turned Mr. Fopling a bit sulkily. "It gives me a most beastly sensation, don't y' know, to see a chap cawessing Bess; it does, weally!"

"Hush, child!" said Bess; "you excite yourself about nothing."

Bess was for having Dorothy over on the strength of the good news, but Richard was against it, proudly.

"No," said he. "With Storri's hold upon him, Mr. Harley asked me to stay away from his house. Now Storri's hold is broken, I shall give him a chance to ask me to return."

"Oh, I see," replied Bess teasingly. "Sir Launcelot having done a knightly deed and rescued a fair damsel, and the fair damsel's family, from a dragon, will give his vanity an outing."

"Only till to-morrow evening!" protested Richard, humbled from the high horse. "If Mr. Harley doesn't invite me by that time, I'll invite myself."

"If Mr. Harley doesn't invite you by that time," returned Bess, "I will interfere. Those who can't see their duty must be shown their duty, Mr. Harley among the rest. On the whole, I think you take a very proper stand."

Storri, without a dollar, lay in his rooms like a wounded wolf. He did not go to the San Reve; he would see no one until he had worn down his anguish and regained control of himself. Hurt to the death, Storri was too cunning to furnish word of it to mankind. No one must know; it was the instinct of self-preservation. The wounded wolf, while his wounds are fresh, avoids the pack lest the pack destroy him. And so with Storri; he would hide until he could command that old-time manner of unclouded ease. He would stifle every surmise, deny every rumor if rumor blew about, of the blow he had received. A few days, and Storri would be himself again. As for immediate money, Storri would extort that from Mr. Harley, who, in his dull-head ignorance or worse, had been the author of his losses. Who first spoke of Northern Consolidated? Who suggested the "bear" raid? Was it not Mr. Harley? The affair had been his; the loss should be his; Mr. Harley must repay, or face the wrath of Storri.

"Face the wrath of Storri!" exclaimed that furious nobleman with an oath. "He would face nobody—nothing! Bah! that Harley; he is a dog and the coward son of a dog! Yes, he shall come here; he shall crawl and crouch! I, Storri, will give him the treatment due a dog!"

Storri wrote a blunt word to Mr. Harley and dispatched it to that shattered capitalist.

"Come to-night at nine, you Harley," said the note, "and do not presume to fail, or my next communication will be through one of your officers of police."

Storri was aware that the French shares were gone from him, but he counted on easily tracking them and buying them back. He would force Mr. Harley to give him the very money that was to buy them. The thought lighted up his cruel face like a red ray from the pit; it would be such a joke—such a triumph over the pig American! Meanwhile he would bully Mr. Harley, who did not know but what the shares were in his pocket.

If Storri had been informed of how, through the deep arrangements of that strategist of stocks, he had borrowed every dollar of those five hundred thousand from Mr. Bayard, as well as every share of Northern Consolidated delivered to perfect those sales that had brought him down in ruin—in sort, if he had been told the whole romance, from Mr. Fopling's exhortation to "Bweak him!" to the close of the market on that crashing Friday afternoon he might have been less sure of recapturing those French shares. But he was ignorant of these truths; and, with confidence bred of ignorance he summoned Mr. Harley. He, Storri, would browbeat and bleed him; he would teach the caitiff Harley to be more careful of the favor not to say the fortune of a Russian nobleman.

Mr. Harley, with the defeat of the "bear" attack on Northern Consolidated, was left in forlornest case. He was aware that it spelled money ruin for both him and Senator Hanway; but the picture of the rage of Storri, and what that savage might do in his bitterness, so filled up his thoughts that he scarcely heeded anything beyond. Mr. Harley was stricken sick by his own fears, and, after returning from New York on the evening of that fearful Friday, never moved from his room. To the anxious tap of Dorothy, he sent word that he was not ill, but very busy; he must not be disturbed. Like Storri, only more a-droop, Mr. Harley owned no wish for company.

Mr. Harley was thus broken to the ground when Storri's message found him. The threat at the tail, like the sting at the tail of a scorpion, stunned Mr. Harley past thinking. He could neither do nor plan; he could only utter his despair in groans.

Two hours later, and while he lay writhing Richard's inclosure of the French shares arrived by post. Mr. Harley at sight of them came as near fainting as any gentleman coarsely grained and hearty ever comes. Ten minutes went by in stupid gazing, and in handling and feeling those certificates that were to him as is the reprieve that comes to one who else would have died within the hour.

There is such a thing as compensation, and the very coarseness of which you now and again complained made most for the rescue of Mr. Harley at this crisis. By dint of that valuable coarseness, Mr. Harley, discovering that he could trust his eyes—he at one time doubted those visual organs—recovered such strength, not to say composure, that he ordered up a quart of burgundy and drank it by the goblet. Under this wise treatment, and with the reassuring shares in his clutch, Mr. Harley became a new man.

The first evidence of this newness given to the world was when at eight o'clock Mr. Harley, faultlessly caparisoned and in full evening dress, descended upon Mrs. Hanway-Harley and Dorothy. The ladies were together in the back drawing-room as the restored Mr. Harley, with brow of Jove and warlike eye, strode into their startled midst. Establishing himself in mighty state before the fireplace, rear to the blaze, he gazed with fondness, but as though from towering altitudes, on Dorothy.

"Come and kiss me, child," said Mr. Harley.

Dorothy obeyed without daring to guess the cause of this abrupt affection.

"You act strangely, Mr. Harley!" commented Mrs. Hanway-Harley, with a tinge of severity. "I hope you will compose yourself. It is quite possible that Count Storri will drop in."

"Madam," shouted Mr. Harley explosively, "I shall shoot that scoundrel Storri if he puts hand to my front gate!"

"John!" screamed Mrs. Hanway-Harley.

"Madam, I shall shoot him like a rat!"

Mr. Harley got this off with such fury that it struck Mrs. Hanway-Harley speechless. She was the more amazed, since she knew nothing of either Mr. Harley's wrongs or his burgundy. After surveying her with the utmost majesty for a moment, Mr. Harley came back to Dorothy.

"There's a gentleman named Mr. Storms?"

"Yes, papa!" (timidly).

"Yo uiove him."

"Yes, papa!" (feebly).

"You shall marry him!"

"Yes, papa!" (blushingly).

"John!" (with horror).

"Invite him to dinner to-morrow."

"Yes, papa!" (rapturously).

"And every other evening you choose!"

"Yes, papa!" (more rapturously).

"John!" (with a gasp).

"And now, madam," observed Mr. Harley, wheeling on Mrs. Hanway-Harley with politeness sudden and vast, "I am ready to attend to you. Let me commence by mentioning that I am master of this house, and shall give dinners when I will to whomsoever I please."

"But you said marriage, John, and Mr. Storms is a pauper! Think what you do!"

"It may entertain you, madam," returned Mr. Harley, in a manner of grim triumph, "to hear that you also are a pauper. Yes, madam, you, I, Pat Hanway—we are all paupers. Now I shall go to your scoundrel Storri and tell him what I have told you. Oh! I shall not murder the villain, madam; though I give you my word, if there were no one to think of but Jack Harley, I'd return to you blood to my elbows; yes, madam, to my elbows!" and Mr. Harley pulled up his coatsleeves very high to give force to his words.

Lighting a cigar, which he set between his teeth so that it projected outward and upward at an angle of defiance, Mr. Harley got into his hat and greatcoat, and made for the door. As he threw it open preparatory to issuing forth, there floated back with a puff of cigar smoke these words, delivered presumably for the good of Mrs. Hanway-Harley:

"Yes, madam; blood to my elbows!"

"Your father is insane!" groaned Mrs. Hanway-Harley to Dorothy, when the door had slammed and Mr. Harley was on his way to Storri, "absolutely insane!"

Then Mrs. Hanway-Harley, with many an ejaculation of self-pity over a fate that had made her helpmeet to a lunatic, called her maid to aid her in creeping to her room. As for Dorothy, she danced about as light as air; in the finale she danced across the way to Bess to tell that sorceress what wonders had befallen.

"Eh! you Harley—you John Harley, is it you?" jeered Storri, as Mr. Harley was shown in.

"Yes, you black villain and thief, it is I!" roared Mr. Harley, planting himself in front of Storri, who had not taken the polite trouble to get up from the sofa where he reclined. "Yes, you world's scoundrel, who but I!"

"Scoundrel?" repeated Storri with a screech, springing to his feet.

"Sit down!" thundered Mr. Harley, a pistol coming from his pocket like a flash.

Mr. Harley was from a region where pistols were regarded in the light of arguments, and gentlemen gravely debating therewith at ten paces had the approving countenance of the public. This may explain the ready grace with which Mr. Harley produced a specimen of that species of artillery when Storri seemed to threaten violence.

"Sit down!" thundered Mr. Harley, and Storri, with terror twitching at his lips, obeyed. Mr. Harley replaced the pistol in his pocket, and surveyed Storri with a look so sinister it alarmed that nobleman to the heart. "I have come," continued Mr. Harley, taking a chair and maintaining the while a dangerous eye on Storri, "I have come to return your insults, you blackmailing rogue, in the room where I received them."

CHAPTER XVIII.

How Storri Explored for Gold.

Should it ever be your fancy to witness on the part of any gentleman an exhibition of ferocity unrestrained that you may have him at his best for your experiment it would be wise to commence by subjecting him to a tremendous fright. Being first frightened and then relieved from his terror, and particularly if his nature be a trifle rough, he will if brought suddenly into the presence of one who has injured him furnish all you could desire in a picture of the sort adverted to. And thus was it with Mr. Harley that evening when he called on Storri—now no longer terrible.

The offensive utmost that one gentleman might say to another Mr. Harley said to his aforetime noble friend. He crushed Storri beneath fourfold what bulk of insolence and contumelious remark he himself had received, for at that fashion of conversation Mr. Harley was Storri's superior. Mr. Harley rendered Storri such shameful accounts of himself that the latter was well nigh consumed with what inward fires were ignited. Storri burned the more because his own cowardly alarms tied his hands and gagged retort upon his tongue. Mr. Harley, who had been frightened to the brink of collapse in the only manner that Storri might have frightened him, now refreshed himself unchecked and fed retaliation to the full.

Storri, craven to the roots, must fain submit. The murderous facility wherewith Mr. Harley in the beginning invested the conversation with that pistol had not been lost upon Storri, and he shivered lest the interview conclude with his own murder. Mr. Harley, having exhausted expletive and opprobrious term, might empty the six chambers of his dreadful weapon into Storri. Thus spake Storri's fears and he cowered while Mr. Harley raged. Indeed the tables had been turned and Mr. Harley was taking virulent advantage of the reversal. Among other matters he taunted Storri with his (Mr. Harley's) possession of those French shares and gave him to know that the happy transfer had been the fruit of his (Mr. Harley's) own superior wit.

"For," said Mr. Harley, with no more noble purpose than to augment Storri's pangs, "did you think that one of my depth was for long to be held at the mercy of such a dolt as yourself?"

"Then it was you," moaned Storri, who made the mistake of believing what Mr. Harley said, "then it was you who bought Northern Consolidated—you, and your confederates to whom you betrayed us?"

Mr. Harley smiled loftily, and was silent as though disdaining reply. He was willing to have Storri think his overthrow due to him and him alone. It would please him should Storri believe that he, Mr. Harley, had conquered not only the possession of those shares, but of the $500,000 which were so painfully collected as Storri's contribution to the pool's four millions. It would promote Mr. Harley's satisfaction to the superlative; it would make Storri's humiliation complete. By all means teach Storri that he, Mr. Harley, constructed the ambush into which the pool had sold its blindfold way. Wherefore, Mr. Harley with shrug and sneer consented to Storri's charges of betrayal, and intimated his own profitable joy of that treason. After thirty minutes of triumph, Mr. Harley, mightily restored in his own graces, arose to depart.

"And for a last word, you scoundrel," quoth the loud Mr. Harley, "I told Mrs. Hanway-Harley I would shoot you if you so much as laid hand to my front gate. You might do well to remember that promise; I have been known on occasion to tell Mrs. Hanway-Harley the truth."

After the last gloomy notice Mr. Harley went his defiant way, while Storri sank back a more deeply wounded wolf than ever.

Mr. Harley drew his check and dispatched it to Mr. Fopling, and Richard in due course received a check from the latter. Mr. Harley did not allude to the transaction on those few and distant occasions when he and Mr. Fopling met; and Mr. Fopling, burdened of his feuds with Ajax, soon forgot the affair in matters more important.

Mr. Harley, when emancipated from the thralldom of Storri, was as dollarless so far as immediate cash was concerned as was the stripped Storri himself. But in the rebound of spirit which followed, Mr. Harley's genius regained its old-time elasticity. A member of the House with whom he was in touch, being one of that speculative party who opened the New Year at Chamberlain's with cards, was so conveniently good-natured as to offer a measure putting coal on the free list. This, if passed, would be a woundy blow to the Harley mines; also to that railway whereof Mr. Harley was a director, since it hauled the Harley coal to the seaboard. With coal on the free list, Nova Scotia could undersell the Harley mines in every Atlantic port; likewise the Harley road would lose two million in annual freight. Under these threatening conditions, Mr. Harley was instantly given one hundred thousand dollars by the mines and the railroad to kill the iniquitous bill, and convert to a right opinion any and all who talked of coal and free lists in one and the same breath. Those one hundred thousand dollars relieved the pressing needs of Mr. Harley, and the bill that threatened coal and railroads was heard of no more.

When, following Mr. Harley's gracious words concerning Richard and Mrs. Hanway-Harley's disconsolate departure for her own room, Dorothy danced across to Bess, the yellow-haired sorceress rose grandly to the opportunity. She sent Mr. Fopling to find Richard; and since Mr. Fopling's weakness was not of the legs—he being a very Mercury, with feet as fleet as his wits were slow—Dorothy and Bess had no more than finished giving and receiving congratulations—that is, kisses—when Richard appeared and took Bess's labor of congratulation off her hands—or should one say her lips? Bess was of those excellent folk whose fine friendships know when to go as well as to stay, and, Richard arriving, she conveyed Mr. Fopling and Ajax from the room, leaving the restored lovers to themselves.

Of what worth now to tell you those sweetheart things that Richard and his angel said and did? How would it advantage a world to hear that he took her in his arms and held her close? You, who have loved and have been loved, who were lost and have been found again, well know the blissful routine. Richard said that no woman was ever loved as he loved Dorothy. Dorothy the beloved replied that no man was ever loved as she loved Richard. Both believed both statements as they did the Word. And yet Adam said the same thing when, wandering in Eden, he first met lovely Eve, and every lover has said the same thing ever since. Every fire boasts itself the hottest, every lover does the same. It is the virtue of love that this is so, and none will object while Dorothy and Richard work out their tinted destiny on lines of paradise. They had been held apart; they were now together; rely upon it they said and looked those softly tender, foolish, happy, precendental things which have been best among the best lessons of the ages.

Mr. Harley was pompous and patronizing the next evening when he met Richard at dinner; but Mr. Harley was no less kind. Richard submitted himself to Mr. Harley's patronage, for in it he recognized the inalienable right of a father-in-law. Mrs. Hanway-Harley on that dinner occasion did not pretend to the rugged, high good humor of her spouse, and cultivated a manner at once blighted and resigned. But she was civil even as she sighed, and he would have been a carper who complained. Dorothy was beset of many shynesses now that she was brought with her beloved into the presence of ones who were aware of her secret without possessing sympathy therewith. Bess was there; but Bess did not weigh upon her, since Bess applauded her love. Senator Hanway was there; but "Uncle Pat" did not confuse her, since he cared nothing about her love. It was Mr. Harley who permitted and Mrs. Hanway-Harley who tolerated her heart's choice that set her cheeks aflame. Still it was good to see Richard sitting across in the serpent stead of Storri—to see one whom she worshiped where one whom she feared and loathed had been before! It was twice good to think the present was immortal while the past was dead. As Dorothy thought these things and sweetly blushed to think them, you would have been reminded of a rose, if her blue eyes had not made you remember violets, or by their clear, true, tranquil depths led you away to muse on summer skies.

Richard bore the ordeal of that dinner manfully; ordeal it was, for he felt himself on exhibition. He was rigorous to seem unruffled and defended his calmness by talking general politics with Senator Hanway. Nor did he fall into the error of speaking of tempests in the stock market, and as for the recreant Storri, no one named him. Bess might have brought Mr. Fopling, for he was asked, could she have trusted that young gentleman on this point of Storri. But Mr. Fopling was prone to bring up the one subject which others were trying to forget, and, realizing his tenacious aptitude for crime of that character, Bess sent him home and came alone.

Richard, like Storri before him, only with a better conscience, did not crowd good fortune to the wall; he left early. As he made ready to go Mr. Harley invited him not only to another dinner, but to a multitude of such refections. Mr. Harley, having been thus hospitable, swept Mrs. Hanway-Harley with arrogant eyes as who should say:

"There lies my glove, madam! We shall see who lifts it!"

Altogether Richard's coming to the Harley house in the role of suitor for Dorothy's small hand went off well, and Dorothy was thinking that life seemed very beautiful and very bright when four hours later she fell asleep and rosy dreams relieved her thoughts from further duty about her pillow for that night.

Senator Hanway and Mr. Harley, being veterans of the tape, were not ignorant of the hopeless state into which the failure of that "bear" raid on Northern Consolidated had plunged them. They could not name him who had worked the "corner" against them and the other members of the osprey pool, the hand that defeated them had been played from behind a curtain. Time, however, would develop the identity of their conqueror; nor was his identity of first importance, since the great thing was that they were caught. The best they might do was quietly await destruction in its coming. It would surely come; "corners" were not made in vain, and a day would dawn when he who held them captive would disclose himself. That disclosure would mean for them, financially, the beginning of the end.

Mr. Harley and Senator Hanway might have repudiated the deal, and so saved their fortunes at the sacrifice of their names. Indeed, they thought of it; and then they shook their heads. Such a step would ruin Senator Hanway's hopes of a Presidency; those hard years of political labor would be canceled; his chances, now the fairest, would be swept away not only for the present but for time. The discovery of Senator Hanway—he who wrote the report against Northern Consolidated—as a partner in that "bear" raid would strike his name forever from the roll of Presidential possibilities. It might even result in his expulsion from the Senate, for conspiracy is no good charge to face when true. Of those who were "bears" against Northern Consolidated, from Storri to the old gray buccaneer, the ones who must submit without a cry to being flayed were Mr. Harley and Senator Hanway, for with them to be discovered was to be destroyed.

After fullest conference, Mr. Harley went again to New York. It was settled that the old gray buccaneer should continue in command. When he who had beaten them unmasked himself, the old gray buccaneer was to treat for generous terms. With the bankrupt Storri out, there remained but seven to consider; the old gray buccaneer was to offer a round ransom of seven millions of dollars, or one million for each. In similar fashion beaten knights compounded in the dusty lists of Ashby eight hundred years ago; the amount of ransom that Ashby day was less, but the principle throughout the centuries has remained unshaken and unchanged.

After four days of wound-nursing, Storri went to the San Reve. He found that lady of the gray-green eyes sitting sullen and silent, wrapped in resentful anger like a witch's cloak. One thing in his favor; the San Reve had not heard of his return, and supposed him just back from New York.

Storri did his best to be on cheerful terms with the San Reve; he said his business was now accomplished and he would see her every day. Storri strove all he knew to soften the San Reve and turn her frowns to smiles. He failed; nothing would unlock that flinty, hard reserve.

"About the Harleys," said the jealous San Reve at last. "How do you stand with the Harleys? You still go there?"

The San Reve shot a sharp, inquiring glance at Storri from her sea-green, sea-gray eyes.

Storri, being feline, was as has been written no one hard to rout, and could be readily driven from an enterprise. With the loss of those French shares, his designs on Mr. Harley and his power over Dorothy had fallen to the ground. He was left with nothing more potent than his naked hatred. He was more hungry than before for harm against the Harleys, but the new conditions baffled him as might some bridgeless gulf. He could see no open way through which he might find his enemies and overcome them.

But Storri had his miserable prides, and would perish where he stood rather than tell the San Reve this. With her he must pretend to power; he must swagger and boast more loudly than before. This was the vanity and the strategy of the man. He would have thrust his hand into the fire sooner than confess himself beaten by Mr. Harley to the San Reve. She must continue to wonder at and worship him; it was the incense demanded by the nostrils of his self-love.

"How do I stand with those Harleys, my San Reve?" Storri's tone was supercilious and tired, as though he had been forced to remember ones who wearied him by vulgarest dint of their inconsequence. "I do not stand with the Harleys, I stand upon them. Where should such crawling, footless creatures be?" and Storri pointed to his own somewhat ample foundations as indicating the grovveling whereabouts of the Harleys.

"But you go there?" remarked the San Reve, flintily suspicious.

"No, my San Reve," yawned Storri. "Pardon my grossness—a yawn in the presence of a lady, and I a Russian gentleman! I took the habit from these pig Americans! You should know, my dear San Reve, that the very name of Harley bores me. No, I shall no more go to those Harleys. They send, they beg; I do not go. Why should I so honor them? No, they must come to me, your Storri, my San Reve; and when they arrive, bah! I shall not see them. I shall tell them they must come again!" And Storri lifted his hand grandly, as though the Harleys were now disposed of and their trivial status fixed.

Storri threw this off with a lazy insolence that, all things considered, did him credit. And yet he was not wise. He might not have told the San Reve that he had ended his visits to the Harleys, but her bold brow and thoughtful face misled him. He regarded her as deeper than she was; he considered that she would soon discover how he no longer was a guest at the Harley table, and thought to save himself from an inference by a proclamation. He would take the initiative and seem to cast the Harleys into the outer darkness of his disregard. It would make for his standing with the San Reve; more, it would soothe her jealousies.

Storri might have been justified of his reasonings had there existed no flaw in his premises. The San Reve was far from being gifted with that cold, incisive wisdom which he ascribed to her. Given a situation wherein the San Reve had no concern, and she would be sound enough; her speculations would defend themselves, her advice be worth a following. Endow the San Reve with a personal interest, the more if that interest were one mixed of love and jealousy, and her reason, if that be its name, would go blind and deaf and lapse into the merest frenzy of insanity. She would hasten to believe the worst and disbelieve the best. Under spell of jealousy, the San Reve would accept nothing that told in her bwn favor; and just now, despite an outward serenity—for, though sullen, she was serene—the San Reve was afire with jealousy like a torch.

The San Reve listened to Storri and said nothing; she could see how matters stood. Storri still dominated the Harleys; he went there; he saw Miss Harley; his suit was advancing; that was what had sent him to her, the San Reve, with a lie on his lips about having quit his calls at the Harleys'; he was seeking to blind her to what was passing. But she, the San Reve, would be cunning; she would fathom the traitor Storri. Even then she could foretell the end. In a week, or mayhap a month, the news would reach her of the wedding of Storri and Miss Harley. What else could come? Storri was a Count. Were not Americans mad after Counts? And such a nobleman! Wealthy, handsome, brilliant, bold—who could refuse his love? Not the Harleys—not Miss Harley! No, the transparent sureness of it set sneeringly a-curl the San Reve's mouth. Soon or late, Storri would lead Miss Harley to the altar. The bells would ring, the organ swell, the people gape and comment. And then Storri and his bride would ride away; while she, the San Reve—she, the disgraced—she, the daughter of a man who tamed lions—she would be left alone with her despised heart!

All this wild driftwood of conjecture came riding down on the swift, tumbling currents of the San Reve's thoughts, and to her these made conclusions were as prophecy. What should she do—she and her poor love? She must not lose her idol—her Storri! What should she do? She had written this Mr. Storms of the French shares and nothing had come of that! Should she disclose herself to Miss Harley? Of what avail? What woman was ever withheld from wedding a man by the word of that man's mistress? The San Reve could have scorned herself for a fool! She was handless to interfere; the San Reve clenched her white, strong teeth to find herself so much at bay.

Stop; there was one chance of defeating fate—a sure chance; the thought had come before! And now the San Reve looked strangely at Storri; her teeth showed pearl against the coral of her parted lips while her nostrils dilated like the nostrils of an animal.

The little world you have been considering through the medium of this veracious chronicle began now to adjust itself to the changes that have been recorded. Mr. Harley and Senator Hanway, for their parts, gave themselves wholly to that winning of a White House; their ardor, if it were possible, had been promoted by the reverse in Northern Consolidated, and Senator Hanway's anxiety to be President appeared to brighten as his money fortunes dimmed. And, as though fate meditated amends for those disasters of stocks from every angle of politics there came flattering reports. Senator Hanway was sure, so said the reports, to write himself "President Hanway"; politicians were shouldering one another to secure seats in the bandwagon of that statesman's prospects. True, for all their preoccupation, Mr. Harley and Senator Hanway would now and then glance up from those details of practical politics over which they were employed, to wonder why the hidden one of that "corner" did not close the transaction by peeling off their fiscal pelts. So far there had come neither word nor sign of him.

The old gray buccaneer exhorted them in no wise to be uneasy.

"You needn't fret," said the old gray buccaneer; "he's got us as fast as two and two make four. For us to be wondering why he doesn't come around is as though a coop full of turkeys went wondering why the poulterer didn't come around. No; I can't tell you why he—whoever he is—so leaves us in protracted peace. Perhaps he's fattening us," and the old gray buccaneer cheered the conversation with a laugh as strident as saw filing.

Richard and Dorothy, following the selfish fashion of lovers, thought on nothing but themselves. Our young journalist's contributions to the Daily Tory fell away in both quantity and quality, and the editor commented thereon sarcastically, saying they were becoming "baggy at the knee." Richard did not resent the criticism; he cheered himself with the theory that when he had recovered from his happiness he would do better. Meanwhile he and Dorothy privily appointed their nuptials for the first of June, taking Bess into the secret.

obvious as a pikestaff to that sagacious gentlewoman; Mr. Harley and Storri had quarreled over stocks. Mr. Harley had been detected in some effort to swindle Storri; or he had detected Storri in some effort to swindle him; men were always swindling and quarreling, according to Mrs. Hanway-Harley. She put no questions to Mr. Harley, and only marveled at a thickness that would sacrifice the family's chance of possessing a Count over a low, trifling matter of dollars and cents.

Inspector Val, when the capture of the French shares had removed the reason of his appearance in Storri's destinies, told Richard that he would, with his permission, still continue on the trail of that nobleman.

"Unless my judgment be at fault," explained Inspector Val, "there's something coming off that I wouldn't miss for anything you can name."

Richard, held fast with sweeter problems, cared not at all for Storri nor Inspector Val's pursuit of him. If it jumped with the humor of that scientist of stealth, Inspector Val might follow Storri to the grave. Richard would be pleased to have him do so, and to pay the costs thereof as rapidly as they accrued.

Inspector Val, whose trade it was to read men, smiled upon Richard at this and went his satisfied way. He would stick to Storri; and he would notify Richard should aught unusual either promise or occur. Inspector Val saw that in Richard's present mood of beatific imbecility a conference with him would mean no more than would a conference with the Monument.

Storri, while easily beaten from any specific enterprise, was ever ready with a fresh one. During those days when, like a convalescing wolf, he lay hiding with his wounds from the sight and search of men, his disorderly and, one might say, his criminal imagination busied itself in sketching a giant scheme. It was as unique as had been the fallen Credit Magellan without owning to a shadow of Credit Magellan's legitimacy. This time Storri would have no partners; there would be no Mr. Harleys and no osprey pools to sell him out. Before all was done he might require men; but of the sort one controls like slaves.

There was one need that must be supplied, however; Storri must have money. Stimulated with the necessities that pricked him, Storri bethought himself of the Chinese Concession. That precious document was in his possession; the osprey pool had not been granted its custody. Storri carried the saffron silk to a rich and avaricious man; he asked the loan of $50,000, and offered interest steeple high. The man of wealth and avarice was deeply affected; he, like the others, sent for the brocaded, poppy-scented Mongol. The poppy Mongol came, salaamed, translated, and went his way. Then the one of gold and avarice counted down the fifty thousand, and locked up the yellow silk with Storri's note for ninety days in his safe.

Being strengthened with those fifty thousand dollars, Storri sought an ancient surveyor. Did the ancient one possess an accurate map of Washington?—a map that showed every public building and park and street railway and water main and sewer, all done to the final fraction of an inch? Storri's Czar has asked for such—his Czar who so admired the Americans and their beautiful capital!

The ancient one of chains and levels had such a map. Being a man to whom a unit was like a human being and every fraction as a child, the map was accurate in its measurements to the thickness of a hair. Storri bought the map; it showed the line of that drain which ran so temptingly close to the treasury gold, and Storri's eye glistened as he followed it to the river's edge.

Storri collected photographs of the Capitol, the White House and other public structures as a blind to conceal his purpose and lend luster of truth to those tales of his Czar's interest in things American. One evening Storri related to the San Reve his Czar's desires touching maps and plans and pictures and showed her, among others, a picture of the Treasury.

Ah, that reminded Storri! His San Reve worked in the office of the supervising architect! Could his San Reve procure him a ground plan of the Treasury building? His Czar had laid especial stress upon such a drawing!

Yes, Storri's San Reve could get the desired ground plan without difficulty. It would show everything foundational, with a cross-section displaying the depth of the walls below street grades.

The San Reve accepted as genuine Storri's eagerness to serve his Czar. Nor did she doubt Storri's description of the Czar's American curiosity; from what she had heard of that potentate, the San Reve believed him to be as crazy as a woman's watch. Certainly, if Storri wished to send the imperial lunatic a cartload of plans, the San Reve would contribute what lay in her power.

The next day Storri received from the San Reve a ground-plan of the Treasury building. It exhibited in red ink the vault that held the gold reserve. Storri gazed upon that oblong smudge of red and studied its location with the devotion of a poet.

And now what was to be more expected than that the curious Czar would ask questions of Storri, when that illustrious Russian returned to St. Petersburg, concerning those many superiorities which the American buildings possessed? The thought set the indefatigable Storri to visiting the public buildings. He made a tour of the State, War and Navy building, the Corcoran Gallery, the Capitol and finally the Treasury building. Who should escort him through that latter grim, gray

Dorothy asked Richard how he had rescued her father from beneath the hand of Storri; which natural inquisition Richard avoided in right man fashion by kissing the questioning lips and saying that Dorothy wouldn't understand.

Mrs. Hanway-Harley was different from Dorothy. With a wifely experience of many years to guide her, she did not ask Mr. Harley why he had gone to furious war with Storri. Mrs. Hanway-Harley would not put the query for two reasons: Mr. Harley would prevaricate; besides, Mrs. Hanway-Harley knew. It was as edifice but an assistant secretary? The affable A. S. had met Storri at the club; certainly he could do no less than give him the polite credit of his countenance for his instructive rambles. Under such distinguished patronage Storri went from roof to basement; even the vault that guarded the nation's gold was thrown open for his regard.

This gold vault was of particular moment to Storri; his Czar had laid weight upon that vault. Yes; he, Storri, could see how it was constructed—thick walls of masonry—an inner lining of chilled steel that would laugh at drills and almost break the teeth of nitric acid—the steel ceiling and sides bolted to the masonry—the floor, steel slabs two feet in width, laid side by side but not bolted, and bedded upon masonry that rested on the ground! Surely, nothing could be more solid or more secure! The door and the complicated machinery that locked it were wonders, marvels! Nowhere had he, Storri, beheld such a door or such a lock, and he had peeped into the strong rooms of a dozen kings. The gold, too, one hundred and ninety-three millions in all, packed five thousand dollars to a sack in little canvas sacks like bags of birdshot, and each sack weighing twenty pounds—Storri saw it all!

"And yet," quoth Storri, giving the polite assistant secretary a kind of leer, "do not that door and lock remind you of the chains and locks upon your leathern letterbags?—a leathern bag which the most ignorant of men would slash wide open with a penknife in an instant and never worry chains and locks?"

Storri traced that drain in its course to the river. It ran south past the corner of the Treasury Building for the matter of a hundred yards or more, and then broke south and west across the White Lot between the White House and the Monument. In the end it abandoned this diagonal flight and soberly took to the center of a street that lay to the west of the White House, and followed it to the Potomac.

Storri, hands in pocket and puffing an easy cigar, sauntered to the water front and took a look at the drain where it finished. The inspection gratified him; the drain was like a great tunnel; one might have driven a horse and wagon into it. Storri was especially struck by the fact that a considerable stream of water gushed from the drain's mouth; the stream had a fair current, four miles an hour at least, and showed a depth of full six inches. This was a discovery that set Storri's wits in motion; the drain boxed in a living brook.

It was eleven o'clock that night when Storri returned to the mouth of the drain; he was wrapped in a greatcoat and wore high boots. There were no houses about; as for loiterers, the region was deserted after dark. Storri looked out on the broad bosom of the river; he noticed that even at low tide a boat drawing no more than eighteen inches might push within a dozen feet of the drain.

Satisfied that no one observed him, Storri stepped to the mouth of the drain and disappeared. He splashed along in the running water with his heavy boots for something like a rod; then he stopped and lighted a bicycle lantern which he took from his greatcoat pocket. The lantern threw a bright flare after the manner of the headlight of a locomotive, and Storri could hear the scurrying splash of the rats as it sent an alarming ray ahead like a little searchlight. Being lighted on his way, Storri kept steadily forward until, turning the corner where the drain broke to the right across the White Lot, he was lost to sight.

As Storri disappeared, two men far behind him at the mouth of the drain stood watching. They had thus far followed Storri dimly with their eyes by the light he carried.

"What's become of him, Inspector?" whispered Mr. Duff, the shorter of the