The Eagle

tion the front door bell rang and presently the servant announced Mr. Garbould.

"Old Garbould!" exclaimed Fred. "Show him right out here, eh, Laura?"

Of course Laura wanted whatever Fred wanted. So Garbould was introduced. Another bottle of wine was opened, and the young people were pledged in due form, Garbould making a very clever little talk, I remember, of a kind appropriate to the occasion. Upon its conclusion, and just as he was about to set his glass down on the table, he remarked suddenly:

"By the way, Raeburne, I was almost forgetting. I've another thing to congratulate you about. Your article has come out. I wish you joy. It is really a very clever bit of writing, indeed."

Raeburne blushed and muttered something about praise from Sir Hubert Stanley.

"But where did you see it?" broke in Laura, impetuously. "Oh, dear, I'm so anxious to look at it."

"Nothing easier," said Garbould. "The magazine is issued today. They were just putting them out on the news stands as I came up on the elevated. I bought a copy, and one of the first things my eye lighted on was your husband's article."

"Where is it?" asked Laura, eagerly.

"Out in my overcoat pocket," said the critic. "I'll go fetch it."

So Garbould brought the magazine, and Raeburne, excusing himself, plunged into the book, Laura the while looking over his shoulder and reading no less eagerly than he. Garbould began to expatiate on the excellence of Fred's style to Kitty in his usual bumptious fashion. When the "Old-man-who-knows-it-all" condescends to commend an author he is just as fierce about it as when he condemns, which, by the way, he usually does.

Garbould wearies me when he mounts his hobby of criticism. So I turned away from him and began to watch Fred and his wife. Every feature of Laura's face was lighted up with interest and pride as her eyes ran rapidly from one side of the page to the other. Fred's face, on the contrary, was a picture of consternation. Presently he laid the book down on the table. Laura looked at him in surprise.

"What's the row, Fred?" said I.

"Why, hang it all, there's some mistake. This is not my article at all."

"Not 'A Carnival of Crime?'" I inquired, while Garbould stopped his flow of speech and cocked up his ear.

"Not my 'Carnival of Crime,' certainly," said Fred. "Listen to this: 'A Carnival of Crime: Being a protest against the hanging of horses' tails and women's heads.'"

"And a very clever protest it is, too," put in Garbould.

"But it's not mine," said Fred, considerably chopfallen. "Who the mischief can have done this?"

He stared disconsolately at the magazine as if he expected to find an answer to the conundrum there. I looked at Kitty. She was gazing demurely out of the window. Suddenly Fred started and looked over at her.

"You did it," he exclaimed, pointing his finger at her.

Kitty laughed. "Well, if I did," she said, "I am sufficiently up in the law to know that I can't be compelled to testify against myself. But whoever did it," she continued, "you oughtn't to be very angry. See what it has brought you." And she pointed to the lovely face that was leaning over Fred's shoulder.

"Kitty," I put in at this juncture, "let me tell you one thing—no, two things! These young people, like all the rest of us, will have to row their own boats. Also, people who push their noses into other people's affairs are apt to get them sadly pinched."

"You might add a third," Kitty responded. "It is often a very good thing to forget and forgive. You will, won't you, Fred?" she exclaimed, holding out her hand.

Fred grasped it heartily, and I fancied there was a gleam of tears in his eyes as he turned away to explain matters to his wife and Garbould. "The Old-man-who-knows-it-all" was at first disposed to feel injured, as if a fraud had been perpetrated upon him personally. But upon reflection it was apparent that all he had said about the article was as true now as it had been before, so that he was not compromised in any way.

* * * * * *

"Kitty," said I, when some time after we took our leave and were wending our way homeward, "Kitty, so that was the reason you were anxious to get rid of me that evening, was it?"

"Of course, stupid," she said.

THE END.

An Officer's Trying Situation.

I was dining at the officers' mess of a regiment at Toungboo. It was during the wet monsoon at the time. We were sitting over our wine, when a young lieutenant called out: "I feel something creeping up my right leg." I may mention that wide trousers of American drill are worn for the sake of coolness. An old officer present told the young fellow for God's sake not to stir, but sit perfectly quiet, adding that it was no doubt a snake, and that if he was to move his position he might be fatly bitten. The young fellow behaved with much nerve. His face became a shade paler, but he took the advice given him and remained quiet. He told us in a low voice that the creature, whatever it was, could not get past his knee, and that it had coiled itself around his leg.

Not knowing how the affair might end the colonel had sent to town for a snake charmer. Two of these worthies soon made their appearance, one with a reed pipe somewhat resembling a flageolet, the other bearing a basket with flaps to it. The basket, with one flap up, was set down behind the young officer's chair, the bearer squatting down beside it. The other officers made room for the charmers. The musician commenced to play a low, soft melody on his pipe, monotonous but pleasing. In a few minutes the head of the reptile was seen to peep out of the bottom of the young officer's trousers, and after nodding it about a little, keeping time with the cadence of the music, the snake slowly wriggled itself free from the young fellow's leg and glided toward the piper.

The music now became fast and wild, the snake keeping time with it, until, with a rapid, sharp movement, the man on the floor caught the snake by the neck, thus forcing his jaws apart. Producing a steel instrument, the operator pulled the poisonous bag out with a dexterous jerk; then threw the snake into the basket and shut down the flap. On receiving a few rupees the charmers made a low obeisance and retired with their prize. The snake proved to be a cobra-di-capella, or hooded snake, about eighteen inches in length. After the reptile had withdrawn from about his person the young officier would have fainted from the reaction, but the "old hand" had a tumbler of brandy ready, which he made the youth swallow. This restorative soon put him to rights, although I don't suppose he forgot the incident for some time.—Cor. San Francisco Chronicle.

Had Had Opportunities to Learn.

"My son," said the judge, blandly, to the youthful witness, "do you know the nature of an oath?"

"I think I do, sir," replied the little boy, timidly; "my father has been betting on the Detroits this season."—Chicago Tribune.

THE STOLEN LACES

An Episode in the History of Chicago Crime.

FROM THE DIARY OF DETECTIVE DENIS SIMMONS, OF THE BANK DETAIL OF THE CENTRAL STATION.

I.

Early in the spring of 1872 the boarders at Mrs. Frelinghuysen's house, on West Adams street, felt themselves constrained to discuss and decide a very delicate question. For some time previous the conduct of Mrs. Alice Claypole had given them great concern. This lady was the wife of a middle aged lawyer of good standing, who seemed devotedly attached to her, and was blind to the many weaknesses of her character, and oblivious of the fact that her bearing in male society was a subject of unfavorable comment in the well conducted establishment of the estimable Mrs. Frelinghuysen.

Mrs. Claypole's flirtations were the talk of the neighborhood, and her bald headed, good natured husband came in for a goodly share of that pity and compassion which the world has ever in store for persons apparently unconscious of their own misfortunes.

"Poor old Claypole" was an oft repeated remark; "some one ought to open his eyes and let him know the full iniquity of his wife's misconduct."

But none undertook this delicate mission, and "poor old Claypole" continued to idolize his charming and fascinating spouse—charming and fascinating not only to him, but to some half dozen other gentlemen who were said to languish in the sunshine of her smiles.

Mrs. Claypole, to make matters more piquant and interesting to her fellow boarders, was not a beautiful woman, as the term goes. She was tall and shapely, however, dressed with becoming taste, and carried herself with a stately grace that never failed to elicit remarks of admiration.

Her features were somewhat irregular and heavy in repose, but when she became interested in conversation, or, better still, when she was aiming at a conquest, her face lighted up with the ardor of her thoughts, and her big blue eyes flashed dangerously from beneath half drooping lids fringed with long, dark eye lashes that tried in vain to screen the passionate fire of amorous glances.

No; Mrs. Claypole was not a beautiful woman, but she had that subtle power of charming which is more fascinating than beauty and plays the dence with the virtuous instincts of mankind.

Mr. and Mrs. Claypole had lived at the Frelinghuysen establishment two months when the boarders thought it high time to arrive at some conclusion as to the alleged improprieties of her conduct.

Not content with the conquest of full grown and bearded men, the fair Alice, who was thirty if she was a year, had recently shown a liking for the society of young men in their teens. Three or four of these susceptible young fellows danced in constant attendance upon her. They ran her errands, escorted her to the theatre, took her to supper after the play, and acted spooney generally in the manner peculiar to lovesick lads.

And, what was most exasperating to the critics of mature age, Mrs. Claypole seemed to enjoy this boidenish homage. She was soft and soothing, even motherly, in her demeanor toward her young admirers. She would stroke their cheeks and pat their heads lovingly, call them brave boys, and sometimes—so Miss Goggles, the ancient spinster, who occupied the first floor hall bedroom, and was ever on the alert to spy out the moral delinquencies of her neighbors, averred—kiss them tenderly and tell them to be good and true and devoted to their mother.

"She calls herself their mother, the artful wretch," reported Miss Goggles, with a look of horror in her watery eyes; "she ought to be horsewhipped!"

No wonder Mrs. Frelinghuysen's boarders were stired to the very depths of their honest hearts. Such vagaries on the part of a married woman were reprehensible in the highest degree. They called for an expression of virtuous indignation. Mr. Claypole ought to be informed of his wife's moral obliquity. It was a burning, scandalous shame that such a nice, high minded, honorable old gentleman should have the wool pulled over his eyes by this wicked woman, and he a lawyer, too, with a professional knowledge of the relief which could be speedily gained in the divorce court.

Then it was that the boarders came to the unanimous decision that Mrs. Claypole was a designing, heartless coquette; that her society should be tabooed, and that poor old Mr. Claypole should receive a broad hint of what was going on, with a view to a prompt disruption of his marital ties.

The conveyal of this hint was deputed to James Hadley, clerk in a downtown lace store, who had worshiped at the shrine of the fascinating blonde when she first appeared at the boarding house, and whose attentions had been suppressed with a scornful derision which still rankled in his virtuous breast, and made him accept the mission with revengeful alacrity.

And when Mr. Hadley finished his recital of Mrs. Claypole's shortcomings and suspected peccadillos, which he delivered with many pious sighs and groans about the inconstancy of woman, he was almost petrified by "poor old Claypole's" emphatic rejoinder.

"I'll break every bone in your carcass!"

"You confounded idiot!" cried the lawyer, shaking his fist in Hadley's face; "you lace peddling dolt! If I hear another word of this I'll break every bone in your assinine carcass!"

II.

If Hadley had been a man of good common sense he would have thought twice before meddling with the conjugal affairs of Mr. and Mrs. Claypole. Students of social philosophy have long recognized the dangers of such interference. Husbands and wives may fight like cats and dogs, they may be guilty of the grossest kinds of infidelity, but woe betide the rash individual who essays to patch up their quarrels or smooth the wrinkles in their code of mutual morality.

Hadley, however, was young and impetuous, not accustomed to philosophical speculation, and he learned his first lesson of worldly wisdom from the bitter tongue of the irascible lawyer. It was not long ere he regretted the foolish step he took at the instigation of his fellow boarders.

Mr. Claypole, it can be readily imagined, had the fullest confidence in the honor and integrity of his wife.

"Ally," said he, after venting his wrath on the callow dry goods clerk; "Ally, the fools are beginning to talk. It may be prudent to draw in a little. Give the boys a hint to be less demonstrative and let us work slower for the common good."

"Why, what is the trouble, Henry?" asked Mrs. Claypole, as she got her husband's slippers and drew his easy chair in front of the cheerful grate fire in their private sitting room.

"That idiot Hadley has been telling me of your flirtations. The boarders are shocked at your free and easy ways, and they induced the fellow to enlighten me on the subject. I had half a mind to break his head."

"Oh! is that all?" said Mrs. Claypole, with a peculiar smile. "So they think I am a wicked, reckless flirt? I admire their penetration. But, under all circumstances, Henry, it's a splendid reputation. A flirt has no time for other business, and our affairs may flourish without suspicion while they think I'm engrossed in the pleasurable occupation of juggling with hearts. As for Mr. Hadley, you may leave his punishment to me. I will settle him in a way he will remember for the rest of his life."

"He deserves something, the meddlesome fool," responded Mr. Claypole, in a contemptuous tone. "But what is your plan?"

"Wait and see," was the quiet rejoinder, while those big blue eyes flashed ominously; "it will be in the direct line of business."

"Ah! I understand," said the elderly lawyer. "Do you expect any one this evening?"

"Herman promised to be here about 9 o'clock."

"Well, I will take a nap and afterward go to the club, so that you may work him alone. He is smart as a whip, that lad, and I expect great things of him," and with this Mr. Claypole settled himself in the easy chair, closed his eyes and was soon snoring gently in front of the fire.

Mrs. Claypole, who was more annoyed by the incident of the evening than she was willing to admit, took up the evening paper and rapidly scanned its columns. She seemed to be looking for some particular item of news. Presently a paragraph struck her eye which she read with great interest.

"The scheme works well," she muttered. "No clew? Of course not. Trust a woman's wits for that. Six months more will give us all the money we need, and then for the sunny south. Bah! How I detest this horrid climate as well as the hurry-scurrying habits of the people. Everything is rush and bustle and money making. Well, let them pile up their wealth, let them repair the ravages of the fire and build costly temples of trade and commerce. Those who neither weave nor spin will be the gainers in the end. Honest industry is ever opening up avenues of idleness and luxury for those who have the courage and ability to follow the only royal road to ease and affluence."

Mr. Claypole finished his nap in about an hour, and at once went out to spend the evening at his club, leaving his wife alone to entertain the expected visitor.

She added a few touches to her toilet after the departure of her husband, and then sat down to the piano and sang one or two love songs in a low contralto voice.

The music reached the ears of the boarders in the parlor, who by this time had worn the sensational story of Hadley's reception by Mr. Claypole threadbare, and were deliberating as to the next step to be taken in exposing the scandalous doings of the fascinating blond.

"The old fool has gone out as usual," said one. "She's expecting somebody. She always sings those sentimental ditties when one of those kids is coming."

"Well," remarked another, an elderly gentleman with a pair of twinkling brown eyes, "I think we had better allow things to take their natural course. The flirtations of married women bring their own punishment, and I guess old Claypole will finally come to his senses without any assistance on our part."

"But it's so abominably disgraceful," snapped Miss Goggles. "I wouldn't mind so much if she confined her attention to grown men, who ought to know better than to encourage her base designs; but to think of her inveigling those boys. Why, it's an outrage against all the recognized maxims of good society."

"Never mind that, Miss Goggles," said the old gentleman, who seemed anxious to restore peace in the Frelinghuysen establishment. "We have done all we can for the present. Besides, we have no evidence that there is anything radically improper. All pretty women like to flirt."

"Oh! Mr. Johnson," ejaculated the spinster, blushing feverishly. "How can you say such a thing?"

"It's true, Miss Goggles," said Mr. Johnson, stoutly and with a touch of gallantry. "Coquetry is one of the prerogatives of the sex; the art is inseparable from female loveliness. Don't attempt to deny it, Miss Goggles; you, of all women, ought to be the first to recognize this universal truth."

The old fellow, who was suspected of matrimonial designs on the antiquated spinster, accompanied this speech with a glance which threw Miss Goggles into a flutter of excitement. Several of the gentlemen tittered at her confusion, but she was too busy with the tender thoughts Mr. Johnson had suddenly inspired to notice their amusement.

"Well, what shall we do, Mr. Johnson?" asked Miss Goggles, as soon as she regained her composure.

"Nothing," was the laconic response.

"Nothing!"

There was a tone of disappointment in this query which caused Mr. Johnson to elevate his eyebrows suspiciously. But he was firm in the resolution with which he sought to imbue his fellow boarders.

"That's just it," he rejoined, emphatically. "We'll do nothing more, but wait and"——

"Watch," chimed in Mr. Hadley.

"Yes, sir; wait and watch. You have hit it exactly. I thought you would realize the wisdom of this course."

Hadley's face flushed, but he had gained wisdom since his interview with "poor old Claypole," and deemed it prudent to say nothing.

Something about the programme struck the boarders favorably. The first step of active interference had resulted disastrously. The old lawyer was evidently indifferent to the fate his wife so recklessly invited. "Waiting" and "watching" were words full of mystery and ominous import. The programme presaged keen excitement. Ten pairs of eyes scrutinizing every look and action of a frivolous woman, ten superheated brains wrestling with the motives that guided her conduct, and ten busy tongues ready to tear her reputation to tatters on the slightest provocation—why, the prospect was delightful to this modern school for scandal, and with one accord the boarders lifted up their voices in approval.

"Agreed," was the unanimous verdict. "We'll wait and watch."

Meanwhile 9 o'clock had arrived, and with it Mrs. Claypole's expected visitor. From her cozy little sitting room upstairs came the rhythmic thumming of the piano and the soft contralto voice singing in delightful unison, "You'll Remember Me."

"One of them's there," said Miss Goggles in a stage whisper. "She always sings that song when that curly headed boy comes. But it's getting late—I wish you all good evening."

And Miss Goggles glided swiftly from the parlor and went upstairs.

"The game's begun," remarked Mr. Johnson, with a significant chuckle.

"How so?" asked Hadley.

"Miss Goggles is first on watch.

III.

Mr. Johnson was right. Miss Goggles was first on watch.

The watery eyed spinster foresaw many personal advantages in the scheme of espionage agreed upon by the boarders. In the first place, nature seemed to have endowed her with especial gifts of poking and prying into the personal affairs of others.

Her eyes, expressionless though they were, were remarkably sharp both at short and long range. Her ears, which bulged out like miniature cornucopias, had very susceptible tympanums, which accurately received and registered the slightest undulation of sound. Her nose, long, sharp and pointed, seemed framed to scent out scandal; while her high, narrow forehead betokened intellectual qualities in keeping with those other tokens of inquisitiveness and cunning.

Then she had a footfall as soft and velvety as that of a cat. She glided noiselessly about the house, and was constantly turning up in the midst of interesting domestic incidents. The servants said she had a disagreeable habit of looking through the keyholes. One night, when young Mr. Jobson came home slightly under the weather, and Mrs. Jobson began to moan and cry and threaten to return to the aching bosom of her mother, Miss Goggles was caught peering through the transom of their room. She excused herself on the ground that she thought the wretch was murdering his unfortunate wife, and she wanted to be able to testify against him in the criminal court.

Mrs. Jobson came near tearing her eyes out the next morning, and Mr. Jobson, mortified and humiliated almost beyond endurance, consulted a scientific friend as to the practicability of securing the germs of some malignant disease with which to quietly inoculate the innocent, saintlike Miss Goggles.

This showed Mr. Jobson to be a bitter, spiteful man, quite capable of the awful crime which the spinster suspected him of contemplating; but a man cannot feel friendly and dovelike toward a woman who has witnessed and gloated over his first connubial tiff.

Then, Miss Goggles was pleased with the new programme because it emanated from Mr. Johnson.

The old gentleman had been particularly attentive to the spinster of late. He had taken her to the theater several times and grown tenderly sentimental over the subsequent oyster stews. More than once he had waxed confidential over the parlor stove, and spoken of his financial affairs in a way which excited her to envy, if it did not warm her to love.

She felt herself blushing whenever those kindly, twinkling brown eyes looked into the literally liquid depths of her own passionless orbs. Affairs had reached such a pass now that Mr. Johnson had only to whisper an affectionate word, and she was ready to flop into his arms and proclaim vows of undying devotion.

But Mr. Johnson did not whisper that word, contenting himself with an occasional sigh and a glance of respectful adoration. He sometimes called her "Henrietta"—that was her given name—but the word seemed to come from him unawares, and he lapsed into moody silence every time it escaped his lips.

Now was the opportunity of her life, she argued, as she glided up stairs to her hall bed room. If she were industrious in her espionage, if she discovered reckless abandon on the part of the fascinating Mrs. Claypole, if she were the first to procure proofs of unlawful conduct, Mr. Johnson would be profuse in expressions of admiration, and probably be impelled to make the longed for declaration.

When Miss Goggles reached her room she closed the door noiselessly. Inside there was another door which communicated with the sitting room of Mr. and Mrs. Claypole. This door, of course, was locked on the other side. The key hole was stuffed with paper, the chinks were covered with list, and the glass of the transom had a green baize covering to shut out the gaze of curious eyes and deaden the sounds within.

It was evident that the Claypoles knew of and were desirous of circumventing the inquisitive proclivities of their next door neighbor.

But the genius of Miss Goggles rose superior to trival obstacles of this kind. Days ago she had seized a chance to enter the Claypole apartments and unfasten the button which held the transom closed. This maneuver had evidently not been noticed, since only that morning, while Mrs. Claypole was down town shopping, she had tried the transom and found it worked responsively and noiselessly to her touch.

As to the key hole, a pair of tweezers had picked the paper almost entirely out, bit by bit, until only a thin layer remained, which could be easily removed when the exigencies of the case reqired such a step.

Consequently Miss Goggles was well situated to play the part of a spy and, if needs be, to surprise the blonde in the very height of her amours.

And Miss Goggles chuckled softly to herself as she heard the lid of the piano close and the singing give place to sounds of earnest conversation.

Turning down the gas, the inquisitive spinster mounted on a chair, pushed the transom open a little, and was delighted to find that the angle of vision thus obtained gave her a full view of Mrs. Claypole and her visitor, besides enabling her to hear every word that passed between them.

What was transpiring in the Claypole sitting room must have been profoundly entertaining, since for a full hour, at the risk of cramp in her neck, Miss Goggles remained in this uncomfortable attitude, with wide staring eyes and eager open ears taking in the scene below.

What was transpiring.

Suddenly the ancient spinster released her hold of the transom, sprang from the chair with a suppressed scream, hastily undressed herself, got into bed, and pulled the clothes over her head like a frightened child.

IV.

What was the cause of Miss Goggles' agitation? The spinster had nerved herself to see and hear strange goings on in the Claypole sitting room. Something out of the ordinary run of scandalous proceedings must have occurred to make her dive deep under the bed clothes as if she wanted to shut out the remembrance of a horrible sight.

When the expected visitor was admitted, Mrs. Claypole was seated at the piano warbling plaintive love songs. She rose and received him cordially, called him "dear Herman," and allowed him to press his lips to her cheek.

The boarders were right as to the age of this youthful admirer. He was about 17 years old. He had a bright, sunny face, with laughing blue eyes, and flaxen, curly hair, brushed from a square, intelligent forehead, adorned by heavy bushy eyebrows, which were arched like a bow at full tension.

He was dressed with great neatness. His black cutaway coat was of the newest pattern, the vest cut low, showing a wide expanse of shirt bosom. He wore a gold watch chain of excellent make, and on the little finger of his right hand was a solitaire diamond ring.

The boy looked like a well to do broker's clerk. He carried himself easily and gracefully, as though accustomed to society.

He was evidently a welcome guest, for Mrs. Claypole's eyes dwelt lovingly on his handsome face, and beamed with pleasure as he asked her to resume her seat at the piano.

"What shall I play, Herman?" she asked, smiling.

"You know my favorite song, Ally," he replied. "Sing, 'You'll Remember Me.'"

Mrs. Claypole complied, and the boy hung on the tones of her low, rich voice with rapt attention. His eyes followed her every movement; his face flushed with delight when she turned to him during the tender passages of the song and accented them by glances which sent a thrill through his frame.

There could be no doubt as to the feelings with which the lad regarded her; he was desperately in love with this fair enchantress.

And Mrs. Claypole? It would be difficult to probe her feelings. Practiced in all the arts of coquetry, she could play with hearts at will and yet remain serene and cold beneath the surface

The conversation with her husband denoted that the lad was kept under the spell for a purpose. What was the purpose which could induce a woman of mature age to enthrall a boy and keep his heart jumping in response to her seductive wiles?

Just as Miss Goggles was gently opening the transom Mrs. Claypole again left the piano and seated herself by the side of the boy, who, with a trace of old time gallantry, raised her jeweled fingers to his lips and kissed them. The action sent a thrill through the bosom of the antique eavesdropper, which was intensified when the blonde run her fingers lovingly through his flaxen curls and fondly patted his rosy cheeks.

"Now, that is enough nonsense for tonight," she said, with a winning smile. "Tell me what you have been doing lately, Herman."

"You ought to know, Ally," he answered laughingly; "or doesn't the governor make daily reports?"

"I am afraid he does not tell me everything," was the smiling reply, "and I always like to hear the exploits of the boys from the captain's own lips."

The lad was evidently pleased. He said frankly: "To tell you the truth, Ally, I have been a little suspicious of the governor of late. He doesn't seem to be toting fair. He said he only got $1,000 for that last bundle, while I have it on the best authority that the stuff brought $1,700. The gang are mad about it, and you better give him a gentle hint that we will stand anything but swindling on his part. We run all the risk, and he ought surely to be satisfied with a square divy."

A shadow crossed the woman's face, but it was gone in a moment.

"You are right, my boy," she said, in a caressing tone. "Henry should be more careful of your interests—indeed, of all our interests, since we are all in the same swim. But you know what he is."

"Yes," responded the boy, moodily, "I know what he is, and he better be a little more careful. Had it not been for you, Ally, we would have broken with him long ago and given him a push toward the pen. If you say the word now I'll risk everything to settle him, and we'll go south together."

"No, no! Herman," cried the woman, in a tone of alarm; "that would never do, you foolish boy. I must still be your mother, and you must be kind and considerate to Henry."

The boy pouted, but returned the kiss with which this declaration terminated.

"I am getting tired of this 'mother' business," he said, testily. "A fellow don't want two mothers."

"But you need me, my dear, to keep you safe. You would have been in trouble a year ago had I not caught you in time. Now, be patient, Herman, and don't harbor harsh thoughts about the governor. I want my boys to work pleasantly together, and we'll soon be able to enjoy the good time that's coming."

"All right, Ally," said the lad in a more cheerful spirit. "I'll not only wait, but work, if you say so."

"That's my brave boy," said the woman, kissing him again warmly. "Now, tell me what's in the wind."

"Well, we've done some fine night work lately," Herman responded, his eyes flashing enthusiastically at the recollection. "We've been cracking private cribs, and the governor has several thousands in the vault, which will be worked off soon on the outside. The cops are all at sea. They are looking for eastern crooks, and have no idea that home talent is at the bottom of all the fine work in town. I pass members of the central detail every day, and they don't condescend to notice the peddler boy who is disposing of stolen goods under their very noses."

The lad laughed heartily at this evidence of the perspicuity of the police, and continued:

"We are going to branch out in another direction. The private house racket is played out, for the people are getting alarmed and laying in stocks of firearms to give the cracksmen a warm reception. We will scoop in the business district next. There are lots of fine pickings in some of the wholesale houses, and we have two or three marked which are easy to crack. Oh! there'll be no end of fun and boodle during the next three months, and then it will be time to take that vacation you spoke of."

"I am glad you are working toward the business center," said the woman. "But how are you on blowing?"

"Curly has been practicing lately," answered the lad, "and promises well. A fellow from St. Louis, an old timer, has him in tow and says he'll be a daisy in a few months. But we don't depend on blowing for good hauls. We'll take all the loose stuff we can find—such stuff that can be easily peddled and has a quick sale in offices and private houses. The governor's vault is a safe hiding place."

"But isn't this peddling fake risky?" asked Mrs. Claypole, uneasily.

"Bless you, no," replied the lad, laughing. "It's the greatest scheme on earth. The cops will never suspect poor peddler boys of being mixed up with high toned cracksmen. The very openness of our street fake is an insurance against suspicion, and I understand the scheme is being adopted by the big bugs in New York."

"Well, you must be cautious, Herman. I don't want any of my chicks nabbed."

"You needn't be afraid, Ally," said the boy. "We've got everything fixed in case of trouble. He'll be a fly cop, indeed, who tumbles to our racket."

"Do you think, Herman," said the woman, with some hesitation, "that you could do a little job on my own account?"

"Why, of course I can," promptly replied the lad. "Anything you want will be attended to; the boys swear by their mother. Just give it a name and consider it done."

Mrs. Claypole smiled at Herman's confident tone. She was proud of her influence over the "gang," who were always ready to obey her slightest behests, and she was particularly pleased with the ardent homage of the handsome captain.

She drew her chair nearer to him, and caressed him in a motherly fashion.

"Two people have offended me grievously," she said in a tone of mingled mournfulness and malignity; "they have tried to damage my reputation in this neighborhood, and want to set Henry against me because I am kind and affectionate toward you, Herman."

"Who are the villains?" cried the boy melodramatically. "Give me their names and the gang will soon settle their hash."

"Oh!" responded Mrs. Claypole, with a languishing sigh, which had the effect of stirring Herman to deep anger, "I don't want any rash deed of vengeance. This is a matter which can be disposed of without bloodshed. I would like their punishment to be lingering—to be in the nature of mental agony, the loss of friends and the sacrifice of good name—in short, to make them objects of scorn, to make them suffer as they intended I should suffer."

"They shall do all this and more, I swear," exclaimed the lad, excited by the quiver in the woman's voice and the tear she had forced to glisten in her eye. "Who are they?"

"One is a woman," said Mrs. Claypole, "who watches my movements and circulates evil reports about my character—a malicious, spiteful wretch, whose life has been one long chapter of deceit and wickedness, and whose sole excuse for living now is that she may sow the seeds of dissension and hatred broadcast in the hearts of loving husbands and trusting wives. You know her, Herman; she lives in this house."

The lad jumped to his feet and paced the floor excitedly.

"It's that Goggles," he cried. "Know her? Why, of course I know her, the prying, meddlesome hussy. And she has dared to talk of you—to backbite and slander you! Say, Ally"—and he spoke in a tragic whisper, every syllable reaching the acute ears of the eavesdropper—"we'll kidnap her and bury her alive. If she makes any outcry this will settle her."

And the lad pulled a murderous looking dirk from his hip pocket, and brandished it fiercely like a stage villain.

It was at this juncture that the transom closed, and Miss Goggles hurried to bed, shivering and quaking with fear. If she had listened a little longer she would have heard the cruel blonde acquiesce in this boyish scheme of revenge and become acquainted with a scarcely less fiendish plan to get even with Mr. Hadley for his impertinent interference in Mr. Claypole's personal affairs.

But Miss Goggles had heard too much. Her nervous system was severely shocked. She passed a dreadful night, and in the morning was found dangerously ill with brain fever.

V.

Shortly after the incident above recorded Chicago was startled by a series of bold and successful burglaries in the business section of the city.

The perpetrators of these crimes were skillful workers. They picked out first class establishments and carted off large stocks of such merchandise as was readily salable. As a rule the safes were left untouched, the burglars being satisfied with the portable goods in the store.

Among the victims were Williamson & Graves, the hardware merchants, on Lake street, who were relieved of a valuable assortment of firearms, knives and tools; Cobb's circulating library, which lost a number of expensive books and stationery, and Mendelsohn's lace store, on Washington, near State street.

The lace store was completely sacked of its finest goods. All the imported hand made laces were taken. The burglars left the common grades in a state of confusion on the counters, and must have spent considerable time in selecting their booty. Mr. Mendelsohn estimated his loss at about $10,000.

The store had been entered by the windows which opened into an alley in the rear of the building. The goods were taken out by the front door, which was found open in the morning.

Of course these daring robberies caused a commotion at police headquarters. No noted cracksmen were in the city, and yet the detectives were convinced that the burglaries were the work of old hands. Several expert criminal hunters were put to work on the case, but they worked diligently for weeks without striking the faintest clew.

The newspapers and public became impatient over the delay in capturing the daring burglars, and the central detail came in for a liberal dose of censure.

To make matters more complicated, it was openly charged that there had been no burglary at the Mendelsohn store, but that the proprietor, who was known to be financially embarrassed, had robbed himself to gain the sympathy of the public and make easy terms with his creditors.

Mr. Mendelsohn was greatly annoyed by this accusation. He acknowledged that his financial affairs were in a desperate condition, but he pointed to his past record as incompatible with the infamous act of which he was charged.

His friends admitted everything in regard to previous probity, but shrugged their shoulders significantly when they were asked to accept it as an assurance of present integrity.

"The facts are against you," they remarked. "Burglars do not generally possess the technical knowledge to enable them to pick out the finest laces in the excitement of a midnight raid. If your store was despoiled by robbers, where are the robbers?"

And Mr. Mendelsohn's inability to produce those living proofs of his innocence was regarded as additional evidence of his guilt!

Then came an attempt to find Mendelsohn's accomplices, for it was evident that he could not have carried out this gigantic scheme of deception alone and unaided.

A hint was received at police headquarters that a clerk named Hadley was implicated. The note conveying the hint was written in a delicate female hand. It read:

To the Chief of Police:

DEAR SIR—Watch James Hadley, clerk in Mendelsohn's store, about those stolen laces. Perhaps some of his lady friends are sporting a portion of the goods. At any rate, you can take the hint for what it is worth.

ONE WHO SUFFERS.

The detectives did take the hint. For a week or two Hadley was constantly shadowed, and his lady acquaintances were subjected to a rigorous espionage, which, had they been aware of it, would have thrown them into hysterics.

Hadley's fiancee, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy lumberman, wore some handsome laces at churches one Sunday. The following day her father received a visit from a stranger, who poured poison into his ear concerning his prospective son-in-law. The stranger was promptly kicked out of the office, but when the lumberman's daughter admitted that evening that the laces were the gift of Hadley some months previous the old man waxed angry and told her to throw them in the fire.

"There's something wrong about the fellow," he cried; "clerks cannot afford to buy such expensive gewgaws. Perhaps he helped Mendelsohn to rob himself."

And Hadley was beside himself with grief when, the very next morning, a district messenger brought him a parcel containing the laces and other presents he had made to his sweetheart, together with a note blotted with tears, stating in simple but excruciating terms that her heart was broken, and that they must part forever more.

It was several months before Hadley could clear himself in the eyes of the young lady and her father, and during that time he had wasted away to a mere shadow and suffered the torments of a lost soul in purgatory.

There was one member of the city detective force who took no stock in the story that Mr. Mendelsohn was his own burglar. This was Denis Simmons, one of the oldest and shrewdest of Chicago's able officers, who for the last seven years had been detailed on bank work.

"Mr. Mendelsohn," said Denis to the grief stricken merchant, "don't worry yourself to death. I am convinced that the robbery was the work of professional thieves, and I'm a Dutchman if I don't pinch them before I'm many weeks older."

The work of professional thieves.

This was the strongest expression Denis could use, for every one knows he is not a Dutchman, and wouldn't be one for any consideration.

Mr. Mendelsohn was consoled by this expression of confidence.

"I thank you, Mr. Simmons," he said with emotion. "I hope heaven will prosper you in this work. If the thieves are not captured soon I shall be ruined in body and soul, for even my old father in Germany thinks I am the thief."

"Cheer up," said Denis, encouragingly; "we'll bag the game, and then you can take a month's vacation to receive the apologies of your suspicious friends."

VI.

If this were a romance instead of a story based on facts, it would be easy to associate Mr. Simmons' name with some wonderful experiences during his search for the lace robbers.

Real detective work, however, rarely possesses romantic features. Success in this arduous calling is attained as much by patient plodding as by a keen appreciation of the habits and methods of criminals and a shrewd knowledge of the world. Sometimes the most important revelations are the result of sheer accident. As straws show the drift of a current, so do trivial incidents often guide detective skill to the accomplishment of great and important ends.

When Denis pledged himself to "bag the game," he had not the slightest clew to work upon. Like several of his confreres, he believed the robberies were committed by New York experts, but he was as much puzzled as they were when it was proved beyond peradventure that no metropolitan thieves of prominence, men who were skilled at this class of work, had been in town for months.

Consequently, Denis had to "go it blind" for a time, trusting to Providence to furnish him a clew. And Providence didn't shirk this grave duty.

Two or three days after his conversation with Mr. Mendelsohn the detective was detailed on a petty larceny case in a fashionable boarding house on Michigan avenue. The job was an easy one, and as he was about to leave the house a lady asked him if he were a judge of laces.

"No, madam," said Simmons; "why do you ask?"

"Because I have just made a wonderful bargain," replied the lady. "I have bought several yards of the finest French hand made lace for $1 a yard. It's worth at least $10 a yard."

"Indeed!" said Denis, his heart giving a great bound as he thought of that troublesome robbery at Mendelsohn's; "of whom did you buy it?"

"Of a peddler—a nice looking, curly haired young man, wearing a velvet coat."

The detective examined the lace, and, although not an expert, he had sufficient knowledge of such goods to warrant him in the conclusion that the peddler was practically giving the laces away. He made an excuse to take the "bargain" down town and showed it to Mr. Mendelsohn, who immediately recognized it as a portion of his stolen stock.

Denis had struck a clew. The description of the peddler tallied with that of Herman Landgraff, a boy whom he had arrested for sneak work several years ago, and whom he thought was leading a correct life. Still, the detective did not think that Landgraff was skillful enough to commit the lace robbery; the boy was probably the tool of older thieves, who had set him to peddle some of the goods as the safest means of disposing of them.

But this was a great discovery, and Simmons was elated over it.

About the same time another detective had his attention called to a cheap pocketbook bought from a peddler by a broker's clerk. This pocketbook proved to be part of the stock stolen from Cobb's Circulating Library. The peddler who sold it answered to the description of Charlie Mott, a partner of Landgraff's, and the brother of Mellie Mott, whose thieving propensities and profligacy were the talk of Chicago for years.

"It never rains but it pours," remarked Denis to his colleague. "We are on the eve of a great haul."

Having got track of a portion of the stolen property, Simmons felt that the rest of the work was comparatively simple. He soon located Landgraff and Mott. They lived in an old frame house on West Thirteenth street with Mrs. Landgraff.

The detective made cautious inquiries as to the habits of the boys, and ascertained that they were regular nighthawks, as well as street peddlers by day. They rarely reached home before daylight, and invariably drove up in a buggy, from which they carried bundles into the house.

Two other boys, known as "Curly" and Herman, often accompanied them, and stopped with Mrs. Landgraff for days at a stretch.

As these facts developed Simmons changed his mind about the connection of New York men with the burglaries. He had struck an organized gang of smart young thieves, who were probably solely responsible for the crimes which had startled the business community and puzzled the police.

It was late at night when Denis reported the result of his investigation to the chief. He was instructed to arrest the lads, but as by this time they were undoubtedly on one of their marauding expeditions, Simmons concluded to swoop down on the old frame house in the early morning and capture the whole gang.

Three officers were detailed to assist Simmons, and at 4 o'clock in the morning they drove out