

# PICKVICK ACIDTS

By LEO CRANE

(Continued from page 4)

have been glad it had happened to him.

August strolled soberly along, tenderly carrying his bandaged hand so that all could see he had been injured, and in the midst of gloomy thought he approached his destination.

Wegner's Garden was alight and cheerful looking, but no melody of German tenor burst from its open windows. From the opposite side of the street, August looked up and saw Grossmeyer near a window, leaning forward, an idle stein in his hand, intently listening to something. Evidently a speech, thought August.

"I vill go upstairs undt see vat idt is," he muttered.

**S**HULTZ had arrived before him, and had spent the first hour in recounting the events of the day, in which August Scheffel loomed big as a monstrous character, without regard for humanity, devoid of true German sentiment, minus any virtue that would identify him as a man.

Those who came late were anxious to hear the details, and Shultz was in demand. At the eighteenth rehearsal of his story, he had reached the acme of excitement. It was no longer possible for him to sit still and calmly recount its varied features. He rushed about between the tables, gesticulating earnestly, his broad face ruddy from exertion, his thick voice husky from emphasis, and his eyes blazing indignation. Nineteen times he wound up with a peroration, the splendor of which had increased with each repetition, and nineteen times he had dropped back into a chair, gasping—"Dot's chust the way idt habbened!"

Then a new voice from the doorway exclaimed genially—

"A goot story, Shultz, no doubt—but I didn't heard idt all. Vouldt you please—"

As one man the assembled realized that the dead August Scheffel, "pickvick acidts," loaded bandage and all, was upon them.

Shultz wildly sprang for the balcony and risked his life in a slide down the awning supports; Grossmeyer, the brother-in-law of the unfortunate, leaped toward the rear staircase, fell, and caused a furious blockade; Voldman, the landlord, who was of a width, stuck in a window and yelled madly for the police. Men fled from the placid August Scheffel as from a pestilence. He stood aghast in the midst of this confusion, a bewildered, an astounded man. His jaw dropped, his knees weakened, and when he tried to ask questions the hubbub silenced him. Finally, he summoned all his strength and bellowed: "Fools! Vot is the meanings—?"

There was no one to answer him. Even Voldman had conquered and had disappeared. To say that August Scheffel was angry, is similar to the expression of anything inane. Words cannot describe his condition. He was convulsed, shuddering, gasping—

Fifteen minutes later, warm and grimly desperate, muttering dire vengeance on whoever might prove to be responsible for these outrages against him, the bewildered August Scheffel rounded the corner of the block below his Exchange. He came to an abrupt pause. He rubbed his eyes savagely.

Another crowd? A crowd in front of his place! Also a patrol wagon! Himmel! August's Exchange raided for the first time in twenty-three years! It was too much.

"Ach!" he whimpered, now rapidly becoming irresponsible. "Idt is a consbracy."

He hurried forward, waving his bandaged hand threateningly. He burst into the place, wild words upon his lips. A dozen policemen greeted him and a dozen hands sought firm holds on his collar in the name of the law.

"Now, Scheffel," said one belligerent roundsman, "where's the stuff hid?"

"Hid! Stuff! I don't understandt," cried August amid tears, "Gott in Himmel! Vot is this nonsense? I sell no beer, I have no friends—I am ruindt!"

"Where's the dynamite? Come, no lying?"

"Dinnamite! I got no dinnamites. I got noddings left to me."

"Quit your stallin'," bawled the sergeant. "Shultz says ye have a cartload of it hereabouts. Tell us where the stuff is, an' git it over wit'—"

The light of realization spread over August's face. "Ah! So—idt is Shultz," he murmured, "Shultz!" There sounded a scuffle at the door, and a patrolman entered, dragging a victim. It was Shultz—a dilapidated, nondescript Shultz, to be sure, but nevertheless a living and protesting Shultz, who stuttered warnings and regarded August Scheffel in abject fear.

"Holdt him, please," he begged, finding that he could not free himself. "Holdt him tight—dot man Scheffel. Holdt his hands! Holdt his handt mitt the cottons. Idt is 'pickvick acidts' on his handt, undt we all go to smash in von minute."

"Say! you're the guy that give out the tip, ain't yeh?" asked the sergeant. "Well now, cough up! Where's the stuff ye saw?"

"Idt's on his handt, I tole you. 'Pickvick acidts' on his handt. Undt it blows up the city halls if he hits idt. Holdt his handt from dropping down quick. Gedt some vater, undt soak his fingers."

Shultz was frantic, and the expression of restraint on August's face terrified him.

"Say! d'yeh mean to tell me that all this row is over that bandage?" exclaimed the mystified roundsman, his eyes bulging.

"Chust so," protested Shultz. "Soak him. Idt is on his handt."

"Men!" said the sergeant, disgustedly, "we've attended a false alarm. Outside wit' yeh."

They hustled the baker into a corner, gave August a shove, and truculently departed. A grim silence fell over the wreck of August's Exchange, in which a three-cornered tableaux posed. Shultz quailed beneath the terrible gaze of August Scheffel. But for Otto, he would be alone facing grim vengeance armed with a "pickvick acidts" bandage, and Shultz was not sure that Otto could be counted on. He uttered one pleading sound, an appeal to old friendship—"Aowgoost."

"Otto," he heard in unforgiving tones, "Otto, lock the door."

Shultz made a desperate leap, and fled.

**A**UGUST Scheffel wilted down into his favorite chair and surveyed the chaos created in the search for explosives; then he looked at his hand; and then he looked at Otto.

"Otto," he said huskily, "Otto, nefer before have I asked anything from you—but I ask it now. If you are a true Cherman, you will nodd standt by

undt see your father ruindt. All this is because of dot man, Shultz."

Otto shuffled from one foot to the other, eyed the bandage, and kept to his side of the place.

"Otto, I have always eggspected that you would be a dutiful son." August paused. Then he said solemnly, grimly: "Otto—idt is your duty to kill dot man Shultz."

Thus it was up to Otto.

"You leave it to me," he said sturdily. "I'll fix it. But—before anything else drops, I'll have an understanding with you. I want to continue living around here. You see what's happened tonight. Now if you expect me to help you, get busy removing that cotton from your hand—and do it careful, very careful—else you may wonder where's the hand. I studied chemistry once, if I am a fool."

August stared at him, and became speechless. He could not believe all he heard. This was plain revolt. This was advice coming to him, August Scheffel, father, head of a family, with a pull in the ward, and it came from Otto. Under ordinary circumstances he would have roared like a wounded elephant; but now, he glanced around the place, sobbed, and nodded a surrender.

They gently rolled the bandage up and placed it in a cigar box.

"Otto, what is the matter mit idt?" he asked humbly.

"It is loaded," said Otto.

August chuckled.

"Sure?—idt is loaded?—undt it goes off, bang!" A wicked gleam came into August's eyes. "Say, Otto! Send idt acrossst to Shultz."

"No," decided the other, sternly. "We will put it down a sewer. You wait. Shultz will get something just as good. Also, you try to say nothing about it. The more you talk, the worse off you are."

**V**ERY early in the morning they slipped out and deposited the cigar box in one of the sewer openings. When it had disappeared, Otto gave a deep sigh of relief.

Shultz, who received a bundle of cotton in the noon mail next day, became wildly excited, summoned the police, claimed that he had been sent an infernal machine, and got himself branded in the afternoon papers as suffering from a mania concerning high explosives. Public opinion shifted with the wind. August was vindicated, and had the sympathy of the multitude. The Exchange did a roaring business, and over each glass of Weissner, Shultz was execrated.

Nevertheless, on the following Saturday, when there was a heavy rain and the gutters thundered into the sewers, the street below two blocks below the Exchange suddenly writhed, buckled, humped and suffered a convulsion. A hole five yards wide and twelve deep was discovered. The public works department believed it to have been caused by an underground leakage of gas. It cost the city \$1,867.92 in repairs to mains, sewers and conduits. Every man in the ward was sure he knew how it happened—except August and Otto. They had nothing to say. When Kellerman, the grocer, dropped in for his "ghlass of lighdt," and casually said he suspected anarchists, August surprised him into silence by grunting:

"Have von ont the house."

and then a second astonishing thing happened. The dark young man called Estworthy suddenly appeared, and he, as Mrs. Warren released the girl, also took her into his arms. Over the girl's shoulder he caught sight of Mr. Warren.

"Hicks," he said, "we have seen enough of you. You may go—and don't waste any time about it."

"Hicks!" cried Mrs. Warren. "Hicks! What is the meaning of all this?"

"Matilda," demanded Mr. Warren severely, "who is this young woman?"

"Don't you remember Maude, Jerome?" she asked wonderingly. "She is sister Jane's ughter, who visited us when she was a child of six."

"And likewise," added Estworthy, drawing the girl closer to him, "she is my promi' wife."

The girl called Maude was leaning against Estworthy's shoulder and laughing until the tears came.

"Oh, Uncle Jerome!" she cried. "Why did you say anything? I would never have told."

"It's about time," observed Mrs. Warren grimly, "that some explaining was done. Maude, your uncle doesn't seem to be able to tell us anything. What have you to say?"

"Aunt Matilda," she said, the laughter still bubbling through her lips, "I knew Uncle Jerome the moment I saw him, but he didn't recognize me and asked me to ride with him in his automobile. I'm afraid, Aunt Matilda—" and for a moment her words were lost in a gale of merriment—"I'm afraid that he has been flirting with me dreadfully."

Mr. Warren sadly left the house and sought his automobile. He seized the crank and turned it dejectedly. The automobile coughed apologetically, gasped weakly—and died.

Mr. Jerome Warren felt himself to be a very lonely man.

## The Girl Called Maude (Continued from page 7)

On the way out they encountered Jackson, who contrived to detain Mr. Warren briefly.

"Old man," he whispered, with a significant glance toward the innocent Maude, "Mrs. Jackson has just telephoned your wife that you are here. She says your wife seemed mystified and I thought perhaps you'd like to know that."

Mr. Warren shuddered and passed on with the girl called Maude. Mrs. Warren mystified spelled explanations from him and Mr. Warren did not exactly see his way clear to lucidly explain everything that had happened during the afternoon. But, presently, his sense of humor again assumed control of the situation. He recalled the unusual ease and facility with which he had lied that afternoon. And it filled him with an unexpected confidence. He contemplated his encounter with Mrs. Warren with equanimity.

The girl called Maude had said nothing since they left the Sunset Inn and Mr. Warren reflected that the time was at hand when he must make some disposition of her. He must have a little time, he considered, in which to determine just what he would say to Mrs. Warren.

"Where," he asked, "shall I take you?"

"To number seventy-five Drexal Road," she replied calmly.

Now number seventy-five Drexal Road was where Mr. Warren lived and it was likewise where a mystified and, quite possibly, angry Mrs. Warren awaited him. He looked at the girl called Maude reflectively, but she was gazing serenely ahead and seemed undisturbed at the thought that she had ordered him

to take her to his own home. It was Jackson, he decided, who had done it. Jackson must have contrived to convey the information to her that there was a Mrs. Warren and she had therefore determined to punish him because he had told her that he was not married. Very well. He was of the opinion that the girl called Maude would meet with a frigid reception from Mrs. Warren—albeit he was just a little in doubt as to his own reception.

Quite cheerfully, however, he brought the automobile to a stop before his own home. With an exaggerated air of gallantry he assisted the girl to alight and jauntily preceded her to the door. Inserting his latch key he flung open the door and stepped aside to permit her to enter.

Mr. Warren remembered afterward that, as he did so, he was conscious of a dismal premonition of disaster; that he had glanced back at the automobile, for the instant considering the practicability of cowardly flight; and that he had peered anxiously into the dimly lighted hall at the swiftly approaching Mrs. Warren in order that he might gauge the depth of her displeasure or extent of her mystification by the expression upon her face when she first saw the girl called Maude. And yet it was an astonishing and unexpected thing which happened.

"Maude!" cried Mrs. Warren. "Maude, my child! I have been so anxious about you. Where have you been, Maude?"

Thereupon her arms had enfolded the slender figure of the girl called Maude, while her face told of an emotion no more serious than relieved suspense.

Mr. Warren had followed the girl into the hall