulsion, the startled young rascal exclaimed: "I'll give you the whole business, as far as I know; and if you'll save my mother, I'll turn State's evidence. I know nothing about the murder! I only know now that Fritz Braun wanted to get poor Mr. Clayton into some out-of-the-way place to get the money away from him. I only thought that he wanted to bleed him, using that pretty woman, s'help me, God! I did."

"We will judge of your story when we hear it," grimly answered McNerney.

But it was Doctor Atwater's measured courtesy which disarmed this vulgar youth's pregnant fears.

"We can show your mother and yourself to have been used as innocent tools, if you give up the whole truth. But, remember, a little smart lying will surely cost you your life."

Atwater and McNerney listened, in astonishment, as Emil Einstein unveiled the double life of his former patron. The inner workings of Magdal's Pharmacy, the dual trades on different banks of the East River, the duplex Braun and Meyer, and the whole scenario of the Cafe Bavaria and the Newport Art Gallery--all these were faithfully pictured.

With moistened eyes, Atwater listened to the story of Randall Clayton's chivalric faith in the beautiful waif whom a romantic Fortune seemed to have thrown in his pathway, a creature of light

and love.

When the long recital was done, both the inquisitors felt that Einstein spoke the truth, as he wildly declared that he only thought Braun was throwing a pretty woman in Clayton's way to get a secret hold upon him.

"I never dreamed of the company's robbing, nor of killing poor Mr. Clayton. I got not one dollar out of it. I never had Braun's confidence, and he followed me up, and used me, and threw me away like an old rug. And Ben Timmins knows nothing. He's only a poor drudge in Braun's Sixth Avenue opium-joint and whisky-store."

"But Lilienthal, he knows a lot! Catch him if you can! But he's an oily devil. He threw this woman against poor Mr. Clayton."

It was only when the boy was thoroughly subdued that Atwater quietly asked, "And Ferris? What had he to do with it?"

"Nothing," stubbornly cried the boy. "Only so far as this: he wanted to sneak in and get old Worthington's daughter, and all the money. That's square! He hated Clayton. He used to write lying letters to the old chief about him. He sent private reports on his life to Mr. Worthington. I used to watch him. I often got a peep at his papers, and he bribed me to pipe off poor Clayton. But you can hang me if Ferris knew Fritz Braun. You see," coolly said the crafty boy, "Ferris wanted the girl, the money, and the old man's favor. Braun only wanted the company's money, and used the Hungarian lady to draw Clayton on. I fancy, from all I could see, that Mr. Clayton really loved that lady; and Braun could only use her to fool him over there; then he took the chances to kill him to get the money. No! Ferris is only a snake in the grass, a coward, and a cur! He fastened on Clayton as a friend, and got in between him and Mr. Worthington; but, he never saw Fritz Braun!"

The boy's tone was convincing. "Then you let Braun know how easily he could steal a fortune by getting hold of Clayton on his way to the bank!" roughly accused McNerney.

"Not me; never, on your life," defiantly answered Emil. "It may have been Lilienthal, for Mr. Wade was often in that 'back room' of his. Old Wade is a 'dead easy game,' soft on the ladies, and Lilienthal may have pumped him and so put the job up with Braun."

The recital of Lilienthal and Braun's illicit trading made Dennis McNerney's eyes gleam.

When the three men left the yacht at sunset, the policeman called Einstein into a corner. "See here," he said. "I've got your mother locked up in my charge. She is a decentish sort of woman, in her way, and she loves you, you young brute. See if you can remember anything more in your yacht cruise of a month.

"Officer Condon will treat you well. You may clear your mother and yourself; you may get Timmins' evidence for us to break up this smuggling gang. There'll be a big reward there! I will see that you don't suffer. Give the whole business up to Officer Condon. When it is safe, you'll be taken ashore."

Emil Einstein, watching the boat going ashore, felt a choking throb in his throat. "That fellow McNerney's a smart devil," he said. "He is on the right trail, and there'll be a fight for life when he rounds up Fritz. He is going after his blood. And Fritz will never be taken alive!"

The stars were peacefully shining down on New York City, three days later, when Miss Alice Worthington bade adieu to Doctor Atwater. The mystery of Randall Clayton's murder had passed into a worn-out sensation, and new crimes, new names, new faces, filled the flaring journals. The firm hand of Witherspoon was at the helm of the Trading Company, and even Adolph Lilienthal had forgotten his fears.

The Clayton affair had been all threshed out! It had been tacitly arranged between the friends that Witherspoon should watch over Miss Worthington's peace of mind, while Atwater went upon the quest led by the resolute McNerney.

Far away under the shadows of the Katzen Gebirge, on this summer evening, Mr. August Meyer, dogging Irma Gluyas' every footstep, secretly exulted. "Leah is now on her way to meet me! And then all the old scores will be soon settled!"

The Hungarian witch, patient in captivity, breathlessly waited for Randall Clayton's coming, still deceived by the false telegram.

But, as Alice Worthington whispered her last secret instructions to Atwater, sailing on the morrow, her heart was light, for she knew her father, though stained with greed, had been guiltless of Clayton's blood. "I will give anything on earth to the man who clears Randall Clayton's memory," said the heiress. "Don't promise too much, Miss Alice," cried Atwater, as he kissed her hand. "I will do my duty!"

As the carriage drove away, she watched him from the window. Their eyes met, and she turned away, with sudden blushes.

CHAPTER XIV.

IRMA GLUYAS.

It was four days after the sailing of the secret mission of justice when Witherspoon said adieu to Miss Alice Worthington at the Forty-second Street station. With a wise forethought, the young lawyer had succeeded in his innocent ruse to distract attention.

Mr. Lemuel Boardman not only called the young heiress back to Detroit, for the probate of her father's will, but sent on his wife as a courteous convoy to make sure of the girl wife's acquiescence.

It was none too soon. For a haggard anxiety now drew lines upon the heiress' fair brow. News from the pursuers could only be expected in a fortnight, and Witherspoon feared the strain of a momentous secret upon the young beauty's nerves. Her soul longed for Randall Clayton's complete vindication. "One hint, and Ferris would take flight," mused Jack. "And if there were accomplices, they are surely watching her every movement."

And yet it was an ordeal, this parting. For the hundredth time, Witherspoon promised to come by the first train to Detroit with the tidings of the secret quest, and a score of times he was forced to deny Alice Worthington's tearful pleading. "Let me know to whom I can make restitution," she cried. "This will--who has it? The beneficiary may sorely need poor Randall's strangely withheld fortune!"

"Only when justice is done will that claimant appear," firmly answered Witherspoon. "You trust me now with the handling of your fortune! Trust me yet a little longer with that secret. I will telegraph you of the success or failure of our expedition.

"And then all will be made plain to you when Atwater returns. There must be no failure of justice. We will repay the villains to the uttermost farthing."

And, in his turn, Witherspoon was sorely baffled, for the sudden appointment of Mr. Arthur Ferris of New York as Consul of the United States at Amoy, China, had been duly gazetted. Only to Stillwell did the eager Witherspoon confide his fears that one of the unpunished criminals was escaping in honorable guise.

"You are in error, my boy," confidently answered the legal Solon. "We have had Ferris shadowed on behalf of the executors ever since the death of Hugh Worthington. The fact is," he said, lowering his voice confidentially, "Senator Dunham is at the helm in this thing. You well know that old Hugh and the Senator were closely allied. Now, Hugh blindly trusted Ferris, as the statesman's nephew, and, in fact, Ferris is, to a certain extent, a very dangerous customer for all of us. He had papers and secrets which might ruin his uncle, and a discovery of the hidden relations with Hugh would gravely affect our company's commanding position. Old Boardman has had a week of private conference with Senator Dunham.

"Boardman knew every secret of poor old Hugh's heart. Dunham and Boardman have gone over all the documents and matters surrendered by Ferris, and the Senator vouches for Ferris' future silence.

"He has himself set off a hundred thousand dollars of our stock, in Ferris' name (in escrow) as a guarantee of the young man's silence. This is a present to Ferris, who let Dunham have the first privately telegraphed news of Hugh's death.

"Why, sir. Dunham turned the market for a half million on that! It appears the daughter telegraphed the first news of the accident to Ferris, at the old man's dying request. And Ferris cunningly held it back, so that the Associated Press did not get it for a day. Then came the panicky drop in our stock. Dunham sold huge blocks short and filled later at the lowest notch, forty points below!"

"I thought," slowly remarked Witherspoon, "that Ferris would perhaps try to blackmail the estate!"

"So he did," drily answered Stillwell. "He gets one hundred thousand dollars in clear settlement of all his claims for legal services for the past five years, as rendered to the Worthington Estate."

"Oh! I see," bitterly remarked Witherspoon. "Each side puts up a hundred thousand dollars as the price of his silence!"

"And," curtly said Stillwell, "we now hold Dunham responsible that Ferris does not return to America for four years. By that time Dunham's senatorial term will be out. He will retire from politics, and so, his record and our interests are secure! I always feared that Ferris would turn up darkly in this sad murder business," gloomily added the old lawyer. "But the whole secret inquest so far proves to me the correctness of Boardman and Warner's judgment. Ferris feared Clayton's natural influence over the old man, and his own final game was the daughter's hand, and then the control of the old man's fortune. He spied on Clayton, lied about him, and at last brought about the estrangement of the old man and his only loyal servant in the whole circle.

"Poor Clayton! After his death he fell into a useless fortune! Miss Worthington has already made arrangements for a magnificent monument to him in the family plot at Detroit, and Randall Clayton will be there beside his stern old master. But for Ferris' wiles Clayton would surely have married that noble girl, and been alive to-day, a happy man, in Detroit.

"Ferris played a bold game and lost at last. It was the sale of the Senator's influence for the hand of the heiress. And she now hates him with an undying bitterness. But you can drop Ferris out as a suspected murderer. No; Clayton was evidently killed for the vast funds he carried. And we see, too late, that no less than three men should ever be trusted to make regular trips with such

great amounts of money. But it's the old story of life. We are all wise, a day after the fair!"

Ten days after the stout "Rambler" shook out her snowy sails and flitted away to Bermuda, there was nothing left to ruffle the still waters of oblivion which had closed over Randall Clayton. Only upon the face of Robert Wade, Esq., lingered now an anxious expression of vague unrest.

For the Newport Art Gallery knew the oily beauty of Mr. Adolph Lilienthal no longer. There was a new face behind the proprietor's desk, and the "private view" gallery was permanently closed.

The furtive visitors came trooping in and went disconsolately away, for the private hall entrance was sternly shut and the electric bell removed. Night after night police, customs, and post-office officials sat in secret conference over the mysterious threads of the Baltic smuggling conspiracy now being gathered up while Mr. Adolph Lilienthal languished in a private cell in Ludlow Street jail.

He divided his ignorance of what he was "in for" with the frightened "Ben Timmins," who was safely locked up in a lower tier of the same human safe deposit bureau, charged with "complicity in smuggling."

The affairs of Magdal's Pharmacy were being conducted by a new clerk, nominated by the police, all unknown to the Tenderloin habitués, and a service-paid detective occupied the private office where the secret connection between Lilienthal and the absent Mr. Fritz Braun was being daily traced out.

The summer flowers were nodding over poor Randall Clayton's lonely grave, in the lonely cemetery of Woodlawn, on the September day when a queerly-assorted party of tourists descended from the train in the little Silesian village of Schebitz. Doctor William Atwater was tenderly cautious of the comfort of a veiled invalid woman, at whose side a sturdy nurse aided the watchful medical attendant. And none of the gaping yokels of the town obtained even a glimpse of the sick woman's pale face, as she was conducted to the covered carriage in waiting for the train.

With some show of state, a resplendent courier and a hard-featured military-looking stranger drove in advance of the carriage, half hidden in a hooded country droschky. The slanting summer showers glittered in the half-veiled sunbeams as the party hastily drove away toward the summer resort, two leagues away, where jaded fashionables rejoiced in the healing waters of the Louisen Quelle.

But no one of the gaping throng following the "fremden" guessed at the errand of this motley throng. In silence the cortege proceeded until a little by-lane covered with overhanging branches was reached, leading down into a dell where a natural vista showed an old gray mansion upon a rocky knoll.

An untrimmed forest around still gave its shelter to bird and hare, starting out from their coverts as the carriages rolled over the grass-grown, deserted road. "It is a 'Bleak House,'" murmured Atwater, gazing out of his carriage at the dreary crags of the Katzen Gebirge towering up, overhanging the neglected demesne. The young doctor leaned over and then whispered a few words in the ear of the apparently invalid woman, who was now trembling like a leaf.

"Remember, Leah," he sternly said, "your boy's life hangs on your faith now." Atwater moved a heavy pistol holster around under his loose top-coat, as the droschky in front of them halted. He sprang lightly out and walked to where the two other men were busied in an earnest colloquy.

McNerney, pistol in hand, was gloomily gazing at the turrets of the gray house. "He may escape us," fiercely said the man who had traveled from New York, eager to clasp the cold steel on "Mr. August Meyer's" blood-stained hands.

"Not so," calmly answered the disguised Breslau police sergeant, a sturdy war veteran. "I have hunted here all over the Adler's Horst. I know every crag and open spot. My soldiers are now hidden in a circle all around the old house. The moment that our carriage drives out into the open, they will close in and arrest every living soul. Do you see that little white flag flying on a pole on that pile of rocks? That is my signal that all is ready. Come on, now. We may not be in at the death."

Atwater had marvelled at the rapid work of the officials in their three-hours' stay at Breslau, and now he admired the skirmishing tactics of the veteran as the three men dodged from side to side while the empty carriage slowly drove down into the open.

The German sergeant threw up his hand and darted forward on the run as lithe forms in rifle green were seen quickly swarming out of the woods encircling the old mansion. There was no sign of life in the low, irregular hunting-lodge, save a pillar of smoke lazily ascending from the offices in rear.

McNerney was racing along at the German officer's side, his pistol drawn, and Atwater hardly turned his head as a squad of soldiers darted out of the encircling thickets.

"He is in there!" shouted a corporal to the Breslau policeman, now eager to make the capture and share McNerney's promised reward.

The screams of the frightened servants could be heard as the assailants neared the house. Was it fancy, or did McNerney see a grim, human face glaring out of the window of a round tower at the angle of the facade?

"Here; this way!" cried McNerney, as he stumbled into a little garden where trellised grapevines in olden days made a shaded walk for the Lady of Adler's Horst.

The group of men stopped aghast as a woman dashed wildly out of a door opening into a long conservatory. Her voice rang out in a last, appealing cry for help. She was sorely pressed!

Not three paces behind her trailing white robes, his face convulsed with passion, Fritz Braun leaped along, in a murderous rage, like a tiger in pursuit. In his right hand gleamed a flashing knife, and as the frantic woman tripped and fell, the brute's arm was raised.

But, throwing himself back into the "gallery position," McNerney tossed his revolver at the point blank. The heavy crack of the pistol was followed by a yell of rage as the American sprang forward, planting his foot firmly on Fritz Braun's chest.

Atwater had kicked the knife a score of yards away, when Sergeant Breyman thrust his burly form in front of the fallen woman.

But, McNerney was sternly covering the fallen form of Braun with his cocked pistol. "Move, you dog, and I'll blow your brains out!" he shouted. "Here, Atwater, get the handcuffs out of my left coat pocket and clap them on this wretch!" There were a half-dozen men now holding down the defiant murderer, whose right arm lay limply at his side.

The second carriage had boldly driven across the lawn, and Leah Einstein leaped lightly to the ground. She was all unveiled now, and Irma Gluyas uttered a faint cry as the handsome Jewess stood spellbound before the astounded prisoner.

Sergeant Breyman had already knotted a handkerchief around the prisoner's bleeding arm, when Dennis McNerney, in a ringing voice, cried, "August Meyer, alias Fritz Braun, I arrest you for the murder of Randall Clayton!"

With one shuddering sigh, Irma Gluyas fell prostrate upon the grassy sward. "Take her into the house, men," cried the sergeant, as a score of hardy soldiers now closed around the excited group. "Go with them, Leah," said Atwater. "I'll just glance at this scoundrel's arm, and then come in to you."

When the riflemen bore the now fainting prisoner into the dreary granite-walled lodge, McNerney whispered to Atwater, "Look out for him! I must take the nurse and Leah, and try to locate Braun's plunder. These Germans must never know of that."

With all the formality of a martinet, Sergeant Breyman now posted his guard, leaving a corporal and two men with the young surgeon, for Atwater only lived now to see Braun dragged back to his punishment. There was no mistake, for McNerney had whispered, "It's the Sixth

Avenue druggist, sure enough! I am a made man for life!"

The few household servants were being paraded and questioned by the German official, while Dennis McNerney, followed by Leah, glided through the rooms of the second story. A glance told the practical officer where Braun had made his own headquarters.

"The southwest bedroom and second-story turret gave a view of all of the approaches to the Adler's Horst."

Guns and sharpened hunting implements easily showed Braun's preparations for defense, and his presumed relaxation.

When McNerney had glanced at Irma Gluyas' own retreat, he hastily locked the door of Braun's separate retreat. The policeman's quick eye had caught sight of the inner bolts and chains! "The stuff is surely hidden near here! I must make my play upon his pretty companion." When McNerney rejoined Doctor Atwater, the physician had already left Braun to the formal questioning of the methodical sergeant.

Irma Gluyas was now sobbing wildly, her head resting on the bosom of the woman who had been Braun's dupe as well as slave; the woman who had feebly enacted the role of Madame Raffoni.

And now the whole frightful truth had dawned upon the beautiful Magyar. She gazed despairingly at McNerney when he quickly said: "You can purchase your own safety; you can aid us now. Tell me, where did he hide the quarter of a million he stole? For this scoundrel only did murder to reach the fortune carried by poor Clayton!"

"Kill me! Do what you will; I care not," sobbed the singer. "I knew nothing of these crimes, of either one. Hasten, though. Search well the second floor of the turret. This fiend spent all his evenings there alone. He always locked his rooms, and the door into the tower. Even the servants were not allowed to enter his den! What you seek must be there! May the curse of God reach him! And now is my hour of vengeance. He betrayed this poor victim, the man who died through a noble love for me!"

Only Leah Einstein and the resolute Atwater remained at Irma's side as McNerney ran upstairs alone. The police matron who had been Leah Einstein's secret jailer on the voyage was now listening to Braun's stubborn negations of all Sergeant Breyman's formal questions.

Atwater, with a touched heart, listened to Irma Gluyas in her passionate ravings. "The lying fiend! I will tell all! I will go on my knees to pray God to strike him dead!"

For, at last, the duped woman knew that Randall Clayton was already cold in death when Braun had forged the lying telegram which bade her hope for deliverance.

"He watched me, night and day, lest I should try to escape! He plotted to kill me, but he feared the servants. I always kept a little peasant child here in my rooms, night and day.

"Our old forester, Hermann, who guards the estate for the young Count von Kinsky, who is travelling over the world for four years, is good and true. He is Frida's uncle. And I told him all my fears. I had only a few jewels, my own. Braun feared to give me money. But Hermann was arranging to help me away to Poland, when you came. Once there I would have been safe from Braun. He would not have dared to claim me. And Hermann, the forester, is known to all the officials. He has charge of the estate.

"Braun feared him. He dared not take me away, for I would not go. It has been the slavery of hell itself. But I baffled him! Four times a day Hermann came for my orders, and I always left a little light burning in one window of my rooms. Every night one of the men watched. My food was prepared by little Frida alone, and she never left my side. Braun dared not poison me! I waited, and he waited. What did he wait for?"

"HE WAITED FOR ME," cried Leah Einstein, in a fit of remorseful tears, now anxious to save her boy.

She seized Atwater's arm with trembling hands. "Your police detective did not get Braun's first letter to me. He begged me to come to him. He was to get rid of this poor girl, and I was to live like a lady."

The two guilty women were weeping together when McNerney stole into the room. He drew the young doctor aside.

"Our main work is done here," he whispered. "Now get these two women in trim so they will not tell anything to our German friends. You and I can handle this quest alone. I've found out his hiding place!"

While the matron delayed Sergeant Breyman below, Atwater and McNerney ascended to the murderer's lair.

"I at once saw that the flagstones of the fireplace in the turret had been lifted," hoarsely whispered the overjoyed Dennis. "With this old boar spear I pried up the slabs. It's all down in there. A valise full of notes! Here! Help me drag this couch over the stones, and move the furniture. The German police must not see this. To-night you and I will gather up the harvest!"

The athletic young men worked with a will. In five minutes the panting McNerney said, "Safe enough now from the ox-eyed German detective! Let us go down. How badly is he hurt?"

"His right arm is merely disabled! It's a very severe flesh wound,"

complacently answered the doctor. "Just enough loss of blood and following inflammation to leave him as helpless as a lamb in our hands."

"I want to take the wolf home," growled McNerney, "and to see him sit in the chair of death. I'll give him no chance to play tricks!"

There was little sleep in the old schloss of Adler's Horst on this eventful night. The regular pacing of sentinels reechoed upon the porticos, and a squad of hearty German soldiers made merry in the servants' hall with the released domestics.

Stout Ober-forster Hermann listened, with mouth agape, to Sergeant Breyman's loud denunciation of the wounded prisoner as the two men exchanged confidences, in the dining hall, where antlers and wolves' heads, grinning bears' skulls, and eagles' wings told the tale of many a wild jagd.

In the library, where Braun lay under guard, the two Americans were as powerless as Sergeant Breyman to break down Fritz Braun's dogged reserve. The only growl which escaped his bearded lips was a muttered curse. "Damn you both! In five minutes I would have silenced that lying jade's tongue forever."

It was four days after the surprise of Adler's Horst when the strangers left the estate to the care of rugged old Forster Hermann. Far and near, the simple country folk came to gaze upon the "Amerikanische" desperado, as the cortege of three carriages and two wagons drew slowly away from the schloss.

The soldiery had now all departed, save a corporal and three men, and peace reigned over the woods given up again to the elk and roebuck.

Atwater and McNerney were astonished at Fritz Braun's stolid indifference. The whole drama was now laid bare up to the fatal moment when the entrapped Clayton was left helpless under Braun's strangling fingers.

The news of the capture, cabled over to New York City, had sent Jack Witherspoon whirling away to Detroit to give to Alice Worthington the news of the successful capture, and a proximate vengeance for Clayton's murder.

Braun's defiant mood still continued. The only request he had made of the two friends was that he might have the necessary clothing for his homeward voyage.

With keen eyes, McNerney and Atwater searched all the articles reserved for the use of the sullen wretch, whose inflamed wound now rendered him almost helpless.

The whole crime seemed to be now cleared up from the frank confessions

of Leah Einstein and the unknown Magyar beauty.

"It has been a great campaign," said McNerney, as he saw Braun, guarded by four soldiers, start slowly toward the village under the convoy of Sergeant Breyman. "He spent but little of the plunder! Here we have recovered nearly two hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars in bills and good cheques! He evidently feared to attract attention by any undue luxury."

They had removed every scrap of the belongings of both the fugitives. "I can understand this wretched Leah, now," said Atwater. "She would have been Braun's willing tool in hiding his final murder of Irma Gluyas. Braun needed her aid, and would have given her the slave's dole of comfort. But this beautiful wanderer! She hails with delight her return to America! Is it her frantic desire for vengeance? She had learned to love poor Clayton! And her whole soul is fixed on Braun expiating the murder. Prison she fears not."

Neither man knew of the singer's fear lest an Austrian dungeon might open its iron cells to her, should Braun be discovered to be the fugitive Hugo Landor.

"No one can read a woman's heart!" mused McNerney. "Judges and juries, the journals and the public, fancy these poor wretches, hunted down for their beauty, are different from their more fortunate sisters. I've not found it so. There's some womanhood left in every one of them, and there are manifold temptations and weaknesses in the lives of many who walk serenely in honor. At the last, all men and women are much the same; only, once started on the downward path, not one in a thousand ever is checked!"

"This Irma is not such a bad woman; with a better chance she might have been some one's heart darling for all time. The only thing I cannot see is how Braun killed this man so quietly."

Both of the friends had discerned no more than the final trap. The fatal lure of Irma Gluyas' beauty!

Braun, at last becoming distrustful of the woman whose heart was rebaptized in love, had acted on the moment, and his crafty advantage was taken of Clayton's headlong passion.

"It is clear poor Leah was only used as a stool-pigeon; she is far too cowardly to harm the meanest creature," said Atwater. "In some way, Braun must have given Clayton a stupefying poison, and then strangled him."

"In that lonely place, he undoubtedly hid the body and had it thrown overboard later. Of course, it was probably hidden in some case or box, perhaps a great trunk, and then cast into the bay by others. One thing is sure, we will never know from this brute's confession. He will die mute."

"You are right," said McNerney; "for he will go grimly silent to the chair, a thug and a murderer, in heart and soul.

"This fellow could have prospered in any decent line of life! He is only one more to make the bitter discovery THAT CRIME DOES NOT PAY! It is both stupid and useless. But the criminal only finds this hard truth out too late. He will never get away from me, alive or dead; back he goes to New York." And yet McNerney forgot his keenest daily precautions, deceived by the apparent helplessness of the wounded murderer.

The strangely-assorted party were hurried through Breslau by the authorities, and Sergeant Breyman proudly wore Doctor Atwater's gold repeater as a parting present, when the train rushed away, bearing the secretly raging criminal back to a shameful death.

"I shall not sleep till I get that fellow safely in an iron tank stateroom on the Hamburg steamer," said the stern-eyed McNerney, preparing to lock Braun's wrist to his own. "After we sail, we can have him watched, night and day; then, you and I can rest!"

The secret of the vast money recovery had been faithfully kept, and even when the "Fuerst Bismarck" turned the Lizard and sped out on the Atlantic, few of the passengers suspected that a daring criminal was imprisoned below.

While Doctor Atwater keenly watched the bewitching Irma Gluyas and the now happy Leah, the returning tourists supposed them to be only a lady of rank and her waiting women.

McNerney, sure of his princely reward, now never left his prisoner, and the recovered funds were duly locked in the liner's great steel steamer safe.

So it was left to William Atwater to draw out, bit by bit, the whole story of Irma Gluyas' wasted life.

A pale-faced, stately beauty, steadfast and silent, was the wretched woman who had innocently lured Clayton to the murder chamber.

It was easy for Atwater, in his professional experience, to discover from the final unbosoming of both the women, that Braun had artfully drugged and stupefied his beautiful decoy, so that she was incapable of warning Clayton, or interrupting the leisurely disposition of the murdered man's body.

"He must have changed his first plans," mused Atwater, "only guided by his desire to have the money so imprudently trusted to one man."

There was life in Leah Einstein's heart once more, for she now knew that her graceless son was probably safe from prison.

Sly, secretive, and slavishly devoted to the young reprobate, the

sin-soiled woman had successfully hidden all which could in any way implicate the dishonest office boy.

When the great ship neared Sandy Hook, William Atwater frankly answered Irma Gluyas' wailing cry, "Why do I not throw myself over there, in search of peace?"

For the gnawing of conscience had made the Magyar girl's life a torment. "It is not for me to judge you; it is only for me to help you!" sadly said the young physician.

"You have aided to bring many sorrows and sufferings on others! Work out your own salvation! You were born a Catholic.

"Your religion has orders where repentant women can toil among the suffering in schools or in the hospitals. It has its great work among the helpless. Hide your dangerous beauty there, among those who give their lives up to good works.

"And you will find peace and hope stealing to your side. God gave you a life; you have no right to throw it away." The poor, repentant, soiled one seized his hand and kissed it, while bitter tears rained from her eyes. "I will work; I will go where I cannot be hunted into a deeper hell than my accusing conscience brings up!"

There was a grim vigilance in every movement of Dennis McNerney as he watched the now haggard-eyed Braun in the tank cell far below the decks, where Fashion's children gaily chattered.

Only a few gruff sentences had ever escaped the murderer on the long voyage, and only a horrible curse had answered the proposition of Atwater and McNerney that a full confession might, in some way, soften the brute's impending doom.

The room where Braun was confined was bare of all lethal implements with which he might effect a suicide, and two stalwart men were his room-mates.

When the quartermasters, at midnight, peered out for the first glimpse of Fire Island light, Dennis McNerney, pacing the deserted deck, almost alone, revolved his plan of inspecting the sullen prisoner at intervals of every three hours during the night. "It is a desperate human brute, that one," muttered the sturdy policeman; "but, I've brought him safely home."

While a wild coast storm raged, and the screaming gulls circled around the plunging ship; while shrill winds moaned in the steel rigging, McNerney crept down for the last time before sighting land, at four o'clock, to peer through the grated door and see Fritz Braun lying prone--a confused heap--his coat rolled up as a pillow under his head.

The wounded arm alone was free; the other, shackled to a broad

belt, was locked around the prisoner's waist.

"He is sleeping like a child," mused the officer. "In a few hours he will be safely in the Tombs, and my long watch will be over!"

The great liner was grandly sweeping up to Quarantine, when Dennis McNerney leaped from his berth and followed the startled cabin-boy, who shook him roughly.

"Come down, sir! THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG!" the boy babbled. "Get Doctor Atwater, instantly!" cried McNerney, as he rushed down into the ship's hold.

One glance at the guarded door was sufficient.

One of the careless keepers was clamoring for admittance, while the other bent over a rigid form lying there, prone and ghastly, in the gray morning light stealing in at the little porthole.

"It happened while I was out at breakfast," pleaded the unfaithful watcher, whom McNerney roughly cast aside.

Atwater was at McNerney's elbow when the frightened inmate had unlocked the door of the strong room. One shake of the recumbent form told the story. "He has cheated the executioner," solemnly said Atwater, letting the lifeless hand fall heavily from his grasp.

"He lay that way all the while since your last visit," said the sullen derelict keeper.

A hasty search of the cell showed an empty vial. "Chloral! Here is the key to the mystery!" cried Atwater, examining the coat, flung aside when the body was lifted. "See this torn sleeve! The murderer had hidden the bottle of poison here in the thick breast-wadding of the coat under the coat-sleeve. He waited coolly for the deed till the last night before our landing."

Atwater again inhaled the odor of the narcotic. "Chloral, sure enough!" he slowly said. "A two-ounce vial, and probably mingled with some more deadly poison! Probably the 'knock-out drops' the wretch used formerly to peddle to convicts!"

An hour later a circle of astonished police officials stood around the corpse of the crafty criminal who had passed beyond man's jurisdiction. "A desperate wretch," said the chief of detectives. "Fritz Braun, the mysterious druggist. He was prepared for the worst!"

With a quick sagacity, Doctor Atwater had concealed the press news of the desperate wretch's suicide, having in mind the final punishment of Lilienthal and Timmins. It was decided by the police officials to keep the news of the recovery of the fortune an official secret until all the crafty Baltic smuggling gang should

all be apprehended.

In Irma Gluyas' cabin, Leah Einstein had divulged the whole details of the cowardly crime, as she had worked them out. It was to Doctor Atwater alone that Leah freely unbosomed herself.

In return for the Doctor's pledge, now given, to save the precocious Emil, the timorous Leah gave out the vital keynotes of the Baltic smugglers' syndicate.

For, at last, the ban of fear was lifted, and the frightened woman made haste to avail herself of the official clemency offered by the authorities.

A half-dozen policemen sped away to concert with the United States deputy marshals for the arrest of a clan of steamship clerks, stewards, Hoboken hotel-keepers, wharf officials, and others who had been the tools of the robust-minded Fritz Braun.

There was a happy meeting with Miss Alice Worthington, who was now seated in Atwater's stateroom, under the care of the triumphant Jack Witherspoon. The cable had called her from her princely Detroit home to be the first to hear the whole story of the capture of Braun from the lips of Atwater and the jubilant Dennis McNerney.

McNerney's triumph had been sadly dashed by the successful suicide of the great criminal.

"Never mind," kindly said the chief of police. "It was not your fault! This makes you a Sergeant, Dennis." The happy officer's eyes glistened as he saluted.

And ten minutes later he knew from the rosy lips of the great heiress that the full reward of twenty-five thousand dollars given by the company, and the same by Miss Worthington was now payable to him on the deposit of the recovered funds and cheques with the Western Trading Company.

"Five thousand of this is yours, Jim," cordially cried Dennis to Officer Condon, who had reported on board to announce the well-being of the office boy prisoner on the yacht "Rambler."

"I'll take another job of cobbler work like that, any time," joyously answered Condon, "and, mind you, I'm to be your best man at the wedding!"

For Dennis McNerney's new rank and fortune were to be the immediate cause of his precipitating a hitherto delayed matrimony.

The craft with which Fritz Braun had hidden away the poison in the padded coat-lining suggested to all the insiders the manner which he intended to use to rid himself of the repentant and defiant Irma.

While the chief of police arranged for the secret removal of Fritz Braun's body at night, there was an earnest conference in Atwater's stateroom.

"I leave it to you, my brothers," she said, with a pretty blush, "to arrange for the complete rehabilitation of Randall Clayton's memory.

"The whole business world must know that he was led to his grave by an honorable affection, and that the momentary imprudence which caused him to fall into Braun's trap was the only indiscretion of his whole career.

"And now, I have a right to demand of you both the name of my dead foster-brother's heir. The million dollars paid for the poor boy's half of the Detroit lands is on deposit in the Railway Company's safes, awaiting the probate of his will."

"HE STANDS BEFORE YOU," gravely said Doctor Atwater, taking her hand.

"Poor Randall! Some premonition of his doom haunted him. He had saved some money, and by investments accumulated a little purse of twenty thousand dollars or so. And this, and all his estate, he willed to Mr. Witherspoon, as a wedding present for Francine Delacroix!"

"Why did you not tell me sooner?" reproachfully demanded the heiress, turning her lovely eyes upon Witherspoon.

"Because I wished to freely aid in running down his murderers; to clear his memory, and because the great world would have misinterpreted my zeal. I know the nobility of heart with which your father set aside this property for Clayton, as soon as he found out the old title! Had they met at Cheyenne, all would have been well!"

And then Alice Worthington thanked God in her anxious heart that her dangerous secret was safe. She smiled through her happy tears as she placed her hand in Witherspoon's. "We will both cherish his memory, for life! And I now only exact one condition: that is, that Francine's wedding shall be from my home. We were schoolmates, and sisters of the heart, though our home was a very quiet one. My father was averse to all family intimacies. The executors are ready to make the transfer of the money whenever you prove up poor Randall's will."

"And I," said Witherspoon, "exact one thing in return. I demand the right, in honor, to refund to the Trading Company all the money used by the murderer, the whole search expenses, and the double rewards. There will be a princely fortune left for me after all, and this money so used will vindicate poor Clayton's memory from all blame for his chivalric folly." Alice Worthington bowed her

head in assent, as the spirited young man proceeded.

"When you see Irma Gluyas, you will know what a strange fate overtook him. For she has been made another woman by the manly love of the poor fellow who believed in her." The Detroit lawyer was deceived by the heiress' calmness. "She knew nothing," he mused. "It is well."

While Atwater busied himself in the removal of the two women who had been Fritz Braun's dupes, and arranged for young Einstein's meeting with his mother, and recording the joint confessions of the two, a surprise awaited Officer Dennis McNerney.

The cabin boy who had been allowed to bring meals to the wounded prisoner, in fear and trembling, confessed to the baffled policeman that Braun had given him a hundred-dollar bill which he had managed to secrete in his trousers waistband, for the promised duty of writing to Mrs. August Landor, No. 195 Ringstrasse, Vienna, that her fugitive son, Hugo Landor, had died of fever in a Catholic hospital at San Francisco, under an assumed name.

The men on watch were all ignorant of German, and so did not detect the last wishes of the intending suicide.

"But I knew nothing," protested the boy. "I was always freely allowed to serve him, and so I brought him a scissors and needle and thread to repair his clothing, which had been cut to accommodate his arm.

"I thought that his little bottle was only medicine; for he hid it in his hand, after opening the breast of his coat."

"And so there was one last touch of feeling left in the murderer's heart," mused the stout policeman. "He wished his poor old mother to believe that he died decently. Let it be so! She shall not carry this last shame to her grave.

"And now, to polish off all the underlings of the smuggling conspiracy. There is both honor and profit in bringing them to book.

"Timmins and Lilienthal may be useful as State's evidence, for this last fellow saves his neck, perhaps, by Fritz Braun's death. It can never be known if he was only Braun's tool or the real inspirer of the crime. He must have found out about the money!" And so the careful lying of mother and son hid forever the reason of Braun's plot. The boy was saved.

When the stars of night shone down upon the great ship at her dock, all signs of the gloomy happening had been carefully hidden. Doctor Atwater had removed the two women, under guard of the well-rewarded matron and a skilled detective, to his own apartments, where the crafty Emil Einstein was brought to meet his poor, doting mother.

The detective captain took charge of the unravelling of the whole story of Mr. "August Meyer's" Brooklyn career, as well as the secrets of the crafty druggist, Fritz Braun.

There was a great symposium at Counselor Stillwell's residence by the leafy borders of the park. The great advocate rejoiced at the removal of every stain from Clayton's memory, and marvelled greatly at the deeply-laid snares of the man whose body now lay uuhonored at the morgue.

"You will have to run the company's affairs alone for a month," cheerfully said Jack Witherspoon; "for Atwater and I are to accompany Miss Worthington out to Detroit. Only I bid you all now to my wedding, which will occur in six months, and Miss Worthington honors my Francine with throwing her home open for that quiet ceremony. Atwater is to be the best man!"

"Where is your reward?" softly said Miss Worthington to the faithful young physician, as they looked out on the evening stars together.

"I can wait!" simply said the young man, and their eyes dropped in a strange confusion.

But Alice Worthington was in her mind already wondering when the weary weeks would pass away and free her from the tie binding her to the man secretly banished to Amoy.

CHAPTER XV.

MISS WORTHINGTON SHARES HER SECRET.

The time of roses had come and gone once more. The woodland was turning to gold again around the beautiful country home of that successful capitalist, Mr. John Witherspoon, at Fordham.

All the world knew of the stately glories of that recent wedding festivity at Detroit, whereat, under the wedding bell of white blossoms, Miss Francine Delacroix had given her hand to the man whom all envied as he stood before them, the active intellectual champion of Miss Alice Worthington.

The serene countenance of the young millionairess was placid, bearing a dignity far beyond her years, when she marshalled the friends of her youth to witness the marriage of the man whose skilful hand

now guided the vast eastern interests of the Worthington Estate.

It was only after the bewildering honeymoon days had passed that Witherspoon, under the advice of Counselor Stillwell and the astute executors, began to gather up all the loose ends of the Clayton affair.

The permanent residence of Witherspoon in New York City was exacted by the growing cares of the vast company's interests.

And so the young bridegroom had selected a temporary country house until his vivacious helpmeet could be pleased in a choice of their permanent city residence. Unchanged by the possession of his dead friend's fortune, so romantically passed down to him, Witherspoon ceased to try to unravel the dark complications of Hugh Worthington's past.

There seemed to be some peculiar restraining influence which sealed the lips of Messrs. Boardman and Warner, and even the great Stillwell but briefly referred to the strange compact with Ferris which had seemed to buy the crafty schemer's silence for one hundred thousand dollars.

To the astonishment of proud old Detroit, Miss Worthington seemed to show no desire to open her superb palace home to society, and the great world slowly crystallized to the conclusion that she had found a new field in the affairs of the vast estate now absolutely under her own control.

The beautiful girl seemed to have passed, with a bound, into a mature womanhood, as if some malign influence had swept away all the flowers from her path. And, in her daily walks, she avoided the scores of gallants who now sought that richly dowered hand.

"This is not as it should be," finally decided Witherspoon, whose firm hand had cleared up all the aftermath of complications arising from Clayton's murder.

Busied with his own affairs, Witherspoon left the fate of Irma Gluyas, the friendless Leah, and the corrupted boy to Doctor William Atwater, whose frequent visits to Detroit were explained by some vague plan of philanthropic deeds now occupying the mind of Miss Worthington.

The meaner subordinates of Fritz Braun's crime were all easily disposed of, for both Lilienthal and Timmins were now serving long sentences for defrauding the United States customs laws.

And the Newport Art Gallery and the Magdal's Pharmacy were now both matters of "ancient history."

A mock auction allured the crowd, where the drugstore had long gathered the degenerates, and a gaudy "Bargain Bazar" flourished

where once Lilienthal's inviting smile had wooed the unwary.

And, as the pernicious smuggling gang had been routed, "smitten hip and thigh," Witherspoon ceased to pry into the still partly veiled past. It was only after Sergeant Dennis McNerney had dropped the very last clue, that Witherspoon finally abandoned his settled purpose of tracing down Arthur Ferris' supposed connection with the crime which swept Randall Clayton out of the world. "It's no use, sir!" muttered the sergeant, "He was capable of anything, but he stands clear of the whole thing!"

The prosperous sergeant had sifted to the very dregs the fullest confessions of the passionate-hearted Hungarian beauty, and the defenceless Leah.

The complete history of "August Meyer" in Brooklyn had been traced out, and McNerney triumphantly demonstrated the uselessness of further search in No. 192 Layte Street.

The old mansion had been in every way changed, and the basement was now the abode of swarming Celestials, who had tinkered its space up to suit themselves. There were no traces of the crime left!

And so, reluctantly, Manager Witherspoon ceased to pry into the private life of Arthur Ferris. McNerney stoutly maintained the thesis to the last, that Ferris and Fritz Braun were strangers.

"The women both prove it," urged the officer.

"And yet some still unfathomed game of Ferris made him Clayton's secret enemy. Ferris wanted that beautiful heiress; he wanted to completely estrange and supplant Clayton, and so to reach old Worthington's millions. For that, he clung to the unsuspecting comrade of his bachelor life. Look to the West for light in this! Believe me, if any one knows, it is Miss Worthington! She is one woman in a million, a woman who does not talk!"

"What do you mean, Dennis?" sharply said the young lawyer.

The simple policeman stoutly answered, "I observed that Miss Alice seemed to have gained a great mastery over Counselor Stillwell and her Detroit lawyers.

"She was with her father for hours before he died, and I'm of the opinion that he told her many things that none of the lawyers even dream of, secrets that perhaps even you do not suspect! I'm only a plain policeman, yet strange schemes are in these millionaires' heads often.

"The great man had his own private uses for Ferris, and for the Senator uncle, who knows what great designs ended with his death.

"Believe me, she is following out her father's last advice; and if

she lets Ferris off easy, you must do the same!

"As for Fritz Braun, he at first only intended, evidently, to lure poor Clayton into the Art Gallery or his own drug-store, through this pretty Hungarian, and, from a study of Clayton's habits, change the valises and so rob him by the old trick! The bunco game!

"But fortune willed otherwise, and Braun took the chance of Clayton's faith in the girl. He did not know that Clayton was so fondly devoted to the woman.

"The murder was a sudden inspiration, arising from Clayton's headlong imprudence.

"And Braun knew nothing of old Worthington's designs, nor Clayton's past history. What more Miss Worthington may know, you will never know, much as she esteems you, unless she wills. For she is a very resolute character, and I believe that she is quietly managing Stillwell and the other lawyers in her own way.

"It's clear to me that both Ferris and Braun used this poor office boy as a spy on Clayton; only, for different purposes.

"As for the two women, they were both mere puppets! Fritz Braun was tempted by the unprotected situation of that vast sum of money going daily to the bank. He easily learned that from the boy's braggadocio talk, and then used the whole circle as a means to entrap Clayton. As for the women, they are both merely what temptation, misery, and surroundings have made them. I'm glad to hear Doctor Atwater say Miss Worthington has some plans for their future.

"As for the boy, your own design is a wise one. Transport him out West, give him a fair start in some Pacific State in a decent business, and then if he goes wrong, after his severe lesson, let him run up against a smart punishment."

Reluctantly convinced, John Witherspoon dropped all his final investigations as to Arthur Ferris' secret career in New York City. As the months rolled along he saw the justice of the blunt police officer's judgment, for Miss Alice Worthington seemed to be an administering talent of the highest order.

"She would make a Secretary of the Treasury, sir," said the admiring Stillwell. "She is old beyond her years--a rare woman!"

By some vague influence, the personal future designs of Miss Worthington seemed to be a subject tabooed between Witherspoon, his wife, and Doctor Atwater, at the regular weekly dinner at Beechwood, where the young physician was always a stated guest.

Miss Worthington, already a Lady Bountiful, in Detroit, conducted a separate correspondence with the young wife, the husband, and the physician, the last her only confidant in the still unmaturing

plans of a practical philanthropy.

It was in the early autumn of the year following Randall Clayton's death that Witherspoon sprang up in astonishment, when he unfolded the New York Herald over his morning coffee at Beechwood.

The cabled announcement of the death of the Honorable Arthur Ferris, United States Consul at Amoy, China, was only supplemented by the statement that he had fallen a victim of the coast fever.

"This is the end of all," sadly mused the lawyer, as he saw his immediate duty of repeating the news by telegraph to Detroit.

"Whatever connection Ferris had with the secret designs of Worthington is now a sealed mystery forever; the hand of Death has turned the last page down."

Witherspoon rightly conjectured that to Senator Dunham the death of his once trusted negotiator would be a welcome release from the tyranny of a dangerous past.

"The statesman's immaculate toga is still unsmirched," bitterly commented Witherspoon.

"And now all of Arthur Ferris' busy schemes have come to naught! His bootless treason, his fruitless intrigue of years, even the hush-money on the one side, the blood-money on the other, are all alike valueless! He lost every trick in life, even with the cards in his own hands." It was a case of the engineer "hoist with his own petard!"

In vain did John Witherspoon await any personal comment from the great heiress. The very name of the dead man was unmentioned in the daily letters from her secretary.

When Doctor Atwater returned from one of his now frequent "business" visits to Detroit, he shook his head in a grave negation when Witherspoon brought up the name of the dead counsel.

"Something very strange there! Even Boardman and Warner seemed averse to any conversation upon the subject," soberly said Atwater. "I judge that the memory of Ferris is a most distasteful topic to them all. I presume that the papers of old Hugh probably have revived matters, which might as well be buried in Ferris' lonely grave out there on the shores of the Formosa Strait."

It was nearly two months after the cabled announcement when John Witherspoon received a bulky packet from the United States Vice-Consul at Amoy, China. He had not fully deciphered all the documents when he sprang from his chair and, quitting the Trading Company's office, hurriedly drove to Doctor Atwater's headquarters.

Atwater saw from his friend's face that something of moment had

happened. "Tell me, Jack, what is it?" he asked with a horrible fear.

"Alice?"

Witherspoon smiled sadly, as his friend's excitement betrayed the innocent secret of the young physician's heart.

"No! God be praised!" he slowly answered. "Alice lives to bless some good man's life! But I have here a message from the dead, and the last legacy of a crime! You must go out instantly to Detroit, for I cannot leave our great interests at this juncture. It seems as if the very grave had opened for this!"

Doctor Atwater's eyes were dim when he handed the papers back to his friend. "What could have goaded him on to his unhappy end! What stings and whiplashes of conscience! Let us go carefully over the whole matter together! I will telegraph my departure and then take to-night's train."

The few lines traced by Arthur Ferris' feeble fingers were supplemented by a long and formal letter from the United States Vice-Consul at Amoy.

The enclosure of a verified copy of the will of Arthur Ferris, duly attested by the consular seal, was accompanied by a statement that the original and the keys of Ferris' safe deposit box in New York had been duly forwarded to New York, through the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank.

There was a sealed enclosure directed to Miss Alice Worthington, the superscription being faintly discernable in the trembling hand of the fever patient.

And as both men gazed silently at each other, they knew that some dark secret lay veiled there under the outspread wings of the American eagle of the consular seal, which duplicated Ferris' private signet.

With a strange interest, Atwater read of the last sufferings of the unfortunate official. "My late superior seemed to be tortured in his mind to his very last moment," wrote the Vice-Consul, "by the fear that these documents might not safely reach Miss Worthington through you.

"Be pleased to give me the earliest possible acknowledgment of the receipt of both the certified copy herewith sent and the original with the keys and duly certified order for the delivery of the tin box of the deceased to Miss Worthington herself."

"Here we dismiss his memory forever between us!" solemnly said Witherspoon, as he read aloud Arthur Ferris' last message. "It is for her alone to bear him in mind, and to sit in judgment upon him! What unrighted wrong drove him, in remorse, to his lonely grave!

I shall never ask an answer of her!"

In vain did Atwater follow the enigmatic sentences.

"I leave the fund of one hundred thousand dollars, created for me by my uncle, and the similar sum now due and payable by the Worthington Estate, to Alice Worthington for the foundation of such a charity as she may deem proper. This money is the legacy of a crime and of a wrong!

"Of a crime, though only contemplated, of which I am not innocent at heart, and of a wrong done, of which Miss Worthington alone shall be the judge.

"To you, Witherspoon, I can say that every mad scheme which I framed to reach wealth and power has failed miserably; that I have found my soul's unhappiness in the betrayal of poor Clayton's friendship.

"And yet, as I hope for the forgiveness of an Almighty God, I knew nothing of his murder, either in the deed or its conception. Let me be forgotten by all the world, forgiven by one alone."

The two friends long gazed at each other in a gloomy silence.

"I leave the whole mystery to you, my friend," at last wearily said the lawyer. "I will never try to read between the lines. Take the whole correspondence with you. I have already had a copy made of the Vice-Consul's letter and Ferris' own few sentences. I know that Alice will surely consecrate this vile money to some good purpose, and so I make you my ambassador.

"She will understand why I hope never to hear Ferris' name again, for I know and feel that he was a murderer at heart. Had Clayton missed the snares of the deadly thug who coveted the money which was so criminally exposed, for the golden bribe of the Worthington fortune, Ferris would have sacrificed the only man who stood between him and the millionaire's favor, between him and, perhaps, this orphaned girl's hand.

"And, as sure as the sinner errs, so sure is that old proverb, 'THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH!'

"I will simply forward any further Amoy enclosures to Miss Worthington for her own action. The drama is done, the curtain has fallen, and the lights are turned out forever!"

Mr. and Mrs. John Witherspoon were enjoying the delights of a Continental run a year later, when that bright-eyed young matron, Madame Francine, read to her delighted husband the account given by Miss Worthington of the opening of the "Free Hospital and Orphans' Home," to which the young heiress had dedicated the estate of the unfortunate Ferris, as well as a large sum set aside by herself.

The Witherspoons were in the far niente, floating on the Grand Canal in beautiful Venice, while the young beauty selected Alice's letter from a sheaf handed to them by the porter of the Hotel Danieli, who pursued them in a gondola.

The married lovers were now on their way to the Nile and the eternal glow of its cloudless skies.

Witherspoon listened with a mock gravity, until he suddenly interrupted, "What does she say of Atwater?"

"Nothing," answered the merry matron. "It's all about the grand opening of the Home."

"Then, IT'S ALL RIGHT!" calmly answered Jack, lighting a cigar and leaning back under the parti-colored awning. "When a woman says nothing about a man, it's surely all right. I can wait, wait patiently, till her philanthropic fever abates. I suppose that we will hear something at the First Cataract, or at Khartoum. or some other remote spot, perhaps where the lion basks upon the tomb of ruined Palmyra! There is a happy crisis approaching 'in the near future,' as the swell journals say."

There were many interesting details lost to the runaway lovers by their wanderings, but the essential facts finally reached them in Calcutta, on their homeward way around the world.

Neither Alice Worthington nor the man who was now her coadjutor in many noble works could ever exactly recall the sequence of the events which had prolonged indefinitely Atwater's stay in Detroit.

But it had happened upon a winter evening, when the great Worthington mansion was silent, and Mrs. Hayward, Alice's duenna and general almoner, had artfully stolen away, leaving the unconscious lovers together.

The successful working of the Hospital and Home was now assured beyond a doubt.

Atwater, gazing out into the glowing embers of the great fireplace, slowly said, as the musical chime of the silver bells of the mantel clock sounded ten:

"And now I feel that Messrs. Boardman and Warner can oversee your local Medical Board and keep the institution from lapsing into the dry rot of a purely charitable organization."

"I fear for nothing," he said, smiling faintly, "as long as you are here to watch it. And," he hastily added, "certainly you can trust Irma Gluyas! That poor woman finds a fiery zeal from her past sorrows spurring her on. She is a faithful assistant manageress.

"And even Leah Einstein has her humble merit as a sterling housekeeper.

But, you must have Jack carefully watch over that boy out in the West. Young Emil needs a firm hand, and only Witherspoon can hold him down to usefulness."

"Why are you telling me all these things?" suddenly said Alice Worthington, her cheeks paling in a strange dismay.

"Because," said the young man, slowly, "I have long desired to follow out a special line of medical investigation in Vienna. I have the two years yet before I reach thirty, in which I propose to make my mark in original research, or else return to New York to my old routine, fortified by the contact of the ablest medical minds in the world."

"This is impossible! YOU SHALL NOT GO!" suddenly cried Alice Worthington, with pallid cheeks aflame with sudden blushes. Her bosom was heaving in some strange tumult as Atwater took her trembling hands in his own.

"It would be so hard for me to say 'Good bye,' he almost whispered, "that I have decided to write you from New York. I have already secured my passage on the 'Paris.'"

"And you will not allow me to recompense you for all you have done?" whispered Alice, bravely struggling to keep back her tears.

"Yes; I will," resolutely answered Atwater. "Go on lifting up the lowly, bind up their bruised hearts, and all good men will bless your name. That will be my reward!"

"Wait a moment," faltered Alice, as she sped away.

Left alone in the room, Atwater, gazing into the fire, listened for the returning footfall of the woman whose face had long haunted his pillow.

"You alone, of all the world," said the beautiful woman, as she glided to his side. "You alone are entitled to my confidence.

"Only you should know the story of my life!"

She handed him the letter which had been Arthur Ferris' eternal farewell to the woman who had never even borne his name.

He started forward, with arms extended, as he read that last message from beyond the sea. "It means that I am to keep your innocent secret!"

"There is nothing hidden now," the loving woman shyly said. "IT MEANS THAT YOU ARE NOT TO GO!"

They were still tranced there in their happiness when the silver bells chimed out again. The ruddy fire-light lit up their faces,

glowing with the hidden love which had at last found its voice as the shadow of parting fell upon them.

"Auf wiederschen, dearest heart!" cried Atwater. "We will lead the noble life together, please God, to the end!"

"Hand in hand, and heart to heart," whispered the loving woman, whose happy eyes saw no cloud of the past now lowering upon her. And, even in the flush of the new-born joy she was true to her solemn vow.

"No shame rests upon my father's name," she murmured, that night, in her prayers. "The works that men do live after them, and in his name I will build up a monument of good works over the tomb where the secret of his life's temptation lies buried with him."

The gleaming stars shone down tenderly upon the happy lover speeding homeward, for the bells of joy were ringing in his awakened heart. "I must try and get these glad tidings to our wanderers abroad," mused Atwater.

And this, stripped of some merely personal happenings, with a gracious confirmation by Alice, was the budget of good news which greeted the Witherspoons on their arrival at Calcutta.

"Jack!" joyously cried Madame Francine, "I have only been waiting for this official confirmation for some months. Alice writes me to hasten back so as to be the star guest of the coming wedding."

"I have had a firm faith also," drily rejoined her husband, "that in due time Alice's field of philanthropy would enlarge itself to include our friend. And so, it's all well that ends well! Here's for home, then, when you will!"

[THE END.]

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