The Darrow Enigma

By Melvin L. Severy.

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THE EPISODE OF THE PARALLEL.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

"Look here, Doc," Maitland said, breaking out suddenly, "I've an idea. Might not this fellow's interest in cancers be due to his having one himself? Suppose you make a canvass of the specialists on cancer in Boston and vicinity, and see if any of them remember being consulted by a patient answering the description with which I will provide you. In addition to this I will insert an ad in the papers calling attention to a new method for the cure of cancer, and asking all interested to call at your office for further particulars. The plan does not promise much, still it may bring him. What do you say?"

I expressed my willingness to do all in my power to aid him, and he left me. The next morning's papers contained the advertisement and I had several calls in answer to it. These would have caused me much inconvenience had I not explained the whole ruse in confidence to a medical friend who made a specialty of the treatment of cancers, and persuaded him to come to my office during the nours specified in the advertisement. When a patient would call I would satisfy myself that it was neither the person we were searching for, nor anyone sent by him to make inquiries, and then turn him over to my colleague, Dr. Rhoades. It would never have occurred to me to interest myself in any patient who did not answer the description given me by Maitland, had he not especially cautioned me in this regard.

"We have," he said, "to deal with a man possessed of ability of no common order. We have already seen that he never runs a risk, however slight, which he can avoid. It is more than likely, therefore, if our advertisement meets his eye and interests him, he will inquire into it thru some second party. Again, we are by no means certain that his interest in cancers is a purely personal one. Perhaps it is a wife, a sister, or some other relative who is afflicted. In this case we could hardly expect him to come himself. Let me caution you, therefore, to closely scrutinize all applicants and question them until you are satisfied they are in nowise connected with the man for whom we are searching."

I followed this advice most carefully and had no difficulty in convincing myself that none of my callers had any relation whatsoever with the murderer of John Darrow. This order of things was continued for several days with the same result. In the meantime Maitland was working upon a new clue he had discovered. He would tell me all about it, he said, when he had followed it to the end. This was on Tuesday. On Friday he came to the house and informed us that he had met a man who had known a M. Henri Cazot, a Frenchman whose description seemed to tally perfectly with nearly all we knew of Mr. Darrow's murderer.

"It came about in this way," Maitland began in response to Gwen's request that he should tell us all about it:

"I determined to thoroly search every book on the 'Weltz-Rizzi' list, to see if I might not get some additional clue. In the work by Robert Houdin entitled 'The Sharper Detected and Exposed' I found the statement that gamblers often neutralized a cut in a pack of cards by a rapid and dexterous sleight. This, the book went on to say, was accomplished in the following manner: When the cards are cut and left in two packets upon the table, the sharper picks up with his right hand the parcel of cards which was originally at the bottom of the pack. This is brought above the other packet, as in an honest cut, but, just before releasing the cards, the lower parcel is deftly tilted up by inserting the right little finger under it, and the upper packet quickly slid beneath it, leaving the cards in precisely the position they occupied before cutting. For this purpose, the book continued, the nail of the right little finger is worn very long, so as to facilitate its being thrust beneath a packet of cards. Here, I said to myself, is a possible explanation of one of the peculiarities of my plaster cast. The long nail on the left little finger may have served its function at the gaming table. If so, however, it would seem to indicate that our man is left-handed, while, as we have already seen, the writing upon the library slips would indicate that he is ambidextrous. We need not, therefore, I reasoned, be surprised if we find that both little fingers have long nails. I at once acted upon these thoughts and began a search of the gambling resorts of this city. In order not to excite suspicion, I played a little in each place, watching my opportunity to engage the proprietor in conversation. In every case I followed the same formula. Did he remember the gentleman who used to come there? Foreigner—spoke French, a little under medium height; had a sort of halt in his walk; bit his finger nails, etc., etc. I met with no encouragement in the down-town places, tho the proprietor of one of the Hayward Place 'dives' had an idea such a man had been there, but only once or twice, and he was not sure he could place him. I then went up to the South End and on Decatur street found a man who promptly responded to my inquiries: 'Gad! that's Henri Cazot fast enough, in all but the height and gait. Dick there, he'll tell you all about him. He owes him a little debt of honor of about a hundred plunks. He gave him his note for it, and Dick carries it around with him, not because he thinks he'll ever get it, but he likes the writing. M. Henri Cazot! eh, Dick?' and he burst into a coarse laugh. I turned to Dick for further information. He had already produced a much-crumpled paper and was smoothing it out upon the table.

"'There's the article,' he said, bringing his hand down emphatically upon it. 'The cuss was hard up. Luck had gone agin him and he had lost every cent he had. Jem Macey was a-dealin' and Cazot didn't seem to grasp that fact, but kept bettin' heavy. You see, young feller, ye ain't over likely to win at cards when yer playin' agin the dealer. Cazot didn't know this and I wouldn't tell him, for he was rather fly with the cards himself when he wan't watched too close. Well, he struck me for a loan; said his little girl was hungry and he hadn't a cent to buy bread. Gad, but he looked wild tho! I always thought he was more'n half loony. Well, as I had helped to fleece him I lent him a hundred and took this here note. That's the last I ever see of M. Henri Cazot,' and he handed the paper to me. I glanced at the signature. It was the same hand that had written 'Weltz' and 'Rizzi' upon the library slips. There was that unmistakable 'z' which had just attracted my attention! It required considerable effort on my part to so restrain my feelings as not to appear especially interested in what I had learned. I think, however, I succeeded, as they freely answered my questions regarding Cazot and the daughter of whom he had spoken. They knew nothing further, they said, than what they had told me.

"'It was a year ago come next month that I lent him the money,' my informant continued. He pocketed it, hurried out, and that is the last I have ever seen or heard of him. Shouldn't wonder if he'd blown his brains out long ago. He used to have a mighty desperate look at times. He was one of them Monte Carlo fellers, I reckon.'

"That's all I have been able to learn thus far. It isn't very much, but it shows we are on the right track. By the way, Doc, I'm going to change that ad. tomorrow, offering treatment by letter. Perhaps our man is too shy to apply in person. At all events we'll give the other method a trial."

CHAPTER III.

The new advertisement duly appeared and on the next day, which was Wednesday—I remember it because it was my hospital day—I received several written answers, and among them, one in which I felt confident I recognized the peculiar z's of Weltz and Rizzi. I took it at once to Maitland. He glanced at it a moment and then impulsively grasped my hand. "By Jove, Doc!" he exclaimed, "if this crafty fox doesn't scent the hound, we shall soon run him to earth. You see he has given no address and signs a new name. We are to write to Carl Cazenove, general delivery, Boston. Good! we will do so at once, and I will then arrange with the postal authorities to notify me when they deliver the letter. Of course this will necessitate a continuous watch, perhaps for several days, of the general delivery window. It is hardly likely our crafty friend will himself call for the letter, so it will be imperative that some one be constantly on hand to shadow whomsoever he may send as a substitute. May I depend on your assistance in this matter?"

"I will stand by you till we see the thing thru," I said, "tho I have to live in the postoffice a month."

Well, I wrote and mailed the decoy letter and Maitland explained the situation to the postal authorities, who furnished us a comfortable place inside and near the general delivery window. They promised to notify us when any one called for our letter. Our vigil was not a very long one. On Thursday afternoon the postal clerk signaled to us that Carl Cazenove's mail had been asked for, and, while he was consuming as much time as possible in finding our letter, Maitland and I quietly stepped out into the corridor. The sight that met our gaze was one for which we had not been at all prepared. There at the window stood a beautiful young girl just on the verge of womanhood. Her frank blue eyes met mine with the utmost candor as I passed by her so that she should be between Maitland and me, and thus unable to elude us, whichever way she turned upon leaving the window. We had previously planned how we should shadow our quarry, one on each side of the street in order not to attract attention, but these tactics seemed to be entirely unnecessary, for the young lady did not have the slightest suspicion that anyone could be in the least interested in her movements. She walked leisurely along, stopping now occasionally to gaze at the shop windows and never once turning to look back. She did not even conceal the letter, but held it in her hand with her portemonnaie, and I could see that the address was uppermost. A strange sensation came over me as I dogged her steps. I felt as an assassin must feel who tracks his victim into some lonely spot where he may dare to strike him. It was useless for me to tell myself that I was on the side of justice and engaged in an honorable errand. A single glance at the girl's delicate face, as frank and open as the morning light, brought the hot blush of shame to my cheek. In following her I dimly felt that, in some way, I was seeking to associate her with evil, which seemed little less than sacrilege. I could do nothing, however, but keep on, so I followed her thru Devonshire street, to New Washington and thence down Hanover street, almost to the ferry. Here she turned into an alleyway and, waiting for Maitland to come up, we both saw her enter a house at its farther end.

George glanced hastily up at the house and then said, as he seized me impatiently by the arm: "It's a tenement house; come on, the chase is not up yet; we, too, must go in!"

So in we went. The young lady had disappeared, but as we entered we heard a door close on the floor above, and felt sure we knew where she had gone. We mounted the stairs as noiselessly as possible and listened in the hall. We could distinguish a woman's voice and occasionally that of a man, but we could not hear what passed between them. On our right there was a door partly ajar. Maitland pushed it open, and looked in. The room was empty and unfurnished, with the exception of a dilapidated stove which stood against the partition separating this room from the one that the young lady had entered. Maitland beckoned to me and I followed him into the room. There was a key on the inside of the door which he noiselessly turned in the lock. He then began to investigate the premises. Three other rooms communicated with the one of which we had taken possession, forming, evidently, a suite which had been let for housekeeping. Everything was in ill-repair, as is the case with most of the cheap tenements in this locality. The previous tenant had not thought it necessary to clean the apartments when quitting them—for altruism does not flourish at the North End—but had been content to leave all the dirt for the next occupant.

When we had finished reconnoitering we returned to the room we first entered, which apparently was the kitchen. We could still hear the voices, but not distinctly. "Do you stay here, Doc," whispered Maitland, "while I get into some old clothes and hunt up the landlord of this place. I'm going to rent these rooms long enough to acquaint myself with my neighbors on the other side of the wall. I'll be back soon. Don't let any man leave that room without your knowing where he goes." With this he left me and I soon found a way to busy myself in his absence. In the wall above the stove, where the pipe passed thru the partition into our neighbor's apartment, there was a chink large enough to permit me, when mounted upon the stove, to overlook the greater part of the adjacent room. I availed myself of this privilege, tho not without those same twinge of conscience which I had felt some minutes before when following the young lady. The apartment was poorly furnished, and yet, despite this scantiness of appointment, there was unmistakable evidence of refinement. Everything visible in the room was scrupulously neat and the new pictures that adorned the walls, while they were inexpensive halftones, were yet reproductions of masterpieces. In the center of the room stood a small deal table, on the opposite side of which sat the man who had answered my letter.

At one end of the table, poised upon the back of a chair, sat a small Capucin monkey of the Weeper or Sai species. He watched the man with that sober, judicial air which is by no means confined exclusively to supreme benches. I, too, observed the man carefully. He was tall and spare. He must have measured nearly six feet in height and could not, I think, have weighed over one hundred and fifty pounds. His face was pinched and careworn, but this effect was more than redeemed by a pair of full black eyes having a depth of penetration I have never seen equalled, albeit, there was, ever and anon, a suggestion of wildness which somewhat marred their deep, contemplative beauty. The brows and the carriage of the head at once bespoke the scholar. While thus I watched him, the young girl came from a corner of the room I could not overlook and laid my letter before him. She stood behind his chair as he opened it, smoothing his hair caressingly and, every now and then, kissing him gently. He paused with the open letter before him, reached up both arms, drew her down to him, kissed her passionately, sighed, and picked up the letter again. I took pains that no act, word or look should escape me. This show of affection surprised me, and I remember the thought flashed thru my mind, "What inconsistent beings we all are! Here is a man apparently capable of a causelss and cold-blooded assassination of a harmless old man. You would say such a murderer must be hopelessly selfish and brutal, amenable to none of the better sentiments of mankind, and yet it needs but a casual glance to see how his whole life is bound up in the young girl before him."

While this was passing thru my mind the man had glanced thru my letter and thrown it upon the table with an exclamation of disgust. "Bah! he has had the effrontery," he said petulantly, "to send me what he calls a new mode of treatment, and it is in every essential that of Broadbent, well known for more than a quarter of a century. New, indeed! I shall never find a doctor who has any scientific acumen. I may as well abandon the search now. Mon Dieu! and they call medicine a science! Bah!" and with a frown he dropped his head despondently upon his hand. The young girl passed her hand gently, soothingly, over his forehead and did not speak for nearly a minute.

"You are not feeling well tonight, father," she said at length. "M. Godin has been here during my absence."

"M. Godin!" I exclaimed half aloud, catching at the stovepipe lest I should fall from the stove. "So our rival is hot upon the scent—probably even ahead of us. How on earth——" But I did not finish the exclamation. My seizure of the pipe upon my side of the partition had produced an audible vibration of that portion extending over the heads of my neighbors. The young girl's quick ear had detected the sound and she had ceased speaking and fastened her eyes suspiciously upon the aperture thru which I was gazing. It seemed to me as if she must see me, yet I dared not move. After a little she seemed reassured and continued: "I knew he had been here. You are always this way after his visits. Why, of late, does he always come when I am away?" The question seemed innocent enough, yet the man to whom it was addressed turned crimson and then as pale as ashes. When he spoke the effort his self-control cost him was terribly apparent.

"We have private business, dear," he said, "private business." He hesitated a moment and again his eyes wore the wild look I had first noticed. "I am selling him something," he continued, "very dear to me—as dear as my heart's blood, and I expect to get enough for it to guard you from want."

"And you, father?" the young girl questioned fervently. I thought I noticed a tremor run thru his frame, as drawing her face down to his, he said, kissing her, "Me? Never mind me, Puss; this cancer here will take care of me."

She made no reply, but turned away to hide the tears that sprang to her eyes. As she did so she raised her face toward me. I have never been considered particularly sympathetic—that is, no more than the average—but there was something in the expression of her face that went to my heart like a knife. I felt as if I were about to sob with her. I do not know what it was that so aroused my sympathies. We are, I fancy, more apt to feel for those whose beauty is like to the ideals we have learned to love, than we are to be moved by the suffering of those whose looks repel us—and this may have had something to do with my condition—for the young girl was radiantly beautiful—yet it could hardly have been the real cause of it.

So rapt was I in the sympathetic contemplation of her that I did not see Maitland's entrance or realize I was observed till he plucked me by the coat and motioned me to get down. I did so and he told me he had rented the rooms, and laid before me the plan he meant to pursue.

As soon as he had ceased speaking I said to him: "George, you are undoubtedly on the right track. The man in there is the one we are looking for, fast enough, but I am afraid we are a bit too late."

"Too late!" he exlaimed in a tone that I feared might be overheard. "What the mischief do you mean?"

"I mean," I replied, "that M. Godin is already upon the scene."

In the next ten seconds Maitland turned all colors and I edged nearer to him, expecting him to fall, but he did not.

"M. Godin!" he ejaculated at length. "How in the name of all the gods at once—Doc, he's all they claim for him, and as fascinating as he is clever;" at which last remark a heavy cloud passed over Maitland's face. "Come," he continued listlessly, "you may as well tell me all you know about it."

I then confided to him what I had heard and ended by asking him what he proposed to do.

"Do?" he replied. "There is but one thing I can do, which makes the choice decidedly easy," and he set his jaws together with a determined expression, the meaning of which I knew full well.

"I shall camp right here," he said, "till I learn all I wish to know of our neighbors yonder. I have already provided myself with instruments which will enable me to note every movement they make, indeed to photograph them, if necessary, and to hear and record every word they utter. You look surprised, but it is easily done. I will place my lenses there at the chink thru which you were gazing and bring the image down into my camera obscura by a prism arranged for total internal reflection. As for the hearing, that is easier yet. I will carefully work away the plaster on this side tonight till I get thru to the paper covering their wall. This I will leave intact to use as a diaphragm. I have then only to fasten my carbon to it, and, behold, we have a microphone or telephone—whichever you choose to call it. All I have to look out for is that I get it high enough to avoid the danger of the paper being accidentally broken from the other side, and that I work quietly while removing the plaster. I shall, of course, cover it with a bit of black felt to prevent our light from showing, and to deaden any sounds from this side. This will enable us to hear all that goes on in the other room, but this may not be enough. We may need a phonographic record of what transpires.

"The device whereby I secure this at such a distance is an invention of my own which, for patent reasons—I might almost say 'patent patent reasons'—I will ask you to kindly keep to yourself. To the diaphragm there I fasten this bit of burnished silver. Upon this I concentrate a pencil of light which, when reflected, acts photographically upon a sensitised moving tape in this little box, and perfectly registers the minutest movemeut of the receiving diaphragm. How I develop, etch, and reproduce this record, and transform it into a record of the ordinary type, you will see in due time—and will kindly keep secret for the present. You had beter go now and send me the things on this list, as soon as possible," and he passed me a paper, continuing:

"We will not despair yet. Our clever rival may not be ready to prove his case so quickly as we. At all events, when he comes again I shall be in a condition to ascertain how far he has progressed. I have some things I must settle before I can ask for an arrest, and I am not at all sure that M. Godin is in any better condition in this regard than I am. By Jove! I'd give something to know how that wizard has gotten so far without so much as a single sign to indicate that he had even moved in the matter. I say, Doc, it beats me, blest if it doesn't! Please say to Miss Darrow that I am at work upon a promising clue—promising for someone anyway—and may not see her for some time yet."

I did as he requested, and, if I am any judge of feminine indications, my message did not yield Gwen unmixed pleasure; still, she said nothing to warrant such a supposition on my part. I visited Maitland every day to learn what he might wish me to bring him, and also to carry him his mail, for he had determined to remain constantly on the watch at his new quarters.

I have thus far, in the narration of these incidents, been perfectly candid, both as regards my friends and myself, and, therefore, that I may continue in like manner to the end, I shall suppress certain qualms which are urging me to silence, and confess myself guilty of some things of which you will, perhaps, think I may well be ashamed. Be that as it may, you shall have the whole truth, however it may affect your opinion of me. One reason why I went to Maitland's new quarters so often, and stayed there so long, was because I was always permitted to relieve him of his watch. With a telephone receiver strapped to my right ear, and my eyes fastened upon the screen of the camera obscura, I would sit by the hour prying into the affairs of the two people in the next room. I tried for a number of days to ease my conscience by telling myself that I was laboring in the cause of justice, and was not a common eavesdropper. This permitted me to retain a sort of quasi self-respect for a day or two till my honesty rallied itself, and forced me to realize and to admit that I was, to all intents and purposes, a common Paul Pry, performing a disreputable act for the gratification it gave me. I determined I would at least be honest with myself—and this was my verdict. You will, perhaps, fancy that when I arrived at this decision I at once mended my ways and resigned my seat of observation to Maitland's entirely professional care. This, doubtless, I should have done, if we fallible human beings governed our conduct by our knowledge of what is right and proper. Inasmuch, however, as desires and emotions are the determining factors of human conduct, I did nothing of the sort. I simply watched there day after day, with ever-increasing avidity, until at length I got to be impatient of the duties that took me away, and more than half inclined to neglect them.

I shall gain nothing by attempting to make you believe it was the man in the neighboring room that interested me, so I shall not essay it. I confess, with a feeling of guilt because I am not more ashamed of it—that it was the young lady who attracted me. You will, I trust, assume I had enough interest in her father to paliate my conduct in a measure. Be generous in your judgment. How do you know you will not be in the same predicament? Think of it! A young woman beautiful beyond your feeble powers of description; her eyes of a heavenly blue; her luxuriant hair like a mass of spun gold; her complexion matched to the tint and transparency of the blush rose—and such a throat! From it came a voice as musical as the unguided waters when winter rushes down the hills in search of spring. Never you mind, that's the way I felt about it, and, if you had been in my place, you'd have been just as bad as I; come, now, you know you would. Suppose I was a bachelor, and almost old enough to be her father. Does that help matters any? Is the heart less hungry because it has been starved? Just look at your history. When nuns have relapsed from other-worldliness to this-worldliness how have they been? I'll tell you. They have been just a round baker's dozen times worse than they would have been if they had never undertaken to cheat nature. Look at the thing fairly. I don't expect to dodge any blame that I deserve, yet I do want all the palliating circumstances duly noted. Many months have passed since then, and yet the thought of that sweet girl sends a thrill all over me. I wonder where she is now? I feel that we shall meet again some time, and perhaps you will see her yourself. If so, you will see that I couldn't be expected to withstand any such temptation.

To Be Continued Next Saturday.

HUGE DON'T WORRY CLUB.

Baltimore American.

With President Roosevelt in the White House, the whole country resolves itself into a huge Don't Worry club, with some 80,000,000 paid-up memberships.

UP TO DATE.

"Yer want ter sell me a gold brick, I spose?"

"Oh, no, indeed. It's a brick of radium this time."

FORTY YEARS BETWEEN

By LLOYD OSBOURNE.

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"Ah, if that had been any one but him!" exclaimed Captain Hadow.

"It's horrible to call him a deserter," said Francis.

"Don't let's do it!" said the captain.

"We have to say something, sir," replied the first lieutenant, helplessly.

"One can always lie, I suppose," said Hadow.

"There's nothing I wouldn't do myself for Jack Garrard," said Mr. Francis.

"Why not say he was kidnapped here by the hill tribes?" said Hadow. "We aren't certain sure he wasn't, and no one can deny but what he might have been."

"But the admiral would be bound to inquire into it," said Mr. Francis. "Sooner or later he'd send a ship."

"Trust Jack to do his own lying when she gets here," said Hadow. "Besides, he'll be sick of the whole thing and only too glad to step aboard."

"But won't we be asked why we didn't rescue him?" asked Francis.

"No, no, I have it!" cried the captain.

"It's certainly a case for stretching a point, sir," said Mr. Francis.

"Enter in the log," said the captain, speaking very slowly and thoughtfully, "that Passed Midshipman John de Vigne Garrard, failing to report himself at the expiration of his leave, was afterward discovered to have been kidnapped by the hill tribes of Borabora island. On my threatening to land a party to recover him I was dissuaded by King George, who cleared himself of any personal responsibility in the matter, and who promised, if only I would give him time, to recover the man without bloodshed or any cost to his majesty's government. The king urged that the use of force would imperil the officer's life, which otherwise he had every confidence would be spared."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Francis.

"You'll give old George a flaming character," added Hadow.

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Francis.

"Pile it on about his reverence for the queen and the way he gave beef to the ship," said Hadow.

"And what then, sir?" inquired Mr. Francis.

"Well, you know," said Hadow, "my orders here leave me a pretty wide latitude. You can't tie down a surveying ship in wild waters the way you can a simple patrol. By George, sir, I'll lay the ship back here in nine months and retake Master Johnny Garrard."

"You may count, Captain Hadow, on our most loyal and hearty support," said Mr. Francis.

"Thank you," said the captain, "and you will pass the word along that the subject is not one to be discussed."

"Quite so, sir," said the first lieutenant.

"Not a word!" exclaimed the captain. "Tho you might coach the king a bit about the hill tribes. But, of course, not a whisper that we're ever coming back."

"No, sir," said Mr. Francis.

"This must go no further than you and me," said Hadow.

"It shall not, sir," returned the first lieutenant.

"We shall said tonight at the turn of the tide," said the captain.

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Francis.

It was not nine months—it was fifteen and some days to spare—before the Dauntless again raised the peak of Borabora and backed her mainyard on the settlement.

It was morning when Hadow raised the island, a fleecy speck of cloud against the sky-line, and he shortened sail at once and lingered out the day, so as to bring him up to it by dark. After supper every light on board was doused, and the great hull, gliding thru the glass-smooth water, merged her steep sides and towering yards and canvas into the universal shadow.

By 10 the ship was hove to close ashore and the lights of the little settlement glimmered thru the palms. The warm night, laden with exotic fragrance and strangely exciting in the intensity of its stillness and beauty, hid, beneath its far-reaching pall, the various actors of an extraordinary drama. With pistols buckled to their hips, Brady, Winterslea, Hotham and Stanbury-Jones, four officers of the ship, together with Hatch, a flinty-faced old seaman who could be trusted, all slipped down the ladder into the captain's gig and pulled with muffled oats for the break in the reef. Picking their way thru the pass, with the surf on either hand roaring in their ears, they slowly penetrated the lagoon and headed for the king's house. The shelving beach brought them to a stop, and all jumping out to lighten the boat, they drew her over the shingle and made her painter fast to a pandanus tree. Then, acting in accordance with a preconcerted plan, Winterslea was sent forward to track down their prey, while the rest huddled together to await his return.

Ten minutes, twenty minutes, passed in palpitating suspense. A girl drew by wreathed in flowers; she looked out to sea; then up at the stars, and shrank again into the shadow. From the neighboring houses there came the sound of mellow voices and of laughter. A pig rooted and rustled among a heap of cocoanut shells. Half an hour passed, and from far across the water, as faint and silvery as some elfin signal, the ship sent her message of the time—six bells.

Panting and crouching, Winterslea groped his way among them.

"Come," he said.

They followed him in silence, unloosing their holsters and grimly ready. A pair of handcuffs clinked in Hatch's jumper. They inhaled the deep breath of tried and resolute men, inured to danger, and accustomed to give and receive an unflinching loyalty.

"There!" said Winterslea.

The path opened out on a little clearing among the trees and showed them, set on high, the outlines of a native house. Like all Tahitian houses, it was on the model of a bird cage, and the oval wall of bamboo, set side by side, let thru vertical streaks of light from the lamp or fire within. As the whole party drew nearer they heard, deep below them on the other side, the pleasant sound of falling water, and realized that the cliff they were mounting overlooked a little river at its foot. Here, in exquisite seclusion, Jack Garrard had chosen the spot for his moral suicide.

Creeping up to the house and looking thru the cracks of the bamboos, his comrades saw him sitting within, dressed like a native in tapa cloth, with bare chest and flowers in his tawny hair. He was sitting in a hammock and, with her head against his knee, a beautiful girl was looking up into his face, one hand locked in his. In that land of pretty women she was the one that outshone them all. Tenea, the sister of the king, for whose sweet favor every man on board had sought in vain. And here she was with her long hair loosened and her eyes swimming with love, looking up at the lad who had given name and honor to win her heart. The pair were hardly more than children; and Brady, a sentimentalist of 40, with red hair, sighed as he peeped thru the eaves and thought of his own dear girl at home.

Garrard laid down the pipe he had been smoking, and in happy unconsciousness of any audience but the woman at his feet, began to sing. His voice had always been his greatest charm, and the means of gaining him the friendship of men much older than himself. It had won Hadow. It had won Francis.

Jack lay back in the hammock, and with wonderful tenderness and feeling sang, "Flow, Gently, Sweet Afton," repeating the last verse several times over. It was plain that something in it—some phrase or line—had deeply moved him for he suddenly bent over and laid his face in his hands, shaking with a strange commotion. Tehea arose, and throwing her arms round his neck and forcing away his hands, pressed her lips to his wet eyes. Even as she did so, Brady gave the signal for the whole party to move round to the door.

He entered first, the others close behind him. Jack leaped to his feet, white and speechless, his wide-open eyes those of an animal at bay. Brady, Winterslea, Stanbury-Jones, Hotham, Hatch, the familiar faces haunted him like the sight of ghosts. Friends no longer, they were now avengers with the right to track him down and kill him.

"Jack!" cried Brady in a stifled voice.

The lad took a step back. The girl moaned and tried to run between Hatch and Stanbury-Jones. The old seaman caught and shook her like a dog, tearing away the whistle she put to her lips and dashed it to the floor. Jack put up his hand and snatched a pistol hidden in the thatch of the roof. Brady on the instant leveled his own and thundered out:

"Drop it, or I'll shoot!"

"Shoot and be hanged," returned Jack, and with that he turned his pistol on himself, and, placing the muzzle against his forehead pulled the trigger.

It missed fire.

Before he could try again Brady had caught him around the neck, while Hatch, resigning the girl to Stanbury-Jones, ran in and snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

"Jack!" cried Brady, "we aren't going to hurt you. We've rescued you from the hill tribes. Man, you're saved!"

"You never was no deserter," said Hatch. "Mind you back us up, old fellow," said Winterslea.

"Give us your fin, boy," said Hotham.

"It was some time before Jack could pull himself together. When at last he did so, and began to appreciate the generosity of his captain and shipmate, and their astounding concern to save him from the penalty of his crime, he underwent one o fthose reactions when despair gives way to the maddest gayety. He swore at Hatch and made him take off the irons; he got out a bottle of white rum and forced them all to drink his health; he kept them in a roar with the story of his adventures and laughed and cried in turn as he described his life ashore.

"What does she want?" demanded Brady, as Tehea insistently repeated some words in native.

"She says," said Jack, calmly picking up the whistle from the floor and touching it to his lips, "she says I've only to blow this and you will all be dead in five minutes!"

A hush fell upon the company.

Jack, with an oath, flung the whistle from him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am grateful. I am d—d grateful. If I live I shall try and repay each one of you. I shall try and be a better man. I shall try to be worthy of your kindness." He went round and shook hands solemnly with every one of them.

"D—d grateful!" he repeated.

"Let's be off," said Brady.

"Now, lad, your word of honor," said Winterslea.

Jack looked about him helplessly.

"I suppose I've no right to ask such a thing," he said. "I know how good you've been to me already, and all that. But—but gentlemen—she's my wife. I love her. I shall never see her again. May I not entreat a single minute for myself?"

"No," said Brady.

Jack went over to Tehea and took her hand. He put his arms about her and, unashamed, before them all, pressed her comely head against his breast. He tried to explain the inexorable fate he was so powerless to resist; in incoherent whispers he told her he would break his chains and return to her, free in the years to come to dovote his life to the woman he loved. He called her the dearest names and begged her not to forget him. But she, with a perception greater than his own, swept away these despairing protestations with disdain. The daughter of one king, the sister of another, could she not meet force by force? These fierce intruders, with their rough voices and drawn pistols, who were they to threaten a princess of the royal blood and carry away her lover before her eyes? If they were strong she was stronger, and what ship cannon, she asked, however murderous or far-reaching, could penetrate those mountain recesses whither she would carry him before the morning. Ah, she said, it was for him to choose between her and them; between Britain and the island; between love or the service of the white queen beyond the seas.

"I have chosen," he said.

Her eyes flashed as she freed herself from his arms.

"I am hateful in my own sight for having loved you," she said.

"Will you not even wish me well, Tehea?" he asked.

"No!" she cried, "I hope you will die."

He turned away.

"Siati," she cried after him.

He came back to her, downcast and silent.

"Remember," she said, in an agony of sweet relenting, "that wherever thou goest, however many the years that may divide us, however wide the waters or the land, I shall be here waiting for thee, here in this house of our happiness, and if I die before thou comest, here thou wilt find my grave."

"Tehea," he said, "as God sees me, some day I shall return!"

She took his hands and looked up into his face with such poignant longing and tenderness that Jack's comrades, already uncomfortable enough, were quite overborne by the scene. Tough old Hatch snuffled audibly and Brady could hardly speak.

"Come, come, lad," he cried huskily, "you mustn't keep us longer!"

Jack unclasped the girl's hands and suffered himself to be led away by his comrades. A few minutes later they clambered up the ladder, the boat was hoisted in and the boatswain's whistle was rousing the watch on deck.

"Mainsail haul!"

By morning the island had sunk behind them and standing on the dizzy mainroyal yard, with one arm round the mast, Jack could make out nothing but a little cloud on the horizon.

At 60 John Garrard was a post-captain, a Knight Commander of the Bath, and within a year of receiving flag rank and the command of a fleet. His career had been more than distinguished, and he had won his way to the front as much by his fine personal qualities as by his invariable good judgment and high professional attainments. He had earned the character of a man who could be trusted in situations involving tact, temper and diplomatic skill, and no captain in the navy was more confidently ordered to those scenes of international tension which, in spite of statesmen, so often arise in some distant place to menace the peace of the world.

He had never married, and when rallied on the subject was wont to say, with a laugh, that the sea was his only mistress. No one had ever ventured to question him much further, tho his friends were often piqued—especially the women—as to an implied romance in the captain's earlier life. It was known he supported two old maid sisters, the Misses Hadow, the impoverished daughters of his first commander; but in view of his considerable private fortune this drain on his resources seemed scarcely the reason of his renunciation.

He was in command of the Inflexible battleship, one of the Australian squadron, when she developed some defects in her hydraulic turning gear and was ordered home to England by Admiral Lord George Howard for overhaul. The captain's heart beat a little faster as he realized his course would take him south of the Societies. He spread out the chart on his cabin table and sighed as he laid his finger on Borabora. He shut his eyes and saw the basaltic cliffs, the white and foaming reefs, the green, still forests of that unforgotten island. He was a boy once more, with flowers in his hair, wandering beneath the palms with Tehea. How often had he thought of her during all these years, the years that had left him gray and old, the years that had carried him unscathed thru so many dangers in every quarter of the world. For him she was still in her adorable girlhood, untouched by time, a radiant princess in her radiant isle, waiting by the shore for his return. It shocked him to remember she was not far short of 60—a fat old woman, perhaps, married to some strappling chief, and more than likely with grown chuldren of her own. How incredible it seemed!

Dawn was breaking as he slowed down to leeward off the island and watched the shadows melt away. It was Sunday, a day of heavenly calm, fresh yet windless, with a sea so smooth that the barrier reefs for once were silent, and one could hear, from across the hushed and shining water, the coo of pigeons in the forest. Under bare steerage way, with the leadsman droaning in the forechains, the ship hugged the shore and steamed at a snail's pace round the island.

With every mile the bays and wooded promontories grew increasingly familiar as Sir John was born toward Lihua, the scene of his boyish folly.

It was like a home-coming to see all these familiar scenes spreading out before him. He looked at his hands, his thin, veined, wrinkled hands, and it came over him, with a sort of surprise, that he was an old man.

"That was forty years ago," he said, to himself. "Forty years ago!"

As Lihua opened out and he perceived, with an inexpressible pang, the thatched houses set deep in the shade of palms and breadfruit trees, he felt himself in the throes of a strange and painful indecision. He paced up and down the bridge; he lit a cigar and threw it away again; he twice approached Commander Stillwell as tho to give an order, and then, still in doubt, turned shamefacedly on his heel.

"By the deep nine!" came the hoarse murmur of the leadsman.

It lay with him to stop the ship or not—a word and she would come shivering to a standstill; a word and the boatswain would pipe away his gig and the crew would be running to their places. His heart ached with the desire to land; but something—he knew not what—withheld the order on his lips.

Did he not owe it to her to keep the promise of forty years, a promise given in the flush of youth and hope, and sealed with scalding tears?

His resolution was taken. He ordered Commander Stillwell to stop the ship and lower a boat.

"I am going to treat myself to a run ashore," he said by way of explanation.

He was landed at a little cove where in bygone days he had often whiled away an hour waiting in charge of Hadow's boat. It gave him a singular sensation to feel the keel grate against the shingle, and to say to himself that this was Lihua! He drew a deep breath as he looked about and noticed how unchanged it all was.

It came over him with a start that the village was empty. Then he remembered that it was Sunday, and they were all in church. Thank God, there were none to watch him, no prying, curious eyes to disturb his thoughts. But they would soon be out again, and it behooved him to make the best use of his solitude while he might. He struck inland, his heart beating with a curious expectancy; at every sound he held his breath and he would turn quickly and look back with a haunting sense that Tehea was near him; that perhaps she was gazing at him thru the trees. He approached his old home thru overgrown plantations. It awed him to part the branches and to feel himself drawing near at every step to the only house he had ever called his own. As he heard the splashing of the waterfall he stopped, not daring for the moment to go on. When at last he did so, and mounted the little hill, he found no house at all. Nothing but ferns and weeds, man high. He moved about here and there, up to the armpits in verdure, in consternation at discovering it gone.

His foot struck against a bowlder. He had forgotten there were any rocks on the hill. He moved along and his foot struck again. He pressed the weeds back and looked down.

He saw a tomb of crumbling cement, green with age and buried out of sight under the tangle.

It had never occurred to him before that Tehea might be dead.

He held back the undergrowth again and peered into the depths. Yes, it was the grave of a chief or a woman of rank. He laid both hands on the thick stem of a shrub and tore it out of the ground. He seized another and dragged it out with the same ferocity. It was intolerable that she should suffocate under all this warm, wet jungle that intruded itself, like a horrible canaille, where there were none to drive it back. He would give her air and sunshine, she that had loved them both; he would uncover the poor stones that marked her last restingplace; he would lay bare the earth that wrapped her dead beauty.

He worked with desperation until his hands were bleeding, until his eyes were stung and blinded with the steaming sweat. Dizzy with the heat, parched with thirst and sick with the steam that rose from the damp ground, he was forced again and again to desist and rest. He cut his waistcoat into slips and bound them round his bloody hands; he broke the blades of his penknife on recalcitrant roots that defied the strength of his arms; he labored with fury to complete the task he had set before him. Here he stood, within four walls of vegetation, the sky above him, the cracked and rotted tomb below, satisfied at last by the accomplishment of his duty.

He called her aloud by name. He bent down and kissed her mossy bed. He whispered with a strange conviction that she could hear him, that he had kept his promise to return.

Then, rising to his feet, he turned toward the sea and retraced his steps. The people were still in church, and the village was deserted as before. He walked swiftly, lest they might come flocking down before he could reach his boat, to torture him with recognition, with the question they would ask, with their story of Tehea's death. Then he laughed at his own fears, remembering his white hair and the intervening generation. Time had passed over Borabora, too. The world, he remembered, was older by forty years. Older and sadder and emptier.

He swung himself up the ladder, mounted the bridge, and put the vessel on her course, the Telegraph rang, the engineers repeated back the signal, and the great battleship, vibrating with her mighty engines, resumed once more her ponderous way.

Defective Page