ROBERT HARDING

OF

PATRICK SLATER

Title: Robert Harding—A Story of Every Day Life
Date of first publication: 1938
Author: John Wendell Mitchell (ps: Patrick Slater) (1882-1951)
Date first posted: 2nd January, 2025
Date last updated: 2nd January, 2025
Faded Page eBook #20250103

This eBook was produced by: Al Haines, John Routh & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at https://www.pgdpcanada.net

ROBERT HARDING

A Story of Every Day Life

By

PATRICK SLATER

TORONTO
THOMAS ALLEN
PUBLISHER

Printed and Bound by
The Hunter-Rose Co. Limited
Toronto, Canada

The names of its scenes and of the characters in this novel are fictitious in every instance; and no statement which it contains has reference to any specific institution or community existing on the continent of North America since the days of the Jesuit Relations.

As one says it—in 1938 A.D.—

If you have a smile to spare always let it go.
In this world of work and care, laughter's needed so.
Trouble coming on your way may divide in half
If you lift your chin and say: Sweetheart, let us laugh!

As Omar Khayyam thought it—in 1100 A.D.—

Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again:
How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same Garden after me—in vain!
And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one—turn down on empty Glass.

—Edward Fitzgerald.

CONTENTS

The Prologue
I. Robert Reginald Percival Young-Harding
II. Enter Marshall Pickhall
III. The redoubtable Aaron Burke
IV. The Honourable Mr. Justice Finlayson
V. Learned Counsel argue before the Bar
VI. Benjamin Hughes argues also
VII. Colonel Septimus Honslow
VIII. Re-enter Benjamin Hughes
IX. Miss Sally Brittain
X. Mrs. Sarah Boniface
XI. Phineas MacIntosh, the Confectioner
XII. Mrs. Thomas Fenton Jardine (alias Agnes)
XIII. Nicholas Speers (alias Go-by)
XIV. The Reverend Solomon Burgoyne, B.A.
XV. Miss Lucy Merle Wharton (alias Burgoyne)
XVI. J. Ephraim Brown, J.P.
XVII. An Interlude
XVIII. Miss Claire Jardine
XIX. Miss Mary Brown

THE PROLOGUE

This novel is written to entertain and amuse with an interesting story quickly told,—just that and nothing more. It is to be read as one loafs and forgets both his importance and his troubles.

It hopes to make easy reading and never to be tedious. If at any point things should appear a little otherwise, the reader is asked to exercise patience for half a minute or so. There are traps and ginfalls set along the way to catch anyone who attempts the gentle art of skipping in these presents. This is a fair warning to friend John Gilpin who gallops and arrives no where.

It professes to supply realism in the sense that its plot and characters do not put a strain on the credulity of anyone—not even of a non-gullible pipe smoker. The writer assumes that it is impossible at this late date to shock, enlighten or amaze the reader of the Modern Novel. So why try?

Many little concernments are left to the imagination, which is intended as a compliment to the reader. When told briefly that the chestnut spires are out, pray add thine own budding roses and favourite bird songs.

In the writer's mind, the scenes are laid in America, and by the northern shores of the Lower Great Lakes, where nature, taken by and large, has little to answer for—and man has much; but the reader may locate them over behind his own hills beyond—or in low places, for that matter.

The action opens on Thursday the 12th day of October, 1911, and the curtain falls on Thursday the 12th of September, 1935.

It is hoped the actors express themselves simply and clearly, and without offence to God or man.

And the writer will ever pray that his book may never prove fatiguing.

(Exit the author bearing his crotchets with him.)

A blare of trumpets.

CHAPTER I

Enter—Robert Reginald Percival Young-Harding to play centre stage.

Bob Young had alighted from the up-bound morning train at the Markham village station; and the sun had pierced the rain clouds and was high enough to throw a handful of heat down on that personable young man by the time he arrived on foot at the William Hendrie farm. He was slim-hipped and stream lined; and he swung along with the easy, limber stride of a man without much flesh on his bones. Bob was carrying a leather suitcase, and in his eyes a smile was lurking.

It was Thursday, the 12th October, 1911; and autumn was strown already with its russet leaves. The maples in the wood lots were as the bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. The grain fields lay in auburn stubble awaiting the plow share, and the swallows and singing finches were already flown where summer wings could rove. He smelt the sweet, nipping tang of cider in the air as he passed up the long orchard lane. It was the season for picking apples and getting the potatoes into the pit.

As he approached the low-lying brick farmhouse, the resinous breath of its rain-washed windbreak gave him a heartsome home-coming feeling. Bob was a young Englishman who had spent his first two years in America working on this farm; and now, after a year's absence, he was dropping in, unexpected, to pay the Hendrie family a passing visit.

Mrs. Hendrie made him welcome at the kitchen door. She had a sonsy round face with kind, twinkling eyes.

"Why, Bob!" she exclaimed in her crisp, hearty way, "you're the man we're glad to see. All right, again, after your operation?"

"I feel that way, and I hope I look it," he told her.

"Come in, Bob, *do*!" she motioned him as she stepped in to put the kettle on. "Make yourself at home and take the air of the place."

"And Mr. Hendrie, has he been keeping his good health?" the visitor inquired as he took a wooden chair—no need to test it—and sat him down squarely, well back on the seat.

"Strong and hearty, thanks."

"And Ralph?"

"Bravely, indeed, the child is."

"And your mother?"

"Poorly, a while back, but picking up nicely now with the change of weather."

There was no occasion to inquire as to Mrs. Hendrie's health; but the reader may ask: Was Mary Hendrie good to look at? Yes, Bob thought her a pleasant-looking, friendly body; and he knew her heart was sweet and sound as a ri′bston pippin. She was then a buxom, bustling matron rising thirty-five —filling out at the curves, it is true, but not old enough yet to sit back and let her figure go. Mrs. Hendrie was a neat-looking woman, even if she was beef to the heels like a Mullingar heifer. She was one of the Frankish girls, all of whom had made good catches without mousing—more than a little—for husbands; and Mary had been the prettiest of them, and a slim arch bit of a thing when William Hendrie took her away from a comfortable home and a good mother. He judged rightly that a good apple usually grows on a choice tree. Her sisters had all done better—that is in the matter of style; yet her easy-going Bill Tom Hendrie, whilst only a farmer, was a big hulk of a man with a kindliness that made him soft as butter. Mary was the last to be picked—but with apples the culls go to market first. She had now a comfortable home of her own and had brought there her mother's cheerful sunny outlook on life. To Mary's notion, the far side of the moon may be smiling for other skies to see. She had no time to waste, had Mrs. William Hendrie, on hopes and fears and vain regrets. Her mind was thronged with the busy present; yet she found a way of managing everything—even to a slow-moving husband—without any unseemly fuss or bother. But whenever did a clumsy big man not think his short little wife a wonderful woman? She liked to cook up good, strong wholesome food and she joyed to watch men eat it. A rock of commonsense, that's the sort she was.

"It's a delight to see your smart, neat kitchen again," the visitor remarked. "It's like cool water to a thirsty soul!"

He held his head erect, and the hips seemed the main joints of his body, which rested in alert repose.

"I see the beefsteak begonia's still thriving," he commented, as the kitchen greeted him pleasantly with the sweet, spicy smell of gingerbread that had been baking. "My word, that plant's as full of life as I was of hope whilst crossing the briny . . . still gets its face washed every Friday morning?"

The room had air and sunshine in plenty, but nary a fly.

"And what sort of a place did you have, Bob?" the lady enquired, as she stuffed cedar kindling into the stove to hurry the boiling. "You look as lean as a stray cat."

"Oh, I got the summer in—after a fashion," he told her and let the subject drop with that. "So you think I've been slimming, do you, Mrs. Hendrie?" he asked after a pause. "Yes, my belt is riding a couple of notches closer."

And he stepped out onto the back stoop to wash his head in rain water, which he drew from the cistern.

It was pure friendliness that had prompted her inquiry; and, of course, the young man knew it. When fresh on the continent, he had blundered his way out to work for the Hendries—an awkward, inexperienced, and incompetent hired man on a farm that went in for grain and beef cattle. Yet he had proved himself so agreeable a worker,—and so willing and dependable—that his mistakes were laughed at till his tech′nic had time to improve and he had been kept on—a little, perhaps it was, for kindness sake. The world's a passable place to a healthy fellow rising twenty; and to a positive gust for living, Bob Young had added the happy knack of holding his grumpy thoughts within himself; and, forby, he had surpassed any hired man Mrs. Hendrie had ever known in keeping her wood box filled and his own things neat and tidy. The Hendrie family thought Bob was quite all right. They took a friendly interest in him.

"You're as shy sometimes, Bob, as a squirrel, and hide your secrets like nuts in the ground," Mrs. Hendrie told him as she fetched him out a fresh towel and stood watching the noisy splashing of him.

There was a taste of salt in her tone, but she let it pass with that. She had no mind to drive a coulter through stubborn soil. He had always been dif′fident in discussing his personal affairs; but she did not like such stiff-necked ret′i·cence, did Mary, who was open and above-board herself; and the incident lodged in her memory.

"You order things better here, Mrs. Hendrie," he told her as he seated himself again by the kitchen window.

His glance took in the wide, well-scrubbed floor, and his nostrils caught a whiff of the sachet lavender that clung to the fresh house dress the woman was wearing.

"Ralph will be glad to see you," the mother remarked as she laid a place for the visitor at the kitchen table. "Did you get the child's letter? He wrote you after you got out of the hospital."

"Yes, and it's ashamed I am not to have answered it," he apologized. "What's Ralph specializing in now—Indian warfare or Indian runners?"

"No," she explained, to the singing of the tea kettle, "he's gone out of ducks. Some vermin cleaned up on his young flock down in the creek bottom"—she didn't say crick. "Of course we had tears! His affections are centred this season on a litter of York′shire pigs. It's a ton he says he'll make them by Thanksgiving—and his father says it's likely. Ralph has studied them so closely that he would know their names, every one, and stroke them kindly if the child found their sides hung up as Danish bacon."

"Yes," the visitor commented. "The boy's as bright as a new dollar. He'll grow up into a real honest-to-goodness farmer. That's the sort of men the country needs!"

"It's glad I am," she agreed with a glint of mother's pride in her eyes, "that the child takes such an in′ter·est in the place. If he didn't, the only boy on a farm would be as lonely as a king's son. Now, sit over here," she went on, "and have some fōōd. It's black tea, kindly observe, that I'm brewing for you."

She was a quick-footed woman for all the plumpness of her and she bustled about heaping his plate with bubble-and-squeak, to wit: cabbage and hashed potatoes and meat, which, frying in a pan together, make a joyful, noisy splutter.

"I made a discovery last winter, Bob, which may interest you," she told him in a joking way as she took a chair on the opposite side of the table to do the friendly honours. "I found that the English go in extensively for tea. It seems to be *tea—tea—tea*—with them—from sun-up to sundown and then on. Their insides must be lined with tannin as lime cakes on a tea kettle. It beats all get out! Tea's as right as rain-coats with them—any time. I don't know how your English girls kept that lovely fresh complexion we used to read about in *The Family Herald*. Of course, I know how they manage it nowadays. I suppose they acquired such natural bloom whilst *doing* the flowers. It strikes me, though, Bob, that in entertaining, the English go in more for beverages than for co·mes′ti·bles! Leastwise, I found it so. Weak tea and light collations—and thanks *awfully*, eh?"

Her visitor chuckled.

"Now, Mrs. Hendrie," he scolded her, "you're making sly digs at the Englishman's vacuous verbal stare—I know you are. Where in the world have you been to pick up all these curious notions?"

"Oh, didn't you know? I was out to the Pacific Coast last winter," she informed him. "I took mother out to visit my sister, Muriel, who is married and lives at Victoria, B.C. If you don't know where that is, it's near Es (hold-your-nose) qui′malt—One nasals that to be proper. The folks I met out there try to be more English than the Surrey Downs. And they're so deucedly enthusiastic about it, too! That seems to be the only thing they are enthusiastic about. They're not even on the make. They're just sitting pretty. I seemed to be visiting in a community of tea grannies and tea gaffers. The men were positively adepts at handling chinaware—and so leisurely in their motions. That seems as easy as winking for an Englishman—that and small talk."

"Small talk, indeed!" Bob exclaimed with a grin. "Serious business, rather! Holding an adjourned inquest—you know, discussing the vital affairs of some one not present in the flesh. But let me plead for them, Mrs. Hendrie," he went on, "that this tea drinking of theirs is a harmless dissipation. If the English had never done anything worse than drink tea, they'd not have created much stir in the world. Yes, it strikes a stranger as a silly sort of ritual, doesn't it? Believe me, an English play cannot get rightly started on the boards—get into action, you know, without a pleasant insipid tea-drinking scene as a curtain raiser. If it's the maid's afternoon out, things are held up, one way or another, till Abigail arrives in a fluster to get into her bib and tucker and light the spirit lamp to brew the stimulating infusion. No difficulty telling what an English family will be found doing at home between meals. It's tea drinking they're always about."

"Anyway, it was a revelation to me, Bob, that visit of mine was. Somehow, I never associated you with the English before because you don't drop your aitches and you're not self-opinionated—that is, not re′al·ly[1]—*for a man*. But I can see clearly enough, now, that you're English, and no mistake about it. You just belong to another tribe in Judah—that's all. I venture to say you have a sister or a she-cousin who is busy at this moment *doing* the flowers and waiting for some Agatha to ring the bell for afternoon tea. I think, young man, you've been hiding your light under a bushel."

"Then I may as well have another cup," Bob suggested, "and drink to all the pretty girls over the water."

"Of course, three years will acclimatize anyone, *some*," Mrs. Hendrie observed as she brought the tea pot over; "and I notice your tongue is already contaminated with local idiom. I notice you've hooked yours about that word—*a·boug'ht*. You roll it on your tongue like a native son. I'm told they spot a girl from these parts in New York City by merely turning the head on the pillow and asking: 'What time is it, nurse?' If she's a pretty one, the answer'll come right back: 'It's *a·boug'ht* so and so o'clock.' But you're still of the rough tweed, tea-imbibing type. You're still an exotic! What *fetched* you over—as the English say? Wrathy father ship you abroad, eh? Crop of wild oats sprouting or something? Waiting a delayed family bereavement to call you home—or what's the explanation?"

"No, Mrs. Hendrie," he assured her gravely. "I come of a long-lived family and we're prolific too. You'll never hear of me sitting pretty at home, waiting for the tea and warmly supporting the Archbishop and the Established Orders."

"Anyway," the lady told him, "I think Bob Young is a—what-you-say—a deucedly ple·be′ian name for a long-legged English tea drinker to carry around with him. Tell me honestly now, what did your maiden aunty call you? Wasn't it Reggie or—perhaps—Percy?"

"At that, you're not a bad guesser," he admitted. "Yes, when you first saw me I was travelling light. My luggage had gone the way luggage goes when one goes broke; and my name was toned down to suit the altered occasion. I have never missed the clothes but I may get the name out some day and dust it up—that is, if I win a sweep or something. Just at present, I fancy my dear connection would regard me as a returned empty."

"If luck ever breaks strong for you, Bob," the lady observed "—and I wish you all sorts of luck—you'll not be running around squawking about it like a half-feathered chicken that has caught its first worm. Mum's the word for you!"

And with reference to the birthplace and family connexion of Robert Reginald Percival Young-Harding, these are all the particulars that Mrs. Hendrie ever discovered; nor will the reader ever discover more.

They chatted on for a while over local news and gossip.

"I merely dropped in to see the family and especially Ralph," the young man informed her. "I shall be going back down, Saturday, to the city again; and, perhaps, Mrs. Hendrie you can put me up?"

"Why, of course, Bob. You're more than welcome any time. Didn't I tell you that? You needn't take it as a compliment this time, either," she went on with a smile, "because anyone with a sup′ple back is welcome on the Hendrie farm when we're picking potatoes. Mr. Hendrie detests that job, as you know. The man already has me rubbing his back with white liniment. A crick always catches him bad—come potato-picking time."

In the course of further talk, Bob told her that he had not located work for the winter; and he then went out to inspect the new well the Hendries had sunk that summer and to cast an eye over Ralph's porkers.

It was now a day of amber sunshine.

Mrs. Hendrie smiled as the tune of *The Blue Juniata* came drifting back to her. Somehow she always associated a singing voice with an easy conscience—

Wild roved an Indian maid, bright Alforata,
Where sweeps the waters of the Blue Juniata.
Swift as an antelope through the forest going,
Loose were her jetty locks in waving tresses flowing.

[1] The word, really, according to Mrs. Hendrie, is not pronounced real′ly—it is pronounced re′al·ly. A note will be permitted, at this point, on the way the characters in this story use their tongues. In friendly, informal conversation, they use homely, colloquial words and phrases—as everybody else in this world does who is not engaged at the moment in putting on airs; but they do not mispronounce words in violation of universal good usage. This remark has no reference to the broadening of the A's and the burring of the R's, which will always remain matters of local pride and prejudice; neither is it concerned with choice of diction. The point is that the characters in this story are the masters of what few literary words they use, and they do not throw false accents to annoy us. Of course, no person every does this deliberately. That stamps the speaker as a slattern or a sloven. To put this matter beyond possibility of doubt, the fall of the accent will be marked on many commonplace words as we go along. The diacritical marks are those used in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; (Merriam Series), a reference to which often settles impolite, family table-disputes.

CHAPTER II

Enter—Detective-sergt. Marshall Pickhall and the minions of the law.

"Of all the con′tri·bu′tions which America has made to the sus′te·nance of mankind," to quote Mary Hendrie's slow-speaking husband on the subject, "none other can compare in importance with the suc′cu·lent and es′cu·lent *Solanum Tuberosum—please pass the salt*—and of the di·verse′ varieties of that far′i·na′ceous tuber, the Cobbler stands in a class by itself—incom′pa·ra·ble in its ex′cel·len·cies. It is a neat potato—clean eyed—*pass the pepper, please*! with a smooth waxy skin and of moderate girth. When it comes piping hot from the oven, its russet jacket puckered and split open in the roasting of it, words fail to express a man's feelings! All I can say is: *Mary, please pass the butter*."

Bob Young lent willing hands and a supple back to the picking of the five acre patch of Irish Cobblers on the William Hendrie farm. Fitful showers made the going mucky; but by Saturday morning, the group of workers had the big job cornered, and all hands planned to drive to Markham village in the afternoon.

Saturday was a day off at the section school house; and Ralph Hendrie was out, in his blue overalls and work boots, keeping Bob Young fast company. They were picking potatoes, of course, but they were having lots of fun, too. The young man liked the sturdy little urchin, and for the eternally sufficient reason that the child liked him. He felt there was something pleasing and a trifle comical in the pride of the ten-year-old who thought he was doing a man's work in his father's fields. And there was something refreshing in it, too, because the labourer was putting his heart into his work and his thoughts were not on profit.

Bob was telling the youngster of his recent experiences in driving a Ford touring car. There had been two tire explosions in a twenty-odd mile drive, and the adventure had ended with the car going baulky on a city street and stalling trolley traffic. The details were so engrossing that neither of them noticed two large motor cars drive up the Hendrie lane. Three men had alighted from the first car, and after making inquiries at the kitchen door, had walked across the field to the potato pickers.

"Is Robert Young here?" a throaty voice demanded, and Bob looked up to find two heavy set men standing beside him.

"I'm Bob Young, gentlemen," he replied, straightening his back as he rose, "and I'm at your service."

"I wish you'd come over to the house, Young," the older of the men requested. "We want to talk to you."

"Certainly," said Bob; and they started to walk across—three abreast.

"What can I do for you?" he enquired.

"You were working for Thomas Wilson this while back?" he was asked.

"Yes," said Young. "I left his place only the other day."

"I am detective-sar′jnt Marshall Pickhall and we're from the police," the more florid-faced one of his companions informed him. "We want to ask you some questions, Young, concerning the motor car you were driving the other night. But we'll wait till we get back to the house."

When they arrived at the police car, Robert Young was placed in the rear seat and his jackknife was taken from him.

"Now, Young," Pickhall told him in a throaty tone of authority, "consider yourself under arrest!"

"What's the charge, pray?"

"We hold a war′rant," the sergeant replied, "to arrest you, Young, for the theft of a motor car—but other charges may be preferred against you—later."

In the performance of police duties in this locality, officers burr their R's like County Tyrone and lay great emphasis upon them.

"It's my duty to inform you," Pickhall went on, "that any statements you make may be used in evidence against you. So under the circumstances, we'll take you directly to headquarters."

Meanwhile William Hendrie had arrived on the scene, and he caught the drift of the matter. He moved at ordinary times with a deliberation that was impressive, but, on this occasion, the look that came to his homely face beneath its thatch of iron grey was more impressive still. His great bony hands were fidgetting. His wife was there, too, and her velvety brown eyes were filled with tears.

The other car remained behind to prosecute further inquiries and pick up the prisoner's belongings. Without regard to traffic laws—or were there traffic laws, then or ever, for police cars!—Detective-sergt. Pickhall's vehicle pounded down the gravel road, and they were lumbering, rocking cars, were the big ones, that men then were driving. Bob Young was started on a long journey.

"What's in the wind, anyway?" Bob asked after a while of the sergeant who was sitting beside him in the rear seat.

"This will give you a few minutes to turn matters over in your mind—carefully," Pickhall suggested sagely.

The official's own mind was fully occupied at the moment. Luck had broken in his favour and he was feeling proud as a bubbly-jock. He was a clean shaven, middle-aged man with streaks of grey showing. Hard work and early rising on a stubborn hill farm in his boyhood—and plenty of oatmeal porridge—had given him a large frame, and in his youth he had been active and a lacrosse player; but a lazy life and a swivel-chair job were now plumping him. The man had a roll of fat at the back of his neck and more of the same he was pushing before him. Pickhall was a man of e′qua·nim′i·ty at all times as his beefy, unwrinkled face gave evidence, and at the moment he was in an especially amicable frame of mind. Making arrests was part of a day's work for him and his morning's bag was a nice one. A job on a police force anywhere offers a splendid opening for a man of me′di·o′cre parts who is careful in matters of routine—and of himself—and agreeable to taking orders; for in orders—those blessed orders from Higher-up—lies the very essence of official peace of mind and of snug security.

"Pleasant weather we're having?" Pickhall commented after a pause. "May expect hard frost any night now. Care for a cigar?"

"Thanks," said Bob, who had been studying the official's person carefully. He observed that the detective-sergt. was an Oddfellow and wore a Scottish Rite ring, and also that he had gone up to the Shrine by the other route as a Knight Templar. Other signs and tokens told that the florid official was a member of the Orange Order—advanced to the Black Knights—of the Maccabees and of benevolent societies too numerous to mention. Jewelry of such a kind not only adds a touch of elegance to an official's person, enough of it will find him lodge brothers in any crowd or on any committee of enquiry. From signs which hung out of a different nature, Bob judged that detective-sergt. Pickhall was not a member of the Sons of Temperance. He was puff-faced and ruddy.

"Don't let me disturb your train of thought," the sergeant went on as he struck a light and settled himself back on the seat with great complacency, "but you won't mind me explaining your position to you, Young? This is serious business! I tip you off in a friendly way to watch your step. To put the whole matter in a nutshell, a hunting party is out. The police, young man, are the hounds and you are the fox. For the next hour or so, I'm the Master of the Hunt, and I'm a scrupulously fin′ic·al fellow in observing the Rules and Regulations. You'll be questioned when we get down to headquarters, Young, and I suggest you think over carefully what you're going to say—and I'll be thinking what I'm going to ask you."

The truth is that Marshall Pickhall was a friendly man by nature, as most fat ones are; and as a shrewd one, he practised assiduously the art of cultivating friendships. He had long since discovered that to solve crimes right along and have his name often in the newspapers, a detective must establish satisfactory relations with those who have found themselves in the toils of the law. There is almost as much professional jealousy among criminals as in a detective force itself; and they tip the police off on one another. Helpful news of that sort comes to an official who has a reputation for square dealing.

At Police Headquarters, the prisoner, Robert Young, was questioned by Sergeant Marshall Pickhall, with officers Scott and Rennie also present. A natty fellow with a tooth-brush mustache was called to take notes in shorthand. The interrogation, as the police called it, brought to light facts that are important in this story and some of which are not mentioned again. The sergeant may have moved clumsily at times, but on the whole he was not maladroit. He was not sifting and bolting matters to the very bran. We omit irrelevant verbiage—for every trade and calling has its patter and its argot—and we do so without using asterisks. The effect of the interrogation in King's English was as follows.

The prisoner, Robert Young, was shown the warrant for his arrest and the formal caution was read to him.

"Now, Young," the sergeant began, clearing his throat, "you understand you are free to answer or not to answer as you see fit; but we want to put some questions to you."

"I have no objection," Young told him. "Go ahead with your questions."

"And I caution you, in your own interest, to be careful and tell the truth," Pickhall continued, "because what you say may be produced at your trial and used against you."

The prisoner then stated that he was twenty-three years of age, was of English birth, had been three years in the country and steadily employed since his arrival at farm labour. He declined to give particulars as to his family and previous life.

"You were working recently," the sergeant inquired, "as hired man with Thomas Wilson on his farm on the Second Line, near Goldthorpe?"

"I was."

"How long have you been working there?"

"For six months."

"When was your time up?"

"It was up Monday night last."

"So you left the Wilson place on Tuesday morning—October 10th?"

"Yes, I went to the city."

"And took all your effects with you in a suitcase?"

"Yes, I took all the stuff I had there away."

"And you returned to the Wilson farm, alone, on Wednesday evening—the day after?"

"Yes."

"At what hour did you arrive there?"

"After supper time—in the gloaming—dark was settling down. I should judge it would be about seven o'clock."

"And afterwards you were seen in charge of Thomas Wilson's car in the city?"

"Yes, I drove it there."

"When did you leave Wilson's place with the motor car?"

"Within an hour or less after arriving there."

"And you left Wilson's car near Sloan's garage on Hudson Avenue late that Wednesday night?"

"Yes, I think it was close to midnight."

"What had you been doing with the car in the meantime?"

"I drove first to pick up my suitcase. I had it in a slot machine at the Union Station. I intended then to go to Mr. William Hendrie's farm in Markham, but I had tire and engine trouble. So I didn't get there."

"What occurred at the Wilson's when you were there Wednesday?"

"I found the old couple in the kitchen, squabbling as usual. They had been to the village in the buggy in the afternoon, and had done the chores and finished their evening meal when I arrived. The supper dishes were still standing on the table. Wilson was expecting me. I went to get the balance of my wages—$24 which was owing me. Wilson told me he had been disappointed in getting the money in. He said he didn't have it in the house to pay me but would have it sure by Saturday. I didn't wish to stay there waiting and they didn't want me around, either. So I borrowed the Ford car and drove away. I was to go back to-day for my wages."

"Have any conversation with Mrs. Wilson while there that evening?"

"No; she hadn't been speaking to me for a fortnight—nasty habit some folk have in this country. She may have grumbled at Wilson for lending me the car—if so, I don't remember. She made no move to get me anything to eat. I remember that because I was hungry."

"Any other person at the Wilson house while you were there that evening?"

"Oh no, no one; they never had callers there."

"So that, you say, is how you came to have Wilson's car in your possession?"

"Yes, he owed me the money. He had brought me out there on a useless trip. I had to come back again. I could drive the car and Wilson couldn't without ditching it. So I borrowed the car."

"Well, Young, if that's your *good* reason," Pickhall remarked, leaning back in his swivel-chair and looking down at Young along the barrel of his nose, "perhaps you'll go on, now, and tell us your *real* one?"

"I don't understand what you're driving at."

"So that's your story!" the Sergeant mused, readjusting himself in the swivel chair and getting both feet back on the floor. "And I suppose you'll stick to it like a clenched nail. You have it all off pat, haven't you?"

"That's all I really know of the matter," the prisoner explained, a troubled look coming into his eyes.

"Well, Young," the officer suggested in a genial tone, after a moment's reflection, "the police have a serious problem on their hands in this Wilson case. You should know more about the Wilsons than anyone else. You lived in the house alone with them for six months. Perhaps, you wouldn't mind joining us in a friendly little get-together?"

"Willingly!" said Young. "What's the trouble?"

"Who do you suggest burgled the Wilson house early Wednesday evening?"

"I have no idea," Young replied. "I saw no suspicious characters about the place, nor anything in the house worth taking."

"But we're told the Wilsons were misers and were hoarding?"

"They acted like it," Bob agreed, "the way they fed their hired man."

"You hadn't a high opinion of them, evidently?"

"I didn't fancy their ways," the prisoner replied, "but perhaps they didn't care for mine either."

"It has occurred to the police, Young, that the person who took their car may have given their house the general going over."

"I see your point," Bob exclaimed, "but dismiss that thought absolutely. All I wanted from Thomas Wilson was my wages. Surely the old man doesn't accuse me of stealing his car!"

"No; Wilson and his wife, Young, are not in a position to give us any information whatever."

"Why not?" the prisoner enquired.

"Because the robber put them out of the way."

"Ex·traor′dinary!" exclaimed Young, his easy assurance being put to sudden death.

"Yes," observed the Sergeant, "makes it awkward for you, Young."

"Quite! For the life of me I don't see the connection, sar′jnt," the young man muttered as he moistened his lip with the tip of his tongue—"but, by God, I fear it!"

"Peculiar concatenation, don't you think?" Pickhall suggested. " 'Twill require some explaining away. You lived alone with them for six months. You went away Tuesday morning. You went back alone on Wednesday evening. The house was robbed and the old couple were murdered early

Wednesday evening. A few hours later you abandon Wilson's car in the city. Look at it that way, it's a bit disconcerting, isn't it! Seems almost in-ex′pli·ca·ble, doesn't it?"

Robert Young sat a moment in silence. A hunted look came into his eyes.

"This is all news to me, sir," he exclaimed at last, his voice rising to a startled pitch. "I was out in the country and had not heard of the deaths. If you want my opinion, I think the whole business is another piece of my damned bad luck. It's a coincidence, that's true, but you make a concatenation of it that's terrible. That's the kind of chain the devil forges when he's feeling ugly. Two and two put together that way make twenty-two."

"You have gumption enough anyway, to pretend ye didn't know the Wilsons were killed," growled Officer Rennie. "If you had heard of it, your actions since Wednesday would be strong evidence of your guilt."

"Pardon me, Rennie," Pickhall interrupted him, "I'm in charge of this interrogation at the moment. You told us, Young, a while back, that you came to this country three years ago. Did you bring much money with you?"

"I had some money for travelling," Bold told him; "but it didn't last long."

"Have you received any money from your homeland since you came here?"

"No."

"And you have worked at farm labour since you came and at no other kind of work."

"Yes."

"I suppose you have saved some money?"

"No, Sar′jnt," Young told him. "You know the wages that sort of job brings. I did have two hundred-odd dollars laid by last February. Then I went into the hospital for a minor surgical, and that licked my platter clean. If you want to know my financial standing, I'll tell you. I have twenty some dollars cash, and a claim for $42 back wages."

"How much was it you said Wilson owed you for wages?"

"Forty-two dollars," the witness replied.

“Curious that!” the sergeant commented, “you told me $24 a while back.”

“I can’t help what I may have told you. Wilson owed me four tens and a two dollar bill. My tongue stumbles every now and again on figures. Sort of a spoonerism of mine. You know I told you I was 32 years of age when you first asked me my age.”

“Did one John Mowat ask you on Tuesday whether Wilson had paid you your wages?”

“He did.”

“Did you tell him you had been paid?”

“No. I did not.”

“What did you tell him?”

“Just something about knowing my onions or being able to handle my feet or—something like that. I didn’t think it was any of his business.”

This brought Officer Pickhall’s labours to a close.

“Do you wish to add anything to the information you have given?” he inquired on closing.

“No,—not if you have everything down right,” Bob remarked after a lengthy pause. “Better type it out so I can read it over.”

This detail took up an hour or so; and in the meanwhile, detective Arthur Scott kept the accused fast company in an adjoining room. That officer was feeling grumpy. He had an appointment to take his wife down town this Saturday afternoon and the case had kept him on duty. He could feel by her voice over the telephone that she was nursing a grievance which might ripen into a cold supper for him. Scott’s mind was on his family cares and he held the prisoner and his murderings as the cause of all his present troubles.

“But I tell you,” Bob impressed on him, “that I went back to get my wages!”

The prisoner’s point of view did not impinge on the official mind. Officer Scott’s comments were not consoling.

“Yes! Yes!” grunted Scott, “you have told me all that before. Of course, you need an excuse, and to my mind you need one badly. That sounds like a fair one, seeing that you have old Wilson and his wife put out of the way.

One thing sure, they'll not contradict you. Stick to your story, my lad, and tell it to the jury."

"But if I'd done it," argued Young with a protesting snort, "wouldn't I have cut and run?"

"I think myself," the officer told him, "that you handled yourself well on the job . . . in fact, you nearly pulled a fast one. A little slipping up, that's all, or you would have got clean away. A lucky accident led us to inquire for you up around Markham. You hadn't told the Hendries, I find, with whom you have been working before you came there the other day. No one at Goldthorpe seemed to know who you were or where you came from. You had a nice quiet little hide-away, hadn't you? And I find from Mrs. Hendrie that you were on the point of flitting from there to points unknown."

"What took you to the Hendrie's?" the prisoner inquired.

"We picked up an empty envelope in the Wilson house. It was addressed to you somewhere and had been forwarded to Goldthorpe. It was posted at the Markham Post Office. So we made inquiries in that locality. Strikes me, Young, you are quite a mystery man. No one seems to know much about you. Even the Hendries do not know where you had been before you came to work there. With luck you'd have e·lud′ed us altogether. By sundown, you'd have disappeared on us like a rain drop in a mud puddle! You came a cropper leaving that envelope lying around. However, you had destroyed the contents. You're a smart young fellow and you were careful, but, unfortunately for you, you were not careful enough. But we all make silly mistakes once in a while."

Later in the afternoon the statement was ready and Robert Young signed it.

"Well thanks, Sar′jnt," he said as they were escorting him away. "Good of you to supply me with cigars. My smoking days may now for a while be over."

"That's a cool customer," one of the staff remarked after the prisoner had left for the gaol. "Looks to me like a doggish, devil-may-care fellow—one full of bounce."

"Talk of im·per′tur·ba′tion!" commented Marshall Pickhall. "He's as im′per·turb′a·ble as a granite boulder.' Lots of mettle, don't you think? Pity an up-standing young fellow would commit such a horrible crime. However, it's now clear we have the right man."

CHAPTER III

Enter the redoubtable Aaron Burke and his mess mates.

Bob Young was lodged that afternoon in the city's common gaol, where prisoners who could not arrange or raise bail lay on remand awaiting trial, and petty offenders, the ragtag and bobtail of an urban area—sneak thieves, shop-lifters, drunks, wife beaters, pan handlers and vagabonds—were mewed up doing short terms and getting ready for another go at the police. A fattening coop, that's what it was for these rapscallions.

He was stripped, examined for vermin, and pronounced clean. He passed under a shower and got a passing glance from the gaol doctor, and was then locked up with a score of other men on remand who were lounging in a narrow cement-floored corridor. What light there was came from a row of barred, frosted windows, and along the wall opposite them stood a range of individual sleeping cells. Seated on benches or sprawling on the floor, the occupants were idling away the time with vapid gossip shot through with argot and bristling with pungent monosyllables. Vicious speech habits may not lead to crime but they usually travel with it.

Young got an earful of news about himself as his cell mates crowded around him. The murder of the old Wilson couple, he learned, had made front page news the day before, and the Saturday noon editions carried screaming headlines detailing the clever arrest by detective Marshall Pickhall of the ex-hired man who had been found hiding on a farm near Markham village. Officers Scott and Rennie got their names mentioned for an assist.

"Listen to the blighter rave," crowed an old cock with a peg leg when Bob asserted gruffly that the law had nothing on him. "Doesn't even seem to know why he's here! Why, man you're a bloody murderer. Bash in the brains of a helpless old couple and expect to get away with it? Havers, you're balmy, I'd say."

Bob Young was getting his first hearing; and fellow prisoners usually form a hanging jury.

"Did they get your swag?" a sallow-faced bantam pushed up and whispered out of the corner of his twitching mouth. It was Paregoric Kid who had lost his original name in a series of aliases, and had dissipated a

legacy from a maiden aunt—and a comfortable competency it was—on heroin and intravenous injections. It's a costly habit taking drugs if one does it in style; and the avails of petty shoplifting will scarce supply codeine to frayed nerves that are accustomed to something stronger. In fact, shoplifting will not supply one with much more than another term in gaol after his face has become familiar to shop detectives. So the end of the matter usually is that a drug addict loses caste and is reduced to drinking laudanum and chewing dizzy pills. A month before, Paregoric Kid had left a reformatory as snug and compact as a sausage, but already he was a sack of bones, mostly.

"Oh, no!" chortled another torturer. "Wise young man! He has that planted for the widow. Bet she'll make a neat-looking ace of spades. Leaving her well provided for, eh Buddy? What's her address, Robert?"

They were making sport baiting the slim newcomer and soon had him ashen grey. A sinking feeling in the midriff made him qualmish at the stomach.

A verdict was quickly brought in.

"Got him with the stolen goods!" urged a gimlet-eyed skip jack of a fellow who talked so fast that he sprayed saliva.

"No alibi!" asserted another, a tall lean individual who wore a toupee, and expressed himself with violent arm thrusts. He was a common bounce who travelled with a boy and levied blackmail,—in polite language, an extortioner.

"Motive robbery!" suggested a lip smacker with a falsetto voice.

"Knew the lay-out!" added a quiet little man who rolled his lips to add force to his timid assertions. He was in for biting his wife's nose off. That was a method commonly used in ancient times to keep a wife from gadding around with other men, and doubtless it was effective. Nowadays, the practice is a bit risky.

"Inside job!" declared a tooth-sucker who was locked up for cooking his employer's books. To the music of square rattling bones, he had danced himself into strange company.

"Killed their evidence, he did," contributed Peg Leg with deep moral indignation in his tone. He was in for cracking a close-fisted pedestrian over the head with his crutch.

"Gave a confession!" piped a dapper little whippet whose eyes strayed constantly toward the corridor gate. He ran a tobacco shop with a dummy

paper box display—you know the kind—and was in for book-making. He was waiting for his business associates to put up cash bail, and to him the wait seemed a long one.

At this point one of the jury men was seized with an epileptic fit which interrupted the deliberations. His body twitched in convulsive spasms, and he suddenly pitched forward, his head striking the cement floor with a nasty dull, hollow thud. His jaws locked, the teeth biting his protuding tongue; and blood-stained froth was running from his lips. Two guards came smartly on the run and prized the man's mouth open with a heavy cell key.

The diversion was soon over, and the trial was resumed.

"I'd say you've supplied them with everything but the rope," growled an ugly customer with a scar that disfigured his face, and he spat on the floor to express his professional disgust at such conduct. "Your goose is cooked!"

They soon had Bob Young clutching the steel bars of the corridor gate and calling urgently to the guard who was seated comfortably out beyond.

"I want to send a message, officer! I want to send a message right away!" he shouted as he shook the steel gate till it rattled. His forehead was dank with clammy sweat.

The official continued his leisurely perusal of the day's news and paid not the slightest attention to him whatever.

"Come over here," urged a grizzled man, taking Young by the arm. "Don't think Aaron's trying to scrape an acquaintance with you. He merely wants to have a word with you in private. Keep your shirt on! Hold your horses! Don't make a spectacle of yourself, young man, before this common rabble."

It was Aaron Burke, whose tight, pallid skin and weak blue eyes told a long story of a life within prison walls. The wear and tear of it had made him a trifle eccentric. He was a withered old man who showed the rust and batter of time. He made quaint faces as he talked, puckered his lips and screwed up his eyes in a curious manner; yet he was endowed at times with a sharpness of wit. He was now a police-court jester by principal occupation; and for years back, he had been slipping in and out of gaol, every now and again; for there is pretty much nothing else for such a man to do in the fag-end of his days.

"There's no safer place for a man charged with the brutal murder of an old couple," he told Young in a confidential tone as they sat down side by side on a bench, "than snug behind iron bars. You might be handled roughly

if you were on the street beyond. You must realize that you are now a celebrity and your name is on many tongues this evening. Of course, they'll forget all about you—and that all of a sudden—but that happens to every celebrity so it doesn't matter much. While the show is on, though, see that you act the part in a becoming and dignified manner. Show hackle, man, show hackle! Relax and give your animal courage a bolstering up. What you need is a bracer, a quick one, a neat raw rammer—a blood-and-thunder or a Port-Credit-special. Of course, one cannot get liquor here unless one's a stockbroker; but Aaron'll give you a few drags on a cigarette—after this guard changes."

"I have no time to spare," groaned Young, whose body was rocking on the bench with impatience and anxiety. "I want to send a message. Can you tell me how to do it?" he begged, his voice dying off in a plaintive note.

"No time to spare? We have time in plenty on our hands in these places," his companion advised him gently as he eyed his agitation with placid, amazed pity. "Yes, time goes slow on remand and quick after conviction. Please don't take amiss what Aaron's saying, but friends who desire messages from a gaol usually call personally or send to get them. Don't worry! Your friends and acquaintances will all learn this evening that you're lodging here, and they'll know, too, that you'll be in when they call. Most of them'll discard you like yesterday's newspaper. When a fellow gets in here, his folk like to put him out of mind. Don't hurt their feelings by making it an awkward affair. Where do you want to send a message, anyway?"

"I want to cable my uncle," the young man explained, "and I hate like sin to do it, too."

"Well, if your uncle is that far away," suggested Burke dryly, "leave the old gentleman enjoy a restful Sunday."

"But what can I do?" Young demanded impatiently. "I've never been in trouble before."

"Never been in trouble before!" Burke repeated after him, his voice rising in a mimicking tone. "*Sure*, they all say that! . . . Man alive, we're all innocent in this corridor—as innocent as sucking turtle doves. *What should you do?* Aaron says to keep your mouth shut close. It's his tongue that lets out a man's littleness. Why be a bonehead? Why put on a free show for these no-accounts who are amusing themselves with you? Between ourselves, they're a mean set, the whole box and dice of them. Pay no attention to their clack and blather. They're merely tormenting you. Pull a smile on your face! That's easily done. It's a purely mechanical process, and a man always

controls a situation if he keeps a smile on his face. One must be as stolid as a chopping block to get along in a place like this. Be a bit devil-may-care! See that quiet little runt over there with his back to the wall? Observe the haughty elegance of the man! There's the pose for you. Looks cool, doesn't he?"

"Yes," said Bob, interested in spite of himself. "He looks as cold and sharp as a set saw. Quite a grand manner! Must be a deep one. What's he in for?"

"That snippety specimen is a desperado," Aaron whispered, his expression keeping time with the changing inflections of his voice. "Stuck up a bank on his own, and got clean away. Would be going yet if one of his lady friends hadn't become jealous of the way he was throwing the bank's money around among other ladies. So she had a confidential talk with her favourite detective, and the first thing this fickle gentleman-friend knew, the police had the come-alongs snapped on his wrists. He was carrying his barker in his hip pocket when they picked him up. Now, he is being held on remand till the bankteller he shot recovers or goes out. Look how he deports himself with becoming dignity! No small fry jeering at him, you'll notice. Most of your present company are gentlemen of the Three Outs—out at the pocket, out of friends and out at the elbows. Sure he's a bad member and a haughty one."

"What do you suggest these fellows are up to?" asked Young. "Are they just seeing if I can take it?"

"*Precisely*," replied Aaron, "and don't talk your business in here. Whist! There are little birds around that carry stories. Don't be like Charlie over there—the little bald-headed one. He robbed his sister Myrtle's house—did a little prowling whilst she was away at her summer cottage. Sister Myrtle's husband was batching in town earning her spending money. He had no insurance and he hustled down to put the detectives on the job. They picked up his brother-in-law Charlie in short order. The fool was working the stolen stuff off on the pawnbrokers. Brother Charlie is now rueing his bad judgment. He's wringing his hands and asking everybody who'll listen to him: 'Why didn't I work sister Irene's house—she has no husband and she carries burglary insurance?' Queer lot of people in these places, don't you think? A fellow who gets in here should nurse his wounds mutely as dumb creatures do. No use making a noise where one gets no sympathy—any two-year-old knows that."

"Thanks kindly for your advice," said Bob, straightening his back and planting his feet firmly on the floor. "I'll certainly put a stop to their monkey-shining. Now, I ask you, isn't this one hell of a place? And I suppose it costs a lot of money to keep it going?"

Aaron Burke's eyes lit up. He was always ready to talk of himself—and in the third person—but not always able to find a listener. So he settled down to business. He was as keen to talk as a farmer who leans on his fence and knows he should be plowing.

"Of course, Aaron can see," he observed indulgently, "that you've never been in gaol before. You've been like a wild bird fluttering its wings against a window pane. Now as for Aaron—take him for instance, he feels at home in such a hostelry—as chirp, in fact, as a yellow canary in its cage. No financial worries here—one's like the lilies in the field. Everything found, like at a hospital—all you're supplying here is the perspiration—better than a hospital—no bills to pay. No tipping allowed—a carefully balanced ration, bulky belly-cheer of a kind. True man, it's a black fast here. Most of the time neither fish, flesh nor red herring—never any butter, cheese, eggs or milk whatever. But for all that, a guest eats like a horse, goes to bed with the sun and sleeps like a baby. Shower baths, too—pills in profusion—religious services with no plate-passing, and a great commotion, indeed, if the old bird were found lying dead in the bottom of his cage. Such an occurrence would get more notice in the press than the death of a prosperous greengrocer. No occasion at all to worry in here—anything but! Of course, some like this, some like that—it's just according."

Aaron paused and looked into his listener's face with wide open eyes—a trick he had—as if seeking some trace of the amazement that should be there.

"But I must do something," exclaimed Bob, springing up. "I want to get a good lawyer."

"Tut tut, man, sit you down," urged Aaron, clutching at Young's sleeve and drawing his audience back to attention. "Hear Aaron's considered opinion of the legal fraternity. There are not enough criminal lawyers with ability to go round. So a man must pay well for a good one. You'll admit it would look bad for a poor man in working clothes like you to be flush with funds when the charge against him includes robbery with violence? As for the rest of them, it's hard to get some of them to go straight, let alone travel on the square. So if you have avails put by, Aaron advises you to save your nest egg and throw yourself on the indulgence of the Court. The judge is

obliged to assign the prisoner counsel in a capital case such as yours. Yes, and mark my words!" he went on after a pause, "a poor man has the powers of unlimited wealth arrayed against him. You'll be kept locked up and helpless and you must leave your defence and your other little concernments to the inscrutable providence of the Almighty. As an illiterate fellow would say, you must trust to luck."

"I hope she's not as blind as the police seem to be," said Young glumly and with a shrug. "They have no eyes to see anything that's in my favour. They've picked on me; they have me tagged, and all they're now looking for is evidence to convict me."

"Well, anyway," Aaron suggested, "there's one thing a guilty person can always be thankful for. The police are a bit short-sighted. They don't do much rooting about. Trust a police officer to clutch the obvious and sit down to crease his adipose. That gives a fellow a chance sometimes to get off. But don't imagine for one split second the police are out to convict a man who is innocent—that is, unless he's an old-timer. Terrible official risk in doing that. No! No! Might cost a police officer his job. What they think in your case is that they've caught you redhanded with the goods on you. Let's hope they're mistaken; but in the meantime, you can't do anything to help yourself, can you? So what's the use of worrying? When Aaron has any worrying to do, he always puts it off till the morrow. Every time he gets ready to do it, he waits a bit to see what'll turn up."

Bob gave the old man a keen, yet friendly glance.

"True, old Homer's gods seemed never in a hurry," he remarked listlessly.

"Never heard tell of those Johnnies," Aaron commented. "Must have been wise fellows, though. Probably knew that nothing finally matters much!"

"Perhaps you're right," Bob muttered, trying to pull himself together. "Worrying never gets a man anywhere save into a sick bed."

"I wouldn't pluck my heart out worrying about that trial anyway," the old man suggested. "Chances are something will slip up and you'll get off. Juries always give young fellows a break. They'll not convict you if they can decently avoid it. I know what'll happen! A disappointed judge will give you a frostly glance over his spectacles. 'You may go,' he'll squeak at you. But where the hell are you going to go? That'll be your problem. It's right then your troubles begin! You'll step out of the dock to shuffle through life an unconvicted murderer. People will nudge each other as you pass down

the street. If you have children, they'll hear of it in the school yard; and if your wife has any self-respect, she'll clear out and leave you. How can a man live decently with a question mark that size sticking out of his life as noticeable as a crooked spine would be on his body? Your only hope is that they'll catch someone else and convict him of the crime—good and proper. That'll give you the only clearance papers you'll get this side of the pearly gates. Get that?"

"Yes, I get it," Bob admitted ruefully. "Tell me what have they you locked up for—or is it bad manners to inquire?"

A guard appeared at the corridor gate with an iron key the size of a monkey wrench.

"Robert Young!" he shouted. "Wanted at the office! A lawyer to see him! This way, Young, step lively!"

"Watch your step! Watch your step, young fellow," Aaron cautioned him, as he trotted beside Young who had bounced off like a retriever to answer the summons. "Find out who sent him! Find out, first, who sent him! He'll tell you a friend asked him to call. Be sure it's a friend of yours—not a friend of his. Be making a poor mouth, first off. The police want to know that you have cash money—that's what Pickhall wants to know real bad. Be sure to tell the lawyer you're broke—stone broke, d'ye hear? See what happens, then. That'll put the kibosh on him! That'll cool his ardor! Anyway, discuss your case to-morrow—to-morrow, d'ye hear?"

"Yes, I hear, and I apprehend also," Bob assured him. "I told the police I have no money. Do you think they don't believe me and are trying to trap me?"

"Gosh, that's good! Stick to it now! Stick to it . . . stick to it like an adhesive plaster," Burke urged him as the steel gate clanged to end the conversation.

The prisoner was conducted in great haste to the main office and was ushered into a small private room where he was left sitting alone to await the convenience of his caller, who was in having a chat with the gaol governor. There was a table, two chairs and a sign on the wall. Members of the Profession were strictly enjoined not to supply tobacco or matches to inmates.

After a space, Marcus Flynn sauntered into the room. He was an up-standing specimen of a man, with a fine presence, and was neatly togged in a professional way—wing collar and bow tie; and his smooth face had that

oily texture which comes from a barber's facial every office-day morning. Mr. Flynn was not yet old, nor was he youthful either. He had that fulness of the jaw muscles that comes with the galloping thirties. He was a busy lawyer and needed to be, because he had a fashionable wife who had been pretty; and he stirred about quite a bit himself of nights, which sometimes made a facial advisable the morning after.

His greeting to the prisoner was that of a jolly friend of long standing. There was a suggestion of jauntiness in his manner.

"Well, Bob Young," quoth he heartily, as he shook hands, "here we are together for a quiet little chat! I'm Marcus Flynn, the lawyer,—of course, you've heard of me. A couple of friends suggested that I call down and see you with reference to your defence. Care for a smoke?"

And he chucked a package of cigarettes on the table.

His hand had the soulful hurting grip that a Methodist minister puts into a brotherly greeting. Bob could see the man was being affable; but being friendly, as Bob knew and the reader knows, is a different matter entirely.

"Thanks for coming down to see me," said Bob as he got a light from the professional gentleman. "I suppose my friends have arranged to pay you?"

"No, I haven't gone into that matter," Flynn explained, ". . . no time for that, yet. I suppose you'll first use what money you have available; and if that isn't enough, I'll be pleased to write your friends on the subject; and you can supply me with their names and addresses. We have time for that sort of thing. Your case will not come to trial for several months."

"I suppose," inquired Young, "cases like this take a lot of money?"

"Yes, the expenses of your defence will be quite heavy," the lawyer agreed. "But it's a case of your life or your death and this is not the time for stinting in our efforts. Let me have a line on your defence."

"Have you talked to Pickhall about my case?" Bob inquired.

"Oh, of course, I know Pickhall," Flynn answered him. "I run into him every now and again in the course of a busy practice. I think him a harmless, amiable old boy. Have you a grudge against him?"

"Certainly not!" Young told him. "I think Pickhall is a smart officer. I was merely asking you whether you have had any conversation with Pickhall about my case."

"Merely a word over the phone before I came down. He seemed fair-minded and from his remarks I got a favourable impression of you."

"Well, Pickhall knows I have no money. Perhaps he told you? I have twenty dollars in cash and a claim for forty-two dollars for back wages. If you are aware of this, then we both know where we're at."

"But surely you can get your hands on a few hundred dollars when youre life is at stake?" Mr. Flynn suggested.

"No," Bob told him, "I cannot. I have no money and no friends or relations to help me."

Flynn lit a cigarette and took a long while about it. The package he restored to his pocket. All of a sudden, the man was as stiff-necked as if he had swallowed a ruler.

"That's most unfortunate," he commented at last. "I suggest, Young, that you think this matter over carefully between now and Monday. Your case will come up in the police court then. I'll have my assistant attend on the first remand. If you see any light on the subject, advise him when you are down at court, and I'll arrange to see you later."

"Thanks," said Bob; and his hand was not hurt in the parting.

On returning to his cell corridor, he found Aaron Burke agog for news.

"Who was it?" the old man inquired as they resumed their seat on the bench.

"Flynn, I think was the name he gave me. Do you know him? Has a cow's lick."

"Know him? Of course Aaron knows him . . . knows him well. He's a smart criminal lawyer. Few of them can hold a candle to him. Remind me, and I'll tell you a story about him sometime. Who sent him down?"

"He said friends had asked him to call," Bob replied with the trace of a smile, "but it didn't occur to him to tell me who they were. Perhaps he made a chance call looking for business . . . may have read about my case in the papers."

"Oh no," Aaron assured him. "Marcus Flynn is a busy man and has a large practice. His time is fully occupied, and it's money and not advertising he's looking for—

He handles crimes, both small and great,
And fights big counsel for the state.

Knocks about with the police, quite a bit, Marcus does. He's on intimate terms with some of the higher-ups. He's their white-haired boy. They tip him off when they's locked up a stranger who looks well-heeled. Flynn arranges cash bail for pick-pockets who jump the jurisdiction—and all that sort of thing."

"Yes," said Bob, "he told me he had been speaking to Pickhall about my case. You don't suppose he was down doing stool-pigeon work for the police? He froze up quite when I told him I was broke. But I got you a cigarette before he pocketed the package and bade me a haughty adieu."

"Thanks," said Aaron, "tailor-made, too!—Quite a luxury!—No, not in that way. Anything you told Marcus Flynn he would hold in strict confidence. The troops here say he's a square dealer and a bargain-keeper—not that I'd put too much past him whatever! He's a free spender and some of the police like hob-nobbing about with Marcus. '*It's always fair weather when good fellows get together*' and that sort of thing, you know,—jolly little parties—Nothing underhanded about him. I think, glory be, you were too much for him."

"He may be all that," Bob remarked, "but he doesn't strike me as gen′uine. I was like catnip to a house tabby, when he first saw me."

"If Marcus was your lawyer, he wouldn't need to tell the police a blessed thing," the old man assured him. "Pickhall would know, straight off, that you have cash money available to pay first class counsel fees, and he'd know, too, that you've been lying. That would give him a nice comfortable feeling of certainty that he's prosecuting the right party. Expensive counsel have convicted many a man who would have got off scot free had he sat tight and pleaded poverty. It would be hard for a young farm hand and a stranger in the country to explain to Aaron's satisfaction where he innocently laid his hands on seven or eight hundred dollars. Don't you agree?"

"Yes," said Bob. "I'd think, too, it needed a little explaining unless the chap had a well-established bank account. That, I'd say, would take a bit of doing. Tell me, is it good form for a lawyer to accept stolen money to defend the man who stole it?"

"Yes! yes, indeed—criminal lawyers would starve otherwise. Funds for a defence are like money on a collection plate. They are put to a legitimate use; and why bother where they come from? There's a lot of history let me tell you, young fellow, behind any soiled ten dollar bill . . ."

"But let us get back where our conversation was interrupted," suggested Bob. "What have they you in for?"

"Well now, you know," Aaron confided, his face lighting up and his spirit purring at the joy of finding an audience, "Old Aaron does a little house painting in warm weather. He's an old complaint that troubles him in the wind. Perhaps you've heard tell of John A. Smithers, the lawyer? Fine man *indeed*—a great friend of Aaron's. Gives him little jobs touching up the fronts of houses that come back on his hands. Remind me, will you some time and I'll tell you a story about him? Well, yesterday Aaron had Jimmy, the expressman, moving his pots and ladders. A little cheque had been cashed in the morning; and that always lets a bit of sunshine in! Not that we were tipsy, quite—just bright in the eye. In our altitudes! Old fellows dreaming of colts teeth and feeling frisky. Yes, that's the way it goes. A man take a little drink; the drink hollers up lustily for his big twin brother; and the two of them take the old man off on a little trip. Well, how-so-ever, Jimmie's horse was jogging up Kensington Place in the Jewish quarters. There chanced to be flower pots—just common, red, clay flower-pots standing out on a house verandah. Old Aaron popped out and grabbed a Yiddish rose off the door step—you know, a rubber plant. It seems Jimmie objected and wouldn't whip up his horse. So the two fell into a heated discussion. An old lady with a wig came screaming out of the house and Jimmie was so impolite as to make a Queen Anne's fan at her. A crowd quickly assembled. A policeman came round the corner. Fine fellow, that! Know him well. He took Aaron into custody to save him from the screaming rabble."

"And what may that get you?" his young bench-companion inquired as Aaron paused to let his breath catch up.

"Oh, by-the-by, you haven't had an introduction," the old man exclaimed. "Sure, you're chatting with the notorious Aaron Burke. Gosh, you should have heard that prosecuting attorney," he went on, with pride shining in his eyes, and going like a breeze, "the new one with macassar oil on his hair, reading off Aaron Burke's record to the court. 'Seventeen years in Portsmouth Penitentiary on commuted sentence for murder—Liberated on ticket-of-leave! Three years for house breaking!' and as the young man gracefully remarked 'other convictions on minor offences too numerous to weary the court in the enumeration of them!' Sure it's all set out here in this clipping from the evening paper. Not, mind you, that Aaron cared two hoots for that little whipper-snapper! Aaron gave his wor′ship a high ball. He'll make a disposition of the case in the Monday morning court. His wor′ship'll

give six months with his compliments to carry an old man over the winter. The guards up there are fine fellows and they'll have little inside painting jobs waiting. Some men winter thus and make no bones about it—Clean, comfortable quarters with steam heating—It's a snug little haven for old craft to tie up in during bad weather. In the spring, Aaron'll come out chirp with the early robin. Indeed, some have little bay windows put on over the winter. A fellow can do a lot of reading, too. Do you like Thomas Hardy?"

It then transpired that Bob Young did not care for the sombre novels of Thomas Hardy and he liked his poetry less. That, as Aaron remarked charitably, was merely an instance in which good tastes differ.

"That first sentence you got sounds interesting, Burke," his companion commented. "Tell me about it."

"Oh that was away back—away back, years ago—out in the West," the old man told him, with a faraway look in his weak blue eyes. "Aaron was a husky young fellow then, a blacksmith with a shop of his own, and he had need to be making the sparks fly. He had a silly little blond wife with eyes as big and innocent looking as a china doll's. She was as smooth as butter but as wayward as a swallow. He had long since spoiled her with her own way. She ruled him with her tears nor ever could the man gainsay her. Six years of married life had destroyed the illusions; but there was a little girl, toddling about the house, whose prattle was like the laughing of water. Aaron was so stupid as to think that happier people could not be found than the three of them were together. But why go back to the days of the gladness of a man's heart? Why drag out the hopes of lost years in faded garments dressed?"

"The child died—choked of the quinsy. Yes, ties of flesh and blood bind on a man a load of great sorrow. It's a lone, dark journey for a little child to be off upon, isn't it, with no one by to lead her by the hand? Of course, every one loses a child; and in his work, a man often tries to find a way to mend it; but a vain, grieving woman craves flattery and attention. At times, she seeks elsewhere and finds them.

"A railway man down the street fell into the practice of calling around. Sure, Aaron was as blind as a mole and as unsuspicious as a door mat; but, by chance, he discovered that he had this brother starling. Curious, but it was a little spotted dog with a twist to its tail that started Aaron off on his journey to this bench on which we are sitting. Yes, the railway man had a little brindle Boston bull with saucer eyes. One morning, Aaron chanced to be at home when the little creature came scratching at the front door. It

scampered about the house, frisking and quite evidently was looking for its master. So diligent was the dog in prosecuting his enquiries, that Aaron was put on inquiry himself. Of course, everyone on the street knows before a woman's own husband does. Yes, Aaron had his eyes opened! He found the neighbourhood women were tittering at him.

"So he lay in ambush for the prowler; for what is a man to do when he finds his wife is cheating? If he packs and leaves her, the police bring him back by the heels as a wife deserter. And if he puts up with the affair in silence, he loses his self-respect. One morning, the railway man sauntered in by the front door, comfortable like, without even knocking. His little dog was with him. Aaron met him in the front hall. A scuffle ensued, and the prowler got a smart upper cut on the jaw. Over he went backward and in falling, the base of his skull struck a knob on a big seashell that was used as a door stopper. The man died like a rabbit struck behind the ears. He had rooked Aaron in life, and he rooked him with his dying breath. The body rolled over with a faint whistling sound and there wasn't another twitch or quiver. The man was turned to clay! In walked the postman! Horrible spectacle! Man lying dead with his face down, and a little dog jumping and showing fight. The jury made quick work of it. Ah well," concluded Burke, his eyes wandering, "it was the mercy of God, Aaron didn't swing or, *perhaps*,—who knows?—it may have been His sore displeasure."

"And what happened," asked Bob, "to the little blond wife with the big eyes?"

"Oh! the poor thing! Aaron lost track of her. When the man got a loose leg, he was all by his lone. Sure, a wife should be faithful and fruitful—and she was neither. She cheated, so she did, and it was a great shame, so it was —but she was to be pitied. She was a neat, tidy little woman and no clart about the house. As a husband, Aaron was a good provider but he was utterly untrained in the art of matrimony. He didn't cosset the woman enough! One shouldn't leave too much to be taken for granted in married life. Had she known a man would be killed over her, the conceit of the thought might have kept the woman steady. I disremember rightly what became of her."

"Tell me," Bob demanded, after they had sat for a time in silence, "Do you think I killed the old couple? Can't a fellow borrow an old car without raising a hullabaloo?"

"Well now, young man, Aaron is not a custodian of truth; and, at times, he's not a seeker after it, either. A person shouldn't place too high a value on

his passing opinions; and reserve the right, at any time, to change them. I'm sure I do not know whether you killed Wilson or not. Do you expect me to accept your word as convincing proof? You may be like a friend of mine who claimed he'd only taken the lend of a rope. The jury found a stolen horse at the other end of it. The point is that the police have you charged, and so everybody suspects you. Once they clapped you in gaol, they destroyed the effect of your own evidence. 'Skin for skin,' said Old Nick —'yea, everything a man hath will he give for his life' and that's a high authority for viewing a prisoner's statements with grave suspicion. Of course, if you let slip anything that hurts your case, everyone will accept that as the gospel truth. Therefore, you should keep your mouth shut."

"Well, my conscience is clear."

"But there you're off on a different track. Others sit in judgment on our acts,—sometimes; but a sin is a violation of one's own soul, and if unrepented of, it brings its own punishment by the changes it makes there. A man's conscience, let Aaron explain, is a curious sort of a jigomoree, and like to get out of order. There are men in plenty with unrepented murder in their hearts, who are walking about as comfortable as you please. One time or another they had the wish—and the will, too, but they lacked the courage. In other words, they are sinners who are cowards. With them a conscience works no better than a sluggish liver—all choked up with conceit and self-pity. Don't see straight! Like me—have jiggling spots in the morning. How will their case stand in a court that is less concerned with a man's acts than with the desires he coddles? People go through life smug as you please—all the while cockering unholy desires which they are afraid to gratify. Do such like think for one split second that the Old Boy is not looking them over—all the while? Every time he claps eyes on one of them, he gives his fire a poke and pushes on the bellows. For Satan was brave himself, and the brave admire courage. Did Satan not stir up rebellion in High Heaven itself, and shout defiance in the very presence of the Almighty? He's the hero in that tale, and the chief of all recalcitrants. He'll get after pigeon-livered hypocrites when they're handed over to him for punishment. How he should warm them up! But perhaps he'll decide it's not worth the trouble."

"On that basis," Bob told him, "we're all guilty and we're all to be pitied."

"Yes," the old man agreed, "a gentleman told me that once while he was down here bailing out his son. 'There's a hidden purpose at work in our lives,' said he, 'that makes music of our little confusions.' Gosh, he was a capitalist, that insurance magnate was, but after his son had been locked up a

few times more, the father's philosophy of life seemed to get frozen up. Don't you agree with Thomas Hardy that the old weather beaten thrush singing his cracked little song in the sere season saw joys in life that man's eyes cannot discern? As for Aaron, he's seen life and he's worn everything threadbare—even sin. He's gone down into the pit of it, and there's little else than sorrow there. But some of us, get only a dog's portion of happiness—a lick and a smell. But as for you, Young's your name and Young's your age. If you haven't personal courage—if you can't stand up and take life as it comes to you—it's a mercy they do you if they destroy you. And many a dog has been shot because he was gun shy."

"I think you're altogether right, old friend," Bob told him, and rising, he unfolded from the hips.

"My word!" he exclaimed, looking the dirty corridor over with some disgust, "There's a shocking lack of privacy in this beastly place—with its jackes stool flushing over there in the open, but that's no reason a man cannot keep his fears and feelings to himself. By the look of these specimens, it shouldn't require a high order of intelligence to round them up. Come on, notorious Aaron Burke, let's play a game of checkers."

"Let's!" agreed Aaron. "It's a diversion and keeps the mind from fretting. It's an optimist a man should always be!"

Major Bunting of the Salvation Army was holding his Saturday afternoon song service in the corridor below. Sixty odd inmates had paraded in their broad stripes to attend in the chapel and were lustily shouting gospel songs under the major's stirring leadership. A minister's son, in for banditry, was pumping on the organ for all he was worth, and as the game of checkers proceeded, a song's refrain rose to rattle the glass dome of the old stone gaol.—

When by His Grace, I shall look on His face,
That will be glory—be glory for me.

CHAPTER IV

Enter the Honourable Mr. Justice Finlayson and a jury.

On the following Monday morning, October 16th, 1911, Robert Young was conveyed from the gaol in a horse-drawn black maria, and made his first appearance in the police court. He had no occasion to open his mouth that morning, but for all that he was playing centre stage.

The finding of the dead bodies of Thomas Wilson and his elderly wife had made live local news for the afternoon papers of the previous Friday. That brutal murdering had occurred in a secluded farmhouse within twenty miles of a small city which at that time supported five daily newspapers, and nothing else breaking on Saturday, front page spreads had been carried over giving full details of a double murder which was so callous and brutal as to startle and shock the public over the week end. In fact, an editorial appeared on this Monday morning, complimenting the police on the energy they had displayed in investigating the crime and bringing the suspect so speedily to justice. So the afternoon editions had to carry something or other about Robert Young, and in lieu of anything else to say, a paragraph or two were padded out with comments on the personal appearance of the accused. It was mentioned, as an item to awaken surprise, that the ex-hired man, who had been caught hiding on a farm near Markham village, showed great composure and stood in the dock as erect and expressionless as a soldier on parade. On this date, for the first time in his life, Bob Young had his picture printed in a newspaper; and it didn't cost him anything, either.

After the usual adjournments, Young received his preliminary hearing before a magistrate on separate charges of murdering Thomas Wilson and Elizabeth Wilson; and a prima fa′ci·e case being made out, the prisoner was committed to gaol to stand his trials at the next court of competent jurisdiction.

The trial of Robert Young came on before Mr. Justice Finlayson and a jury at the local criminal assizes holden the following March. Instead of describing the court room, we refer the reader to any one of the thousand such chambers, each one of which has its big clock, its faulty ventilation, and its harrowing train of tragedies. Let him choose his favourite one, and make himself quite at home. He will search for some time among them, however, before he finds a presiding officer whose dignity is as unassailable

as was that of Tobias Finlayson, an upright judge who is now with God. Behold, then, the big man perched up on soft cushions beneath a canopy, his kindly blue eyes peering down under shaggy, beetling brows.

On the court resuming after luncheon on Monday, its opening day, the grand jury returned true bills against the accused on both charges; and Robert Young was thereupon led into court by the sheriff's officers and placed in the dock to be formally arraigned and answer to the indictments (in·dite′ments). Herbert Bunyan Osler, Esq., K.C., a luminary (lyu′mi·na·ry) of high magnitude in that quarter of the legal sky, was briefed for the prosecution—E. Smythe-Jones, Esq., being with him.

Mr. Osler rose and intimated that he would first proceed with the charge relating to the fe·lo′ni·ous killing of Thomas Wilson.

It then being made to appear to the Court that the prisoner at the bar was without counsel, James Boynton Thomas, a young barrister who chanced opportunely to be present, was assigned to his defence. Mr. Thomas bowed to the Court in an insinuating manner and pleaded gracefully for time to consult his client and prepare his brief; and to facilitate counsel—as his Lordship observed—and to meet the convenience of the Court, having regard to the condition of the calendar, the trial of Robert Young stood over to come on first on the list on the Wednesday following.

A crowded and expect′ant courtroom rose on Wednesday morning as the judge in his robes—a trifle late as usual—entered by a private door at the rear, and ascending a short stairway, made his neck-bow to counsel and took his seat on the Bench. His Lordship, who was a cor′pulent person, had a brief argument with his tie which was misbehaving. An usher placed before him a leather-bound note book—to which we shall hereafter refer—and poured his Lordship a glass of water.

After some shuffling, the spectators meanwhile had resumed their seats; and to open the Court an usher cried "O Yez! O Yez!" to all persons having business there, the Court's special business being apparently a general gaol delivery. His Lordship, whose voice was high pitched in the nasal passages for a man of his bulk of throat, intimated in a thin undertone—and in pantomime—that the window ventilators required attention. The sheriff's officer, a se′nile person in tails and with a sword, bestirred himself to make the necessary adjustments.

The clerk of the assize, who sat immediately below and within reaching distance of his Lordship, then called upon the jury panel to answer sev′er·al·ly to their names and save their fines. Simon Kearns, a juryman

who had met with a mishap that morning getting in from his farm, was found among the missing. His Lordship took judicial notice of the man's absence, and there followed loud shoutings of "Simon Kearns!" within the court room, of "Sim′i·an Currans!" at the doorway and of "Cinnimon Currants!" down the corridor without; and it's a Chelsea bun they might, indeed, have been finally shouting for, had the law required a defaulting juror's name to be called more than three times, within and without the Court. The man's cor·rect′ given name and cog·no′men were then duly noted down to receive ap·pro′pri·ate attention later.

The sheriff's officers had Robert Young seated, perched up in the prisoner's dock. He was fresh shaved that morning, but the razor had cut him; and he was without a dicky collar on his shirt and in need of a good hair cut. His skin was sallow after months of close confinement on skilly and salted bread and without sunshine and exercise. The public seated on benches behind him could see his shoulder blades showing through his coat. The prisoner seemed to be nervous and fidgety, and kept rubbing his neck with his left hand, which struck many present as having a grave significance. In truth, Bob Young's appearance that day was not prepossessing, and the place where he was sitting was enough, of course, to cast a grave suspicion on any man, whatever his personal appearance. To most persons present, the prisoner looked that sort of a fellow who will stand some watching. Had not the coroner's jury reported against him? Had not a magistrate committed him? Had not the grand jury brought in true bills against him? In any event, the newspapers had published all the prosecution's important evidence months before; and the public had naturally concluded that where there was so much smoke there must have been a fire. Robert Young faced his trial with the reputation of having committed an atrocious double murder. There is something inherently lu′dicrous in the mealy-mouthed statement that a needy friendless stranger enjoys a fair trial in a modern court.

The prisoner was ordered by the clerk of the assize to stand up and the charge of murdering Thomas Wilson was intoned:

"Robert Young, you are charged on indictment (in·dite′ment) for that you on or about the 11th day of October in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and eleven feloniously and wilfully and of your own malice aforethought did kill and murder one Thomas Wilson . . . How say you: Are you guilty or not guilty?"

The prisoner's counsel entered a plea of "Not guilty", and the business of picking a jury was then proceeded with.

"You may resume your seat," his Lordship remarked to the prisoner in a low, courteous tone. "No person is required to stand unless the Court is addressing him or he is addressing the Court."

The prosecution exercised its right to challenge and have members of the jury panel stand aside, to such purpose that after a reasonable space twelve jurymen were selected, all of whom were farmers, and all of whom no doubt had had trouble with immigrant hired help, one time or another.

The jury then stood and each member kissed the book as the oath was administered to them severally:

"I swear by Almighty God that I will well and truly try and true deliverance make between Our Sovereign Lord the King and the prisoner at the Bar whom I shall have in charge, and a true verdict give according to the evidence."

The jury were then re-seated and the clerk of the assize addressed them. "Gentlemen of the jury," he intoned, "the prisoner at the bar, Robert Young, is charged in this indictment with the wilful murder of Thomas Wilson on or about the 11th day of October in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and eleven. Upon this indictment he has been arraigned, and upon arraignment he has pleaded not guilty. Your duty therefore is to inquire whether he be guilty or not guilty, and to hearken to the evidence."

Herbert Bunyan Osler, K.C., then rose leisurely and after adjusting his gown at the shoulder, bowed gracefully to the Bench and proceeded to open his case to the jury. He was a beefy-faced man with side burns. He looked for′mi·da·ble, masterful—dominant, in fact.

"May it please your Lordship and gentlemen of the jury," the prosecutor began in measured terms, turning his back to the Bench and talking conversationally to the jury in a deep-voiced but pleasantly confidential tone, "you have heard the charge of murder to which the prisoner by his counsel has pleaded not guilty.

"It now becomes your duty to listen at·ten′tive·ly to all the evidence that will be presented, both for and against the prisoner, (ah-hem!) to weight that evidence carefully according to your best judgment, and then return a verdict that will satisfy your consciences as citizens, who are now called upon to assist in administering the laws of your country—and to assist, also, in protecting the lives and the property of all law-abiding persons. In weighing that evidence, which will lead you, as I submit, to find that the accused Robert Young is guilty of the murder with which he stands charged, you will bear con′stant·ly in mind that an accused person at the bar is

entitled to the benefit of any reasonable doubt—and that it is the duty of the prosecutor to prove in a convincing way that he is guilty of the offence as so charged. But you must, at all times, also, bear con′stant·ly in mind, gentlemen (ah-hem!) how im·por′tant it is that the laws be enforced and that juries bring in findings according to the strength and weight of the evidence presented—otherwise, gentlemen, in the terrible tragedy of crimes, such as this one, none but the innocent victims will ever suffer! You will, ac·cord′ingly give the prisoner Robert Young, the benefit of any reasonable doubt; but, such a doubt, mark you, gentlemen, must arise in a reasonable way out of the evidence presented, and is not found (ah-hem!) by searching the mind for some hy·po·thet′ic·al possibility that the accused person may be innocent."

"The prisoner at the bar," the learned counsel then explained, "is on trial before you, gentlemen of the jury, for the wil′ful murder of Thomas Wilson, an inoffensive farmer of good repute who was living a peaceful and orderly life with his elderly wife in their secluded farm house within a few miles of the place where you are now sitting." Continuing, he gave the jury a sufficient outline of his case to satisfy them that there was no reasonable doubt in his mind as to what their finding would be; and thanking them generously for their attention, he concluded his opening by calling upon William Gordon Rutledge, his first witness, to take the box.

We have now reached a point in this narrative where authorial interference is necessary for purposes of compression, and a word of explanation may be permitted. Throughout this story, the reader is being treated fairly and is receiving the fullest and frankest disclosure. Not a scintilla of evidence is being withheld to manufacture a mystery—out of what was no mystery at all—or for any other purpose whatever. If there is the faintest suspicion lurking in any reader's mind that Robert Young's trial was not an everyday sort of a reality—let him dismiss such thought quickly, and as Bob himself would have put it, let him do so absolutely. As an account of a criminal trial, what is served up here is not fancy bread and chicken fixings—it is common corn pone and everyday doings. Those who have had experience in such matters will know it; and all others should prepare themselves right away to believe it. The reader is now invited to sit in with the jury and share with them the solemn duty of trying a man on a charge of murder.

To try this case as the jury did, it is necessary, of course, that the reader hear all the important evidence that was presented and as it was presented. This celebrated trial occupied three full days of the court's time and the

stenographic transcript of the proceedings is altogether too lengthy for our purpose. However, the presiding judge was taking notes of the evidence as in duty bound; and his Lordship was a lazy man, being a gross feeder. A trifle chol′er·ic at times, he occasionally interrupted counsel to pipe at them to "shorten the matter up!" Learned counsel, who are hired on an hourly wage and are never on piece work, did not like this habit of his. It was dis′con·cert′ing at times and de·rog′a·tory to their dignity at all times, the covert innuendo in his Lordship's growl being, of course, that they were lazy, incompetent fellows and loafing on the job. "Yes, mi-lud! Yes, mi-lud!" they would bow and scrape, in the meantime whispering to their worried clients in an aside: "Old Pie-face is grouchy this morning" or "Old Pie-face had a bad night" or words to that effect.

However correct their guesses may have been, the old judge had a nimble wit about him and his heart was warm beneath the crust. His Lordship was a strong judge, his mind ripened by wide experience in life, and his judgment balanced with sound commonsense, and this partly for the reason, perhaps, that he had not spent his active days on his feet arguing and logic-chopping to bolster up whatever briefs came to his hands as part of a day's work. He had breezed around in his prime, dipping into politics and had made his money acting for wealthy clients who shunned litigation as a child does a dose of molasses and cream of tartar. He had married a southern lady to whom he was devotedly attached and in whom he could see no faults save for the detail that she went in strong for highly flavored dishes and insisted that a roast fowl get a kiss of garlic on the breast. Later in life, Finlayson had accepted appointment to the judiciary because he thought the Bench a dignified, comfortable place to tuck one's legs under, and he did so also to please his wife, who desired the social position and whom he had spoiled even to the extent of doing without children. In a judgeship, a lawyer's life often ripens into a mellow old age as undisturbed by surrounding changes as is a late tomato set on a ledge to draw colour from autumn sunshine. When his Lordship took the oath of judicial office, he was a wealthy lawyer in general practice, but he knew no more of the tricks and subtleties of court procedure than an articled law clerk can easily carry under his hat. However, he concurred with his Brothers for a while, and he ever concurred in the sage axiom of Aaron Burke that a man's tongue lets out his littleness. In six months' time, in consequence, Justice Finlayson felt as comfortable on the Bench as a bug in a rug.

His notes of the evidence taken in longhand at this trial are clearly and nearly written down; they are unimpeachable, of course, and they are brief enough to weary no one in the perusal of them. They are transcribed here

from his leather-bound note book—bracketted comments and all—and they serve ad′mir·ab·ly to shorten the matter up.

William Gordon Rutledge sworn examined by *Osler, K.C.*

Witness is a butcher with shop at Goldthorpe, a crossroad hamlet lying two and a half miles west of the Thomas Wilson farm. He does his own killing.

He was present on Friday the 13th October 1911 when the dead bodies of Thomas Wilson and his wife Elizabeth were found lying in their farm house on the Second Line. Had been acquainted with the deceased Thomas Wilson for years, and knew his wife slightly. Had occasionally bought a beast from them for killing.

Rutledge had a conversation with the deceased, Thomas Wilson, on Wednesday afternoon, the 11th October last. Wilson and his wife were then at Goldthorpe, having driven there in their buggy. They called in to see him at his shop and offered to sell him a fat bullock. He needed a carcass for his Saturday trade and agreed to go down to the Wilson farm first thing Thursday morning and inspect the beast.

On Thursday morning (12th October) Rutledge drove to the Wilson farm, taking a boy with him to drive the animal to his slaughter house. He arrived at Wilsons shortly before seven o'clock in the morning. He went first to the kitchen door, and knocked repeatedly without getting any reply. He then tried the door and found it bolted on the inside. The window blinds were drawn down. He looked in the shed in the rear and noticed that Wilson's automobile was away. Rutledge then searched in the barn finding no one; and he noticed in the stable that none of the morning chores were done. The absence of all hands from the farm at that hour surprised him; and he drove away intending to call back later.

Rutledge returned to the Wilson farm on Friday morning, arriving there about 8 o'clock a.m. He found the house still locked up. He failed to raise any reply by hammering on the doors. He went then to the stable. He concluded that no person had been there since his call the day before. A pen of hungry hogs were squealing.

Witness decided something serious was wrong, and he drove post-haste for the nearest neighbour, Herbert Silverthorn, whose house lay down the line and say a quarter of a mile away if one went in a beeline across the fields. Silverthorn jumped in and came right back with him to the Wilson house, and together they prized the kitchen window open. An opaque blind suspended from a roller at the top was drawn down its full length. Holding

the blind back, they observed the kitchen was in disorder and they spied the body of Thomas Wilson lying on the floor, with dried blood staining the floor and the clothing of the corpse.

Neither Silverthorn nor the witness entered the house at that time. Leaving Silverthorn in charge of the premises, Rutledge drove to Goldthorpe and notified the local policeman, Adam Swift, who immediately telephoned to police headquarters in the city.

Cross-examined by *James B. Thomas*

Witness knew little of the Wilsons or of their affairs save in a casual business way. Wilson himself seemed a silent, inoffensive man getting up in years; he drank occasionally—not often, and when he did, he didn't carry his liquor well. Yes,—when on a spree he was a trifle noisy. The neighbours thought his wife was peculiar. She had acted friendly enough to the witness at times, and again when in the humour, she would not answer the door and once or twice she had slammed it in his face without any apparent provocation. Folk did not go to the Wilson house—that is, not much. The Wilsons were left to live alone.

Yes, Thomas Wilson had a Ford touring car. He bought it secondhand the spring before while on a spree and never learned rightly how to drive it. It was the one extravagance Wilson had ever been known to commit.

Witness recognizes the accused Robert Young and says he was the hired man who was working for Thomas Wilson in the summer of 1911. Yes, witness had seen the accused, Young, driving Thomas Wilson and his wife through the village in the Wilson automobile. No, not often, but on several occasions.

No, there was nothing out of the ordinary in the conversation which witness had with the Wilsons on Wednesday. Wilson merely said he had a beast to sell and asked the butcher to buy it. Said the bullock was in good condition for killing and would touch twelve hundred-weight. Yes, witness supposed the Wilsons had use for the money—farmers usually have. Yes, witness had dealings with Wilson extending over years—bought a beast now and again, and always paid him right on the nail (Limerick expression). No, witness cannot say what the bullock would have fetched. He hadn't looked it over. Good killing steers were selling at five cents the pound live weight last October.

Herbert Silverthorn *sworn* examined by *Osler*

A farmer, a member of the local township council (looks a prosperous cow-keeper and would make a speech). Witness had lived on the next farm to Wilson for 16 years—was friendly but not intimate with them. They did not neighbour back and forth. He says the Wilsons were *through-other* people.—explains they never got their field work done on time. (An Ulster expression).

The Wilsons lived to themselves, a close mean and shabby sort of life. No church, lodge or societies. No children or relations hereabout. Cannot speak of Wilson's financial affairs. He owned a hundred acre farm and paid his taxes.

Witness tells of finding the body of Thomas Wilson lying in his farmhouse kitchen on the morning of Friday. He corroborates all statements made by Rutledge in this connection. No person entered the Wilson house while he was in charge until the police arrived.

Witness recognizes the prisoner at the bar as a man who worked for Thomas Wilson in the summer of 1911. He says he knew the accused well enough to say hello to him but not intimately.

Silverthorn states that Young spoke to him on the morning of Tuesday the 10th October 1911. Witness was a road-viewer for the township council, and had three men with him who were mending a culvert on the Second Line on which Wilson's farm lies. Young came along on foot carrying a leather suitcase. The accused stopped for a moment and inquired if any of them knew where he could get a job. He said he was through working for the Wilsons and was glad of it. He said he didn't like the cooking. Young then set off toward the city on foot.

Witness recalls the evening of Wednesday the 11th October 1911 clearly. He had been to a township council meeting and arrived home shortly before eight o'clock. While his wife was warming up his supper for him, he had occasion to step out of the house. While in an outbuilding, he had heard two gunshot discharges. They seemed a bit muffled and came from the direction of the Wilson buildings. He had given the circumstance no particular attention at the moment. He thought Wilson had shot a prowling dog that had been troubling the neighbourhood, and that the second shot had been fired to put the animal out of misery.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

Witness admits that he had formerly been on more friendly terms with the deceased, Thomas Wilson. Differences had arisen between them over

keeping up a line fence. That was five or six years ago. At one time, Wilson had acted like a man in comfortable circumstances. He purchased fair live stock and had money to pay for it. Latterly things had gradually run down on the Wilson place. Yes, he had heard of Wilson having trouble with hired help. Yes, witness knew of one occasion on which Wilson had been slow in paying wages.

Adam Swift *sworn* examined by *Smythe-Jones*

A local policeman. Went with Silverthorn to the scene of the tragedy on Friday morning. He took charge and kept everybody out of the house until police inspectors arrived.

(Witness is a short stocky man with goat whiskers—carries an umbrella—a fussy, little, local busybody, now bursting with news. This is the apogee of his career. He insists on telling what people told him—I check him up sharply).

Cross-examined by *J. B. Thomas*

(At this point his Lordship executed a pen and ink sketch of local constable Adam Swift, who appears in a startled and indignant state under cross-examination).

Charles Wesley Willisdimple *sworn* examined by *Osler*

Witness is an inspector of police with 18 years' service on the force. (A plump person with flat, careful police voice).

Pursuant to instructions he drove to the Thomas Wilson farm on Friday the 13th October 1911. He was accompanied by officers Allen and Owens, and arrived there about 12 o'clock (mid-day). He found local officer, Adam Swift, keeping the neighbours from entering the dwelling. Witness immediately entered the farmhouse with his officers and made a careful inspection.

The Wilson farmhouse was a small frame dwelling, set well back from the travelled road. On its ground floor, there was a small general room—used as a sitting room, parlour or suchlike—a bedroom and a lean-to kitchen, with a blind pantry leading off it, and below the kitchen a root cellar had been dug which could only be entered through a trap-door in the kitchen floor. There was one small bedroom upstairs which was lighted by a dormer window and was reached by an open stairway from the livingroom.

Witness found the body of Thomas Wilson lying on the kitchen floor beside an armchair. The dead man appeared to have been shot from behind at close range, buckshot entering the base of the skull and expending its force upward. There was rigor mortis and blood that had spilt was thickened on the floor. When shot, Wilson had been wearing blue overalls over rough work clothes. The witness searched the body and found in the overall pockets a plug of smoking tobacco and a jackknife. In the hip pocket of his trousers, he found a worn purse containing eight dollars in bankbills and forty cents in silver.

The body of Elizabeth Wilson was found lying face down in the blind pantry off the kitchen, where she had apparently fled and been shot down. She wore soiled house clothes; and in the pocket of her skirt, the inspector found a thimble and a leather purse tied with a string, containing thirty-eight dollars in bills and twenty-three cents in coins. There was nothing to evidence that either of the dead persons had offered any resistance.

Inspection of the premises disclosed that the dwelling had been pillaged. The contents of every room were in disorder. The ticks had been slit open. The drawers in the table and bureau were found open and their contents littered the floors. Papers had been extracted from their envelopes and were scattered in disorder. The inspector produced a list of papers and documents found in the house, (exhibit A).

The unwashed dishes used for an evening meal for two persons had not been removed from the kitchen table. A careful search of the house and outbuildings and vicinity failed to discover firearms or anything of importance.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

Witness merely inferred the dishes were used for an evening meal. The food consumed had been bread and butter, head cheese, preserves and tea. Not a farm breakfast, because no porridge. Certainly not a noon-hour warm farm-dinner.

Papers found in the house consisted of tax bills, store bills, old deeds and musty agreements. No—there was no correspondence found or any evidence of such other than an envelope addressed to Young found lying in the bedroom upstairs.

John Alexander Mowat *sworn* examined by *Smythe-Jones*

Works on a farm on the Second Line.

(is a stout husky young man—by his hands a mechanic).

Recognizes the accused in the box and states he knew him to speak to.

Had spoken to the accused during the summer of 1911, while Young was working on the Wilson farm.

Witness was with Silverthorn on Tuesday the 10th of October, helping to fix a culvert on the Second Line. He saw Young pass and corroborates Silverthorn's evidence as to what the accused said at that time.

Witness had stepped aside to speak to Young on that occasion.

Had asked the accused if Wilson had paid him his wages.—Understood from Young that Wilson had.

Witness saw Young again on Wednesday the 11th of October, 1911. Young was then walking along the Second Line and was within a few rods of the Wilson gate. It was after sundown and dusk was settling down. Witness was riding in a motor car and passed the accused on the road. Recognized the accused clearly.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

Witness had helped the accused once to adjust the carburetter on the Wilson car. Yes, sometime prior to October last. No, he forgets just where the car was stalled at the time—either on the road or in the village. Yes, Thomas Wilson was riding in the car at the time.

Yes, Thomas Wilson went on a spree once in a while. Yes, witness admits that he takes a drink himself—but says that occurs rarely. No, witness had not been drinking on the Wednesday evening in question. Witness was then riding in a motor car with William Kidd on his way to the village (Goldthorpe) to attend a dance. Sure he hadn't been drinking because he was going to pick up his girl, who is death against the smell of liquor. No, it was not dark when he passed the accused. He did not speak to Young on that occasion—no reason to do so. Witness wondered what Young was doing there. The accused was just mootching along. (County Clare expression).

Yes, witness had spoken to Young privately on Tuesday morning. Had asked him "Did you get your wages out of the old geezer"—or something much like that. The accused had smiled. Witness thought he nodded and replied "Trust me" or something like that. Witness admits that the accused did not reply categorically. Witness says he could see what Young was saying—understood from the reply that the wages were all paid.

Ulysses Samuel Hunter *sworn* examined by *Osler*

Witness a qualified medical practitioner, in general practice for thirty years—is local coroner.

(A pompous learned little medico).

Performed an autopsy on the bodies of Thomas Wilson and Elizabeth Wilson.

On the male cadaver observed a morbific cuticular affection of a purpuric nature due to extravasation, but found no evidence of superficial abrasions, fractures or contusions other than a breach of the occiput.

Explains that the occipital bone is the sheath that encloses the cerebellum, which is a mass of nerve tissues and is concerned with the co-ordination of movements— Localizes the cerebellum in the dorsal lobe.

(The jury at this point appearing confused, I advise them that the witness is referring to injuries the deceased Wilson sustained at the back of the head where the pig brains lie.)

Witness describes the injuries—minute technical description—hemorrhagic—coagulations—incrustations—metathesis etc., etc.

> "*Words are like leaves and where they most abound*
> *Much fruit of sense beneath is seldom found*."

(At this point a juryman interrupted to inquire from the witness what he thought the deceased Wilson actually died of. Delay having occurred while further technical explanations are given, I inform the jury that the doctor's evidence tends to the conclusion that the deceased Wilson came to his death by reason of the fact that the back of his head was blown open.)

Witness first examined the corpses early on Friday afternoon (the 13th October). Cannot state from their condition then the precise time that their deaths had occurred.

Found evidence still present then of the coagulation of the muscle plasma—such results from the generation of myosin. That, he explains, is a proteid substance that produces such coagulation. Muscle plasma is a fluid in the muscles that so coagulates. Such coagulation results from a cessation of metabolic processes. Such processes, he explains, are of an anabolic and katabolic character. Concerned with the building up and destruction of protoplasm in a living organism. Protoplasm is ——

(I here advise the jury the witness has been stating that there was still evidence of rigor mortis when he examined the bodies on the Friday).

Witness confirms that rigor mortis results from the growth of myosin in the muscle plasma. It occurs shortly after death and continues till decomposition sets in. Witness cannot state definitely what time would pass before such decomposition would set in as to remove rigidity of rigor mortis.

With decomposition, he explains, the constituent parts resolve into simpler compounds, and condition of temperature and other factors must first be accurately determined, he says, before a definite statement can be made etc., etc.

Questioned by the Court, witness admits that rigor mortis usually continues, at least evidence of it, until the third day after death.

Witness examined the stomach and other digestive organs of both deceased persons and states definitely that their deaths occurred within less than two hours after they partook of food, the remnants of which were found by the police on the kitchen table.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

Witness hedges; denies he has stated Wilson was killed by a charge of buckshot, but states that deceased was struck by such a charge before his death occurred.

Such wounds would in themselves occasion the death of any living creature.

Witness denies emphatically that the death of Thomas Wilson may have resulted from the presence of purple patches on his skin.

Witness refuses to discuss the possibility that Wilson was on the point of death when he was shot at. Calls it an absurd hypothesis.

William A. Holmes *sworn* examined by *Smythe-Jones*

Is a night watchman employed at Sloan's garage on the south side of Hudson Avenue, and distant 23 miles or thereabouts from the Wilson farm.

He recalls an incident which occurred on Hudson Avenue late on Wednesday the 11th October 1911. A young man was the sole occupant in a Ford touring car which stalled on the street opposite the garage and was

blocking trolley traffic. Witness recognizes the accused, Young, in court, and identifies him as the person who was in charge of this Ford car.

The time was close to midnight. Holmes gave the accused a hand, and they shoved the stalled car off the street and into the garage yard. Young seemed in a hurry to get away. He gave neither his name nor address. Said he would call later and have repairs made. He took his suitcase and left the scene. He made some remark about the car getting him into trouble with the police. Witness does not recall the exact words.

The Friday evening paper gave the license number of the Wilson car, which was that on the vehicle witness had helped Young shove off the street. Holmes notified police.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

No person present in garage on Wednesday night to make repairs—witness did not attempt such work. He admits Young may not have been asked to give his name and address. Witness cannot recall the exact words Young used. Witness paid little attention to the incident at the time, but afterwards he saw significance in the remark. Asked whether Young had not in fact, told him that the car had been giving a lot of trouble, witness states his best recollection is otherwise but he is not certain.

Marshall Pickhall *sworn* examined by *Smythe-Jones*

A detective sergeant on the force with 24 years' service. (A uniformed, avuncular person).

Witness attended at Sloan's garage, on Saturday morning, October 14th 1911, examined a Ford touring car standing in the yard there, and found the car was the property of Thomas Wilson.

He questioned Holmes, the last witness, and pursuant to instructions from headquarters made inquiries for the accused, Young, at Markham village. Later in the morning he took the accused into custody. Officers Scott and Rennie accompanied him while making the arrest.

The prisoner was cautioned and not interrogated prior to his arrival at headquarters. He there made a signed voluntary statement, which witness produces.

Mr. Thomas objects.

The jury are excluded.

Further evidence is given by Pickhall. The statement is examined and found admissible.

The jury are recalled.

Examination of Pickhall continues.

Statement signed by accused produced and marked exhibit B.

The statement is read to the jury and handed to the foreman for inspection.

Cross-examination by *Thomas*

(Nothing of importance).

John E. Brown *sworn* examined by *Smythe-Jones*

Witness is 38 years of age, a farmer and local merchant, residing at Muskalonge Harbour.

(Has a slight cast in the left eye).

Witness is a nephew of the deceased Thomas Wilson, being the surviving child and only next of kin of a deceased sister.

Witness was on a shopping trip to the city when he read of the death of his uncle, Thomas Wilson; he came immediately to attend the funeral, and afterwards was appointed administrator of the estate.

Thomas Wilson died intestate leaving a brother, William Wilson, of Bay City, Michigan and this witness as his only next of kin and heirs at law.

Deceased had purchased the farm on which he died 16 years ago (in 1896), coming at the time from Michigan where he had previously conducted a tanning business. He was 67 years old when he died.

Witness cannot speak of what property the deceased may have possessed. He states he is ignorant as to his uncle's financial transactions. The estate consists of the farm, stock and personal effects. No debts were owing save small local store bills. The farm is valued at $3000, and the personalty at $750. The administrator knows of no other assets, and has been unable to locate any bank account which the deceased kept at any time.

Witness says he had not communicated with his uncle for years. Gives the actions of Elizabeth Wilson as the cause of family coolness.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

Elizabeth Wilson may have died after Thomas Wilson, but her estate does not share. She was not the legal wife of Thomas Wilson. Her husband, Samuel Morgan, is still living.

Mary Hendrie *sworn* examined by *Smythe-Jones*

Witness is the wife of William Thomas Hendrie, a farmer in the Markham district, with whom the accused worked for two years. (Young was arrested at her home by Pickhall).

(*She gives the accused a good character.*)

Witness says the accused was in good spirits and acted normally when he arrived at her place on Thursday the 12th October 1911. He came up on the morning train. Said he would be staying for a day or two, and remained over till Saturday helping with the farm work. Young did not tell her with whom he had been working recently, nor where he was going. He had never made a practice of discussing his personal affairs.

Cross-examined by *Thomas*

Says she always found the accused scrupulously honest—even in the smallest matters—says Young had talked with her little son, telling him what he had recently been doing.

(Counsel here objects. Objection sustained.)

Questioned by the Court. Witness knows the location of Sloan's garage on Hudson Avenue, and states that it is on the usual convenient route a person would take in driving from the Union Station to the Hendrie farm.

His Lordship notes at this point that the prosecution here rested his case; and that Court was adjourned to resume on Friday at 10.15 a.m.

CHAPTER V

Enter learned Counsel to argue before the Bar of Justice.

Promptly on the court being called to order on Friday morning—a little late as usual—Mr. Thomas rose and, addressing his Lordship, stated that the accused had been advised by counsel overnight that there was no cause or occasion for opening a defence and placing witnesses in the box on his behalf. With reference to the evidence tendered by the prosecution, he continued, the defence took the position that in all material respects it was truthful and accurate—so far as it went; and the defence therefore had no reason to dispute it. On this evidence as it stood, the accused relied as constituting for him a good and sufficient defence. On behalf of his client and of himself, as counsel, Mr. Thomas expressed his sincere regret that it was beyond the power or ability of the defence to supply the court with any information, not already on the record, relating to the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of Thomas Wilson.

The purport of all this circumlocution was that Mr. Thomas intended to have the last crack at the jury; and this right to make the final address and appeal, which he would have lost had he called a witness, is viewed as a matter of prime importance by learned counsel who think so highly of their own oratory or so meanly of the intelligence of a jury as to fancy that its decisions are swayed like a tree by the last breeze that blows upon it. It was in this sense that Mr. Justice Finlayson understood the remarks just quoted, but in the minds of the twelve jurymen, they had a different significance and one that bore a sinister import. The meaning they gathered was that Robert Young was not going to testify on his own behalf; and they promptly jumped to the conclusion that the prisoner was afraid to submit himself to cross-examination. Lurking suspicions were thus confirmed and now appeared well grounded.

Mr. Osler thereupon arose to address the jury on behalf of the prosecution.

"It is my intention, with your permission, gentlemen," he began, "to discuss with you briefly the evidence which the prosecution has presented for your consideration in establishing the guilt of the accused. The witnesses whom you have heard stand uncontradicted, and their testimony, I submit, is

worthy of full cre′dence. On ir′re·fut′able testimony I ask you to make certain preliminary findings of fact.

"I ask you, in the first place, to find that Thomas Wilson died shortly before eight o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, the 11th of October 1911. This fact, I submit, has been established beyond the shadow of a doubt. Wilson and his wife were seen in the near by village late in the afternoon of that day by the witness, Rutledge, who called at the Wilson home early on Thursday morning to be met by silence there. There had been no awakening in that farmhouse that Thursday morning. You have the evidence of Silverthorn that he heard two gunshots fired shortly before eight o'clock on Wednesday evening, the reports coming from the direction of the Wilson house. You have the evidence of Inspector Willisdimple that unwashed supper dishes for two persons stood on the kitchen table when the police broke in on Friday morning and of Dr. Hunter that the death of Wilson occurred within less than two hours after he partook of his evening meal.

"Next, I ask you to find, gentlemen, that Thomas Wilson was murdered and that his murderer left the premises. The old couple died of gunshot wounds. No weapon was found on the premises, and to inflict their injuries required the hand of a third person.

"I ask you to find, next, that Thomas Wilson was murdered at a time a robbery of his house was committed. From Inspector Willisdimple's evidence, it is made clear to you that every room in the farmhouse had been ransacked.

"From the position of the bodies, I ask you to find, also, that Wilson was not killed while he was offering resistance to the aggressor. He was shot from behind whilst sitting in his arm chair and his wife was killed in the kitchen pantry to which she had fled. From these circumstances, I ask you to find that the presence of the criminal did not at first awaken suspicion in the minds of the elderly couple. Your conclusion from this must be that the murderer was not a stranger to them who made his entry as a man would who comes into a farmhouse after nightfall to threaten the occupants and rob the place with violence. On the other hand, you will find that he was a person whom the Wilsons knew.

"Having agreed with me in making these preliminary findings, I next ask you, gentlemen, to observe the evidence which fastens the guilt of this des′pic·a·ble crime on the accused by a chain of reasoning that is ir·ref′ra·ga·ble. Robert Young had been working for months as their hired man and living in the house with this elderly couple. The Wilson house was

not frequented by friends or neighbours, nor was other help employed during this period. On Tuesday, the day before the murder, the accused had left the Wilson's employ, taking his effects with him, and he made it locally known that he had done so, and that he was going out of the locality. At nightfall on Wednesday, the evening of the murder, Young was observed by the witness Mowat approaching the Wilson premises on foot. A few hours later, the accused is shown by the evidence of the witness Holmes to have been in possession of the Wilson automobile and to have abandoned it on a vacant lot at a point distant some twenty-three miles from the Wilson farm. This witness has told you that at the time Young seemed in a hurry to get away, that he did not give his name or address, and that he made some remark which the witness afterwards thought was significant. From the point where the motor vehicle was abandoned, other evidence traces the accused to the Hendrie farm near Markham village at which place his arrest took place the third day later. Mrs. Hendrie has told you that the accused was close-mouthed on his arrival there. Although she inquired from him on the matter, the accused failed to tell her for whom he had recently been working or where. She has also told you that on the very day of his arrest he was leaving the Markham farm, and that he had not told where he intended to go other than to say that he was going back to the city. You will appreciate, gentlemen, the strength of the evidence which the prosecution has thus produced to fasten on the accused the perpetration of this crime. The accused is first shown leaving the locality on the Tuesday in order to shake off possible suspicion. The murder, you have found, was committed early the next Wednesday evening. We have next shown the accused approaching the scene of the crime. He comes alone and on foot and under cover of darkness to the house where the murdered couple were the only persons present. In this instance, you have both *the time* and *the place* together. We show you later, the same evening, this ex-hired man driving the Thomas Wilson car and abandoning it on a vacant lot.

"For your determination you have here, gentlemen, as I submit, a straightforward case and a simple set of circumstances. A robbery occurred early that evening on the Wilson premises, and shortly afterward the accused was found in possession of Wilson's automobile which he had that evening driven away from these premises. Now, gentlemen, his Lordship will instruct you of a presumption of law which arises under such a set of circumstances and which you are in duty bound to apply against the accused. Let me state that presumption to you in the briefest terms. If a person is found with stolen goods in his possession shortly after their theft, a presumption of law arises that he stole them. If in that stealing a higher

crime was committed, nec′es·sa′ri·ly the presumption carries through. This presumption has the effect, gentlemen, of casting upon the accused the onus of satisfying you that his possession of that automobile was an innocent possession and does not connect him with the robbery and the murder. If such an explanation—so satisfying—is not forthcoming, the conclusion that he is guilty becomes in·ev′i·ta·ble.

"Of course, an explanation of some sort is usually forthcoming at his trial when a man has been found with stolen goods in his possession. In some cases, the thief asserts that he found them. In others, he says that he bought them from some person or persons unknown. Juries, in the performance of their duties, usually view such statements with grave suspicion, and expect some confirmation from independent sources. In the present instance, the accused has also likewise attempted an explanation of his possession of this motor car. This ex-hired man asserts blandly that he had borrowed it! I refer you to the statement he made at the time of his arrest and which is filed in evidence and is now before you. You should subject it, as I submit, to careful scrutiny. It is for you, gentlemen, to say whether the explanation the accused gives is a satisfying one, in view of all the facts and circumstances of the case. You should ask yourselves not only is the explanation which he attempts to make a possible one, you should ask yourselves whether it is probable and sounds gen′uine.

"I suggest that you examine it to see whether the facts as stated therein, are consistent with the findings which you are obliged to make on other evidence which has been given by impartial witnesses who have appeared before you. I direct your attention to one detail. The accused states that he attended at the Wilson home that Wednesday evening to collect forty-two dollars back wages that were due him. Wilson, he says, did not pay him and gave as a reason that he didn't have the money in the house. Now other evidence has shown you that there was more than forty-two dollars in the house when the accused called there that evening. Inspector Willisdimple has testified that in searching the bodies of Wilson and the wife, he found over $46 on their persons. With this evidence before you, are you prepared, I ask, to believe that the Wilsons refused to pay the accused his wages, and at the cost of so postponing payment for two or three days gave their ex-hired man the use of their automobile to drive it off at his own pleasure? And in this connection, you will bear in mind that Wilson was selling a bullock to Rutledge on the morrow, from which sale he would get forty or fifty dollars to replace the cash expenditure such payment of wages would have involved. With such clear evidence before you, I ask you, gentlemen, what can any honest jury do but send the accused to his account?

"In thus leaving this matter in your hands, I wish to point out to you, gentlemen, that in this case, as in every like case in which a robber commits murder in order to destroy all eye witnesses who otherwise might testify against him, the only evidence which he leaves behind him (ahem!) and the only evidence that can possibly be presented for your consideration consists of facts and circumstances surrounding the crime. Honest juries must therefore have the courage to bring in convictions on evidence that is thus circumstantial. Otherwise murders might be committed with impunity throughout the land. For mark you, gentlemen," he concluded in impressive tones, "no man's life will be safe if juries become timid and faint-hearted and shirk their plain duty."

Mr. Thomas then addressed the jury on behalf of the accused.

In his opening remarks he impressed upon them that they were not now sitting as a committee of investigation to make a report on the party or parties who had probably committed this atrocious crime. Their sole present duty in the premises, he explained, was to determine whether the prosecution had proved the accused guilty of it on evidence so unequivocal as to leave no reasonable doubt.

He expressed the hope that he had been mistaken in his understanding of the purport of the speech they had just heard; but to his mind, the argument of the prosecution was that Robert Young should go to the gallows unless he proved to the complete satisfaction of the jury and by independent witnesses that he had not stolen the Wilson car. This, he impressed upon them, was asking Robert Young to do a thing that was utterly impossible on the face of it. Young's explanation of his possession of the car was that Thomas Wilson had given him the use of it to come back on Saturday and get his wages. The only independent evidence that ever existed to corroborate it, was destroyed with the death of the Wilson couple.

Counsel suggested that such an argument was unfair to the prisoner and unreasonable on its face. It was clearly the duty of the prosecution to prove that the car was in fact a stolen car; and until its theft was established it was neither law nor common sense to ask the accused to prove by non-existing evidence that he had not stolen it. If such an argument were to prevail, an innocent person, in the circumstances of this case, would stand no chance of acquittal unless he solved the crime and produced the actual murderer to public view. The action of the authorities, he pointed out, had prevented Young from making an investigation on his own account. The prisoner was arrested the third day after the tragedy. He was a young working man without means and in a far land. He had been in prison, in close confinement

during these trying months. Obviously, he had been utterly helpless; nor could the jury expect the prisoner's counsel, appointed in their presence on Monday last, to carry on independently, during the actual progress of the trial, an investigation thorough enough to bring to light conditions existing in the Thomas Wilson family, such as might reasonably ripen into a motive commensurate with a double murder so cold-blooded and atrocious.

Mr. Thomas at this point criticized severely the sort of investigation which the authorities had made. He stated that he had been surprised and amazed to discover, while attempting to get a brief together, that the authorities had not the slightest scrap of evidence available with reference to the past life of Thomas Wilson and his affairs other than a few meagre details that appeared in the testimony the prosecution had since brought out. The learned prosecutor himself had come into court ignorant of an important fact in the case. In his opening address, he had spoken sympathetically of Thomas Wilson and his elderly wife living peacefully in their secluded farm home. It had remained for the defence to bring out casually in cross-examination that Thomas Wilson had been living an unhappy life with a woman whose husband was living elsewhere. In the speech which they had just heard, he had noted that the learned counsel seemed still unaware that this elderly couple had not been living in unity as man and wife, but had been suffering in bickering and strife the consequences that usually attend in any household where a woman is living with a man without that sense of security which marriage alone can give her. The learned counsel had asked them to find that Wilson was in a position to pay wages on that Wednesday night because the woman he was then living with had money secreted upon her person. From false premises all roads lead to absurd conclusions. True, the woman had a purse tied up with a string and containing $38.23. But it was a considerable jump from that fact to the conclusion that as his wife she was ready and willing to hand over this money, she had put by, to enable him to pay off his hired man. That she was not his wife and kept this money separately on her person was evidence to the contrary. All the money Wilson had on him when he died was $8.40, and there was no evidence in this incident to contradict Young's statement.

He explained that he did not refer to the adulterous relationship in order to cast any discredit on the unfortunate woman who had been brutally murdered. He mentioned it as an existing state of fact which the jury should have clearly in mind in order to pass a sound judgment on the argument they had just heard.

The authorities, he emphasized, had owed a duty to the young prisoner in the dock, who had been arrested in the first instance because a policeman had decided offhand, at first blush as it were, that this was the obvious thing to do. Counsel here asked the jury to believe with him that in crime detection things are sometimes too simple and obvious to be true. Any investigations that had since been made had been made for the sole purpose, evidently, of gathering proof that the man they had arrested was guilty. The plain duty which the authorities owed to the prisoner, Mr. Thomas suggested, had been to investigate the Wilson tragedy thoroughly from every angle in order to satisfy themselves that they had not made a blunder that might cost a decent young fellow his life.

Up to this point, Thomas had been talking directly to the jury in a quiet and natural voice. He had the twelve men sitting up and taking notice. His argument sounded genuine to them because it was straightforward and sincere, and he was carrying their minds along with him. Had his address continued along these lines, it would have received more space than it is going to get. But Mr. Thomas halted. He suddenly remembered that he had spent much of the previous night whipping a powerful appeal into shape. He hastily referred to his brief, and from this point on, it was an oration he delivered. Now to be effective, as the reader knows, oratory must be delivered before men who have been prepared for it by music or a heavy meal. They must have shed self-consciousness as people do at a revival meeting. A forensic assault bristling with emotional appeals becomes altogether too personal when it is directed at twelve farmers who are sitting in discomfort in a jury box. In a court room, his Lordship is the only person who enjoys a soft seat. After sitting cooped up for three days listening to talk of one kind and another, the jurymen were physically and mentally tired. Men's minds weary after a long spell at unfamiliar work, as their bodies do also. Before the lawyer's assault upon them with ses′qui·pe·da′li·an words and question marks, they became uneasy and self-conscious, and were each so busy trying to dodge the speaker's eye, that his eloquence passed over their heads like a blast of wind.

Everything was said by Mr. Thomas that could possibly be said to awaken the sympathies of the jury for the young man who stood before them in jeopardy for his life, and of the grave dangers that lie in convicting on evidence that was circumstantial, and which, were the whole truth known, might amount to nothing more than a mere coincidence. But juries are made up of men who do not go about their private affairs with their feelings on their sleeves; and they sometimes feel that emotional appeals are derogatory to their dignity and smack of insincerity. What they expect from a prisoner's

counsel is an honest-looking excuse for letting the man off; and generalities and sentimental considerations do not form strong, serviceable hooks upon which to hang an acquittal.

It was generally felt that Mr. Thomas made an eloquent and masterly plea; and at this trial he began a career that was to carry him far as a jury lawyer. It so carried him far because he was content to rest on the forensic laurels he had won in the Young case. He left juries in future to assume that he could make a speech, and applied himself diligently to hammering in brass tacks and hanging up serviceable hooks.

As the young counsel's voice rose and trembled in his peroration, his Lordship bestirred himself and motioned urgently to the clerk to hand up the papers and exhibits. Upon Mr. Thomas concluding, Mr. Justice Finlayson turned his chair and, facing in their direction, he proceeded to charge the jury. His address was a brief one.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began, "I have to thank you for the careful attention with which you have followed the evidence as it has been presented to you. You have a grave matter on your hands and it is a serious duty you are called upon to perform. I am now asking you to retire and consider your verdict. It is your duty to say upon the evidence you have heard whether the accused, Robert Young, be guilty or not guilty. Before you so retire, I wish to advise you on the nature of your duties and to instruct you on the principles of law which are applicable to the facts and circumstances of the case before you. In your deliberations, gentlemen, it is your duty to follow and apply the law as I now explain it to you.

"On the other hand, it is you, gentlemen of the jury, and not the presiding judge, who are the masters of the facts. It is entirely within your province, and exclusively within it, to make all findings of facts and to decide what inferences are properly to be drawn from them. It is not my duty to advise or even suggest what those findings should be. It would, indeed, be most improper for me to do so. My only purpose in commenting upon the evidence is to set your problems clearly before you. If in my comments on the evidence, I should inadvertently express a personal opinion or even suggest such an opinion, I now apologize to you beforehand for doing so; and I now say to you that you are at liberty to disregard entirely any opinion of mine on the facts in this case which I may appear to you to have expressed or even suggested.

"Your first duty, gentlemen, on entering upon your deliberations is to expunge from your minds any prejudices, preconceptions, or prejudgments

which may have existed there at the time you took your oath to try this case well and truly; and you must so cleanse your minds, in order that you may give the accused that fair trial to which he is entitled. That Robert Young appears before you as an accused person at the bar, and that you have read some of the particulars of this tragedy, elsewhere, or heard ill-advised comments upon them, amounts to nothing more than that the police authorities have made allegations against him which the prosecution is here attempting to establish by proofs. Whether he be in fact proven guilty, it is now *your* particular business to say.

"The prosecution has produced witnesses before you, and has attempted from their testimony to adduce proofs in support of the allegation previously made. On the evidence so presented, counsel have advanced arguments both for and against the accused; but it still remains your exclusive function, gentlemen, to deduce from the evidence you have heard in this courtroom, a finding as to whether the accused, Robert Young, is on this evidence guilty or not guilty. It is by you and on this evidence, let me repeat, that the guilt or innocence of the accused is being now, and for the first time, determined. It would be most unfair, and a vicious thing for any jury to sit in judgment if they be not themselves unprejudiced and impartial judges. I bring to your attention that under the law the accused appears before you as a person who is presumed to be innocent until he is proven guilty, and that it is for you and you alone to say whether he has been so proved guilty or no. It is also your duty under the law to give the accused the benefit of any reasonable doubt.

"I shall now explain to you what constitutes such reasonable doubt, and this requires that I say a word or two as to the sort of practical certainty which juries must accept as sufficient to support a conviction—if convictions are ever to be made. You will perceive, gentlemen, that no conviction would ever be registered, if all juries required guilt to be proved as a mathematical certainty. You know, for instance, that two and two make four, but such absolute certainty can never be attained in passing judgment on human actions and affairs. For instance, I am now reasonably sure that you apprehend my precise meaning, but there is no way in which I can be made absolutely certain of this—that is, beyond the possibility of a doubt. It is difficult indeed to imagine a jury reaching a decision on human conduct in any state of fact without encountering on the way such possibility of a doubt. To make this clear, let us take a supposititious (si·poz′i·tish′us) case. Let us suppose that a jury—not this one, of course,—is trying for murder an accused person who appears in court and confesses his guilt. I put it to you that in such a case there is always the possibility that the accused may be under an hallucination or he may be taking the blame to shield another.

Before accepting such confession as a proof of guilt, the jury must form an opinion and arrive at a conclusion on these matters, and the very necessity of forming an opinion, involves in that very fact this ever recurring possibility of a doubt. Or let us take another supposititious case. Let us suppose that a jury—not this one, of course—is trying an accused person on a charge of murder, and a witness enters the box and swears that with his own eyes he saw the accused strike the fatal blow. In such a case, the eye witness may have been honestly mistaken or he may be bearing false witness against the accused and committing perjury. So I put it to you, gentlemen, that in this case, also, a judgment must be passed upon the credibility of the evidence; and human judgment in such matters is not infallible. I mention these instances in order to make clear to you that a doubt as a mere possibility is not that sort of reasonable doubt to which an accused person in this court is entitled to the benefit. To become such reasonable doubt, it must move over in the jury's mind from the nebulous regions of the possible into that of the probable. It must be a doubt of such order or magnitude as to prevent the jury from being reasonably convinced that the guilt of the accused has been proven by the evidence before them. So—to epitomise the whole matter,—you are now asked to say whether in your judgment the evidence you have heard convinces you in a reasonable way that the accused is guilty of the offence as charged. You are not asked to say that it is convincing beyond the possibility of further argument because there is no end to the possibility of argument, you are asked to say whether it is convincing with a satisfactory degree of positive certainty. If the evidence, taken as a whole, is convincing to this degree you will find the accused guilty. On the other hand, if it does not impress you with that degree of certainty, then the doubt in your mind is a reasonable doubt, and the accused should be acquitted.

"At this point, I should explain to you, gentlemen, that juries are thus made the masters of the facts at these trials because they are composed of men whose minds are qualified to form practical judgments on matters that relate to human conduct and affairs. I trust that you will devote sufficient time to give every detail your careful consideration before coming to your verdict. But I take the liberty of suggesting to you that it is your business to reach a definite conclusion in agreement, if that be possible, and not to deal in arguments for mere argument sake. You may be aware that there are minds so constituted, or so over trained, that they seem incapable of forming a definite concrete opinion on any subject. We find such minds in our great universities, and some of us put up with them in our own households. They vac′ill·ate backwards and forwards, and finally halt between two opinions. In the end, they are obliged to move on sheer impulse. Such infirmity of

judgment is not always evidence of meek humility, either; it frequently accompanies intellectual arrogance. I trust, gentlemen, that, as practical men of affairs, your minds are not of that discursive order.

"It does not appear to me that the testimony at this trial is either obscure or complicated. You are in as good a position as I am to appreciate the effect of the evidence you have heard, and it is your duty to weigh and sift it and draw your own just conclusions. I do not, therefore, feel it my duty to go into a lengthy analysis to suggest points of strength and weakness on which inferences may or may not be drawn. I wish, however, to assist in clearing up one or two points which were mentioned in the arguments you have heard.

"The learned counsel for the defence impressed upon you at some length the grave dangers which lie, according to his argument, in a jury convicting on evidence that is circumstantial. To reduce his argument to plain concrete words, he suggests that no jury should bring in a verdict of guilty in a murder trial unless the prosecution produces a witness who was personally present and saw the accused do the actual killing. The reason he gave you for such a warning was that there is a possibility of a jury making a mistake in drawing inferences from circumstantial evidence, and the consequence of such a mistake may sometime be that an innocent person may suffer. I point out to you that murders are usually committed in secret and it seldom happens that a murderer kills his victim in the presence of spectators whom the prosecution can produce to give eye-witness evidence against him. Were juries generally to give effect, therefore, to the argument you have heard, the courts would cease giving society any measure of protection from the ravages of persons who plot and commit deliberate murders. To avoid the possibility of a single miscarriage of justice, the argument presented to you suggests that we should have such a complete miscarriage of justice that the lives of all innocent persons would be rendered insecure. I suggest that you give this argument of learned counsel some careful thought before you accept it as having convincing weight.

"You are not here concerned, gentlemen, with what mistakes juries may have made in the past. Your present business is to apply your minds diligently to the particular problem which is before you, and to say whether the evidence you have heard is, on the whole, convincing enough to prove the accused guilty. I assure you that circumstantial evidence, while different from direct evidence in kind, is good evidence and at times the best and safest sort of evidence providing there is sufficient of it and that it is convincing enough. A like argument, with as much force as the one we are

discussing, might be directed against a jury convicting on direct evidence and that for the reason that direct evidence may at times be false or unreliable. It is for you to say, gentlemen, whether the evidence you have heard is convincing. Taken as a whole, what is its effect on your minds? That is the question that is now before you. In this connection, I ask you to note that considerable direct evidence has been tendered to connect the accused with the time and the place of the murder of Thomas Wilson. The witness Mowat states that he saw the accused going on foot toward the Wilson home at dark-fall on the Wednesday evening. The witness Silverthorn, the neighbour, says he heard two shots fired within an hour or less after nightfall. The witness Holmes tells you that later that evening he saw the accused in possession of the Wilson motor vehicle. It is for you, gentlemen, to say whether this startling syn′chronism was a mere coincidence or otherwise.

"And I should also say a word or two with reference to an argument which the prosecutor has addressed to you. The defence, as you have observed, has set up as an explanation of the presence of the accused at the Wilson house that evening that Robert Young called there for the innocent and legitimate purpose of collecting $42 wages that were due him. It is said he called by appointment and was told by Wilson when he arrived there that the cash was not available in the house but would be paid the following Saturday. The defence say that Young was then given the use of the car to go away and come back later. The defence thus say the car was not stolen at any time but was innocently in the possession of the accused. The prosecution argues to discredit this defence that the evidence has shown that there was sufficient money in the Wilson house that evening to pay such debt if it were owing. True, according to the evidence of Willisdimple, there was eight or nine dollars on the body of Wilson when it was found, and on the body of the woman there was a purse containing thirty-eight dollars and some change. But have you any evidence, gentlemen, that the money this woman had thus put by was at Wilson's disposal and was available for his use in paying his debts? Those of you who are married men will agree with me that wives are not at all times accommodating; and in the present instance, you will note *carefully* that the woman who had this money put by was not Wilson's lawful wife.

"Finally, gentlemen, permit me to suggest to you that your present duties require more from you than the mere balancing of probabilities, the one against the other. What you are seeking is a reasonable degree of certainty, and it might be helpful to you in this connection if you found some particular state of fact the careful consideration of which would help you to

test by logic the correctness of whatever findings you may feel disposed to make. In this connection, I refer you to the actual condition of affairs at the Wilson home when the police officers arrived there on the Friday morning. From Inspector Willisdimple's evidence, you get clearly the actual scene; and from the state of affairs I suggest you may be able to deduce what the burglar did when he was ransacking the house.

"It is not necessary for the prosecution to establish a motive in a murder trial; but in this case as it has been presented to you, the prosecution has set up house robbery as the motive of the accused in committing the murder of Thomas Wilson. It has been argued that the accused, who had been their hired man, returned to the Wilson home in which he had been living for the previous six months, in order to commit a robbery, and that the murder of Wilson was an incident in such burglary. To convict the accused on a case so made out, you must be satisfied, I suggest, that he was the person who ransacked the dwelling; for if some other person did the ransacking, a reasonable doubt as to the guilt of Robert Young on the charge of murder would immediately arise in your minds.

"Now what the burglar did whilst engaged in his attempt to rob this dwelling may, perhaps, be deduced from the evidence of Inspector Willisdimple. I ask you to examine this evidence carefully and ask yourselves the question: Was this burglary done in the way that the accused would have done it? There were, of course, persons other than the accused whose arrival at that household in the early evening would not have occasioned in its occupants a fear of violence, but there was obviously no one who could have come there that evening who possessed the intimate personal knowledge of the household affairs that Young had. He had been living in this house for the previous six months and had been only one day away. I ask you to consider carefully whether the things that were done in the course of this robbery were the things that Robert Young would naturally do and to consider also whether the things that were not done were the sort of things that a man with Young's knowledge would have left undone.

"In this connection, I am not referring to actions that would be done deliberately and which would result from thought and planning. I am referring to what one might call the routine matters in this house robbery. You have perhaps observed that it is the way in which a man does a thing,—unconsciously or from habit or as a matter of course—that reveals his character. It has been said, for instance, that a man's character is shown more clearly in the way he sharpens a lead pencil than in the letter he writes to the press. The way a man holds an axe by the helve on examining it

shows one clearly whether he has a woodman's knowledge of its use. So the manner in which this house was ransacked may supply you with evidence of what knowledge the robber possessed when he set upon the job. I am not instructing you that it will supply you with such evidence, but I am asking you to examine the details of this burglary to seek for such evidence. I urge upon you, gentlemen, that the test which I am suggesting to you may be valuable in helping you to arrive at a true verdict. To assist you in doing so, I have had the court stenographer prepare copies of the evidence Inspector Willisdimple gave. This evidence you will take with you as you now retire."

As the jurymen were filing out of the courtroom, Mr. Thomas rose and requested his Lordship to charge the jury specifically as to what effect, if any, they should give in this case to the presumption of law to which the prosecutor had referred in his address.

His Lordship asked that the jury be recalled and apologized to them for the oversight that had occurred.

"Learned counsel for the prosecution," he then charged them, "has stated to you, gentlemen, that by a presumption of law a person found in possession of stolen goods shortly after their theft, is presumed to be the thief. I think he stated the law correctly in this connection; but you will note carefully, gentlemen, that before such a presumption comes into any force and effect in the present case, you must first make a finding on the evidence that the Wilson car was in fact stolen. I trust you understand clearly that such presumption of law does not help you in any way in making such finding that a theft of the car by any person had in fact taken place. Do you understand?"

The jury retired at 3.15 p.m., and at a quarter past five they sent for coffee and sandwiches. It then appearing that there was no prospect of a speedy agreement, his Lordship, who had meanwhile been passing the time in his chambers in the rear and about concerns of his own, made his appearance on the bench, and court was thereupon adjourned to resume at eight o'clock in the evening. The other actors in the drama then hurried away to dine and refresh themselves and Robert Young was taken back to the cells,—where for the moment we leave him.

CHAPTER VI

Enter Benjamin Hughes to argue before a public bar.

In those days newspaper reporters dropped in at the Tremont House to swap stories and talk shop in the easy-going freemasonry of the craft. It was a garish tavern with a bar stretching back in a straight line at least half the length of a city block and at its far end a mirrored wall repeated the pleasant scene and carried it as far as the eye could reach. The brass footrail was a help and a comfort. Fresh sawdust sprinkled on the floor gave forth a pleasant pungent odour; and the crystal designs which an artist working with sour beer had frosted on the wall mirrors behind were deserving of careful study; and at times they got it. A battery of paunchy, jovial-faced men, in shirt sleeves and aprons, were at their stations and moved with the quickness of lightning in filling them up again and combing off the suds. Between times, the bar tenders busied themselves mopping off with moist cloths and kept an impersonal listening ear on the clack and discussions of the patrons. A schooner of half-and-half cost a nickle in those ample days, and cheese and crackers stood handy and were on the house. In licensed places, the law then required men to stand while doing their drinking; and the woman of that era took raspberry cordial in the privacy of her own home, and believed in prohibition. But that was away back when hobble skirts were just going out. It was, in fact, a thrifty and ab·ste′mi·ous age.

Two reporters who had been covering the Young murder trial—that is bobbing in and out of court to see how things were coming along—were now swinging at anchor on the Tremont bar rail. The time was early on Friday evening and the jury was still out. The one was tall and lean and of the rail-splitting type. A fine person of a young man was Ben Hughes, but a rawboned, grouchy whelp at that. His companion was an older man, chubby enough to have a waist line, florid in face and spruce in his toggery, with stick—and gloves, too; and he wore his Christy at a rakish slant, and a hook-on bow tie on a wing collar. A bit stodgy was Samuel, a trifle daffy-down-dilly, but neither finical nor foppish. Samuel was merely jaunty and dapper. He prided himself his attire was faultless; and his habits were passable enough save for the little trick he had of borrowing a five dollar bill in the most casual way and quite as casually forgetting to repay it. However he never asked for more than a five spotter—and he remembered not to try the

trick twice on the same person. It was a sort of an initiation fee which Sam'l charged one on entering the inner circle of his acquaintance.

"Wonder what the jury's doing!" grunted the lean one, who was terse and jumpy in his speech. "That little chap with the nanny goat beard who hugged his hat for three days will be standing out for a conviction, I'll warrant—May be a disagreement."

"My word, 'ughes," chirped his companion, "what price on Young's conviction to-night? I'll lay you three to one the hangman gets him. *Why*, they have him all tied up and with devilish good, tight knots, too. He'll go to his account! Of course, he did it. They didn't fasten the goods on him with any safety pin. 'Twas a 'empen rope the prosecutor used."

And he blinked up through his horn-rimmed spectacles, expecting confirmation.

"Not guilty!" the other asserted, planting his emptied glass on the bar and tapping his friend Samuel on the shoulder.

"Pshaw! My young sir," protested the double-eyed one, shooting his cuffs, "'twas the hired man who pulled that job. No stranger to the old couple, no outsider, as it were, you know. . . ."

"Granted!" the other asserted, and he fell to staring at the frosted mirror and the green liqueur bottles that no one ever called for.

"Circumstances all highly suspicious," Samuel ran on. "Stealing the old farmer's car, a damning bit of evidence, a dead give-away, and all that sort of thing. Criminals always trip themselves up on some silly detail. Pieces fit together like a kid's jigsaw puzzle!"

"Yes, perhaps, they do—mechanically," Ben told him. "But look at the picture you get! Samuel, your picture is cock-eyed—cock-eyed, I tell you! All it shows *clearly* is that Young was not the man."

And he fell to smoking his bull dog fearfully.

"Ah! now, I *say*, where do you find that?" enquired the chubby one, perplexed vacuity bulging from his pale blue eyes.

"You grant," the tall one demanded, "that the ransacker was the killer?"

"Yes, pos′i·tive′ly!"

"And that Young would be hunting round for money?"

"Ob′vi·ous·ly yes!" the other agreed. "A loose-footed farm labourer . . . a stranger in the district . . . just star pitching round the country. Yes, ob′vi·ous·ly, he was searching for cash or something easily convertible. Yes!"

"And the house got a thorough going over?" Hughes continued.

"I say yes!" Samuel agreed. "All messed up, upon my word! Desk and bureau drawers emptied—papers scattered on the floors. Even the ticks split open."

"Then why in hell didn't Young take the money?" the tall one demanded, supporting his point with an expressive look.

"You refer, I suppose, to the cash the old couple had on them?" Samuel enquired; and he gave the bartender a high ball to fill them up again.

"Yes, old egg," Hughes asked him, frowning, "Why the devil didn't Young take the cash that was lying around? I'm not referring to the money the old girl had hidden on her person. Old Wilson probably didn't know about that himself. I'm talking about the wallet in the old man's hip pocket. Go, Samuel, my boy, and try that one out on your melodeon."

"Yes, there's a bit of a discrepancy there, I'll admit," the short one observed after a pause; "but Young may have been rushed—or something—and missed the purses?"

"Rushed nothing!" grunted Hughes, maintaining his point. "That was a leisurely job. The robber took time to go through old papers and such like. Young had lived with that old couple in that small house for six months. He drove them around in their car. The boss had to buy gasoline now and again, hadn't he? Old man kept his purse in his hip pocket. Young knew it. Why didn't Young lift the wallet? Answer me that!" the tall one demanded, eying his friend Samuel from head to foot.

"Upon my soul living!" the other admitted. "There may be something in that. Come to think of it, an I.O.U. would have served poor old Wilson just as well the way the robber left him. Eh what?"

There was something going wrong when Samuel ceased to bubble.

"The thing's as plain as paint," Hughes told him. "Knocks the case higher than Gilderoy's kite."

"Ah, but Young may have got something big—miser's hoard or something of that sort?"

"Yes, and the moon may be made of green cheese, but as learned counsel would argue 'neither statement is supported by the evidence'."

"Ah, but Young may have left those purses to provide a defence—eh what?"

"Disabuse your mind on that subject, Samuel. He didn't, or the point would have made a noise at the trial. And what say you, friend, to the two ticks being split open?"

"Well, what about it?"

"Young had the room upstairs to himself and slept on that tick for six months. He had lots of time, I'd say, to examine it at his leisure. Would the hired man imagine the Wilsons had him sleeping on their hidden wealth? The thing's preposterous!"

"And so you think?"

"Ergo, Young not the ransacker."

"And so?"

"Ergo, Young not the killer. In three words—Young not guilty. Quod erat!"

Samuel was busy mopping his forehead. Beer is a di′a·pho·ret′ic and was inducing a gentle effusion; but the man was thinking so hard that he was not paying attention to what he was doing. Believe it or not, he was using his fancy handkerchief which he had taken from his breast pocket. That one he always kept for show,—the corner peeping out coyly. It was his rector. At the moment, he had clean forgotten the plain soiled white one, his curate, which was resting in his hip pocket.

"My word, 'ughes," he exclaimed, "how you do look down into the bottom of a matter! How closely you reason! 'Pon my soul, that point is obvious. You weaken the whole structure, my dear fellow. You have the whole damned case tottering! Beastly shame," he muttered in some concern, and he scratched his skull which was as smooth as an egg. "Oh well, so be it! 'Twill all be the same a hundred years hence, eh what? Meanwhile your wasting your ability, my learned young Sir. You should be reading the law."

"Too cruel a game for me, old egg," the other replied, grave as an undertaker at a perfect funeral. "Those lawyers are like a party of swells at a badger-baiting—sicking a pack of dogs at a creature in a corner."

"No! no! Say rather a trial is like a Spanish bull-fight," suggested Samuel, who had regained his sprightly air, the while wiping the sweat band with his hard working curate, and clapping on his bowler at a roguish angle, "with rules, you know, and ceremonials and all that sort of bally rot. But every one jolly well knows what'll happen before the show is over. The bull will get his."

"I don't fancy the look of those special prosecutors," Hughes growled, as he turned from the bar with an ill-tempered air. "Look over-fed beef-eaters to me! Too much neck meat and belly fat on most of them. Strut about like pouter pigeons and hide their thought confusions under a cloud of patter. They're no great shakes for brains, I'd say. Question: What is their purpose? Answer: To regurgitate what the police cram into them."

"Better join the police force, then, my boy," the chubby one suggested, settling himself more on his centre, "and you'll be giving learned counsel their instructions. Well, well . . . here we are again, 'ughes! Our old merry-go-round has gone round and round. We've been riding the same old hobby horses and now we've come to a dead stop with the calliope still playing. It's making my head buzz. Yes, yes, demned rotten assignments we have . . . demned rotten pay, I'd say . . . demned bumptious lawyers . . . demned cheap rag newspapers published in these parts. Yes, we agree on all that. Sick of it all, eh what? Let's go shoot a game of pea pool, what say you?"

"No! don't feel like it," said Hughes as the long and short of it sauntered down towards the swinging street doors of the tavern. "This Young affair puts me in a bait. But hanging's a quick and tidy death. Saw an execution last year. The hangman fixes the knot so the fall on the rope dislocates the vertebra of the neck. Instant death comes with the severing of the spinal cord. They go out like that!" and he snapped his fingers.

"Let's stroll down to Shea's Theatre," suggested Sam'l, "and see Alice Lloyd sing 'Every nice girl.'"

As they passed behind an elderly man who was having a lone one, Samuel swung over and hit him one of those whole-hearted hail-fellow whacks on the back that rattle the teeth and have been the cause of black eyes on more than one occasion.

"We have with us this evening, gentlemen," quoth Samuel, with a bow and a scrape, as he hauled Hughes over, "a well known character whose name appears frequently in my great family journal. I have great pleasure in introducing to you, Sir, the redoubtable Aaron Burke."

"I happen to know Aaron," Ben Hughes replied as he smiled a how-dye-do to the old man. "He's a great friend of mine. Just get down, Aaron? How's everything up above? Have a comfortable winter? Left the governor in good health, I hope? Any riots brewing? Suppose you came in bang off to wet your whistle. Take it easy, Aaron. Don't get on a bend!"

"Join me, join me, gentlemen," the old man urged, overjoyed in finding company. "What'll you have, gentlemen? What'll you have? It's better than a month of Sundays since I saw you last."

"Not to-night, friend," Hughes protested, and he motioned the bartender to go on with his mopping. "Husband the golden grain, Aaron. Samuel's had enough—already."

"Not so! Not so!" chirped Samuel. "Throw it on the winds like rain!"

"Pay no attention to him!" advised Ben, passing it off with a laugh. "His back teeth are afloat. Another time! Some other time, Aaron, thanks."

"Oh, but Aaron's in funds to-night," the old man chuckled. "Next time will be your turn, Hughes. Lawyer had a little cheque waiting. . . . John A. Smithers, you know him? A great friend of Aaron's."

"That's the kind of friend to have," nodded Hughes. "The sort that comes across at the right time and without any asking."

"Yes," sighed the old man—"'tis a grand sound five two dollar bills make when a haughty teller crackles them in the counting. Aaron requested new ones, and had him snap them twice for the pleasure of the music of it. Yes, it's money makes the mare go! Wealthy folk get pleasure out of having money in the bank; and a poor man feels important spending what little he has."

"Yes," observed Hughes, "it's the rich man that grows every day greedier, and the poor that every day share what little they have."

"Yes," Aaron agreed, "the poor help each other bravely. Like to hear a story about Smithers?"

"Yes," said Hughes . . . "but some other time. We must be buzzing along."

"Is the jury in yet?" Aaron inquired. "I have been hanging around waiting."

"Not yet! Why, do you know Young?" Samuel asked.

“Know Bob Young? Sure Aaron knows Bob Young, knows him well. He’s a broth of a boy, a great friend of Aaron’s. Cottoned to him straight off. A hell of an ad·ver′tisement for justice, his trial was!”

“Hope he has a good friend on that jury,” Ben Hughes grunted.

“Preposterous, isn’t it?” declared Samuel with some heat. “The man’s innocent and yet that boggling jury’ll convict him. It’s a burning shame, I say. Gives one the creeps. Well Burke, take care of yourself. We must be going. See you later.”

As the doors of the tavern swung to behind the pair, Samuel’s mind was on the song and his soft little mouth was puckered up as if he had bitten into a persimmon. He was executing a weak little whistle of the tune, and his legs were more or less following the beat—

Every nice girl loves a sailor;
But you know what sailors are!
He falls in love with Mary and Jane,
Then off he goes to the sea again.
Ship ahoy, lads, ship ahoy!

CHAPTER VII

Enter Colonel Septimus Honslow and his Staff.

At a quarter to nine that Friday evening, the jury advised their usher that they had arrived at a verdict; and this sent the tottery old officials scurrying on squeaking shoes. They were anxious to get the court assembled for the final scene, and thus call it a day. First to arrive in the deserted chamber were the twelve jurymen who filed in, bringing their hats and coats with them, and packed themselves into the jury box. Next, the prisoner was led in and perched in the dock. Then the clerk of the assize and one lawyer after another put in an appearance, and finally, after a thirty minute delay, his Lordship entered from the rear and took his seat on the bench. Newspaper reporters and a dozen or so idling spectators who had straggled in—mostly charwomen and janitor help—made up what audience there was.

"Have you arrived at a verdict, gentlemen?" the clerk of the assize enquired of the jury.

The foreman, a middle-aged man with side burns, had meantime arisen, and to him the question seemed particularly addressed.

"We have," replied the foreman, and the noise his voice made in the empty courtroom evidently surprised him.

"Do you find the prisoner, guilty or not guilty?"

"We find him guilty," the foreman replied.

Mr. Thomas asked that the jury be polled. The twelve answered one after another confirming the statement their foreman had made.

Mr. Smythe-Jones, who alone was present for the prosecution, thereupon rose and moved for the judgment of the court.

His Lordship then placed on his head a piece of black cloth which he had thoughtfully brought with him; and the clerk directed the prisoner to stand up.

"Have you anything to say, Robert Young," his Lordship enquired in a low voice, "why the judgment of this court should not be pronounced upon you?"

"Nothing, Sir," the prisoner replied, "save that I am altogether not guilty and my wages are still owing me."

"You have been ably defended," his Lordship began, "and after a fair and painstaking trial you have been found guilty of the crime of murdering Thomas Wilson, on which you were arraigned. I do not wish to say anything —in truth, I could not say anything—that would add to the distress of mind which must be present when a man finds himself standing in your position. I will say to you, however, on my own behalf that, during a somewhat lengthy occupancy of the Bench, my duties have never imposed on me a more disagreeable task than my present one of pronouncing this judgment upon you." Mr. Justice Finlayson then read from a paper which he had by him: "The judgment of this court pronounced upon you, Robert Young, is that you be now returned to the prison from whence you came to be there kept in close custody, and from thence you be led to the place of execution on Saturday the 13th day of April, 1912, and that when you are come there, you be hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may God have mercy on your soul."

Mr. Smythe-Jones moved to traverse to the next Assize the other charge against the convicted man, that of murdering Elizabeth Wilson. He intimated that the law having taken its course in the meantime; a *nolle prosequi* could then be entered.

The motion was allowed; and the prisoner was thereupon led away to his death cell. The court adjourned.

No appeal lay in those days from the findings of a jury in a criminal matter save on points of law and on the grounds of mis-direction. There were ap·pell′ate courts in profusion to hear appeals in damage actions, property matters and fence-line disputes but a jury's findings on the facts were not open to review when a man's neck was the issue.

The matter of exercising executive clemency remained, however, to be considered; and a transcript of the evidence given at the trial was dispatched to the government offices in the usual course. On the face of it, there were no extenuating circumstances in connection with the murder of the old Wilson couple to awaken public sympathy for the condemned man or move the bowels of the Executive to compassion and mercy. It had been a cold-blooded and sordid murder. The public were well pleased that a conviction had been made; and it was generally assumed that the law would be left to take its course. Naturally a government department in these circumstances is principally concerned with considerations of public policy. The proceedings

were gone over, of course, to make certain that all things had been done duly and in order; and the official who attended to such matters had prepared for himself a neat little set of rules so bizarre as to flabbergast his chief when they were accidentally brought to his attention. So far, therefore, as the condemned man's deserts and the administration of justice were concerned, Robert Young would have "had a hearty breakfast and stepped smartly to the gallows"—as Ben Hughes wrote such things up—had it been reasonably certain that his death would close the incident.

But representations from a responsible quarter had been made to the department that the jury in this case might have made a mistake; and if so, the hanging of Young might not close the matter up. Further light might, indeed, be shed on this murder at some later date; and it might then prove a serious matter for the Department with such a warning before it, to have sent an innocent man to the gallows. One such instance, clearly proven, might indeed be sufficient to put an end to all death sentences in the jurisdiction. So Robert Young's fate was given leisurely consideration.

And here an awkward point arose, to wit: if Young were properly convicted, he should undoubtedly be hanged and if not so properly convicted, he was entitled to his liberty forthwith—not as an act of mercy but as a matter of right. To liberate him thus was not, however, in the interests of public policy, either. Such action taken immediately would stir up wide public comment, and be an admission that a jury in a capital case had clearly gone wrong. Now the findings of juries—when they convict—are treated with profound respect by all officers of the state; and if Robert Young were set at liberty—with the inferences the public would draw from it—it might become difficult, indeed, to get juries in capital cases to convict thereafter on circumstantial evidence. A hesitating pause occurred in the executive mind.

As usually happens, the condemned man was left to drain his cup to the last drop. He heard the hammers ringing that erected his scaffold stoutly in the gaol yard below. Death's dark wings were beating then for him. A death watch had been posted over him to make certain that he did not rob the gallows by destroying himself in the insanity of terror and despair. The ancients found a purifying influence in such a crisis—which they termed a *Katharsis*—in which fear and terror and pity purge the human soul. However that may be, mental torture engenders its own anodyne in the human breast as pain does in the tissues of the body. Like by like is cured as the ho′me·op′a·thists say. When it seems impossible that man can suffer more, a numbness sets in that brings a mute toleration with it. As the day of

his execution drew nigh, Bob Young was whiling away the hours playing checkers with his guards. He had watched the sun go down for the last time, and was bending unconcernedly over a draughts-board when a despatch came through to the sheriff advising that by order-in-council the sentence of death pronounced on Robert Young had been commuted to penal servitude for life.

Bob Young was shortly afterwards transferred to a penitentiary where long term prisoners, six hundred odd of them, were then confined; and at the north gate of its great stone wall, he was delivered over into the keeping of the warden and his staff. Having already lost his liberty, he was now stripped of those personal accessories that help to preserve self-respect in the general run of men. He donned prison garb and was given a number to do him—as an official casually remarked—till the sounding of his last trump. But the reader will rightly assume (as·syum′e) mark you—that such was not to be the case. He will have observed that it is contrary to the ultimate decency of things, in books if not in life, that a sane person shall lie in prison till he dies. Had such been the fate decreed for Robert Young, the writer would now be subscribing "finis" to this tale, or the reader would be doing it for him; for there is little of general interest in the drear, squalid, sullen monotony of prison life where a ruthless discipline is enforced amid clouds of distrust and suspicion on the one side and of brooding revolt on the other. The incidents that Bob Young observed in prison and his impressions of life there would shed light on this subject,—and elsewhere this might prove of value,—but their insertion here would tend to hold up the action; and the reader will not be troubled with them.

The general population of the prison were lodged in wings several storeys in height (hite, please) which formed a large cross about the centre dome into which they debouched. In block H 1, where Young was first placed, he had a cell to himself, six by ten, with bed and mattress and blankets, a table, a desk, a wash basin and a flushing toilet. Along the back of each tier of cells, ran a closed passageway from which guards could spy through peepholes in the masonry. Bars with an inset gate formed the front of each cell which faced on a general passageway beyond which light was admitted through barred windows in the outer wall. In warm weather, pigeons and starlings flew in to pick up crumbs, and at all times rats had their ancient runways.

His work-day routine began with three strokes of the gong in the great dome at a quarter to seven. The inmates thereupon dressed and stood in readiness, each man with his hand to his gate. Next came the warning gong

which rang the thirty ranges out in succession for breakfast parade; and as the tapper ran along releasing the individual cell bolts, the inmates of each range paraded in single file along their corridors to join the long serpentine procession that wound down into the service kitchen, and in like manner they came chattering back, each man returning with his tray of food to consume it in his cell. It was thus they paraded to morning work in the shops, to fetch their mid-day meal, to afternoon work, and finally to secure the evening meal; after which there was silence till the morning gong sounded reveille again. There was a library with books of a kind available. One had plenty of time to think; but to the general run of prisoners, the working hours came as a relief to the monotony of solitary confinement, and the absence of work on such days made legal holidays and Sundays pass slowly and in an irksome way.

After Young had been working in the shops for three months, he was transferred to join the kitchen help, and was given a cell in a different range. Working in a prison kitchen has advantages which are obvious. The kitchen gang ate below, had special facilities for keeping themselves clean and some chance to gossip. He had been on his new job some ten days when Young got his first personal taste of prison discipline. He had been feeding blue rock pigeons that flew in trustfully to scuffle on the floor for food which he carried up to his cell to feed them. One afternoon the help were searched as they left the kitchen. Two of them were caught with goods unlawfully in their possession. A bald-headed dish washer—in for facilitating birth control—had possessed himself of two hard-boiled eggs and Bob Young was caught cold with a chunk of cake secreted in his pocket.

To some this may seem a trifling matter but it did not impress the prison guards that way. It was a breach of prison Rules and Regulations; and to approach such matters in their true light, one must observe them with the official slant of mind.

From the official point of view, prisons are not maintained to be comfortable rest homes for social misfits. Such institutions are kept up at heavy public expense as places to which men are sent to be punished for crimes which they have committed. Now, public sentiment in recent years has restricted greatly the punishments that can be inflicted on prison inmates. In the first place, a man who is in the custody of the state must receive a balanced ration of food and sufficient of it to keep him in good physical shape. He must also be lodged comfortably in heated quarters and the sanitary conditions must pass inspection. Medical attention must also be supplied him. It is true the food is plain and the sameness of it, month after

month, finally makes it unpalatable; but that is the case with all institutional cooking—as any nurse in training will verify. It is true, also, that a prison inmate dies occasionally because of a faulty medical diagnosis; but many a man has died for the same reason who was choosing his own physician and paying well for his services. There is a deal of malingering in prison life, and this may develop a certain amount of official callousness; but, taken by and large, a prisoner sees more of doctors and pills in one year than the average man does in the course of his adult life.

On the whole, therefore, the average inmate in a penal establishment gets fairly good board and lodging; and it is manifestly impossible to get enough work out of him to pay for his keep. Factory production cannot be successfully operated there because prison-made goods cannot be put on the market for sale. In any event, men soldier on enforced labour. One of the problems of prison management is that of finding enough work to give the inmates a reasonable amount of healthy exercise. On a final analysis, therefore, it is the loss of his liberty and the restrictions imposed by prison rules and regulations that constitute the only inflicted punishment which a prisoner receives. Were it not for thoughts of his children, many a man could live more comfortably in any penitentiary on this continent than at home with his fault-finding and tempestuous wife; and prisons are not the only places where life becomes a harsh and senseless routine. The main return which penitentiaries give for the money they cost arises from the fact that they exercise a deterrent influence on those who never pass within their gates. 'Twere better that they continue to appear dismal and forbidding places—otherwise overcrowding might take place to the inconvenience of their regular patrons.

Again, Rules and Regulations relating to petty detail are obviously necessary if prison order is to be maintained with men crowded together in close quarters, most of whom are mental cases in the sense that they act with the casualness of undeveloped children; and to be effective, in this official view, these regulations must be rigidly and impartially enforced. One can imagine nothing more grotesque than a great penitentiary in which hundreds of healthy, well-fed, young prisoners are getting their own way and having a jolly good time at the public expense.

So to secrete cake in one's pocket, even to feed pigeons, is a serious matter—if one does it in a penitentiary.

Robert Young was paraded to the warden's office. Col. Septimus Honslow was sitting at his desk—his hat on—a gruff little man with a dyspeptic nose; and he reeked of incivility. Bob now saw him for the first

time; and in his opinion, the nose belonged to an admiral of the red. The warden may have been an estimable citizen and a painstaking official—and he was impartial beyond a doubt; yet the pes·tif′er·ous atmosphere which he created in his institution was enough to corrupt the virtues of a saint. Of course, he was disliked by the inmates—a prison official is not worth his salt who is not in that class. The trouble was he did not have their respect, which is quite a different matter; and he was detested by his own officers, who did not trust him and whom he did not trust. He treated prisoners and staff alike as treacherous animals to be put through their paces at the crack of the whip. The man ruled by fear because fear ruled him.

Stealing government stores was the charge.

Young's file had preceded him, and the warden appeared thoroughly seized of the matter when the culprit was paraded in and clicked his heels at attention.

"Ah, stealing government stores! Serious offence"—the official growled with an ominous frown. "Let me see, what's the sentence? Oh yes, life imprisonment . . . yes, working in the kitchen . . . preferential treatment that! Physically fit . . . should be in the stone yard! You'll be here a long time—better learn to obey the Rules and Regulations. If you don't do it—I'll break you. We tame wild animals here."

The prisoner started to say something but was stopped short in speaking.

"Twenty-one meals in solitary confinement. Take him away."

When Young got outside, he learned that his sentence was seven days on bread and water and with a hard bed. He thought he was lucky and could do that bit all right. He had peace and quiet and no work to do; and he discovered, after the first day's discomfort, what primitive man knew long ago, that a fast with bodily quiet and in seclusion cleanses the mind of earthly humours and induces a mild spiritual exaltation. After all a man's stomach is a small organ though capable of great distention. The brain works better when it is empty. Wherefore a man's best thoughts are of the early morning hours. Bob whiled away the time re-reading *Lorna Doone* and dwelt longingly on the way men were fed rankly in those spacious times. John Fry's shout at the hostel for "hot mootton pastry for twoo traav'lers at number vaive in vaive minutes" sounded good to him. Things were going well with Robert Young.

But without, trouble was brewing for him, and the pot was already walloping. In a punishment cell, a prisoner lost his issue of tobacco and other privileges, but being there, he gained the good will of every other

inmate in the institution. In this instance, they were actuated less by sympathy for the silly duffer who had got himself locked up for feeding pigeons than by a keen desire to beat the warden's system. So they prepared to send supplies through to Robert Young; nor was this as difficult a matter as some might suppose. After the guard had passed on his rounds, there was nothing to prevent a comrade down the line from scooting a package up the cement passageway in front of the tier of cells and if the man up-beyond, who was expecting it, had his blanket made up in a tight roll and extended out from his cell, it formed a soft bumper against which the package would lodge. Fishing it in was then a simple matter. No system has yet been devised, other than a solitary hole in the ground with the warden personally sitting on it, that will prevent traffic from going on within a penitentiary.

Now a prisoner thinks twice before refusing such kindly offices. The goodwill of his fellows counts for more in his peaceful existence there than do all the favours the warden can extend. The inmates constitute the one authority in any prison that can continuously make life miserable for a sane non-recalcitrant who is incarcerated in their midst. So Bob raked in a package containing tobacco and a flint tinder box. With toilet paper available, he was all set to roll cigarettes and smoke his troubles away.

But bad luck was still hounding him and Robert Young was caught again —this time for smoking.

He was paraded to the warden's morning court. His file had preceded him.

"Where did the tobacco come from?" was the question asked; and difficult it was to answer; for the gift had doubtless been contributed in pinches; but the culprit hadn't the slightest intention of telling, anyway. And being a truthful young man, he said so.

The official flared up and he was highly indignant.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "recalcitrant eh? Fishing . . . I suppose! Serious offence. Creating disorder! You know what I warned you. I'll break you. Ten strokes and forty days hard bed. Take him away!"

The culprit was escorted away to await the confirmation of the sentence, which would come from the department headquarters. Events move with clocklike regularity in a penitentiary, and the inmates could fix accurately the day the flogging would take place. The evening before, Young was supplied with a cake of laundry soap and advised that if he chewed and swallowed it, his symptoms would prevent the gaol doctor from passing him as physically fit to undergo the punishment.

But Young's gullet couldn't go the soap; so next morning, bright and early, his buttocks got the paddle. The sharp octagonal perforations in the leather left bruised and bloody trails as the whipper proceeded to anoint him. The man couldn't sit down for a week. However the pain inflicted was probably no more severe than many a patient endures while lying in a hospital ward.

Floggings for breaches of petty prison discipline have become less frequent in recent years; because, on the whole, they have proven somewhat costly. When one reads in the morning paper of a prison riot anywhere with property damage, he may take it for granted that the agitators who stirred it up are recalcitrant old-timers who as silly youngsters got the paddle.

However, the flogging did not sour Bob Young. He had no worse opinion of the warden and his system afterward than he had before. When his forty days were up and he got his mattress again, the dull routine of prison life stretched indefinitely before him. To his great surprise, he was shortly afterwards transferred to the prison hospital where he acted as an orderly till he felt as much a part of the place as its furniture and antiquated equipment.

CHAPTER VIII

Re-Enter Ben Hughes.

In the autumn of 1914 there was a war on—if you remember. The German armies were on the move, their guns and goose-step shaking all creation. Mr. Benjamin Hughes, whom the reader will recall meeting in a bar-room which had sawdust on the floor, was then living at the capital. In the course of his routine duties as a resident newspaper correspondent, he called occasionally at various department offices; and he was on friendly terms with one of the staff in the Remittance Branch of the Department of Justice which has charge of paroling prisoners from federal prisons under the provisions of the Ticket-of-Leave Act.

In fact, on an evening recently, he had foregathered with that amiable gentleman and others at a cottage on Brittania Bay; and a pleasant time was had. Full details of the affair are not available for publication, but the after effects may be lightly touched on. On awakening late the following morning, Benjamin noted with pained surprise that he had been going in for collecting things. Now, where the dickens had he got that teddy bear that sat blinking at him out of cock-eyed beady eyes—and a broken door handle, too, of all things? However, he knew the racking headache was his very own, duly bought and to be paid for. Ah yes! he remembered the music, the snacks and the old-stock ale that tasted of onions, and those accursed appetizers that now kept repeating on him to make him sick and desolate. The old familiar shadow fell once more, and the deep places of repentance in his fevered brain were broached every now and again as by a white hot corkscrew.

A day or two afterwards, he dropped into the Remembrance Branch to see his friend aforesaid, and quite casually, you'll understand, not to enter at large into the occurrences of that memorable evening, but, in an incidental way, to gather news that might satisfy his mind touching some details on which he still remained a trifle hazy. If the reader fails to gather his frame of mind and manner of approach, the reader has never been hazy himself as to all that occurred late on a previous evening, and it would be idle to labour the matter further. He was there to hear news but not to ask for it. You twig? You apprehend?

At the office, he noticed his friend was prim and neat and fussy. Everything on his desk was just so. That's the way in the Civil Service. No disclosures of a startling nature broke for Mr. Hughes—which was comforting indeed. His friend's mind was busy in other fields. He proceeded to unfold for Ben the intricacies of the Ticket-of-Leave System. Well, if that night's doings are sealed with seven seals, let it stay sealed with seven seals, thought the visitor. But that didn't explain who in the deuce owned the teddy bear.

If one could believe everything every government official himself believes and confidently expects every person other than his own immediate chief to believe, that hard working civil servant is performing most arduous public duties, and the system which he has himself installed for the handling and despatch of such important business is as perfect in its actions and movements as a railway man's time-piece.

"Yes," Hughes agreed, after he had lent a courteous ear for a reasonable length of time. "Intricate and important, indeed! Fine system. Yes, splendid! But what now, for instance, is such a fine system doing with a case like that of Robert Young?"

"Young—who's he?" the gentleman at the desk inquired, pulling up in the course of his disquisition. "Can't say I recall the name, offhand."

"Oh yes, you do. Robert Young!" his long-legged visitor suggested. "Yes or you will in a moment. Robert Young! Englishman—convicted of murder in the Wilson case—old couple—heads blown in. . . . Finlayson and a jury—a couple of years ago—sentence commuted to life. If he isn't dead you have him down in the Big House."

"Now you mention it, I do recall that case," the other drawled, and his finger tapped his forehead as if to get the combination. "Let me see? Some question as to whether the evidence was convincing enough. The trial judge raised that point. Eh hugh! Bit awkward for a judge to do a thing like that!"

"Yes," said Hughes, "I covered the trial. Should have been hanged or set free. The man's mewed up to save faces. Time opportune now to get him off your hands. There's overcrowding at the Pen. You'll need an extra wing if you don't watch out."

"Why this an opportune time?" the other enquired.

"The fellow's an Englishman," Hughes replied, "is young—was healthy. He'll be off to the war. The Germans will kill him. You need the space. You save the money. You close his file for keeps. No publicity with the present

excitement on. No explanations to make either. No public comment . . . and a peach of an excuse to pass the buck if you should need it . . . fighting for king and country etc. Everything pretty. Quad erat!"

"I'll make a note of the name—Robert Young," said the other as he jotted it on a yellow scratchpad. "I'll have his file brought out."

"Don't just get it out," Hughes suggested, rising, "Keep it out. Keep it under your nose. The fellow's not a friend of mine but he's a friend of a great friend of mine. If an inmate didn't have friends he'd rot in your cursed prisons. May be awkward to have him on your hands if it turns up some day that he wasn't guilty! If you don't mind I'll drop in again and see how your system works in the case of Robert Young. See if you can't get your chief to do something. Well, I must be buzzing along. I'm keeping you from your duties. Be seeing you soon!"

And so it came to pass that the name of Robert Young appeared on the next week's list of inmates at the penitentiary who were to attend for medical examination. This, he knew, was the first step, as of course, in the routine which was set in motion when an application had been made to the department by friends outside for the release of a prisoner before the expiration of his full sentence. He could think of no one who would take an interest in him, and the incident surprised him.

"It looks as though we might lose you," the doctor commented as he gave the orderly a routine going over in order to fill out the form.

"I'm afraid not," Young replied. "I'm a forgotten man."

"How's your eyesight?" the doctor inquired when he came to that point.

"Excellent," declared Young, "never better. On a clear day when an east wind is blowing, I can see clear across the lake—right over to Oswego."

Ten days later the papers for Robert Young's discharge arrived at the north gate. He was called out of line and summonsed to the office. The clothes he wore on his admission were cleared of moth balls and dusted up, but the prisoner had put on considerable weight and the garments fitted him like the skin on a sausage. So he was outfitted with a prison-made suit of shoddy black which spreads its factory label all over the person of an ex-convict.

In his office, the warden shook hands with Young and wished him the best of luck.

"What are you going to do?" he inquired.

"I'm going to France, Sir, if they'll have me," the ex-convict replied, and his eyes wandered to the ill-fitting shoddy prison black he was wearing.

The warden pushed a button.

"I think, officer," he suggested as the call was answered a moment later, "we could find this man something better in the way of clothing. It is present appearance and not warmth and serviceability that concerns him. He may not be wearing them long."

"True," the assistant remarked. "They're all soon back here home again."

Young soon after was sitting in the office at the north gate in civilians, and a free man again—waiting for his final clearance papers to come through. A runner from the kitchen brought his last prison meal over there for Robert Young.

"Lick your platter clean," a grizzled guard admonished him, "or you'll soon be eating here again."

This struck Bob as a funny crack and a friendly one, even if it was a hundred years old. His soul was lifted up and he was in that advanced stage of intoxication where nothing can douse the spirit's glim. For the first time in years his tongue was wagging freely. Thoughts sprang up ex·u′ber·ant·ly and were flitting through his brain like bats.

"No back-talk from the help, officer, . . . just carry on," he observed with a grin as he dug into his skilly. "I'll have you know I'm a guest checking out. We may come and we may go, but you stay on here forever. It's my honest opinion, you're all wet in here—you're all wet as a brook. It's penal servitude you're doing in here yourself, my Robin Goodfellow. The hired help round this old hostelry have my heartfelt sympathy. See how they run! Screws on the jump! Guards on the rain-splashed walls! And keepers with the febrile jitters! Spying through keyholes on your guests and running to tattle on each other—keen professional jealousy eh?—No esprit de corps! And what's your honest-to-goodness opinion of your chief, anyway? You treat your warden as if he had been whelped by a vixen. All his help shout *Tally ho!* and *View halloo!* every time the pack stir him up and make him break cover. As for me, I think his bark is worse than his bite. Pipe the way he's outfitted me—grey flannels, tailor-made and a Stetson fedora!"

"Yes," the officer agreed with a grim smile. "I wish I were a young fellow with life before me, like you. I'd be quick then to quit this job. A man

would be better off feeding contented swine. The husks of life are all we're getting here. It's a case of long hours and the wages are a dole."

"A dole? Yes, that's what it is,—a dole. And that reminds me—'If of thy earthly goods thou art bereft—and of thy stores two loaves alone to thee are left—sell one and with the dole buy hyacinths to cure they soul!' Who can drive slaves and not also himself become a slave? Query as to that?"

The guard was standing looking out the window and he made no comment.

"I suppose you chaps expect some slight gratuity on speeding a parting guest?" the diner drawled. "Well, take this little tip from me, officer of the watch. Go tell all your troubles to the troops. The boys are looking for a decent excuse to stage a riot and rattle those cursed cell bars. They're a decent bunch when their sympathies are aroused—leastwise I find them so. Amid criminals I found myself among friendly fellows. They'll stage a riot to get you fellows better pay. What I'm trying to break gently to you, officer, is that every man jack in this institution has bees in his belfry. A psy·chi′a·trist would ask you fellows how long is half a string—and could you tell him? He'd find you were all suffering from childhood repressions. I know the one that is driving the warden a′slant. When he was a little boy, he enjoyed watching a farmer club a baulky horse. He's never got the point that it was faulty training and cruel treatment that made the horse baulky in the first place."

"You're choking on your food, man," the guard advised him, "talking about bats in our bonnets! What you are trying to say is that we have pants in our antry!"

"Hell, no!" Bob explained earnestly. "What I'm trying to tell you, officer, is that you have heels in your wheads. Holy Land of Goshon! What's coming next?" the young man exclaimed, bringing his sawbill spoon down with a bang on the platter. "Let's pause and have a moment's silence till I draw a sober breath. What I'm re′al·ly trying to say," he went on slowly, "is that you're working in an Eighteenth Century madhouse. It's a horrible job you have and it's getting every one of you."

"If it's fools we are, it's fools that hire us," the guard suggested, and there was a serious tone in his voice. "I hope, young fellow, you're through with such places for keeps. I wish to God I was! I'm tired of reading discussions of prison affairs. I declare any of these political big Johnnies can talk for two hours without giving vent to one single helpful concrete statement. They are not even feeding peanuts to their monkeys. They are just

scattering peanut shells around. For all it amounts to, they might just as well start right off and keep on singing Bumpt-ta-ra-ra, Bumpt-ta-ra-ra, Bumpt-ta-ra-ra-ray. The sort of prison reform this country needs is better pay for the officials who come in personal contact with the inmates. Better pay would secure more efficient service. Men should be selected and trained especially for the work. . . . And the job itself should be made an honourable one . . . it's surely important enough! These prisons cost the public a lot of money. They change the higher-ups—that's all they ever do."

"Hear! Hear!" declared Bob, after washing his meal down with a tin of water, "That's what I say. Improve the personnel!"

The financial details of his discharge were completed at last, and the ex-prisoner was handed the department grant of ten dollars cash, which is made to an inmate on quitting the institution.

"It's thankful I am to get it," Bob told them. "A ten dollar bill is not to be sneezed at; but at that, I think the Big Wigs are practising a false economy. I should say the state is saving at least six thousand dollars turning a prisoner of my age free—that is, if I am off their hands for keeps. One would think it would spend more than ten dollars assisting to rehabilitate a fellow in an honest way of life. The silly show that sent me here must have cost at least fifteen hundred dollars. I have been taught nothing but crime since. I have breathed in a miasma of it. The only friends I have outside now are the friends I have made here. Is it any wonder a fellow comes back to his old bunk and your skilly again? But for me," he told them with a smile, "I thank you kindly, and I salute you for the last time. So help me God!"

So the ex-convict stepped out into the world, looking a bit flaccid but smart, indeed, in a grey flannel suit which had been carefully tailored for a lawyer who had thought it not worth the keeping—and that a short time after losing his silken gown. And the warden had thrown in a grey Stetson fedora to match. All that Bob lacked to look perfectly fetching was a stick and a decent pair of shoes.

CHAPTER IX

Enter Sally Brittain.

That's the way they catapult a man out of a penitentiary. A prisoner completing a definite term is called as suddenly out of line to take his discharge. His friends may have been advised; but their letters to him are censored. There was doubtless some deep purpose in all this.

Out in the bustling world again, Young was as fluttery as a bird that has escaped its cage and is testing its wings in unaccustomed flight. His thrusting out had come with such startling suddenness that he had not had time to compose himself. Eyes seemed still to be watching him and with glances that were askance. He caught himself slinking in a bog of timid anxieties. His present safety required that he snap out of it. In disgust, he sought a park bench to take his bearings.

Perhaps some reader of this story has himself put in an hour on a park bench—thinking things over. It's a fine place to lay down one's burden, if one can manage to leave it there. In such surroundings, it doesn't profit much to indulge in self-pity, which is a purely Christian vice, the habitual practice of which develops in man—and especially in woman—a querulous disposition that would make one unhappy in Beulah land itself. Bob was not indulging in it; nor was he wasting his time nursing vain regrets. One surely has an exaggerated notion of his own importance in the universe who tortures himself over his blunderings in a world which is crowded with blunderers, and in which expensive monuments are erected to the more important of them. Neither was he making such a close-up inspection of fortune's face as a dentist does of a woman's whilst examining her teeth. It is wise always to view Dame Fortune's features from a distance and in the right perspective. What at close quarters seemed a frown may prove later to have been a friendly smile—and vice versa. For instance, there is nothing more dangerous to man than an early and easy success. Park benches are frequently the final resort of such youth-time favorites. Like early apples they seldom have keeping qualities.

His drench of experience had dulled Young into a fatalist. To his way of thinking, a man may as well endure with fortitude what chance sends his way. How is he to tell, now, what in the end will prove to have been good or bad luck for him? And, in the end, does anything matter much? The truth is

that Young, whether he deserved it or not, had passed through flames which left him emotionally burnt out. The ardour and enthusiasms of youth were scorched. The years, given time, humble all men to a like condition or into second childhood; but a crisis may bring it to the young suddenly, and with serious repercussions. One's eyes can tell that in instances trench warfare has done it. The world is littered with men who before their prime have become emotional non-effectives. Something has shattered their personality into a strange dual consciousness, which sends a man onward through life viewing himself and his efforts with the cold disdainful eyes of a stranger. He halts, every now and again, to gaze indifferently on life with its huge stage, its din and interminable pother. At such moments, he seeks a release from it all; and for some, beer supplies an anodyne.

This, naturally, is the wrong sort of temperament for success. When it takes possession of one, be it early or late, his creative days are over. He is left thrumming on muted strings. A term in a penitentiary is reasonably certain to produce such a condition; and it is next to a miracle that a man should come out of such an experience to amount to anything worth while afterward. When he does, it is a miracle itself that brings it to pass.

What Young finally decided he would secure, and without delay, was a fresh identity, and a complete change of scene. He shuddered at the thought of looking up respectable acquaintances and attempting to live with a horrifying reputation that no man could possibly live down. Nor did he see any necessity of attempting it. Common sense told him he was now drifting a nonentity on the wash of a city's life. To the half million quidnuncs whom he saw scurrying on their runways, the notorious Bob Young was not now of sufficient importance to get a single line in the hysterical extras that were screaming how the Belgians were holding the Germans back. Not one of them cared a tinker's damn what had become of him. His wise course, he decided, was to bury that criminal and plant him good and deep. When Bob left that park bench, there was quicklime on his boots.

As many a man has done in like circumstances, Bob decided on an alias; and he then spent the good part of an hour's time fitting his new personality out with a character and accessories to match. Nor was the choice of a role which he then made a matter of small importance either to himself or to society. Every other criminal of major rank—that is every other one,—is an actor set up in like fashion to play a part upon a stage. He has his origin in the dual personality which develops in a man during penal servitude. In precisely the same way that a public executioner may be, in private life, a lover of children and of flowers, a man who has many generous impulses

and is ready at times to go out of his way to help a friend, may yet send himself out in another character to wage ruthless cold-blooded war on society. True, it was not his likeable qualities that got him into trouble in the first place—at least probably not—but the modern criminal in many instances has a dual personality as had Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, Sir Walter Raleigh, or any historical highway man, sea robber, pillager or Highland raider one may care to mention.

It was, then, as Robert Harding that Bob sauntered leisurely out of the park with his chest in the air to front a silly world with a face of brass. Nor was he off to nowhere in particular. He was off, in fact, to get himself a decent pair of shoes, and with a shrewd notion where a bargain could be found. He dropped in on a secondhand dealer with whom the youthful Robert had transacted improvident business in his day of urgent need. At his leisure, Mr. Harding selected a pair of slightly worn Oxfords that fitted both his taste and his feet to a nicety. He raised his eyebrows at the mention of the price, and calmly walked out on the gesticulating lady who clutched his arm and drew him back to close the sale at a price that suited him to a nicety also. His old ones went into his leather suit case; and while inspecting himself in the wall mirror of a shoe-shine parlour, Harding decided that a gentleman in grey flannels and an ample fedora should not be lugging a battered suit case about the streets. It was checked at the Union Station, and its owner then strolled leisurely up the street on his way to join the army.

For a person seeking a change of scene, that was the obvious thing for a man to do at the time; and for that reason thousands of men were doing it. So far as hardships and discipline were concerned, Harding was stepping from the smoke into the smother, and it was not a self-sacrificing urge to give his life for his country that was taking him. At this point, however, it transpired that Dame Fortune's face—viewed at the proper distance—had long been smiling upon him. Had it not been for an accident that occurred to him in childhood, he would doubtless have marched away to the scream of fifes and the rub-a-dub of kettle drums to become a hero whose exploits would have occupied less than a line of print—for little differ in the grave the craven and the unknown brave. But in his toddling days, he had stirred up a hive of bees with a switch, and a medical examination now disclosed, in consequence, an absence of vitreous humour which made him stone blind in the right eye. In vain, the recruit protested that he was a fine shot with the other. He was discharged as a non-effective, and turned aside to enjoy a life of liberty in a season of general unemployment.

Since his country did not need him there, Harding decided grimly to take her by the throat and shake a living out of her here. First, he set off in search of work. His only chance of re-establishing himself, he realized, lay amid crowded city life. In country places, folk have longer memories and are a deal more inquisitive. That night he lodged in a Duchess Street flop house where broken men bundle down. He saw quickly that was a dangerous place for a man with his criminal record to be found in. Fortunately the creeping and crawling on his pallet drove him out to tramp the deserted streets till dawn was greying. He listened with surprise to the noisy roar that great sewers make while a city sleeps. That also was a dangerous place for him. Had the police that night required a prisoner to answer to a charge of robbery committed in that section, this ex-convict was alone prowling on the spot, and it doesn't require much imagination to perceive what would have happened to Robert Young (alias Harding) by due process of law.

He was out betimes in the morning on the hunt for a job. He was going to see, first, whether by hook or by crook he could get a toe hold at honest work; and if he failed, then he was *also* going to see. The middle afternoon found him trucking packages in a commission warehouse on the Esplanade. Curiously, it was Harding's record that secured him the job. On applying, he had been told gruffly by the patriotic proprietor that there was a place for him in the army. That was a tactical error. Harding produced his discharge papers, and inquired casually whether the other young men he saw about the place could produce similar credentials. As the merchant explained to his Miss Halpin in the office later, it was certainly a foolish thing for him to do, —taking a man on like that and at such a time; but at the moment, he just exactly couldn't see what else to do. The fellow had a sort of called his bluff, and he had a curious look in his eye, too. In after years, that merchant had no cause to regret having had Robert Harding in his employ; but he never appreciated, then or later, what his single foolish act amounted to. By it, he had probably done his state a greater service than by all his patriotic fussing. At that time Harding was at a bad age and in no mental state to be driven too far. The chances are the worthy merchant had removed a reckless gun man off the streets.

That evening, Mr. Harding located himself a single bedroom and moved his suit case in. He supped there later on rye bread with onion, and called it the close of a happy day. He had a clean snug bedroom all his own; and so buoyant were his spirits that he would scarce have called a king his cousin. In the weeks that followed, Bob discovered that a big city is a cheap place in which to live if one rolls his own and keeps his nose out of hotels and restaurants.

On the noon hours, he usually doffed his overalls and walked up the street with his lunch under his arm to eat it in the Cathedral grounds that lay near by. On several occasions, at first, he shared a bench with a fussy old gentleman in a frayed alpaca coat, who professed to be carrying on historical researches in the Reference Library. He, also, was lunching sparingly on common doings.

Their talk drifted naturally to the war news that was coming through. The old man blew on his whiskers and pooh-hooed. There was nothing of the war in the papers, he surmised, other than local guesses interlarded with dispatches which were sent out with the deliberate purpose of misinforming those who read them. It couldn't well be otherwise.

This sent Bob's eye searching the current issue. True, the only definite news from Europe, he found, was a despatch describing how Welshmen had done violence to a suffragette. Apparently they had pulled her hair out in bunches and trampled upon the woman as she lay prostrate.

"That's the way with live news," Bob commented. "Those who know won't tell, eh? And those who tell—don't know!"

The antiquarian then passed some derogatory remarks on the value of newspapers generally, save as a record of personal happenings. He was speaking, he explained, in an historical sense. Nothing could make duller and more inane reading than a musty newspaper file. He had spent considerable time over them finding this out. They merely reflect the muddled tone and temper of their times. How could it be otherwise, he inquired. Current events are never correctly appreciated till long afterwards —and then only obscurely. The old passions have then gone flat and the clamour sounds shallow and childish—almost impish, in fact.

"Yes," Bob agreed, "when people's feelings make them surgingly dead sure about anything, there's usually something very much the matter with both them and their feelings."

"True," the old man agreed, "because a man can be no more than very moderately certain of anything. It's the hurry! It's all this infernal rush! People live on tin can food. They feed their minds on tin can thoughts, and their emotions have been bottled for them, likewise. A flock of silly geese, that's all they are."

"Wild geese, eh?" his companion suggested. "True, their wings pulse rhythmically, but they seem to be going somewhere."

"Trouble is, people think the present is the only time that has ever mattered," the old man grumbled. "What was going on a hundred years ago is more interesting to me. At least I can find out something reliable about it —but not in the newspapers of the day."

His mind being wrapped up in such matters, he then went into local details, which proved slightly disturbing to his auditor.

"Directly across the road there," Harding was told, "there once stood a common gaol; and there a hundred years or so ago, a journeyman printer, one Burton, was executed in public for forging his master's signature on a ten shilling bank draft. The man was on a spree and committed the High Crime to pay for rounds of drinks in a tavern up the street. On conviction, the culprit was sentenced to be hanged a short space and then to be cut down and disembowelled whilst still alive. 'Twas a proper job for a butcher, that, now wasn't it?" the old gentleman inquired with a grimace. "Yes," he continued, "they duly showed the man his viscera before the breath had left him."

"Horrible!" exclaimed the young man.

"Yes," went on alpaca coat, "the law was harsh then, but better in ways than what we see to-day. Getting next to impossible to hang a murderer in these parts unless he shoots down a policeman. Even when a jury convicts, the execution may not take place. Look at the case of Bob Young! A public disgrace, I call that!"

"What happened there?" his auditor inquired in a casual tone.

He had been rolling a cigarette for his bench companion, and he now held it over that the old gentleman might moisten the paper.

"Scoundrel had influential English connection! Wires were pulled! For aught you know that murderer may be at large this very moment, getting ready to blow out some harmless person's brains. Shocking, I'd say, the way justice is administered in this jurisdiction. Better far in the old days!"

"Yes, shocking, looked at that way," the young man agreed. "But where did you get your information—out of a newspaper? There may be a lot in that tin-can theory of yours."

The next day Mr. Harding lunched and reflected on a bench well over on the far side of the Cathedral grounds.

The police have a useful rule-of-thumb theory that a gaol bird is back at his old tricks—and given time, they'll catch him at them. As if to confirm it,

pigeons flew down at this point to disturb again with their graceful charm the tenor of Bob Harding's life. To a bench across the sward, a woman came regularly at the noon hour. No sooner was she seated than a flock of pigeons flew down to greet her with a sharp, casual cracking of wings. The sound of their falling pitch brought pleasing half memories of dusty lofts and of fragrant new-mown hay. The birds came, of course, because she fed them; and Bob's interest in pigeons drew his friendly eyes.

She was slim-hipped and high bosomed, and no slip of a girl. The fullness of her figure was there to prove it. She seemed young and neat and Bob noticed she had red hair. Got a lot of brushing, too—wavy, soft, unset and glossy. Delightful burnish! Yes, definitely red! But not carrotty red either—not the vivid shade that goes with ink and freckles about the nose. More on the bronze order. Bob thought of the brown-eyed Susan. No, more like a turkey's wing. That was good enough. He wasn't matching samples. He let it go at that.

Indeed, well he might. His were the idle thoughts of an inexperienced fellow. The colour was a dark chestnut that lends a creamy whiteness to the complexion. The writer verified this only the other day as the woman was showing him her pe′o·nies in bloom. No doubt she made a pretty picture sitting in the cathedral grounds with her leghorn hat on the bench beside her. Why, bless you, she has a graceful figure in middle age and a natural charm as she moves among her flowers.

With further reference to those pigeons, Harding did not notice what the woman was wearing. That, however, was the season of the redingote and of ripple and flare suit coats, and especially of those charming collars with finely tucked fronts that pretended to be fastened with a tiny black velvet bow. The pleated frill that stuck up at the back of the neck was exquisitely feminine or something. Old picture albums give a false impression of the effectiveness of the 1914 modes. Nevertheless, they were quite effective, yes rather! The reason these old pictures have no present appeal is a simple one. The modern eye is not accustomed to the sight of a youngish woman who is obviously wearing under-clothing. They were taken before 'undies came in, and now even scanties seem to be going out.

After this sort of thing had been going on for several days, Harding decided in his idle moments that it would be pleasant to have the cock birds fly down to welcome him with cracking wings. He tried throwing crumbs about his own bench; but his efforts were futile. The lady was retaining full honours.

A few days later, he took a bag of cracked roasted peanuts from the warehouse with him, and arrived on the scene early. He soon had won the attention of the flock; and on the lady's arrival, he continued to retain their undivided devotion.

Curiosity got the better of the red-headed girl; and as she approached, the pigeons were disturbed and flew aloft.

"I suppose we're strangers," she told him with a frank friendly smile, "but anyway we've friends in common in whom we take a mutual interest. My name is Sally Brittain, and what I'd like to know, young man, is: On what are you feeding my pigeons?"

Bob had arisen and was holding the ex-lawyer's fedora with the grace that comes to a man who had been taking his hat off since a time he cannot remember.

"In the absence of our friends," he told her with a chuckle, "permit me to complete the ceremony, Miss Brittain. My name's Bob Harding; and I have been feeding our pigeons on cracked roasted peanuts. Now, we know as much of each other as most people do when they are given an introduction. In fact more! We know our friends think well of us both, and we have something else to discuss than the war and the weather. We have our friends to give a going over."

They sat down on the bench, which was natural enough.

"Yes," suggested the lady, "we can gossip about them to our heart's content, and not hurt their feelings—even if they are coming down eavesdropping. So you like pigeons, too?"

She spoke in a quiet deliberative sort of way and seemed a friendly, sensible young person. There was none of that tittering archness and metallic glitter in her manner that young women sometimes display in less suitable surroundings than a chance chat with a stranger on a park bench at the noon hour. Her eyes were large and blue and set well apart, and there was frankness in them.

"Of course I do," Bob told her, pleased to have a smart-looking agreeable girl to talk to, because one does get lonely to the marrow of him. "I've always fancied pigeons since I was a small boy. I used to think they were such soft, woozy, little things. The first pair I had of my very own were white fantails—my aunt gave them to me. They must have been dandies because they cost the old maiden two and six. I turned them pink with a package of household dye. Believe it or not, I couldn't spare time for meals,

almost—I was so anxious to be near them. You know—heart with rapture fills and so on. I had them cooped up in a pen I built specially, and I suggested to them with crude signs where their nest was to be. I tended them like a trained nurse, expecting every time I climbed up to find an egg."

"And I suppose you were disappointed?"

"Yes," he admitted. "I fancy Aunt Agatha was taken in by the poulterer on that deal. Amongst the three of us,—the little boy and his two pigeons, I was the only one that showed any signs of love and affection throughout the whole transaction. I got tired at last waiting for the eggs. I thought confinement perhaps wasn't agreeing with them. So I let them out and the ungrateful little beasts flew away on me."

"Ungrateful little beasts! That's just what I think they are," the lady agreed, "the way this flock cleared out and forgot me. In my experience, they are not loyal to their friends and they're not faithful to each other. But they're graceful, aren't they?"

"Have *you* been in pigeons, too?" he inquired.

"Yes," she nodded. "I was in the pigeon business so extensively when a youngster that the neighbours complained to the police. But I got off to a fine start. That was a long way from here—so far a wish of God's-speed would get itself broken in the journey. A pair were flying free and nesting when I took over an established business. You know, of course you know, that the birds sit on the eggs turn about. The shifts they take have been in vogue with them since pigeons first were. But my first Mr. Coo was a gallivanter, and failed to keep regular hours. The hen bird struggled along as best she could, but after nursing her wrath over a double shift or so, her patience became quite exhausted. When her erring mate dropped in at last to see how things were coming along, she darted off the nest and gave him a thorough trouncing. She cuffed his lugs soundly and drove him in to attend to his share of the job. And she didn't forgive him either! When that brood was reared, she drove him off the premises, and took to herself a Jacobin with a fluffy hood, a bird of steady, dependable domestic habits that introduced some class into my pigeon loft."

The birds crowded close and were scuffling for the kernels.

"One learns not to expect too much," he suggested. "If they give me their trust and confidence, I'm willing, now, to take care of the gratitude part myself."

"Like cats, aren't they?" she asked "—these pigeons of ours—the one with a soft gentle purr, and the other with a sweet contented coo—but both jolly well looking after number one all the while."

"But so charming in their ways, one just forgives them," he suggested. "What's the odds if they give one pleasure? And I'll not have anything said against a young tom-cat—he's a egoist and a superb diplomat, if there ever was one. I had a cinnamon kitten I called Peter in my fantail pigeon days. Peter would skip along with me when I rode out on a pony, not following and attending to business of his own all the while, but coming just the same. When I came back after an hour or so, he would be waiting for me at the end of the hedgerow—quite incidentally, of course, but he would be there. I'd lean over and lift him by the tail, and he'd arch his back and purr as he rode back with me on the saddlebow. That's what I call courtesy—looking after himself all the while but being friendly and nice because he felt like it. Who would wish a person to be friendly out of sympathy or from a sense of duty or in the hope of gaining something?"

"No, I suppose not," the girl agreed, "but just because of the pleasure one gets in doing it."

The bells chimed the three-quarter hour.

"I must be getting back to work," she told him, rising.

"Don't let me drive you away from your birds," the man urged her as she was leaving. "I'll bring you some peanuts to-morrow and you can coax them away from me, and keep the woozy little things cooing about you to your heart's content."

"Would you be doing that to be nice or for the pleasure it gave you?" she inquired with a disconcerting twinkle in her eye.

"Heaven knows"—and Bob was speaking straight out of his thoughts —"'twill always be a real pleasure to me to leave folk alone to do whatever they jolly well please! 'Tisn't even being civil to try managing them—rooting about to get one's own way in another's personal affairs. I've had my share of solicitous friends and bossy relatives. There's a deal of self-conceit in this directing business,—and all manner of selfishness. It sent me across an ocean!"

"Yes, I've felt the fangs of it, too," she told him and stepped off smartly on her way.

He noticed she had the freedom of movement that comes to stay with a woman who is country bred with plenty of outdoor exercise in her growing

days.

Was Miss Sally Brittain good-looking? Bob certainly thought she was good to look at and pleasant to be with. He liked the way she held herself and the curve of her neck and her clear blue eyes that had fun lurking in them and shrewdness, too. Anyway, her nose was the right size for her face. And these being his feelings on the subject, what need is there of going into the matter of her beauty further? It is not that we here follow the rule of Horace and do not attempt to describe it from despair of success. It is that the reader has observed human nature and knows its inner workings. His eyes have taught him that a man may be attracted by some physical beauty at first sight but that he usually ends by trudging sedately through life with a plain woman whose loveliness he grew to admire. If the swain thinks he is doing otherwise, it is obvious that he is being sadly rooked.

'Tis not a lip or eye we beauty call
But the joint force and full effect of all.

In any event a young woman of the distant teens would appear at a disadvantage before present-day eyes. True, Miss Brittain had charm—but she lacked modern glamour. The Cause of Woman, bringing her the right to vote and leaving her to hustle for everything else, had not then triumphed; and the modern maid—who is not out to reform the world but is striving desperately for woman's age-old and lifetime security by the lures of the beauty parlour—was then luring with nature's dimples and cooing in her cradle. Young women did not then cross their legs and inhale in public places; and when they crossed their legs elsewhere, they had the sense to cross their legs above and not at the knee, which is a matter of great aesthetic importance.

CHAPTER X

Enter Mrs. Sarah Boniface of 5 D'Arcy Street.

Shortly afterward, Sally Brittain punched a time clock and she promptly became one of a line of girls who were standing in blue smocks operating machines in an ēn′velope factory. A smell of fish glue pervaded the air; and what her work exacted was deft and quick mechanical motions continuously repeated. With the maw of a hungry machine to be fed—and expertly too—its operator's mind cannot drift far afield. There was no time for that sort of thing; and Sally did not indulge that afternoon in personal musings of any kind. She had discovered that her thoughts were like a flock of sheep, and in her circumstances required the attention of a vigilant shepherdess to keep them from wandering off into deep valleys en·vel′oped in clouds of worrying gloom. So she made a practice of checking her personal problems with her hat in the cloakroom downstairs. As a result, she always appeared placid and impersonal whilst at her work. Perhaps her's then became the numb mental state that takes possession of a patient as he is being trundled into an operating room. However that may be, the practice made her a skilful operator. The important matter for her was that she was drawing nine dollars a week and holding down a job.

A sharp break in her life a couple of years back, had left Miss Sally Brittain without a stake of any kind, and she had drifted to work and live alone in a strange city. With her shop mates, she was friendly and agreeable, always; yet she had cause to be chary. The interests they discussed were frivolous and petty, and some of them, she found, were positively nasty. A young woman, situated as Sally was, required poise to remain healthy-minded and drift clear of the morbid and neurotic. Of all the lonely places this side of Ultima Thule, there is none to compare with a city for those who are strangers there and sick at heart; and the bigger it is, the deeper are its wells of loneliness. There is always an element of danger present when youngish life is reduced to the monotony of living to drudge—in order to live honestly; and in such circumstances, whether she be conscious of it or not, the thought keeps cropping up in a girl's mind that youth and its chances are slipping. This is not to say that Sally Brittain was by nature inclined toward the megrims; nor to suggest, either, that she was in any way declining into the desperate mental state of spinsterhood.

It takes little at times to brighten one's turn of mind, however gloomy its cast—a pleasant nod from a newsboy has been known to do it—and on the evening of that day, Mrs. Sarah Boniface of 5 D'Arcy Street, who let Sally a single back bedroom, suspected from the girl's vivacity, as she popped into the kitchen to pay the dollar-fifty weekly rent money, that her red-headed lodger must have received good news from home or something like that. She had a room there without board—what she called dry lodgings. Sally herself had given the condition of her spirits no thought, whatever, and would have been honestly unable to enlighten her poke-nose landlady as to the cause or occasion. Whatever it was lay unnoticed under the surface like the hazy half-memories of a pleasant dream. However, it did occur to Sally that evening as she was brushing her hair that the young fellow with the pigeons seemed a nice and decent sort. Something of the kind must have kept on repeating itself in the subconscious regions because she did not make up a lunch. Instead, she had a piece of cake and a fruit salad at a drug store counter the next noon, and so fortified, spent the rest of the hour pretending to herself that she was shopping.

Gusty showers were whipping the streets all the following morning, but in the evening the weather cleared, and the day after being bright and fair, Miss Brittain strolled over at the noon hour to see how the pigeons were getting along.

Having served their purpose, the flock had by this time deserted the scene entirely—and it may have been a tragedy in their lives that caused it—but Bob Harding was at the accustomed seat; and he rose with a smile to greet her. Apparently he had already partaken of his noon hour refection. They sat down together and drifted into easy talk. Oddly enough—and it struck them both as curious afterwards—there seemed to be no barriers of restraint to be broken down. They chatted about this and that in a friendly way and like old acquaintances, which, in fact they were—that being the way they felt about it. It requires subtle art on a girl's part—as every woman knows—to handle such a situation in an effective manner. Sally was placid and demure and manoeuvred her companion into doing most of the talking. That's the way to manage a man—get him to talk. All she did was to slip a deft comment in, now and again, to act as an accelerator. There was a quiet, sane humaneness about her that proved positively disarming, and there was sincerity in her voice and in her eyes, which were big and friendly and full of warmth. In particular, Miss Brittain did not fish.

After that, and with weather permitting, the lady with the burnished hair and the gentleman with the grey fedora kept tryst in the cathedral grounds

on workdays with the regularity of the bells that chimed high noon in the steeple above them. What were they conversing about? They just talked—mostly moonshine and whimsey. So impersonal, in fact, were their conversations that they had been meeting for weeks before either of them could have told where the other was working. Sally seemed the least curious-minded person whom Bob had met west of the briny. Her head was full of all sorts of shrewd quips and turns; but under her direction, that conversation might have been taking place during a lunch on the tip of the crescent moon, so far as their jog trot daily lives were concerned. As with that frayed orb, straying unnoticed in the blue above them, their personal cares, which also hung over them, were not of enough importance at such times to make their presence felt.

There was nothing in the nature of a flirtation in these meetings so far as Sally Brittain was concerned; nor were her intentions frivolous or in any sense remote. She was cultivating an acquaintanceship with a man in the only way that was open to her, and for the properest reason a marriageable woman of twenty-five can have. She intended to marry him if she found later that she wanted him and was able to get him. Undeniably, the stage setting was cramping on her style. She would have made a better job of it on a flagged pergola or under tawny awnings. There is this to be said, however, for the catch-as-catch-can assays that lonely women make: they have founded some first rate families. Nor was Bob philandering, either, and this for the reason that during their park bench meetings, he had no intentions, remote or otherwise, nor did he suggest in any way that he had.

In his garish, young doggish days, R. Reginald Percival had felt that he was quite scintillating in his converse with young ladies; but with proper ones, he had always taken the precaution of having at least two of them present together, at the same time, in his presence and in the presence of each other. He now realized, vaguely and pleasurably, that there was a different hedonic effect to be got from talking with a wholesome-looking, sensible young woman who took an interest in what he was saying. In his loneliness he needed a friendly soul to talk to—at least, that's what he thought. What he noticed with surprise was that a chat with Sally acted on him like a tonic—a regular pick-me-up. It stirred his pulse and produced a warm tingling in his toes. Anyone could have told him that his state was parlous. In fact, the dogs of destiny were already straining on their leashes; or rather, should we say that a bird dog was at point with his flag in the air? A chat with the girl formed a cheerful interlude in his daily life which otherwise was drab and lonely and exiguous. She seemed frankly pleased to have him come, which supplied a satisfying excuse, if, indeed, he sought

one. Things, he knew, would come to a black pass for him when they ended; and as the days shortened with the weather getting colder, he realized that the swing of the earth on its orbit would shortly put a stop to these noon hour meetings in a public park. One thing sure, he had no thought of falling in love with the girl, and no inkling that he had already done so. All he knew was that he did desire, unspeakably, to be with her.

While scant dependence can thus be placed in the progress of the sun through the divisions of the ecliptic in controlling human affairs, neophytes in astrology will note with pleasure that both our principal characters were born in the same month, in the self same year, and under Pisces, the 12th Sign of the Zodiac; and this for the weighty reason that their acquaintance, having started over a flock of pigeons, was turned into something more fateful over a mess of fish. All this occurred naturally enough, and inevitably, as is proved by the syllogism which follows. It may be taken as self-evident that two such persons, who were economizing by subsisting on cold victuals, would naturally drift into a discussion of their respective preferences in the matter of hot dishes. This is the major premise. It will also be granted as a minor premise that it would not have been seemly for either of them to expatiate upon the sort of food that any nearby restaurant stood open to supply. So naturally Sally Brittain and her friend, Bob, turned to dwell longingly on what good home cooking can alone provide—and that is a tasty mess of fish.

"To come on the table with its full flavour," Miss Brittain had just asserted, "a fish should go into the pan wiggling."

She referred feelingly to fond memories she had of frying black bass in a spider over a camp fire; and she then quoted stout bosomed authorities in support of her proposition.

"But of all the fish that swim," she continued with a sparkle of rapture in her eyes, "give me a mess of speckled trout fresh caught while lurking wild in their native waters—and the smaller they are the better."

"As for me," her companion sighed, "a piece of fresh caught lemon sole would content me well—right now."

"Isn't that a fish of the flounder order?" Sally inquired. "They're flat ugly fish that lie on the bottom—that would give them a muddy flavour. I thought your Englishman went in for salmon and jugged hare and such like?"

"Any kind are good enough in a fishmonger's shop over there," Bob told her, "save on a Monday morning—and ruddy Atlantic rovers are always

good."

"Faith, I thought trout was the Englishman's special fancy," she observed, "and I have read how he cooks them."

"How? Faith, I'd like to know."

"For goodness sake, don't think I'm Irish," the girl exclaimed. "Sure, I was never waked out of Ireland. I get that 'faith' from my grandmother with the hair on my head and the temper of me."

"How say you a trout should be cooked?" the young man asked, and its laughing at her, he was.

"To cook a trout, an Englishman hies him out at dayspring time with his creel and tackle. He stretches his legs a little in a gentle walk to the river. A breeze drifts softly from fields of sleep. If it showers, it falls gently, and it's raining May butter."

"You mean the thorns are snowing?"

"No, I mean grass butter," Sally told him, wrinkling up her nose. "He seats him down leisurely by a likely pool. He baits with a lively, quick, stirring worm."

"——Spearing him first in the middle. But tell your story your own way."

"Yes, I will, but not in my own words. A trout strikes bold and lusty. The angler kills him fairly with three horse hairs as a leader. He then rests beneath a flowering honeysuckle hedge till a shower passes over. To the same shelter comes pretty Maudlen, with a milk stool in one hand and a foaming pail in the other. Of course the angler kisses her, and, of course, Maudlen is delighted. She curtseys and sings him a trifle:—

Come live, with me and be my love
And we shall all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves or hills or field
Or woods or sleeping mountains yield.

"The song brings Maudlen's mother, a buxom body, wide in waist and as clean looking as Holland. She stands smiling, arms akimbo, and she gets a buss, too. She curtseys and gives the angler a draught of the red cow's milk. Then she bustles off with the trout to her kitchen. She guts the fish by making a small opening—well forward—but she doesn't wipe out his innards because that would surely spoil the flavour. However she's careful to redd up his breakfast out of his gullet. She stuffs him with breadcrumbs

using also orange peel and spices. Then she sets him roasting on a spit and in the process bastes him carefully in his own juices. The angler's friends assemble and regale themselves with songs while waiting—and the longer the wait the better the appetite. Then. Ah me! They sit down to a trout large enough to fill six reasonable bellies."

"Yes, that sounds familiar," Bob told her, "yes, red′o·lent of all sorts of delights, but I think you're defaming a man who is now with God. Ike Walton didn't say a word about kissing Maudlen, let alone her mother."

"Of course he didn't," Sally admitted, "and of course he didn't kiss her on the occasion he describes because he then had company with him. I'm referring to the trout he caught there nine days previously. You'll admit he was on delightfully friendly terms with the maid who milked the red cow? Did you ever find an Englishman as candid as the skies? Isn't he always on the go like a butterfly among flowers?"

"Ike was a boyish spirited old fellow—after a life of troubles in troubled times," her companion mused; "but that was a long time ago. It's pretty much fish-and-chips, nowadays, over there for merchants in a small way of business, if you ask me."

"I think Isaac Walton missed a lot," Sally asserted. "He'd have gone into special ecstasies if he had set his teeth into a piece of our fresh water whitefish."

"What's that, a whiting?"

"Not at all, not at all!" she assured him. "No relation to the cod. The whitefish is of the salmon family, weighs a couple of pounds, feeds on minute shell insects that cling to weeds on a shale bottom in deep lake water—gets as fat as a young pigeon,—mild, mellow and delicious. The Indian tribes waged wars over the whitefish feeding grounds, and you wouldn't wonder if you ever tasted a fresh caught whitefish baked with stuffing."

"But all fish are alike in a restaurant—even if one had the money to stick his nose in and get a smell."

"Requires home cooking," Sally agreed, with a nod. "My landlady, Mrs. Boniface, could do it. She's English enough to cook fish. Came from Islington and talks of the Star or something. Must have been a rummy quarter when she was young and up and doing. Not that the widow hasn't hopes yet! Tell you what I'll do, Bob, I'll ask her. To-morrow's Saturday. If she'll cook it, we'll get a whitefish at the market at noon. You can come up

to supper and we'll have it with her in the kitchen. She'll *do* for us fine. But till I see her that's nothing more than a might-be. Shall I?"

"Never ask your guest if you'll kill your chicken," Bob commented.

So the next day at noon Miss Brittain selected a whitefish; and after it was wrapped up, Bob and she loitered at the fish stall in the market inspecting the curious seafood on display.

"So those snails are winkles," the girl remarked in some surprise. "My brother used to sing a song with winkles in it; but, do you know? I thought they were some sort of pickled herrings with skewers run through them—the way they spear tripe. 'You prods me with a winkle pin' was the way it went."

"Oh yes," he told her, "that's the song of the Pearly People;" and he whistled a catch of the coster's serenade. "You should have heard Albert Chevalier sing it! The words go like this:—

Oh 'Arriet, I'm waiting—waiting for yer dyear.
Oh 'Arriet, I'm waiting—waiting alone out 'ere.
When that moon shall cease to shine,
False will be this 'eart of mine!

You ain't forgotten yet that night in May
Down by the Welsh 'Arp, which is 'Enden way?
You fauncied winkles and a pot of tea.
'Four 'alf,' I murmured's—'good enough for me.
Give me a word of hope that I may win—'
You prods me gently with a winkle pin.
We were as 'appy as could be that day—
Down by the Welsh 'Arp, which is 'Enden way.

I warbles thus, yet things are just the same;
Your known about 'ere by your maiden name.
Summer is gone and it is freezin' now
And yet my 'eart's as full of love, I vow,
And flutters as it did that 'appy day
Down by the Welsh 'Arp, which is 'Enden way."

"It's funny," Sally commented, "but a brother of mine could sing that song quite well. I'm sure none of my family have been within the sound of Bow Bells since Piet Hein, the Dutch admiral, put to sea and sank the Silver Fleet."

"And what was the Silver Fleet, pray?"

"Oh, that was the Spanish Armada," she told him. "Your education as an Englishman has been sadly neglected if you do not know that it was the Dutch and a bad storm that kept the Spaniards out of England."

"The storm syn·chro′nized," he told her, "but I'm afraid Piet Hein didn't."

In the shank of the afternoon, Mr. Harding arrived for the fish dinner. Mrs. Boniface of 5 D'Arcy Street proved to be a plump, waddling, little woman, who was friendly and fussy and a great talker on trivial matters. As Sally had said the widow had hopes; but, as we say, she was no chicken. A bulge to her eyes suggested thyroid trouble; and her teeth were a wreck. She was partial to a drop of gin, which gave her a pallid, puffiness about the jowl, and Bob proved partial to her mustard pickles and home-made relishes in which she took a pardonable pride. But why go into such matters? Her qualities are no present concern, save in the one important matter that she knew how to cook fish and made a capital job of it.

The meal was served in the kitchen, which was her every-purpose room, her down-stairs-front, fortunately, being let to a couple who looked to be steady and likely to stay the winter. Owing to the widow's presence and her small talk, the meal was a stiff affair—as formal, almost, as an English dinner party. At its conclusion, the widow was in a hurry to get the table cleared and her dishes washed. She was expecting a gentleman caller and was coyly flustered about it. So Bob thanked her heartily and did his going promptly.

Miss Brittain switched on the hall light to see him to the front door, which opened onto one of those built-in vestibules that serve more than one useful purpose.

When Sally set her hand to anything, she made a complete job of it. Yes, that was Sally Brittain's way. So she saw the young man right out into the closed vestibule. Bob there did his little piece quite nicely; but as he said good evening! and thanks! and all that sort of thing, the girl's face on a sudden, seemed to be at a dangerously inviting angle, and the next thing he knew his arms were about her and he was thinking with a thrill that her lips felt moist and tender. Yes, Miss Brittain put expression into her voice and everything she did.

"My word, Sally, that's right nice!" he whispered, with a catch in his voice as he drew her body closer and felt it cuddle. "That's just splendid! Let's do it again, and see who'll tire first!"

"But we mustn't break the rules of an old game, Bob," she told him, laughing yet breathing a little tensely as she turned to watch a figure that was approaching on the side walk. "You know the rule old Samuel Johnson laid down?—'For kisses, the occasion should be adequate and the actuality rare.'"

"The first part of that is neat," he admitted, "but as for the rest of it, the old blighter had things twisted quite."

"Set yourself up as a later authority, eh?"

"Yes, the true rule came to me just now, like a flash out of the blue."

"Hope you haven't been carrying on a set of experiments?"

"Rules," he told her with a chuckle, "are not discovered that way. An apple falls and the law of gravitation is formulated and so on. Experiments are made to verify or disprove rules—not to discover them."

"So what's the true rule for kisses?"

"The occasion should be adequate and the distribution restricted."

"Which means?"

"Rather kiss one girl a hundred times, Sally, than a hundred girls once."

"Then see, Mr. Sobersides, that you don't experiment to disprove it!"—and then as the widow's caller appeared hesitating at the door—"Come up Monday night, Bob, if it's clear. We've no place to sit; but we'll get air and exercise looking into shop windows."

The widow was out that Monday evening, and after inspecting shop windows for a long time, and perhaps not noticing their contents very closely, Mr. Harding and Miss Brittain were resting their feet by her kitchen fire. For some unknown reason, their talk had been halting a little throughout the evening.

"Well, Sally, I suppose I should be going," he said, rising without any show of haste. "The widow will be coming in soon, and we're trespassing. Good of you to tramp around the streets with me. You're a kind-hearted little lady!"

"I fancy she'll sit the picture through twice—if it's sentimental enough," Miss Brittain observed. "I noticed she took some bananas along to sustain her. So don't hurry."

Sally had also arisen, and stood with her hands on the back of a kitchen chair. Her face was paler than usual and her finger tips were white with tension.

"I suppose you are aware, Mr. Harding," she inquired in a low casual tone, "that I should like you to marry me. I do hope you're not shocked by my remarkable frankness; but you should know me by this time. God knows," she trailed on, "there's not much fun in people living alone."

"Yes, the Lord God himself said something pretty much to that effect," Bob agreed, and matters came to a full stop. His face reddened, the blush rising to his forehead.

"Well what do you think about it, Mr. Harding?"

Then she stood still nor moved a muscle.

"The truth is, Sally, that I can't keep you," he stumbled, "and I don't know how in the devil I can get along without you. But if I were in a position," he added after a pause and with some emphasis, "I'd go right after you!"

"Now, isn't that stupid of me?" she inquired. "That's precisely what I've thought you were doing this while back. A man does a lot of proposing before he gets down on his knees. They are not long, Bob, the days of youth and roses——"

"I know that! I know it well!" he told her. "—Out of the mists love comes but soon time closes life's little dream. That's all clear to me, but it's also too damn clear that I'm in no position to support a wife."

"Know any just impediments why these two persons should not be joined together in the holy bonds?" she inquired solemnly.

"No, I don't," he muttered, "but I see a great obstacle and poverty's its name."

"Why, Bob," she inquired, with feigned surprise in her voice, "have you ships at sea? Or merchant ships come home—riding in the roads and waiting the tide?"

"No," he told her, "I haven't any damned prospects at all, whatever."

"Then what's the earthly use of our waiting?" Sally bubbled, the tension in her voice passing. "Summer's gone and it is freezin' now! Back bedrooms you'll find are beastly cold places in winter. All they have is a pipe hole from the kitchen, and the landlady keeps her cooking range dampered. I put

it to you, Bob, that poor folk should economize! The rent we pay for two back bedrooms would supply us with a furnace-heated front room upstairs—with white window drapes, and a gas range, too, to do a little cooking. And I'm a rare hand at the cu′lin·a·ry art! We'd have a comfortable place to sit and play cards of evenings—and we could work at laying down keels for ships of fortune, too. We'd be snug as in God's own pocket, which my granny used to say."

She was sitting with her chin cupped in the hollow of her hands.

"But my job is no good. It's not sure for the winter—not even that!" he protested dully.

"My dear fellow, that's not an obstacle," she advised him sagely, "that's merely an obstruction. I shouldn't make a great stew of worry about that job, if I were you. A smart, strong, willing man in good health can surely earn his share of the keep, somehow. He's more likely to, if he has something to live for. There's a lot of snow to be shovelled. We'll be a sort of mutual insurance society. If we don't altogether starve alone, we'll starve less and in more comfort together. Your wife won't be an encumbrance for a while anyway, Bob. My job looks to be steady."

"But you don't know a blessed thing about me, woman!" he urged, sinking into a chair, his fingers drumming nervously on the table. "You're surely not thinking of taking a husband the way the old woman bought her anthony—in a poke, are you? That's an inadvisable way, I should say, to acquire anything—even a pig. I think you'd better be informed about me."

"But who's going to do it?" she asked. "No use pulling a report on you from Bradstreet's. You're not listed there. I haven't a relative to poke around and get his ears filled with gossip. That wouldn't help either, because a woman never believes what she's told about a man after she makes up her mind to marry him. It's not your reputation that concerns me. No one knows you about here. It's your character I'm interested in. I'll have to live with you. A woman has to discover that for herself."

"I fancy I could supply you with some interesting disclosures," he suggested.

"Yes, and if a man set in seriously to do that sort of thing," she asked, "wouldn't that be a charming way to start off married life? I hope you'd have sense enough not to tell me anything unpleasant. We might even disagree whether a stain was a tarnish or a corrosion, a smudge, a smutch or a smirch. You know as well as I do, a man cannot tell the whole truth about himself because he's not an impartial observer. Is there any sillier sort of

fiction, I ask you, Bob, than a serious autobiography? Can a man criticize himself fairly, and does he know just when to toot his little horn? If you don't mind," she went on gravely after a little thought, "we'll just take yours as read. True, I couldn't write a biography of you not even a decent obituary notice, in fact; but at that, I know you quite well, better, I fancy, than you know yourself. I haven't been sitting on a park bench listening to a lonely man talking about the small change of life without forming an opinion of his character. We reveal ourselves in our slightest thoughts and actions. And I've had you at a distinct disadvantage, Bob. Upon my word, you haven't even been showing off before me. You've just been showing yourself up! I'm satisfied with your character. Why go back to discover the past that made it? If you assure me the past is a closed book with no mortgages or lien notes on you that'll bring trouble knocking at our door, I'll take the damaged goods, and I promise you I'll not rue the bargain. One thing I do know about you, Bob, you haven't a grain of cruelty in your make up and you're not a liar. You'll have forty years, I hope, in which to tell me all about your youthful sins, mistakes and escapades. But mark my words, Robert Harding," she told him earnestly, "I never wish to hear a breath of your past that is not pleasant and comforting."

"You'd better know my right name?"

"Yes," she agreed, quite seriously, "that's highly important for record purposes, marriage licenses, birth certificates and so on. A growing child might be disturbed to discover that his father had been travelling under an alias. I think the handle you use, Bob, is quite a good one; but if it's not your real name, I hope the other is smart and classy, too."

He threw her over his military discharge papers.

"My word, honey," she declared with a chuckle, "that's a peach! The wife of a man with a name like that should be slim and could stand good grooming—should have a distinguished presence at all times and pose with languid grace as she arranges a single rose in a blue bowl. And I promise you as a loving wife I'll never call you Reggie."

"Yes, you could look like a million dollars all right," he told her, "and I honestly believe you could forget about your looks while you were doing it. I wish I could supply you just at present with a good cook stove and a geranium in the window sill."

"But all this doesn't mean," she told him, "that you haven't a right to know about me. I'm a sort of on the bargain counter, and before you take me I'd rather you saw the marks of soil and the damage in the fabric than grieve

about them later. Everyone has a past, you know. Aren't you curious? Shall I confess all, that you may perhaps shrive me?"

"Half a moment, lady!" Bob exclaimed, rising. "You made the first move in this game. You refused to interrogate me and I hate interrogations like sin, —anyway. You sacrificed your pawn and the gambit gives you that advantage in position. In life as in chess, madam, we'll play according to the rules of the game. Go confess your sins to God! I'll not hear them! If I could do it decently, I'd marry you—if you scattered all my illusions. So why scatter them? Do you think, Sally, I want to peer into and violate any person's soul? And I don't wish you to tell me what an outstanding bundle of virtue you are, either! So don't settle down to exalt yourself."

"I think that's real nice of you, Bob," she told him, "and I promise you'll not have cause to regret it, later; but you must always remember that things stand thus between us—at your wish. And, perhaps it's best," she went on, her eyes resting with a fixed gaze on the soiled oilcloth table top. "You know the parable of the wheat and the tares? Life is not one of the seeds of either kind. Life is the field itself. To judge it one must await the harvest. If the good seeds have thrived and the harvest is abundant, what *then* do a few tares matter?"

In the pause that followed, the tension seemed to break down before the loud ticking of the kitchen clock. Bob's eyes had wandered off to the widow's dirty sink with its leaking water tap, but they returned shortly and with a wistful smile to the woman who was waiting.

A shadow from the light above was falling on her full, lovely soft, white throat, and there was a softness and a misty wistfulness in her face which he had not noticed before. It was the look that comes into a little girl's eyes when she sees a big doll that she wants to hug. Yes, a youngster's heart feels like that over his first pair of pigeons—so overwhelmed with the want of them—and in the getting of them—that he can scarcely keep his hands off them. Yes; Bob knew what the feeling was like. There was nothing selfish in such a want. Rather, it was a surging wish to give.

And because of that look on her face, a feeling of sadness crept over him. Things were a bit mixed-up with him,—a messy melange was what he had made of life— And he wanted to be downright honest with Sally because he respected her. Why should he let her back bear his sack of troubles? Yet he feared to hurt her feelings; and through the clouds that encompassed him round about, one thought was shining through, steady, like the guiding Pole—he did not want to go out of the girl's life.

"Pretty notion, this of yours, Sally," he told her at last, "highly impracticable, almost artistic, in fact—but risky sort of business for you, I'd say. However, Barkus is willing."

His thoughts were ceasing to flounder, but in his tone there was an element of surprise that had not yet been drained. He was looking at himself and the scene through the eyes of an outsider. He caught himself doing it. One thing, certain, she was not taking him for anything he had; nor was it romanticism, either, that was moving her. Women grow out of that sort of thing early, and the chin is doubling before it recurs. Some practical notion was guiding her. To understand it, he would need to know what had gone before. But he had refused to listen. So why bother thinking about it? His heart told him what was moving her. She was weary of loneliness—that was it! She wanted someone to do things for and who would cherish her for the pleasure the doing of it gives one. What she longed for was unselfish love and affection. What Sally Brittain was seeking was the soul comfort, the blessed soothing communism of a home.

"Whatever we lack now, Bob," she assured him, "we have hope for our portion—we have—have the future, eh, Bob?"

"Yes," he agreed, shrugging his shoulders, "to be poor in—like the dancing daisies!"

"They rough it through and come up blooming. There's a sobering, steadying quality in poverty—if I'm to judge. So it's a firm bargain, is it?" she asked him seriously. "We make a blind swap, like little boys trading broken jack-knives—and go cahoots?"

"Of course, it is," he agreed with a satisfying certainty in his voice, "to be merry without reason, eh? . . . and suffer without regret? . . . We can but hope for the best," he ended lamely.

"We can not but hope for the best," she told him brightly. "Happiness sometimes proves fellow of rough weather, Bob. Fussy June weddings sometimes lack the wish and the will behind them that make the flowers of life bloom. If we miss presents from the dear in-laws, we'll not have their presence, either, to disturb us. If we feel the need of complaining, we'll have to do as dogs do—yowl our troubles to the moon."

At that moment, in bustled the widow, shaking her smelly skunk-skin boa and complaining that the first snow of the season was falling—and coming down wetter than rain!

"Miss Brittain and I have been waiting here, Mrs. Boniface," Harding informed her in even matter-of-fact tones, "to let you know that we are going to be married. In fact, we're getting married right away."

This blast of news knocked the smug secretiveness out of the widow's eyes. The loss of a roomer was no joke to Mrs. Boniface.

"Well, now, I declare!" exclaimed the landlady. "If that isn't my rotten luck! Here the couple in my upper-front are quitting on me—with cold weather coming on! And coal bills mounting! They're quitting because they *ain't* married—and his wife she's located him! And now my upper-back will be empty too—and for the contrariest reason! I do hope, Miss Brittain, you'll get *proper lines*. I strongly advise it," she added, with an apologetic little smile to her lodger. "They save a deal of shifting about."

The widow kept her romanticism in a separate compartment. The situation had now dried her to the point of silence. She sat staring through Sally, who felt bright spots of colour mounting in her cheeks. For all the expression in the widow's bulgy eyes, she might as well have been gazing into a crystal globe that tells one's fortune. Nasty trick that, some women have.

However it didn't frazzle Miss Brittain. She chatted with Bob for a minute or two and with that entire absence of self-consciousness which the reader admires in a trained nurse who happens to be a pretty one.

The widow was being put in her place and that right in her own kitchen.

"If you'll make us a cup of tea, Mrs. Boniface," Sally finally suggested quite casually, "we'll discuss with you the renting of your upper-front."

CHAPTER XI

Enter Phineas MacIntosh.

On Saturday, the 29th of May 1915, Mrs. Robert Harding punched an office clock for the last time. It was not because of any noticeable change in the family's fortunes or circumstances in life, but for personal reasons solely, that the young woman thus gave up her job; nor was it a case of false signs and tokens either.

That evening Mrs. Boniface of 5 D'Arcy Street had indeed cause to be flustered. In an off season for renting rooms, of all times, she received a week's notice that her upper-front would be vacated. Sally had located a small, partly furnished, frame cottage on the banks of the Aux Saubles; and it was there the Hardings moved to spend the summer months.

An old suburban village, nestling about that river's mouth, had lain for fifty years in the placid serenity of sleepy contentment; but rising tax rates and other painful signs of transition were now disturbing its pleasant dreams of things gone by. The village had throve once upon a time, and was then famed for its girls and its harbour. In its background—and stretching for miles along the river bank—farm lands were already looking a trifle uncared for and di′sheveled. The minds of their owners were so fully occupied with surveyors' stakes and blue print plans of subdivisions that ploughshares along the Aux Saubles were rusting. Among such ex-agriculturists was Thomas Fenton Jardine, who owned the frame cottage which the Hardings rented. The Jardine fields were a visible proof that nothing is more hurtful to good tillage than a speculative flurry in real estate. Daisy patches and thickets of sweet clover were spreading over them apace while thoughts of river frontages, bungalows and country places were drifting through Mr. Jardine's mind. Meanwhile and until his dreams came true, this robust, middle-aged farmer was pottering with skeps of bees and pretending to his wife that he was a busy man looking after a small apple orchard.

Harding thought—and continued long to think—that this cottage on the Aux Saubles was inconveniently situated for the purposes of a man who earned his living working in the city. It took an hour and a half of his time daily travelling in to his work, and he arrived home in the late evening as the shadows were fleeing away. What had possessed his wife to choose that location was long to remain past his finding out. She was moving into a

strange district without a local friend or acquaintance, even. He knew she was country bred, and, of course, that she was anxious to get away from huddled conditions, with its noises and smells, which city life forces on those who are struggling for a mere existence there. She told him she longed for open fields and quiet places, for a little decent privacy and a chance to call her soul her own. But why, he asked, go so far? And why, in any case, to this clapboard affair, which looked to him like a renovated chicken-pen?

"True, it's not much of a river, Bob," his wife told him, "but it makes a lovely sound."

"There'll be other sounds, too," he promised her. "Think of the mosquitoes from those cat-tail marshes, and the old he-loons he-hawing!"

"Anyway, you'll not need a face protector," she told him. That was one of the charming scoldings he was getting about this time because he persisted in growing a beard. Sally didn't like it, and she saw no reason for it, whatever.

"Mr. Jardine keeps three Jersey cows," she explained hopefully, "and I can walk over for the milk. He says we can have one-cow's milk."

"Strikes me that's a lot of milk for one family," he grunted. "What are you planning to do—going to make butter?"

"We'll know it's clean and pure," she assured him.

"Not moving out to the country to drink raw, unpasteurized milk I hope? Those cows may have bovine tuberculosis."

"They act healthy, Bob. One of them chased me clear out of the field."

"Only playing with you," he suggested. "Jersey cows don't like women."

"Fine fish out there, Bob. Right off the fishing boats—fresh as caller herring."

And so it went on till the man was obliged to give over.

"No use trying to argue with a woman," he confessed. "Her head is quite impervious! An argument with a woman is like squeezing a roasted onion. Off her mind pops somewhere, and all a fellow is left holding is the mere skin of a fine, sound argument."

"Which is said in jest," his wife observed, "but is meant in earnest."

That was where his wife's heart seemed set on going; and that, in consequence, was where Robert Harding went. There are times, he had long

known, when a woman's whims had best be humoured; and he had slipped easily into the habit of being agreeable with his wife for the pleasure it gave him, and all this because of a startling discovery he had made while occupying Mrs. Boniface's upper-front. He had discovered, to be brief, that no man is in love with his wife when he marries her; nor can he be. Merely labouring under delusions, that's what a man is, pleasurably inviting and all that sort of thing, but evanescent as the dissolving pictures which the winds assemble in the drifting clouds. Yes, that's it—or something better expressed to the same effect. The point is that at a time when two persons so situated are usually trying desperately not to get on each other's nerves, Robert Harding had been going through the delightful experience of falling in love with his wife.

He had married her because she was physically attractive, which is the way of nature, and because she gave promise of a reso′lute cheerfulness of spirit. He had since found himself possessed of a warm and tender-hearted wife who was also a considerate friend and companion. She had brought to him an unselfish interest in life; and her loyalty and sympathy were rekindling within him the hopes and ambitions of youth. There was a depth and poise in her character that threw a veil over the inner places of the spirit, and this lent her in his eyes the charm and fascination of the unexpected. And he thanked heaven, too, that his wife was not one of the possessive kind. Of life, as of all her gifts, it is untrue to say as Shakespeare wrote of Cleopatra that "She makes hungry when she most satisfies." The very reverse is true. Slightly less than enough is always better than a feast. For was it not written by Lao Tao, a philosopher of the Ching Dynasty, that the wise sup to relish the fragrance, the savour and the aroma of food?

In the hottest of that season's late summer weather, a local weekly, *The Lake Shore Gazette*, contained the brief announcement: "To Mr. and Mrs. Robert Harding of Aux Saubles, a son." Neat, snappy, chaste and right to the point, that birth notice, wasn't it? Further details available on personal application, as it were. Mrs. Harding's laying-in passed, we understand, without arousing local interest save in the breasts of two neighbourhood women who called, bringing black currant jellies and leaving all sorts of sage advices. At this late date, details of the childbirth might interest no one save the son himself. He is now a hospital interne, and thus does not require them. In the exercise of authorial discretion, we therefore leave Sally Harding to have her baby in the heat but decent privacy of her little shack on the banks of the Aux Saubles, and comment on the incident merely to impress forceably on the reader's mind that Robert Harding was now in very

truth a family man with two good and sufficient reasons to be everlastingly on the make.

Also, consider the reading time that is saved! Fifteen pages of solid type have been jettisoned at this point—not including the preliminary and pre-natal matters that have been carried overboard with them. This omission is by crafty design. In every instance, a novel throws a clear light on the tastes and thought-habits of the class of readers it is attempting to attract. Now this story is written for an adult pipe smoker. There is nothing prudish in the make-up of such a healthy vulgar-minded fellow; but he feels an acute pain catching him in the vital midriff every time a writer starts musing and drooling over matters of sex. He doesn't deny that such effeminacy may be art; but on him it has the effect of stale beer unless it carries humour with it. He's the fellow who shifts his seat when someone starts telling indecent stories that are pointless—or too many of them of any kind. So out of kindly regard for our reader, we pass on. This is not to suggest, though, that a novel discloses the character of its author. In these days, let us hope not!

Yes, Robert Harding was on the make. Early the previous winter, he had given over pushing bags around the provision warehouse; and following the peanuts on their way toward ultimate consumption, had shifted over to work on commission as a salesman for the old and reputable but somewhat moribund firm of Phineas Macintosh, Manufacturing Confectioners. With a light delivery body mounted on a Model T Ford chassis, he had since been buzzing around the city streets pushing with vigour the sale of peanut chocolate bars, lollipops, molasses kisses, horehound sticks, licorice strips, all-day suckers, grab bags, peppermint bull's eyes, gumdrop mice with elastic tails, and other delights, ring straked and spotted, which lured in those days the pennies of small children who ran to corner stores which "ourselves, in youth, did eagerly frequent." In such knick-knack shops, women are usually the purchasing agents, and a polite and agreeable young man, who is indefatigable and persevering, but not thrustful, will secure some share of the staple trade, however strong may be the competition. True, both the firm's Ford and its salesman found the going hard at times that winter; but at that, they were knocking out a living.

The Great War had come on the heels of trade depression and unemployment; and its outbreak, the year before, had been followed by a bad winter. The years of the war were thrilling, but the pictures snapped on our memories were blurred then, and are now faded as the phantasies of a feverish dream. For some the war brought wine and roses; for others blood and ruth; but for all it was a time of elemental passions and of wildest

credulity. It would all be over by Christmas, the papers were screaming, yet patriotic women sent their husbands running to try fetch gold from the banks that they might hoard it. The very flower of the age marched away, their faces smiling, to lay down their bodies a living sacrifice on the altars of their country; yet many a man was willing to fight for his country then who was not willing to live decently for it either before the war or since.

As time wore on, fat men, with bad heart action but valiant hearts, shouted themselves hoarse exhorting youths to get into the fight, the while offering stoutly, on their own part, to keep the home fires burning. 'Twas all they could do, perhaps; but their speeches make sorry reading nowadays. Women were soon running the streets screeching at middle-aged men to get into khaki. Many a young man found himself between the pointing finger and the gutting bayonet—and chose the more distant evil.

And then the war boom broke over night, with shell contracts screaming in the air and paper money fluttering down like snow flakes. Prosperity was in spate. Hogs fed and watered, went to twenty-four dollars a hundred-weight; and a girl munition worker would turn up her nose at a pair of shoes priced under twenty dollars. Those were stirring days and the signs were all propitious for a young fellow on the make.

True, such prosperity did not help the sale of lollipops. The youngster who had run joyfully hugging a penny to spend was now become a finical customer with a dime at his disposal. His eyes sought something more delicious and mussy than cheap sweetness, ring straked or otherwise; and this sudden change in popular taste speedily brought to a crisis an unhealthy condition that had long been noticeable in the affairs of Phineas MacIntosh, Manufacturing Confectioners. That old-established firm had remained a one-man business, and its proprietor was now grown old also. Phineas was in his 79th year. By in′dustry and thrift, he had acquired a great store of stocks, bonds and municipal debentures; but arterio sclerosis had come with them, and a short-windedness that was ominous. A simple fall on a stairway might any day break a hip bone and bring on the usual complications that snuff old lives out. He came down to the factory irregularly to mess about with petty detail and get in the way; but his mind was now with the years that had flown, and his heart was ever with his grand-daughter's little children with whom he delighted to romp on granite outcroppings up north, despite the fits of coughing such frolics brought on. Extremes meet; and old age and childhood often get on well together.

But in the conduct of his business affairs, the years had made Phineas MacIntosh a stubborn and intractable autocrat. Cheap aromatic candies had

proved money makers when he and his Maggie were young, and Phineas could see no reason that his plant should not continue profitable in its steady old-line business. The days of handsome returns might be past, he realized that; but he expected to clear at least a fair rental on his property. The old gentleman was now seeing red figures, with snorty disgust, and these were spelling out a sizeable deficit on the year's business.

Naturally, he laid the blame on the inefficiency of those he employed. On their part, they grumbled that he was an antiquated old fogey who tutt-tutted and pooh-hooed any suggestions that were made to him. In any event, the plant was slowly closing down before their eyes; and this dealt a blow to the old gentleman's pride. For some of his employees, it constituted a threat to their family security.

Peter McDevitt, the manager, was a long lean individual, his head chockful of candies and with the stomach of a diabetic. He had gone to work for the MacIntosh firm as a stripling, and after 25 years had worked himself up into a comfortable, cushiony job. He had a young family, now growing costly on his hands, and only recently had moved into a new district where he occupied a stone and brick residence finished in stucco, but fortunately not plastered with a mortgage. It worried him more than a little to feel the old ship settling under his feet.

"What's gone wrong in that territory you're working?" he growled one morning to Harding. "Seems to me you're losing your gimp!"

"I'm pushing lollipops for all I'm worth," Bob told him, "but with youngsters not sucking them, candy shops are not selling them. What more do you suggest I can do? Some new lines might sell, I should say. Fashions change, you know."

"That may be, but we have to sell what we make," the manager informed him.

"Yes, Sir," the salesman replied, "but if you're not prepared to make what people are buying you'll go out of business, and that's apparently what this firm is doing—and in prosperous times, too. A fellow was telling me only last night I could sell a ship load of good chocolates in shorter order than I can sell a Ford body full of all-day suckers and grab bags, and I believe she was telling me the gospel truth."

"Were you thinking of quitting us?"

"No; hope you're not thinking of firing us all—to make business better. You make fair lines, if you'd step up the quality and go after the trade."

"Where does this fellow suggest that you could sell a ship load of chocolates?"

"Where ships are taking things these days. In a live market, of course. They must be hungry for sweet things with all this rationing going on. I don't suppose there's any hold-up on the distribution of soft-centred chocolates. I know my way about there. You better finance me, and I'll get you some profitable business."

"No," the manager told him. "Mr. MacIntosh wouldn't stand for that. He has a disrelish for innovations."

"Then you'd better finance me yourself," Bob suggested. "I'll travel on the cheap, and as I tell you, I know my way about over there. With the orders in our pockets, possibly Phineas MacIntosh will make a deal with us, and fill them. If he doesn't feel that way about it, doubtless some other person will. What's he going to do else? Close the plant down?"

Nothing came out of this conversation at that time, but the matter cropped up again; and a few weeks later Robert Harding was sent. He may have known his way about over there, as he said, but he had to find his way about on that particular business. However, he was fortunate in finding help also, and within two months the old firm of Phineas MacIntosh was gingered up into feverish activity, which was gratifying, indeed, to its elderly proprietor, and proved highly profitable to the gentleman who controlled the orders which put new life into the firm. It was then with Phineas as with an old trout that is slow to rise—when he did, he bit hard. Every change that McDevitt now suggested received his hearty approval. For him the sky soon became the limit; but after fussing around for a while, he tired of the picture, or perhaps found the surroundings too exciting for his enfeebled nerves. For years afterwards, he divided his time between the Muskoka lakes in the summer and the Gulf of Mexico in the winter time. In fact, he went North and South with the swallows. The men who controlled and operated his plant during those stirring years made a deal of money for themselves; and yet it cannot be said, nor should it be suspected, that the Phineas MacIntosh estate was in any sense a loser by his absence. This is not to suggest, either, that there are not critical junctures in the affairs of any firm which is expanding rapidly—in war time or at any other time. Good luck has always had a deal to do with keeping escutcheons and brass signs bright and shiny. It's a crash that breaks eggs and reputations; and if the crash be bad, the melange is usually past all explaining. In finance, a man is put on trial because the game goes wrong.

It was thus that Robert Harding secured a foothold and he proved an agile climber. He had altered his standing. Bob was no longer with the firm—he was of it. The war did well by him. Now in wartime, a man with his wits about him, can make money out of anything—even a handy gravel pit. The finesse is shown in clamping one's takings down below decks securely enough to ride safely with them through the storms that follow. However that may be, Harding proved that much money was to be made out of sugar both in the sack and in the candy carton; and in this connection, the restrictions and regulations the government imposed lent him a helping hand. Glory be, there was no lack of such governmental interference. Because grim necessity had placed the European populations on an enforced war diet, it followed in the official mind that a civil population, an ocean's breadth distant, should also have rationed to it—and in the midst of unexampled extravagance and waste—certain stable commodities of which there existed, or could be produced, an unlimited abundance on the American continent. Perhaps it was the moral effect which the politicians had in view. In any event, to win the war the consuming public in this jurisdiction was restricted in the consumption of such commodities as bolted flour, building cement and sugar. Curious, wasn't it?

Regulations of this character must, however, be framed carefully by officialdom (1) to help win the war, of course, but (2) to keep the factory chimneys smoking. For example, it was judicious to restrict the consumption of building cement to such an extent that a farmer could not secure from regular sources a few bags to mend the floor of his pig pen—that was High Policy of State—but it would have been highly impolitic to stint a manufacturer who used cement in his manufacturing operations. The reader gets the point? The distinction seemed a highly important one. What was the consequence? The farmer bought his cement from the nearest maker of cement blocks—and paid an advance on the fixed retail price.

The same methods and principles were applied in the distribution of sugar. Paper cubes were doled out to diners at lordly banquets and housewives were stinted, but a wholesale confectioner had ample supplies always available if he had cash to his credit and his eyes about him. At seaboard ports there were shiploads of sugar awaiting a purchaser; and these vessels could be kept floating hither and thither until an opportunity presented itself to pass the cargo, and roll it inland for manufacturing purposes. The result was that the Phineas MacIntosh firm had all the sugar its factory could use, and also had sugar to oblige with at a profit. By the time the war was over, settling whatever else it did, it had settled matters for

Robert Harding to the extent that he had by that time not only got on his feet, he was sitting comfortably pretty in a financial way.

In the meantime, he had also cultivated useful business friendships; and the reader will kindly note that after the summer of 1916, Mr. Harding and his family are found living in comfortable circumstances and in reasonable financial security. This is not to say that Harding became one of the rich who are ever intent on further gathering,—and whom Christ pitied. He belonged, rather, to that fortunate class of men to whom the gods with chary hand have given just enough.

A dissertation on the Rise and Undulations of the House of Harding,—and on cultivating useful business friendships and handling one's banker—would clutter the narrative and, in any case, the reader might be tempted to skip it. One hundred and some pages are therefore thrown overboard at this precise point; and, like a ship cleared for action, we put out again on the sea of life. If the reader be curious, he is advised to pull a financial report on Robert Harding & Son, a firm with a brass plate and a suite of offices on the 15th floor of the Boswell Tower. That's the way to get high class and expensive fiction. To epitomise the whole matter while he is waiting for it, that man enjoys a competency—and feels no lack of business friends—who has sufficient of the ready available at all times, and keeps the other fellows doing the worrying.

CHAPTER XII

Enter Mrs. Thomas Jardine.

But prosperity had not broken over the Hardings by the winter of 1915-16. Hoar frosts drove them back to spend those months in a stuffy two-roomed apartment in the city. The building was an old one and in a shabby section; and the other lodgings were occupied by squabbling couples who aired their differences more frequently than their living quarters. Fancy-looking ladies, some of these neighbours were, subsisting on brought-in lunches, and too lazy, many of them, to wash the make-up off their faces. Also, there were other occupants. The rooms were infested with resident bugs, and marauding bands of cockroaches crawled on night-time forays from a moist restaurant kitchen below.

Those were trying months for his mother and for squawling Robert Jr.; but as for Robert Harding, himself, his biographer here notes, again, that it was out of the most adverse etc. . . . that the subject of this brief memoir, owing to his indefatigable etc. . . . rose on stepping stones etc. . . . The fact is, that while living here, Harding hit on an ingenious invention which he should have protected by patent rights. As Uncle Toby would descant on Fortifications, seven even-sized strips of glass (say 3″ x 36″)—fastened on edge and side-by-side on a kitchen table—make six equal passageways. As the sagacious reader will surmise, the inventor was laying out a race track or a course of some sort. At each end of the contrivance, he placed six darkened boxes, each with a small hole to give ingress and egress to and from the runway before it. Harding found his racing stable in the family umbrella; and deposited a full grown he-cockroach, a magnificent specimen, on each of his racing tracks. A sheet of glass laid on top kept them where they were put. A light then flashed into all the boxes at the terminus ad quem quickly assembled the contestants each in his little box at the terminus ab quo. Five persons join in this game of chance, the sixth course being, naturally, the banker's rake-off. After viewing the parade and try-out, each player lays his money on his favorite. All ready? The starter flashes a light at the same instant into all the darkened boxes at the terminus ab quo. They're off! They're off quicker than say scat!! The six race like Billies-be-damned to the little black holes at the terminus ad quem. Of course, the winner takes all. A useful and novel device? . . . Yes! No danger here of a crooked Jockey Armstrong pulling his horse? . . . No! Quick action? . . . Yes! Horses always

ready at the post. T'other end which doesn't matter. Visible certainty, too, that all the bets go into the pot. No pretty blind-folded nurses . . . no bonus tickets . . . no bogus tickets. Also, it's a short walk to get home. But like the proverbial inventor, Bob never made a farthing out of it. He was ashamed to invite anyone up his two flights of stairs that winter; and Mrs. Harding never again lived where the scampering roach could roam. So, like many another business man, Bob Harding lost his racing stable.

The earliest dandelion bloom welcomed Sally back to her shack at the Aux Saubles, where she went to fetch one-cow's milk for that baby of hers. The Aux Saubles now felt quite like home to her. She knew the fishermen at the harbour mouth; and, indeed, she had been out with them in their poke-nose launches to watch the lifting of their herring nets and see the rising sun bounce up suddenly beyond the wide expanse of crinkling water. She knew a market gardener up the road whose hands were gentle with flowers. That quiet little man had let her into all sorts of secrets about growing slips and budding things. He had told her of southerly slopes away over there beyond, of wind-flowers and of bunches of early violets. She thought he was one of the nicest Englishmen she had ever met till Cousin Jack told her indignantly that he wasn't no Englishman . . . no indeed!—he was a Cornish-man. Mrs. Harding also belonged to the Woman's Institute, and to something or other in the stone Anglican church in the village. The rector's wife had been real nice to her. And, of course, she was on friendly terms with stoutish Mrs. Thomas Jardine—so friendly in fact, that that lady had asked that she be called Agnes. In fact Sally and Agnes were quite thick. Every small suburban place is a forcing ground for women's organizations. For instance, there's always a Horticultural Society; and in such places, most anyone, even a summer cottager, can become a daughter of This and a sister of That. Women were going into huddles of all sorts those days, and knitting socks for the soldiers.

The household inventory of the Hardings was expanding also. Charlie Stone had given Sally one of his red setter bitches to keep—a good one with soft eyes, and a coat of rich chestnut brown that matched Sally's hair. Kitty Mulvaney was her name, whelped out of Brannigan by Larrigan Boy (imported). Mrs. Harding had her papers in the house.

As for Bob Harding, he was less a resident at the Aux Saubles than a visitant there; and this continued for long enough. A newly fledged commuter, like the night hawk or the goat sucker, makes his vague fleeting presence felt in the moth-flying hours. True, the local residents saw Bob sprinting with long springy strides to catch the 7.30 morning train. "There

goes that red-headed woman's husband," they'd say. That was all they knew about him or cared, either. Bad as being a Prince Consort—this moving a pretty wife into the suburbs!

Bob knew some of the fellows around the harbour mouth. He rowed a punt down there on Sunday mornings to do a little fishing. Also, he knew his neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Jardine, but for some time only in a business way. The other member of that family he saw for the first time in the fall of 1916. He had strolled over there on a Sunday morning to speak about getting an extra supply of milk. Kitty Mulvaney was getting noticeably heavy; and it looked that all one-cow's milk would soon not be too much for the Harding household.

"That's a bright little kid, Sally, they have over at neighbour Jardine's," he told his wife on returning from his stroll.

Mrs. Harding had been giving the final touches to a dish of curried rice and chicken. She had quite a flair for cooking unpolished rice, and thirteen ways of doing it. Of all of them, her husband heartily approved. It's nice to have one's wife a capable cook and that in a country where half the women make a poor fist at boiling potatoes.

"*Little Claire*, yes, sweet little girl . . . I think," Sally agreed, as she took the rocker and busied herself scratching the cat's ears. "Yes, she's pretty, too; but I don't think she'll ever stand in need to be reminded of that."

Pe·nel′o·pe arched her back, asking for more.

"Sure is"—Bob went on, yawning—"came skipping into the room. . . . Seemed surprised to see me. . . . Looked me over carefully. . . . Told me finally she liked me. . . . Presented me with her doll. . . . Nice direct approach, eh? Quite a friend-maker that! Asked her if it was mine for keeps. What you suppose the little nipper told me?"

"Sure, you have a taking way, Bob," this from Sally who was reaching for an army sock she was knitting. "Did you get title?"

"'Praps yes,' the toddler told me—'prapser no!' A woman's answer, don't you think, Sally? Thought the child was a visitor. Doesn't look like the Jardines—much. So I asked her who her daddy was."

"——Yes?" smiled Sally over the clicking needles.

"Looked me sternly in the eye. Gosh, I could see my stock was falling. 'God made me,' she told me solemnly and took her doll right away from me.

Child's religious training is getting due attention, eh? How old is the youngster—or do you know?"

"Just past five, her mother tells me. Evidently she's out with you now."

"Did you knit her that mauve thing she's wearing?" he inquired. "Looked sort of familiar to me."

"Yes, Curious Eyes—for the child's birthday," his wife told him as she ran a needle through her soft unset hair.

"Yes, nice little child," Bob drifted on. "Hard to believe, I declare, a child like that lay under the heart of your friend Mrs. Thomas Jardine. However, all things are possible! She has no more expression than a turnip. Lord, Sally, the woman has a bovine gaze! Must be so, though. Came in just then and told me the youngster is their only baby. Seems to have a terrible taking about the child—talked of nothing else."

"So that's what you think of my friend's looks, eh?" his wife chided him. "Well, Bob, Old-Thing, I disagree with you. She may be homely, yes, and plain too. Yes, her eyes are light to weakness. Have a fixed expression—like a finger wave. The woman taught school too long! All eyes lack expression, Bob. It's the eyelids do the trick. But I like her. She's a comfortable, friendly sort of woman—always the same. Her wit is not full of corners. What's more, I admire her. . . . She has a taste of pride and she manages her husband nicely."

"He strikes me as conceited—cross-grained, too," Harding observed.

"And so close-fisted!" added Sally. "Keeps a cat's eye on the bread box. No crusts go to waste over there. But his wife floats along—all serene. Gets her own way in the end of every matter."

"That's artistry, I'd say. How does she pull the trick? Some subtle feminine approach, I suppose?"

"Yes," Sally agreed. "First oils the waters with flattery. Strokes the old boy's vanity till she has him purring. Then plays on the conceit and natural contrariness of her Thomas. He has the habit of running down his wife's opinions. That gives her the choice of weapons."

"I see! She plays the devil's advocate, eh? Sure the man will take the other side. . . . Pounce on it like a cat out mousing. . . . So she argues against what she wants, eh?"

"Yes, that's it, Bob. She knows Thomas will crush down her resistance, and force it upon her. His conceit is then satisfied and both sides are

inwardly content. Suppose Mrs. Jardine needed a coat? If she asked for it, she wouldn't get it without putting the man in a huff and stopping his table talk for a month. So she uses finesse."

"How does she do it?"

"Always opens fire over buckwheat pancakes. That's the zero hour. 'I see, Thomas,' she'll say, 'that Mrs. Agnew is putting on airs and holding her head high this season—has another new coat. I declare, such extravagance! Don't see how her husband can afford it!' There's a pause here to let the maple syrup sink in. 'Lucky for you, Thomas,' she'll go on, 'that lady didn't catch you! They all say she had her cap set.' A remark like that usually touches the spot. Thomas sits up and expands his chest. You understand, Bob, the local belles used to give Thomas the cold shoulder. He was too mean to buy a girl peanuts and crackerjack when she went buggy-riding with him."

"What the devil did your friend marry him for?" Bob inquired. "Want the farm or the words 'wife of' chiselled? His appearance is not prepossessing."

"Mr. Jardine thinks he attracts women strangely—that he has a taking way. Every beard-grower has that delusion, Bob. It's gospel truth! That's the L. C. D. of all the beaver tribe. You know—goes in and leaves nothing over."

"Seems he has a submissive wife to prove it?"

"No, Bob, not exactly. Agnes was a school teacher and no longer young. A little declined into the vale, you understand? She had no followers—not one. Thomas was her only chance. She stuck to him like cobbler's wax. What did she want? She wanted a chance to relax."

"Small chance of her doing it over there," Bob suggested. "Her Thomas is given to close reasoning in the smallest matters. His mind's as impervious to ideas as a crutch. Life with him must be a dull, unhappy business. An old maid, she was, eh? I noticed she has little tricks of deportment that grow on an exposed spinster—like lichen on a boulder, don't they?"

"Oh, *indeed*, did you?" Sally protested. "I think she has a sweet character, and it's not sweet insipidity, either."

"Oh, very well! Take her character as read. Take her enco′miums as sung. Buzz along! How does she land that coat?"

"Well, you see, Bob, any wife has to feel her way carefully. A false move at any stage and her game is lost. So Mrs. Jardine proceeds thusly: 'I'm sure, Thomas,' she'll say, 'what's good enough for your wife is good enough for Sadie Agnew, whose husband has a mortgage plastered on his farm. Now, I've worn my coat three seasons, and I'm sure it'll do me *nicely*. All it needs is a little shortening!' Here she pauses. She gives her husband time to feel around for an argument. 'I thought myself yesterday,' he'll come back at her 'that your coat seemed to have something the matter with it—seedy-looking, frumpish, or something.'"

"I twig," observed Harding. "He opens his mouth to put his foot in it. Lucky lady, she now has the Judge as her Advocate."

"Yes," Sally agreed, "Mrs. Jardine is now on solid ground. All she has to do is fight back vigorously. She flies to the defence of her old coat. She produces it as an exhibit. She mentions the defects to brush them lightly aside; but she is honest, Bob, she mentions them all. 'The sleeves might be . . . the length too . . . yes, the fashions have changed . . . but it's warm and I'll *just* make it do.' Thomas observes that his family should look respectable when going out. The wife protests against spending money. The back chat goes on, getting warmer from meal to meal. Finally Thomas Fenton Jardine draws back his chair and puts his foot down. He refuses to go to church again till his wife gets a decent coat. She protests about wilful waste making something. Finally she is dragged down town and gets her new coat. It's not the man's liberality. It's his conceit and feeling of self-importance that turns the trick."

"Is this merely an incident, Sally," Harding inquired, "or is it the daily routine over there?"

Mrs. Harding was placing the warm food on the table.

"Her Thomas is managed thus in every detail of life that is worth his wife's attention," she concluded. "She even got the man to smoke. He's a Presbyterian and things are sure pre-determined and pre-ordained for him around that household. He feels pompous but he's a robot! He's guided by remote control."

"That's certainly an eye-opener to me, Sally. Let's try that chicken and rice. One would never imagine it! Mrs. Jardine has such a soft, hesitant voice! Shows her Thomas courtesy, respect, and all that sort of thing. So deferential, the sly minx! That's a nice little kid, they have."

"Yes," Mrs. Harding confided. "A man may be a numskull and yet make a pass mark in life with a good wife at his elbow—saving appearances for

him."

"He must be a good deal older than his wife," Harding suggested. "Under that treatment his conceit is sure to greatly increase."

"Yes. I understand from her that he's quite up in years but still active," Sally remarked, and the conversation drifted off to other matters.

There was no possibility of the Hardings removing to the city for the winter months of 1916-17. There had been another increase in the family. Kitty Mulvaney had presented Sally with a litter of eleven red setter pups whose Irish eyes were smiling over mischief of one sort or another. Also there was Penelope and her kittens to be considered. So the Hardings rented from Mrs. Sarah Nash a cottage in the village and moved into winter quarters there. A capital self-feeder with mica front kept the frost out of their sitting room. There is no question about it! For Mrs. Harding's front window was a winter-long mass of bloom.

CHAPTER XIII

Enter Nicholas Speers (alias Go-by).

By this time Robert Harding realized that his wife's heart was anchored fast in the waters of the Aux Saubles. He was now driving a little car of his own, and getting in and out had ceased to be irksome. So that winter he bought from Thomas Jardine the five acres on which their summer cottage stood. The parcel sloped pleasantly to the river's brink, and it boasted a clump of wind-riddled pine. By the next fall of leaves, the Hardings had built an all-year-round residence on a sandy knoll where the cellar drainage was good.

The house was neither too big nor too little and it was furnished in decent taste. It was a small country dwelling in stone and brick stucco that Harding had planned; but when the cellar was out, the excavation to his amaze looked large enough for a public institution. Of course, no business man with an ounce of sense will ever admit what his country house cost him to build; but they'll all agree readily that the wife's fussing about during construction added at least twenty-five per cent. for extras. Whatever evil she wrought, Mrs. Harding had seen to it that the house provided comfortable separate quarters for what household help it required. This solved, once and for all, the most trying problem in suburban housekeeping. As for Harding, he had put French pots on the chimneys to make sure the draft would be good. The devil himself couldn't secure a country house an ample supply of water; and a man who can manage an entire railroad system cannot manage to have the pumps at his country cottage kept in working order. In the end, it was a smart-looking, comfortable place, which sprawled as every country house should, and squatted, too, under its overhanging eaves. As we say, it was roomy enough for family comfort, and yet not so large as to appear pretentious. The pine clump behind gave the dwelling a sheltered, homelike setting. Any reader who is curious for further details is advised to drive out and look the place over.

In any event Robert Harding fancied it; and the man imagined that his house-building troubles were now over. In truth, they had only begun. When a man's wife is a natural-born gardener, his five acres becomes a large plantation. A few Dorset horned sheep or a cow and her calf had vaguely drifted through Harding's mind as a solution of his grass-cropping problems. This he found, with the lady, is Error. Nature has an in·gen′ious way of

covering her nakedness with all sorts of unseemly misfits. Bob thus found himself with acres on his hands which he had bought because the price was cheap and to secure privacy; yet weeds came crowding to his doors spreading as bad a mess as motorists leave after their cracker-box roadside lunches. Thus he had the husbandman's age-old problem on his hands—but with the modern difference. The farmer of other days waged a lifelong struggle with grass to be himself covered by grass in the end; but, nowadays, it is the hired man who does all the field work, and a farmer's wife is seldom quite sure of her husband's daytime whereabouts until she has him planted under grass and perpetual care. It's the motor car that has thus done her wrong. Bob Harding, being an up-to-date fellow, handled his field work in the approved modern manner. He hired Robert Wilson to look after the grass problem and to hop around, under Sally's directions, planting per·en′ni·al her·ba′ceous borders. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, thereupon, took up family residence in the small cottage on the property.

Wilson was a greying war veteran who had medals to show for long service to King and Country—but little in the way of pelf or pension. His country did not need him now, and he enlisted cheerfully, and at better pay, in a campaign against weeds. He qualified as an experienced English gardener by doing things his own way and speaking frequently of Kew in lilac time. Harding found he could play chess, and cottoned to him right off.

The reader will be graciously patient over these details when told that Mrs. Robert Harding's urge in the garden business is a highly significant incident in this narrative. One can spot at a passing glance these country places where peace and content have a fighting chance amid the trying intimacies of married life. Where there are no curtains on the windows, peace reigns there always—because there is obviously no woman in residence; but where one notices curtains and no flowers, he knows, offhand, that life in that household has drifted into the doldrums. The fragrance of garden flowers after a rain is an anodyne to many a fretting heart, and their beauty gives comfort to eyes that are soft with trouble's sorrow.

But Robert Wilson's stay was a brief one. This fighting man who had survived barrages laid down by artillery fire, had fallen recently pierced by the shafts of Cupid. He had brought to Aux Saubles a wife who, whilst not a choice flower, was still in her girlish bloom. Like many a veteran in life's battles, a resurgency of youth had broken over Wilson about the time the wine in his own veins was in its last fermentation; and Wilson was not the first gardener to discover that wines of different vintages do not work well together. As a wife, his young bride proved jealous-minded and possessive.

In her bosom there ever gnawed vague suspicions touching her plodding, middle-aged husband. She was not one of those modern pathologically indifferent women of whom novelists seem to know so much, but concerning whom the rest of us are not quite so sure.

Unhappy differences having arisen in the gardener's cottage, they became bruited abroad by an untoward incident which occurred one morning on the kitchen steps of the Harding mansion. At the moment, Robert, the gardener, was adjusting a clothes-line pulley. He was doing so in a lawful manner under the instructions and in the personal presence of Marie, a vivacious brunette, who was a maid in the Harding's household. True, he gave no evidence of unseemly haste, then or ever; but he was out on the lawn where everything was open and above-board. Too open, in fact! Mrs. Robert Wilson observed the doings, and she arrived on the scene with the hurried leg action of a woman who has lost her temper. There was battle smoke in her eyes. Jealousy is the silliest of emotions, but at times it does get a person in the stomach. The wife ignored her husband—merely motioning him aside for attention later—and she pitched in to give Marie a right vigorous dressing down for the bold puss or whatever thing she was. There is something disconcerting in the falsetto voice of an angry, screaming woman; and the maid was driven back to a defensive position on the kitchen stoop. Mrs. Wilson was a fast talker. T'other one couldn't get a word in edgeways. Flail never gave barn floor a sounder threshing. But that didn't content the ter′magant. She made quick motions of closing in for hair-pulling and face-slapping. Marie reached for a bucket of slop water and gave her its contents full in the face. Meanwhile the gardener had been a spectator in the dedans calling plaintively to his Adeline to hush up. He now supported his bedraggled wife from the scene; and Marie rushed in, breathless with indignation, to get her side of the story told first. She had already laid a nice foundation by reporting to her mistress that she had caught the Wilson woman mounted on a stepladder the night before and spying into the maid's quarters.

Mrs. Harding laid the matter before her husband that evening, and her firm expectation was that, as usual, he could set things in their proper places with a smile.

"Have a talk with Wilson and his wife," she suggested. "Don't be too hard on the man; I'm sorry for him. He's got for a wife what my granny used to call *a whither-away*."

"——A whither-away? Strikes me Mrs. Wilson is a 'Come-hither!'"

"No," Sally explained, "a wife who keeps whinning or shouting to her husband: 'Where are you going? . . . I declare! where are you off to now? Can you never stay a minute in your own house? When will you be back?' You know, Bob! The sort of woman who should be housekeeping for a cat."

Wilson was duly cautioned, and scratched his head anxiously as he promised to do his best. He bided faithfully in his house of nights, but the truce was short-lived. Within a fortnight, there was another fracas between the blonde and the brunette. As a result, Marie's olive face required iodine and sticking plaster.

When the tired city business man arrived at his plantation that evening, his household barometer stood at storm. Miss Marie took a serious view of the incident. She did not go so far as to threaten to leave. She liked the place, she told Mr. Harding, and besides she had secured a local steady. However, she didn't intend to have her face disfigured. That might injure her chances in the marriage market. She also intimated to her employer that damages lay against him for keeping a dangerous creature at large on his premises. She paid him the compliment of asking him where she could secure the services of a good lawyer. Harding saw things just that way, too.

Robert Wilson thus lost his comfortable berth; and removed with his Adeline to the nearby village where for years afterwards he wrought in a local factory to support his increasing family. His wife made a daily practice, when her condition permitted, of waiting for her Robert at the factory gate at quitting time, and conducting him safely home through the lures of the village streets. She was ever a busy woman with her eyes on her husband and her foot on the cradle. In her custody we leave him for the moment.

The gardener's job passed to Nicholas Speers, a village roustabout and an early riser, whose acquaintance Harding had made down at the river mouth. The cool of daybreak is the time for anglers and song sparrows, and the most delightful hour of a summer's day. Speers was always on hand first. The two had occasionally indulged in airy persiflage to the gentle lapping of lake waters. Speers always caught fish, which the other sometimes didn't; but Harding never went home empty-handed—which the other sometimes did. Much that follows in this narrative may thus have chanced from the practice Mr. Speers had of chewing tobacco and his trick of spitting on his bait.

Bob noticed right away that Speers was chock full of curiosity but of the harmless sort a sparrow has.

A slight misunderstanding arose between them at the beginning of their acquaintanceship.

"Ah ha! Old slug-a-bed," Speers had saluted him one morning. "Maybe you wouldn't even have a pinch of tobacco to give a fellow?"

"How's luck with you?" Harding had inquired, the while handing over his pouch.

"Bravely, thanks kindly," the other replied, at the time busy knocking the dodder out of his pipe that the borrowing might be more worth while.

"What might your name be?" asked Bob.

"It's Speers I go by," the other told him.

"There, Go-by, you've got another bite," Harding had remarked innocently; and it took Bob so many months to discover his mistake that Go-by because the familiar name that Nicholas Speers continued to go by to the end of his days. It was a handy convenient name, too; because with a township-full of Speers thereabouts, it was next to impossible to distinguish them clearly under their given Christian names.

Go-by Speers was a wizened little fellow who had outgrown his youth and then forgotten to grow old. His father had turned him out early, and Go-by had been turning his attention from one thing to another ever since. He had trapped muskrats, sailed the lakes and driven a hack at Chicago's first World Fair. He was now specializing in still fishing and tree pruning—both of which are light seasonal occupations. So the man was sometimes at odd jobs but more times at the river mouth. In the intervening years, he had collected a curious store of useless information but nothing else that wouldn't go into a hand grip.

But Go-by was not as simple as his clothes. He had a funny story to tell about everybody in the district, and the truth is he could tell more about some people than they hoped anyone knew. He was chockfull of news, always, and at the moment took a delight in detailing the curious doings of city folk who were then acquiring places in the country and pretending they were agriculturists.

"You're one of these city slickers, one of these afternoon-farmers," he remarked to Harding. "What, now, do you specialize in, pigs, Jersey cows, cucumbers or chickens?"

"Wrong there, old-timer," Bob told him. "I have a water lot. I'm going in for bull frogs and bull rushes."

"Makes no difference what you fellows go in for in the line of live stock ——" Go-by observed sagely. "I can tell you one expensive animal you have on your *nice little property*."

"What's that?"

"Answer—a goat."

"How so?"

"City man with a country property is always the goat himself. They have him on the end of a rope and he's butting his head against a stone wall. Yes Sir! I'll tell the world!"

"Anyhow, we make easy picking for you wise fellows out here," Bob told him. "Give us some credit. Please do! We're spending our money out here. Must sweeten up local business."

"Not so!" Go-by told him. "Just rocking the boat. Local merchants spreading out, getting ambitious. Soon all be bankrupt. You fellows will run out of money, too! Bottom to every well, I'd say!"

"Make it there—spend it here, eh? That's what a city farmer does."

"A great sight of people are rusticating themselves hereabouts," Go-by continued. "I call them sky farmers. That's where they grow their principal crops. Not *techy*, are you?"

Harding assured the man that he was armoured like a sturgeon.

"Everlasting caution to me," Go-by observed, "how you fellows make money in the city. Must be as easy as taking candies from a sleeping baby! Look at your neighbour up your line—Horatio Cyril Trask! They tell me he's a financial wizard. Owns forty businesses, they say. When he clears his throat, they say, the stock market jiggles. Guess he has a power of money, too. Yet he can't run a twenty acre farm without making a silly ass of himself! Lord lum'me! Know what he's doing? Gone in for chickens. Yes Sir! And the chickens?—Jersey Giants, yes Sir-ee! Should see the stabling he's put up for those two-legged Clydesdales of his'n!"

"Yes," agreed Harding chuckling, "I guess his morning's Adam-and-Eve-on-a-raft costs him quite a penny."

"Costs him quite a penny? I'll tell the world it does. That bird's too simple to be trusted to do business on his own. . . . Should have a secretary with him. Sure, I could finance rings around him. I heard tell he was looking for a tree pruner. His place is convenient, and up I went to get the job. He

gave me the glad-hand and the high-hat and hauled me through his chicken runs. I'd rather have inspected his cellar! He told me his best eggs are worth ten dollars a setting. I buttered him up with his chickens. Oh man, we had an elegant discussion! I told him they were dandies. Then we inspected the apple trees—thirty of them there were. 'Yes,' said I, 'they'd stand a little touching up. . . . Not much—because they're in fair condition. Trees always will,' said I. Just here and there, a sucker should be taken off. 'What they need,' said I, 'is a Scotch lick.' I offered to do the job by the hour. 'Like *hell* you will,' said he—those are his very words. 'I know *you* fellows. No, what I want,' said he, 'is a *contract* price.'"

"Did you put one over on him?"

"Did I? What sign of a fool do you see on me? If I didn't it's not day yet. 'How would two dollars and a half a tree catch you?' said I. So he offered me two dollars a tree. I closed with him right on the spot. 'Yes Sir!'"

"You handled yourself well," Harding agreed.

"You may well say the same," Go-by concurred. "The gentleman didn't put anything over on me. Show me that line of yours."

Bob held it up in the air for Go-by's inspection.

"Heavens man! Pass it into the hand of me. Isn't that what I asked you to do with it whatever? Howsoever, as I was telling on it of you, I tackled the job next morning bright and early, and I did the job well—and quick as a cat's lick. That afternoon the gentleman had himself driven home to find me sitting on his kitchen stoop waiting to collect my sixty dollars."

"And I suppose he was disconcerted?"

"Dis-con-cer-ted!" Go-by repeated slowly. "To tell God's truth the man was not thankful, and no mistake. It was a down blow that struck his pride and he snorted. 'Hell,' he exploded, 'Didn't earn that much *myself* to-day!' Those were his very words. I let him cool down. 'Perhaps, Sir,' said I, 'you didn't work as hard, either.' That held him for half a wink. 'How do you country bumpkins expect a man to pay you sixty dollars for a part day's work?' he demanded of me—just like that. 'Oh,' said I, 'money is easy come by in the country. Perhaps, Sir,' said I, 'you'll be selling a few settings of hen's eggs.'"

A launch passed through, throwing up waves and disturbing the fishing.

"Now what business has that gaffer to be marauding hereabouts?" Go-by remarked. "He's a bold, impudent pup, that's what he is! It's a dirty trick

he's playing on us: If he does that again, I'll give him enough to remember him all the dear days of his life. He must think his pa is quality. It's a bad right he has to be put-putting round here, this time of the morning, disturbing two gentlemen who are a'fishing. Well it became him not to be bothering us."

Harding decided that better's the devil you know than some other one, and suggested to Go-by, a few days later, that he take on the gardening job.

"I suppose you know something about the business?" the employer inquired.

"What would ail me," asked Go-by, "if I don't know?"

"I'd advise you to be agreeable and press the soft pedal when making suggestions. Never tell a woman what she wants to have done," Bob suggested.

"What a fool I'd be!" remarked Go-by.

"In any case," Harding suggested, "keep off the place if you ever feel the need of getting tight; and if you have a wife, for Heaven's sake, keep her away all the time."

"You may well say that," observed Go-by—"and no mistake."

Mrs. Harding had honest doubts.

"Get along with you, Sally," her husband laughed at her. "Are you not the Corresponding-Secretary or something of a Horticultural Society? You have the technical knowledge and Go-by has the muscles. If he'll do as he's told, he's the first gardener who ever did. You may feel that your flowers are actually your own if you boss the job yourself. You'll find Speers delightful company. He'll give you the low-down on all your neighbours. By-the-way, he tells me the Jardines adopted little Claire."

"But I don't suppose the man knows anything about flowers," Mrs. Harding protested.

"Don't suppose he does," Bob agreed, "but he knows the business end of a spade. If you wish it, I'll teach him the big names for some little things so he'll slip by when you have botanical company present."

"Such as?"

"Oh, coreopsis grandiflora . . . say, or cimex lectularius."

In the work-out, Go-by Speers proved a useful handy man. His mind was of a practical turn.

"If you're going in for growing things, ma'am," he suggested while the two of them were in executive session, "you may as well cultivate friendships at the same time. It costs nothing extra! To stand in well with the community have a nice vegetable garden and be a cheerful giver! No one's dignity stops her from accepting garden stuff from a neighbour—and it's clean bribe money. Don't suppose, Mrs. Harding, you'll need to do it, but to tame a haughty, top-loftical strutter, start in with a few bunches of sparrow grass first thing in the spring. The creature will be eating out of your hand by the time your strawberry bed is reddening. She'll be lending you an old skirt for a scarecrow by the time the cat birds are at your cherries. Yes ma'am! I've known one basket of pie plant and a smile to win the affections of a pernickety spinster. Yes ma'am! It's lovelight that shines up to her battered face through the lattice openings of a rhubarb pie."

A few weeks later Bob asked the gardener, "How are you getting on Go-by?"

"Ah, how but well!" the little man replied. "Never fear, she'll have wagon loads of flowers in her garden come next year. Bad cess to me, if I can't turn my hands to making things grow."

With that, Mrs. Harding went in, enthusiastically, for roses and herbaceous borders. She became a local authority on rose culture, than whom, the rector except, none higher sat. As for Harding, his fancy more lightly turned to evergreens and flowering shrubs which made a shift to do for themselves. As for Go-by, he went in extensively for dwarf wealthys, snows, spies, pippins, damsons, green gages, Montmorencies, and Bartletts. By his fruits every youngster in the district knows him. Also, he proved a rare hand at making nut trees come into bearing, and his secret methods are here made public for the first time. Go-by buried a prowling village tom-cat close at hand to nourish the spreading roots of his callow seedling. At a pinch a pail of potatoes served the same purpose. Black walnuts grew like greased lightning under such treatment, yes ma'am; and budded with the Circassian, they made a beautiful and valuable grove in fifteen years' time.

The Harding place at the Aux Saubles grew into a delight to the eye. As has already been said, it's worth anyone's while to drive out there on a June day to see Sally's pe′o·nies in bloom. Her husband puts on quite a show, too, in the fall, with his tinted hy·dran′ge·as. There's no prettier place for a crow to fly over than the garden old Go-by tends.

CHAPTER XIV

Enter Reverend Solomon Burgoyne, B.A. (Oxon.).

Mrs. Robert Harding now stepped up. In other words, Sally was taken up, enthusiastically. The smart new residence had turned the trick. The way her house telephone kept ring-a-dinging, anyone listening-in might well have wondered how the ladies of Aux Saubles had managed community affairs for years back without Mrs. Harding's daily help and solicited advises. But no one was bothering—it not being a party line. The switch board girls at Aux Saubles—and on the reader's local exchange also—are polite, in·cu′rious automatons when plugging calls through to a house such as the Hardings'. They only listen in on a line that is carrying the sort of news that doesn't get into the local paper. Those bright young things are as clear-voiced as the oriole, and they know, too, where cherries are getting ripe.

So busy did Mrs. Robert Harding become at this stage in her career, that from despair of doing them full justice, we are obliged to pass many of her activities over. We therefore leave Sally to her children, her flowers and her Irish setters, to her house, her societies, her teas and her committee meetings —and, of course, to her bumble-puppy.

Mrs. Harding was delighted with her home and her surroundings; and her eyes showed it. Getting a bit house-proud, was what her husband suspected.

"This whole shooting match is yours," Bob had told her, "but bear in mind, lady, that I'm not in′ven·to·ried as one of the chattels."

His wife did not like the imp′li·cation—or else she did not get it.

"Bob," she told him, "you're in—what's that word of yours—that long legged fellow?"

"In·cor′ri·gi·ble?" her husband suggested helpfully.

Mrs. Harding behaved as many others do. She was acquainted with the entire contents of her dictionary by sight; yet she refrained from speaking to some words save immediately after the pleasure of a personal introduction.

"No, not that one. No one wants to correct you or cage you either. What's your high faluting way of saying a thing's a blazing mystery?"

"In·ex′pli·ca·ble? . . . enig′ma?"

"Ah yes, that's it—in·ex′pli·ca·ble! Nonsense tumbles out of you, Bob, the way a star shakes down light."

"Or a flower gives off fragrance, eh? Not all nonsense though, Sally . . . A breath of truth in it."

"What's the wind in your thought anyway?"

"Many a woman, Sally, makes herself a slave to the things she's proud of. Saw that happen when I was a kid—with the rest of the family playing small parts in a tragedy. Merely suggesting, Sally, that this establishment exists for you and me. We don't exist for it."

"Oh that's what you're implying, is it?" his wife interrupted. "That's not what I was inferring."

"Correct! Don't let us get locked on a tread-mill supplying power to keep things buzzing along—just for the sake of hearing the noise the buzzing makes."

"That would be some hugger-mugger, I'd say!"

"Yes, bad enough," Bob told her, "when one's necessities order him about—that's unavoidable; but it's the devil of a condition when one's possessions take charge of him—that's sheer lunacy!"

"Dogon't, Bob," she asked him, "you're not insinuating, are you, that I'm backsliding or something? *Sure*, I'm with you, old boy, that a home exists in order that his wife may make her hubby com'fy. That's agreed! Hot water bottles, you know, and all that sort of thing. But Mr. Hubby is backsliding pretty fast, in my opinion, if he doesn't take an interest in his home because of the pleasure the doing of it gives him. Robert Harding! I'm going to give you some of your own medicine. What was it you used to tell me in your sentimental days down on D'Arcy Street?—

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."

"Yes, out of hell's despair," Bob repeated nodding. "Yes, I know that, Sally. In fact, I've seen it done. *True*, love is given that self may be a little annulled. But afterward, it may be a life's job to keep a healthy blush on the face of the humdrum and the commonplace. Suppose that requires steady matrimonial habits, eh?"

"Don't mean to tell me, Bob, you're losing the illusions? It's to replace them that those carpet-slipper habits are brought into play. As for me, blessings brighten as they fly away."

"But, Sally, I should say——"

"Oh, please stop *butting*! I have the testimony of a good conscience."

"Gracious, Sally! What now have I done on myself? Have I vexed you? I give you full credit for a smart home-maker."

"It's a pity you wouldn't, indeed! Things are sometimes said half joke—but all in earnest."

"Why make a stew about nothing?" he asked her with a smile. "Let's cut this ba′di·nage! We could never play Darby and Joan, could we? My present care, old thing, is to keep from my wife my pride in her."

So we may comment that Bob Harding beat a judicious retreat and got himself back into more comfortable diggings—where he stayed.

Bob Wilson's domestic afflictions had left Harding short-handed for chess, but it transpired over a dish of tea, a few days later, that the Cloth was not averse to a test in that game of pure skill. The Reverend Solomon Burgoyne, B.A. (Oxon.), who as incumbent in the village church of St. John, The Martyr, combined in his single person the offices of rector, curate and general trouble-fixer, had chanced to catch his parishioner's tall husband at home the first time he paid a pastoral call upon the new house at the scraggly pines. The Reverend thereafter fell into the habit of dropping in occasionally to pass a quiet evening over the draughts-board.

Burgoyne was a tall man, and at that time scarce beyond the prime of life. Forester, the artist, did him in oils a few years later; and we see there a gentleman in black, comporting himself with the air and dignity of his ghostly office—collar on back-side front, of course, a slim figure, of graceful carriage, underfleshed—if anything, but suggesting vigorous suppleness of muscle, strong, thick black hair, thin-lipped, Roman nose, and with a slight hint of pagan drollery about the eyes—but of anxieties, too. The parson had the limber tongue and ready wit that often travel with the office. During tea cup tittle-tattle, he could make shrewd thrusts but inclined a degree or two toward the fa·ce′tious on such occasions. He performed with rare distinction and charm at weddings and church bazaars. Also, his Sabbath morning exhortations were commendably brief though not delivered in the sleepy see-saw tones of a drawling curate. In the long daily walks which he took (D. V. and weather permitting), his brier pipe was his

only companion and the reek of it was on his dying breath. In his ordinary bearing, there was a slight suggestion that he was amid those whom he was not among.

He had ministered at Aux Saubles for so many years that the villagers accepted him as one of themselves. Outside his own particular fold, he was regarded as the kindly, quiet, courteous gentleman which he was. Within it, he had survived some cap′tious criticism. A cheery word he had for everyone as he strode along, and he took a friendly interest in his neighbours, their children, chickens and gardens. He was the local authority on rose culture and bees; and had whittled walking sticks innumerable, which he had given away as cheerfully as the poor share their poverty.

There wasn't a local boot-legger or shebeen keeper, not one of the twenty-three—and for most of them, by-the-way, Friday was a banyan day —who did not respect the Anglican clergyman and trust him to mind his own business. The result was that a word dropped by him would dry the district into a Sahara, over night, against any fellow who was making trouble for himself and knocking his wife about. As to his personal habits, Burgoyne was prompt in keeping his appointments and sensitively scrupulous in paying his store bills.

Of course, there was the other side to the moon. Yes, there always is. It's a soul-trying job a married man has, who is in charge of a small, conservatively-minded church which depends for support on voluntary givings. Its parishioners who have stout loyalty to the Church, usually, have lean purses, and its wealthy ones often wish their religion diluted and are touchy and petulant as children in the help they contribute. The Aux Saubles was obviously over-churched. So many branches to religion there, as Go-by would say, that the gnarled old tree had little strength left to go into fruit. Life for such a shepherd becomes a continuous stretching of a small stipend to cover ever increasing obligations and a continual routine of squirting oil on institutional gears that are too worn to mesh smoothly. Let us hope that in that heaven which the meek shall inherit, no committee meetings will be thought necessary or deemed advisable.

At this time, its affairs were proving unusually trying to the rector at the Church of St. John, the Martyr. A deucedly awkward *faux pas* had recently got him in wrong with a high ecclesiastic dignitary. On the arrival in the village of his lordship, the bishop, who came to conduct a confirmation service, the barmy old sexton, who was officially the ringer, had clean forgotten to toll the church bell, and the noisy to-do that His Lordship made about it had thrown the procession and everything else out of kilter. For all

his dignity, the bishop was human enough to lose his temper on occasion and let all and sundry know it. On top of that, the vestry had recently replaced the organist; and the new broom had swept some cracked voices out of the choir. There were tears, and protests and even vestry meetings over it. As is the usual thing in a choir rumpus, some active ladies in the congregation had entered the fray and were egging their husbands on. It takes an Irish Roman Catholic priest to handle a parish. He silences all crowing hens and handles trouble makers the way a potter thumps his clay. And, he has no wife to worry him half to death.

The Rev. Mr. Burgoyne was keeping a smiling face toward the world, but at the moment his spirit was still further oppressed with family cares. His wife had become what is technically termed a tripper. The climacteric was on; and when present in Aux Saubles, she was always on the point of going away somewhere. The rector mentioned her frequently—and with a sigh—to regret the absence of his dear lady—always weaving in something about her delicate health. His parishioners suspected that the separation proceeded from choice; and one lady whose husband's purse was the back bone of the church, had even rallied the incumbent gently on this delicate subject. To give a thumb nail sketch of the rector's family affairs, his hobble-de-hoy sons were at boarding school and his dear wife was travelling thither and yon for her health's sake. The particular dickens of all this was that the schooling, and tripping and consulting of nerve specialists was costing a deal of money, and the provider of it was living without the comforts of a home.

However, the rector nursed his melancholy in his study and aired it on solitary walks; and thus always faced the world with a smile and a jest. He did no complaining; nor shall we take sides. We merely join the parson in attributing unavoidable human misery to the inscru′table dispensation of divine providence; but we venture the suggestion—in an aside—that at this particular time the Almighty was giving His servant, the Rev. Solomon Burgoyne, B.A. (Oxon.) a particular bad break.

Nor is this remark made in any trifling spirit or to cast the slightest disrespect on the reverend gentleman's sincere religious faith, which is worthy, as we take it, of all commendation. He was loyal to his church, and all it taught, because it had been for centuries the church of his fathers and stood for those things that make life ingen′uous and noble. He accepted her doctrines and all her articles, and this for the reason that in his days of honest doubt he had found nothing less faulty or more satisfying with which to replace them. He faced modern criticism with the bland simplicity of a

faith that inquired kindly whether in the end these things *re'al·ly mattered* much? "Science has grown so great", to quote from one of his short discourses, "that it has now become too humble to be antagonistic to religion; and religion should now, as ever, concern itself with the keeping of the heart right and with the internal beauties of the soul." This is not to say that he went girt about with unshakeable certainties in the presence of the mysteries. It is no more than saying that some men can get along with as little discussion of theology and doctrines as Christ did—who openly taught, at all times, that religion is not a manner of thought but altogether a way of life. So the twilight of du·bi′e′ty did not fall upon his troubled spirit. He believed the Gospel as he preached it; and this made his preaching simple and homely—for no man can wax eloquent who is not so wrong as to get warm over it. In any case, Burgoyne's life was a living proof that he was not living for himself alone.

His feet had been taking the parson on long, fast walks to let him breathe-in content through the lungs and thus throw off the megrims. They now got into the habit, in the spent of the day, of dropping in to rest themselves at the Hardings, where their owner found a quiet retreat from the cares of his little world. He breathed a welcome in its air; and he felt it was extended to him as a neighbour and not as the local clergyman. So he could lay off his clerical dignity while in the act of hanging up his hat. He felt at home.

From the first, Bob Harding was glad to have the man drop in. He found something quaint and refreshing in the parson's turns of mind and points of view. Mr. Burgoyne's bent was constitutionally conservative, of course—as one might expect, but so much so as to make him, at bottom, a thorough-going radical. He had an odd way of looking at everything so reasonably that no heat was generated in his mind during the process; and Bob had observed, a while back, that temper is no more a guarantee of sincerity than rudeness is of honesty. In his opinion, the most prejudiced, self-centred and untrustworthy creature in the world is an angry enthusiast—or an angry person of any kind, for that matter. It is for this reason that reformers so often fail, and reforms so seldom succeed.

Bob was anxious, of course, to act the courteous host and do the right thing under the circumstances; but he had trouble at first in taking his visitor's measure.

"I'd offer you something to drink, Mr. Burgoyne," he remarked the first evening, "but we may not have anything that would be acceptable."

The rector cleared his throat with a sympathetic noise. Bob could see by the man's eye that the reverend was interested and quick on the up-take.

"Perhaps," the visitor suggested, "you're anxious to enjoy life in the days of its fullness? You don't wish, perhaps, to dull the senses? But when you are grown older—a little farther along the way—you may wish at times to break the crust that is casing you in. I've always been abste′mious myself, Mr. Harding; and in these later days, perhaps, a little too much so. The truth is, with present prices, I can't afford to be otherwise."

"What we have, though," Bob went on, "is a butt of sack. I think it's a good sherry . . . it comes from Cadiz. If you don't mind, Mr. Burgoyne, I should like you to sample it. I have read somewhere that the English clergy produced some fine things on port and sherry—amongst them the King James Version."

Mr. Burgoyne was not averse, and sipping the wine he pronounced it excellent; and excellent, indeed, sherry always was, and is, in diffusing a cheerfulness and sunny blush over the landscape clear to the shut of the sky, and in night time farther still—right to the caverns of the sun.

The point of all this, for our story, is that Bob Harding and the parson quickly ceased being mere acquaintances to become warm friends and grow to be closer ones. The butt of sack is mentioned as a beneficent influence and not to preach a temperance sermon upon it—and certainly not because either Bob or the parson ever stood in need of hearing one. The reader knows that people in this climate, unless shaken up or down, act as stiff as a bunch of some other body's second cousins in on a visit. Men often go through life encased in reserve as in a coat of mail. Two men may meet daily for a generation and yet remain strangers to each other. They may be partners in business for a quarter of a century, or teach in the same college, and yet not know one another. There's many a father and his growing son who feel affection, and yet it's quite beyond them to enter into a frank intimate chat. They should go and have a few drinks—even get tight together—or go on a fishing trip or some demned thing or other. It requires sickness or affliction or disgrace to crack the shell on some people. In this world of sorrow and of care, a person who does not feel and show a genuine friendliness should climb up a post and sit in his tub.

"A choice wine, indeed," Mr. Burgoyne remarked. "Like everything else in life, good until it is abused. Ah! It warms one's epigastrium, doesn't it? Abstinence with so good a wine present, might be thought by some to be a

self-denial. In my opinion, such self-denial is merely an indulgence of one's prejudices."

"It's surely courteous in a guest," Bob told him, "to speak so highly of a host's liquor—especially when he has no choice to offer. I hope I'll not have to put up a brush to get you here to sample it again."

Mr. Burgoyne spoke of Xeres, the village in southern Spain from which sherry gets its name, and of the bodera entered through a garden in which the casks of dry wine are stored. He ventured it as his opinion that one of the great curses in the English speaking world was the deplorable drinking habits that were introduced into the Island with the Declaration of Rights and the restoration of the Protestant Succession.

"As for beer," he remarked, "it was first brewed in Egypt as a drink for slaves; and it remains a brain stupifier and a so′porific."

"Yes," Bob admitted, "a little of it makes one bilious, and enough of it to flush the system leaves me blinking like a stupid owl."

"True," the visitor agreed, "the brain goes barmy as the brew itself. Up go the voices as the malt goes down! Somehow things cease co-ordinating in the normal way. One must be soused to understand what beer drinkers are trying to articulate about."

". . . or to put up with them," Bob added. "I can understand a woman's disgust when her good man stumbles in, a silly grin on his face and a ravenous appetite in his disordered belly. However, beer's a fine thing to show up a fellow's self-conceit."

"It's a fine thing, too, to make men contented with their lot and their appointed station," the rector added. "A thriving brewery is a powerful social stabilizer. Give the poor their beer and they'll put up with a deal of misery and poverty."

"But what had King William of glorious memory to do with our drinking habits?"

"Not the Dutchman," the parson corrected. "It was his sister-in-law Queen Anne, who, good woman, was pickled in gin during a sizeable portion of her glorious reign. Port and sherry had been the English gentleman's drink for centuries—wines pressed out of sun-sugared southern grapes and matured out of pure foaming must. If he over-indulged a little, an Englishman—like Kit Marlowe—felt elevated; in other words, he got tight. Queen Anne's ministers enforced sumptuary laws against wines and encouraged the consumption of distilled liquors for high purposes of state

and revenue. Since then, the Crown's subjects have been applying hot and rebellious liquors to the blood. Whisky and gin inflame the lining of the stomach and irritate the tissues of the brain. Consider, also, what they do to the liver! When men over indulge in them they lose control of their leg action. In Queen Anne's reign, drunken carousals became the order of the day in polite circles. A small boy was stationed under a gentleman's table to assist guests who passed out and slid under. His duty, it was, to unloosen their stocks to prevent them from choking to death. Nothing more futile than laws, Mr. Harding, for improving individual character and social customs. Too many laws, Sir! Too many laws! Attempting to do overnight what centuries of living can scarce accomplish—and often smashing to smithereens what the centuries have slowly won."

CHAPTER XV

Enter Miss Lucy Merle Wharton.

It was during the winter months of 1919-20 and while the snow was granular and crunchy under foot, that Harding made a discovery concerning the affairs of their parson which would have solved a problem that lurked in the minds of many of his parishioners. What they could not get through their heads was how Rev. Mr. Burgoyne kept his family affairs going on his meager stipend. Must be receiving help from his connection was what some of them surmised; but they refrained from opening the matter up with their pastor—being well content, for personal reasons, to let affairs ride as they were.

The rector of St. Johns was stretching his legs before a crackling log fire in the disreputable snuggery which Bob Harding maintained abaft the basement as his private keep and stronghold. The blustery weather without and the warmth and comforts within made it a time for confidences; and in a thoughtless moment, Mr. Burgoyne had mentioned to his host that he had been working like the devil these past few weeks. What at? was a reasonable question to follow after; and the visitor had drifted on to say that he had been finishing another book and now felt relieved that the tiresome and irksome job was over and done with. It was thus quite incidentally that Harding discovered that in the person of the Rev. Solomon Burgoyne, B.A., he was also entertaining Miss Lucy Merle Wharton, the author of the Ro′xana Series, a popular line of stories for girls of the 'teen age. Mr. Burgoyne then suddenly recovered his desire for secrecy; and hastened to say that he wouldn't have this matter known locally for any sum of money. In fact, he continued, his dear wife was not aware of it. That, he went on to say, was the reason that it wasn't known. Bob assured Lucy Merle that mum was always the word for him where ladies were concerned.

"But what the devil do you know, Burgoyne, about girls of the 'teen age?" he enquired, his face full of downright honest curiosity.

"Frankly, I don't know a blessed thing about them in the flesh," the author admitted with perfect composure. "I don't need to. Every book of that character should be founded on *Little Women* as every sermon should be anchored in Holy Writ. The closer either of them sticks to the original, the stronger it usually proves to be."

"I'm not so sure about the first part of that," his host suggested. "A successful book of that sort is usually smart enough to appeal to grown-ups. I've read several such."

"My difficulties are of a more practical nature," the author explained. "My present trouble is that I wrote my heroine out years ago—yet I have to get a fresh book out on her every now and again to make a little money. I've put my lovely Ro′xana through every possible combination and permutation, and, *you understand*, I can't marry her off without making an end to the series. I had a bubbling flowing well, Harding. It ceased to flow. I manned the pumps! Now it has gone dry, and I'm deep-drilling for water."

"Perhaps your heroine wasn't young enough when you first took your pitcher to the well?" Bob suggested. "If I were starting off a series like that, I'd open up with her rising five. And, by George, I'd base it on personal studies I've made! Yes, I'd start in while the youngster's panties were showing. We have an eight-year-old who is running about here half her time . . . the little Jardine girl. Looks as though my wife has adopted her. I'm getting quite an insight into the developing girlish mind—and let me tell you, Mr. Author, I don't find it so simple! Funny part of it, the young person has adopted me. From the first, I was the one who was kept busy—

Telling tales of the fairy who travelled like steam
In a pumpkin shell coach with two rats for her team.

This sort of thing has been going on for three years. My heroine is eight or nine now. She goes fishing with me down to the harbour mouth. Jumps into the water like a spaniel pup. Comes home messy and gets me into all sorts of trouble. Calls me Bob and orders me around. I'm like old boots for her! She tells me she intends to marry me when she grows up. I'm supposed just to be waiting. I asked her what we'd do with her Aunt Sally. I thought that a hard nut but I found she had cracked it already. 'If Aunty Sally doesn't like it, you and me can move into the cottage, can't we, Bob?' was her heartless solution of the triangle. 'Don't breathe a word about it to Aunty, just now,' I cautioned her. 'Your Aunty might turn us both out before we're quite ready to go.' I gather she intends raising quite a crop of children. They're all going to take after her, I understand. They're all going to have red hair—no freckles though. But perhaps my eight-year-old is already too advanced for your Ro′xana Series. I find they reach the designing age early, these heroines of the flesh; and they form as strong prejudices as grown-ups do."

"Surely not at the age of eight years?" the other doubted.

"I'll explain. My wife would break her neck to please the child; and yet she has clearly lost her stand-in with her protégée. It all arose out of this community clinic with a basin of tonsils looking like bloody cat's-meat. You know, they tell the youngsters they're being taken to a party. The poor little devils come out of the anaesthetic with sore throats and a pain in the pin′ie. My young heroine thought her Aunt Sally had played a dirty trick on her; and she'll never forget it. It doesn't pay to lie to children unless one is doing it to give them what the youngsters find is a pleasure. Their minds are too simple and direct. They're like a red setter. Once one loses their confidence, no amount of fussing over them will completely regain it. By George, that applies to others than mere children, too, doesn't it?"

The chat was interrupted at this point and Harding went upstairs to see about something or other.

"Why not go on and marry your demure Ro′xana off?" he inquired on his return. "You could then write a morbid neurotic novel. They're all the go, they say. You know,—repressions, defeatism, and all those sort of things —the blisters after the war. You could put your sweet Ro′xana through all the emotional demi′quivers. Your well, then, would never run dry."

"No," the author confessed. "I haven't the necessary mental and emotional equipment. I shouldn't attempt it! The only person in this district who might be able to do that sort of thing with great éclat is a lady in the village—a Mrs. Wilson. Her husband works in the factory. She has the emotional reactions, and could be her own heroine; and I declare she's su·perb′ in matters of detail, which seems so indispensable in a novel. I had her in to see me this morning. I presume she called seeking ghostly comfort and advice on some personal problem. I say I presume, for the lady talked for an hour and a half straight and I didn't even get an inkling of what her problem is. That's what I suppose we might call the Introduction. I called it volume one for short, and I begged to be excused for purposes of lunch. No doubt, the narrative will be resumed in the morning. A person with that mental twist could write a novel. It would be an epic of detail, but I fear I'd find it slightly fatiguing. Indeed, perhaps she's trying one out on me? I have a sneaking suspicion that she doesn't come for advice. She probably comes because she wants an audience. However, it often proves helpful to let a woman talk herself out a little way."

"I fancy," Bob observed, "that God never produced a woman who could talk herself out completely to her own satisfaction. Yes, I'm slightly acquainted with the lady you mention; and I know her afflicted husband quite well. I'll bet she could use up 200 pages telling about having a baby;

and if I'm not sadly mistaken, she'd work in a seduction as soon as she got her scenery and stage furniture properly located. She'd make the noises over it of a cat-eating fish. There's no danger, though, of her trying that Potipher's-wife plot in a modern setting. No man, in her opinion, is to be trusted—ever."

Mr. Burgoyne here made the preliminary motions of starting out upon his way home.

"Just sit where you are," Bob suggested. "When the wife brings the car home, I'll drive you down. Tell me, do you make much money out of those books of yours? I suppose that's an impertinency; but I ask to inquire—as the Chinaman says."

"Make much money out of them?" his visitor repeated with a lift in his tone. "Of course, I don't make much money out of them! A fellow can knock more money out of a good rural mail route than many a novelist makes whose name is well and respectfully known in the literary world—and, of course, I'm not in that class. I'm sure, though, of always making two hundred dollars a year out of a detective story."

It was then that Mr. Harding discovered, further, that he was entertaining M. Philippe Le Mieux, an author whose principal character, Gaston Le Brun, had figured for years with great credit to himself in solving a series of stupendous mysteries to the tune of about two thousand copies a year.

"But what does the rector of St. John, the Martyr, know about criminals and crime detection?" Bob inquired from Monsieur Le Mieux.

"Nothing whatever!" the great author confessed with a chuckle. He was chockful of complacency and in a complaisant mood also. "'Tis better so! Knowledge might cramp the writer's style and scatter all his glamour. A mystery story, my dear Harding, is in a class with a fairy tale in its disregard for the probabilities and of all laws physical and otherwise. However, it always ends with a heavy moral homily. Yes, the crime is always solved by hook or by crook, and the guilty one is left a corpse *felo'·de·se* or a prisoner on his way to his account."

"I'm afraid your moral homilies are manuring ground that does not need them," Harding commented. "I've met some high class criminals in my day, and I never ran across one of them that would open the pages of a detective mystery story. Bilge water—they regard them. Your readers, Burgoyne, are timid law-abiders, I'd say. Not one of them would dare keep a dog without a current license tag. Detective stories have no more relation to actualities than my dreams have to the happenings of the day before."

"Nor are they supposed to have," the other added in perfect agreement. "What sort of stories do you like to read, Harding?" he then inquired with interest.

"Something at least fifty years old," Harding told him. "I trust my wife, Mr. Burgoyne, to keep this family abreast the times in modern fiction. That woman would make a capital book reviewer! Sally's as voracious as a gull, and in one night, believe me, she can skim the spindrift of five hundred pages in her swift flight from cover to cover. My mind travels slowly. I could never keep up the pace."

"Ah, I see," observed the parson, "you let time do your *bolting*, eh?"

Harding dutifully chuckled at that—whatever it meant.

"A book must have merit, don't you think, Burgoyne, to weather half a century and then burst out in a cheap reprint?"

"Such a survival may be purely a for tu′itous matter," the parson suggested. "The chief attraction an immortelle has may arise out of the very circumstance that it is an antique."

"How many of the current books, think you, will be available for a reader in twenty years time?" Bob inquired.

"None of my pot-boilers, I assure you," the parson confessed, and the thought was not causing him any discomfort. "Ah well," he went on cheerfully, "it's a wise provision of nature that men shuffle off the stage to make room for others, and that their works decay with them."

The Harding vehicle was now returning to its fold, and the pair were preparing to be on their way.

"So you have a flair for old books?" the parson commented. "The next time I'm up here, I'll bring you a simple story that was written a long time ago and within a few miles of where we are now standing. I venture to say it's a book that will be read by the thousands and be spoken of by millions of people, yes, a thousand years hence."

The next time the rector of St. John's called at the Harding residence, he brought a parcel of books with him, and he then suggested to Bob that he start in and read "A veritable account of the Martyrdom and Blessed Death of Father Jean De Breboeuf and of Father Gabriel L'Allement, in New France, in the Country of the Hurons, by the Iroquois, Enemies of the Faith."

"Never heard of *The Jesuit Relations*," Harding commented.

"It's high time you did," Mr. Burgoyne told him. "They're over two hundred and fifty years old; and with motor transport the way it is, the scene of their gripping tragedy lies immediately at your back door."

Of course, Mrs. Harding, who was an omnivorous reader, gave *The Jesuit Relations* a cursory professional glance in the week or so that followed and, commenting on them to her husband, one quiet evening, she remarked that she didn't get any particular merit in them. As might be expected of a husband, her husband disagreed with her.

"Strikes me, Sally," Bob told her, "those Jesuits were smart fellows and shrewd observers. I'm quite taken with their letters. They tell of village life as it was lived in this territory by twenty or thirty thousand Indian hunters and corn growers while they were still in their native state and before European influences had changed them in any way. It's quite thrilling to me to get a close up view of just how our own ancestors lived back in the Stone Age before there was an Irish or a Mediterranean Sea, or an English Channel, either."

"It's a gross, horrible picture," his wife informed him. "The only thing I find admirable in the Huron Indians is that they detested a beard on a man. They thought it a sign of lunacy; and the men took all sorts of pains to pluck the hairs out. I marked that passage for your attention."

"I find they had some mighty fine qualities that the centuries have since been burning out of man."

"And what were they, pray?" she inquired.

"To begin with, they were hos′pitable. They were generous sharers with their friends; and I notice that if one child in a Huron village went hungry, all the other children were hungry, too. Do you suggest, Sally, that those virtues prevail to-day in this territory where the Huron villages once lay?"

"But did you read of their disgusting feasts and the way the guests gorged themselves?"

"Yes, but I know a fellow in Aux Saubles who boasts that he can drink nineteen quart bottles of beer in one evening; and you know as well as I do, Sally, that people hereabouts, under an enlightened dispensation, are digging their graves with their false teeth. Plain gluttony—cramming a worried stomach with rich foods—is the devastating curse of our age. Judging from the advertisements, I should say that keeping congested traffic in motion on the alimentary canal is the most pressing, present, human concern. 'Twas

only when empty that it bothered the Indian; and he had his own teeth available to eat his last meal on earth."

"But their morals! Bob, they were appalling."

"Yes, and the Jesuit Fathers went right into details, too, didn't they? They were almost as strong on details as a person writing a novel."

"They were even trading wives," the lady pointed out.

"Yes, but they thought that was good form and quite all right," her husband told her. "I understand, Sally, there is some wife trading going on at present around the Aux Saubles."

"You hear of that sort of thing down in those low resorts which you frequent," his wife told him.

"Not so, Sally," he protested. "I have it on the highest, most unimpeachable authority. Go-by tells me that Father Burke spoke of it last Sunday morning at the Altar after second mass. Go-by tells me the priest gave the faithful a powerful blast. He told them that he had been labouring in their midst for years and that his heart was broken over conditions which he observed with his own eyes,—conditions, he went on to say, that would be a disgrace to benighted, ignorant heathen. Yes, he said that he had taken a walk out the other evening with his little dog; and what had he seen? He had seen a lady who was then present before him being assisted home in a helpless condition by a Protestant gentleman. He had also observed, he continued, two gentlemen out with each other's wives under circumstances which, to say the least, were more than highly suspicious. There is an important moral difference, Sally, which you should bear in mind. When people commit these offences nowadays, they *know* they are doing wrong. When the Huron Indian committed them he was following the approved custom of his times. An Indian would not even dream of breaking the laws and customs of his village. It meant utter and final disgrace for him. He would die, rather, in flames of torture with his death song in the air."

"I've never seen anything wrong with the people at Aux Saubles with whom I associate," the lady observed.

"Oh haven't you?" Bob asked her. "I noticed in a recent issue of *The Lakeshore Gazette* that the marriage had been solemnized of Miss Marie, the maid you had working with you in this house."

"Yes?"

"And I read in the very next week's issue of that journal that Marie had given birth to a baby. Quick work, eh?"

"Yes, I'll say that!" Sally admitted. "That was done faster than Marie ever did anything while she was doing work for me."

"What I particularly admire in these Jesuit priests, Sally, is the fact that they were *gentlemen*. They were ever patient with the rude people among whom they spent long years in privation and enduring untold miseries—cold and hunger—smoky bark wigwams—dogs and mis′chievous children—persecution by their religious enemies, the shamans—squalor and ignorance. Through it all, they were considerate of the feelings of their hosts; they were always charitable in their judgments and even merciful to the follies of others. They did what kindly acts lay within their power, and as gentlemen, they made little of those services while in the very act of rendering them. I'm not even fit, Sally dear, to discuss the heroism of these priests who were walking in their Master's footsteps, but I am capable of appreciating their gentleness and good manners."

CHAPTER XVI

Enter J. Ephraim Brown, J.P.

In the summer of 1922, the eminent author suddenly broke his habit of swinging in to loaf at The Pines, an incident which passed unnoticed for a few days, but which finally piqued Bob's curiosity. So within a fortnight he stopped at the Rectory, on his way home, to inquire what had befallen the reverend gentleman. With an obvious hesitancy, Mr. Burgoyne explained—and he was shame-faced about it—that his frequent, informal visits at The Pines had given occasion for idle and malicious gossip which was distressing him exceedingly. It was apparent that the clergyman was hurt and felt deeply humiliated. On being pressed for details, he supplied them, and went on to say that the gossip had been brought to his attention by a member of his board.

The affair struck Harding as slightly amusing.

"Gobe mouches! That's what these women are," the rector exploded with some heat. "I sincerely hope, Harding, that you'll not mention this distressing affair to Mrs. Harding. I beg of you not to!"

"I'll promise you that!" his caller assured him readily. "Not the breath of a word of it will the lady hear from me; but I shall certainly bring the matter to the attention of Go-by. He's my publicity agent and liaison officer in these parts—and he's Sally's henchman—leal to the core of him. It's blue blazes he'll be giving these busy-bodies if he catches them talking about *the missus*. Yes, parson, I'll sick Go-by on them! He'll go after them the way he goes after their prowling tom-cats. With his intimate knowledge of local affairs, I verily believe he could flay every one of them alive. But don't be thin-skinned," Bob went on to suggest. "Gossip is one of the unavoidable inconveniences of small town life. It's something you simply have to put up with! The Apostle Paul was gossiped about—and it hurt his feelings, too. You'd be a small potato in Aux Saubles, Burgoyne, if you were not interesting enough to have something fastened on you by idle tongues. Such talk is not really malicious—it's simply human nature, the world over. The more important the man, the more of it he has to endure."

"Most baneful, isn't it?" Burgoyne commented ruefully. "This place has outgrown the friendly helpful intimacy of hamlet life, but prying curiosity is still in full bloom."

"In full voice, you mean! I know it's annoying but there's no help for it save utter oblivion. And on the whole, parson, I notice, people like being talked about. Why do we have all these aspirants for offices of one sort or another? A fellow does ache to stick his head up above the crowd, doesn't he? He dearly loves to be talked about—even at the expense of being abused. Anything—*any thing*—to get his name into the paper. I happen to know that men commit crimes sometimes, just to get a write-up. The police court items in the afternoon editions form the personal and society columns for thousands of people. Nothing would reduce crime more than the complete removal of the names of all police officials and of criminals from the pages of our newspapers. Ever think of that? My word! It's the oblivion of silence that hurts many mortals most."

"I'm afraid you're a bit of a snob," Burgoyne commented.

"No. I'm not. I'm the very antithesis. I'm the direct opposite," Harding corrected him. "To be truthful and honest about it, I feel I'm quite a superior person—one of the few such hereabouts. The consequence is that I'm not greatly concerned what the residents think or say of me, and I'm one of the most democratic, unpretentious fellows that ever you saw."

"Yes, I've often noticed," Mr. Burgoyne nodded, "the more superior a person feels in his heart, the less he shows it. In any case, such a person is never a climber."

"But to get back to this sad affair, I admit, Burgoyne, that I'm very much to blame, myself, for your present annoyance."

"How do you make that out?"

"I should have been coming down to your morning services more or less regularly," Bob confessed. "Most thoughtless of me not to! It's not that I object to your discourses, either," he threw in with good-humoured banter in his tones. "They're quite passable, the few I've heard. It's just downright carelessness on my part, that's what it's been! Tell you what I'll do: I'll remedy all this—but on terms."

"And the terms?"

"The condition is that you come up with me on a fishing trip to Georgian Bay next week. Secure a locum tenens for the time and we'll have a look over the territory where those Huron villages lay. You must do something, in any case, to put a stop to this gossip. You're not helping matters by dropping me as one does a hot potato. That's poor strategy! That's merely pleading guilty and promising to mend your ways. Front the silly world, Burgoyne,

with a face of brass! Put an item in the Gazette that you're off with Harding and some friends on a fishing trip. Ah, that's the idea! Do it by all means. 'Twill be a highly respectable party, too. Give them full details. I'll be there as a business person to hire the launch and the guide. You will be present to care for our souls. I'm getting Jim Carruthers to go. He's a doctor, and he will look after our bodily ailments. I expect Pendergast to come. He's a good fisherman, and he'll be handy, too, if any of the party gets drowned; for he's an undertaker whose prices read reasonable. Oh yes, and I'm taking Jim Thomas. He will keep us out of legal difficulties."

"Who's that—Boynton Thomas? Never met him."

"Yes," Bob commented. "Fine fellow! I endeavour to get him to look after my legal business. Came across him on a fishing trip up north a few years back. The big fellow was standing on a rock as we paddled round a bend. Complete stranger then, of course! Caught him in the act of taking a swig out of a suspicious looking flask. He gave me some extra lively dew worms fattened on cream and oatmeal. I've turned my business his way since. Not a bad fish he caught that day, either. But I find he's quite incapable of transacting business at the present moment. Every time I drop in to consult him, I catch him slipping a brass reel or some silly fishing gadget into the drawer. The man needs a change of air. So do you! We'll have a tidy little cruiser launch with a jim-dandy cook and guide. We'll poke among the islands and camp out. Do you a lot of good, your reverence. Forget about these hens and their cackling."

So we arrive at an important point in this story. The scene is off the main shore of Georgian Bay and the time is Sunday morning the 12th August, 1922. A launch has been lying off shore in a bed of reeds; and herring gulls are skirling overhead. Six disreputable looking fellows have been fishing for bass. The most important of them is Baptiste Godour, who is too well and favourably known in these waters to require any detailed description here. He has brought the party on their return journey down the Eastern shores of Georgian Bay on the route which Champlain followed in 1626 on his way to the country of the Hurons.

The fishermen's luck had been nothing to brag about this Sunday morning but proved sufficient for their immediate purpose. The launch put in, and the party landed on an inviting shore which had heavy timber standing in the background. Godour was busy about a fire which he had laid in a circle of stones to heat his frying pan and kettle.

Mr. Burgoyne climbed up a small bank and went back to inspect the forest trees.

"I wish you'd come with me a minute, Harding," he remarked on returning. "I have something here that may interest you."

Following after him, Harding entered a grove of tall, mature maple trees which covered a level space several acres in extent. It was evident that they had started off as seedlings together in a virgin forest growth; and after battling for their places, had matured during centuries to stand sturdy and firm and undisturbed against the winds of change.

"God, it's a pretty place!" Bob exclaimed.

"But do you not notice something perculiar in the lay-out?" Burgoyne inquired.

"What I see is a beautiful sugar maple bush," Bob replied. "These trees must be of great age."

"It's evident," Burgoyne remarked, "that they have been growing since 1648; but what interests me is the fact that they are growing on an abandoned Indian corn field. You know how the Indians prepared their corn land? They had only stone implements and hatchets to use. So they charred the butts of standing timber till the trees toppled over, and they then made a burning to clear the land. The corn field was worked into hillocks that stood well apart and each the size of a hay-cock. On the top of these hills, the women planted the maize kernels and they continued to do so till the patch ceased to yield. The result was that the hillocks became hard and firm. Cast your eyes across this grove of maples and you will notice the corn hillocks still standing out clearly. They've had nothing to disturb them during the centuries save the annual fall of leaves."

"I'd like to own this point of land," Harding remarked as they strolled back to the beach. "I'd let the trees stand and I'd build a log cabin over here by the waterside."

Godour had breakfast ready and the self service was simple. One took a thick slice of bread and covered it with crisp bacon. On its mate he planted a thick top dressing of fried fish. Then he clapped the two slices together to make a sandwich, and bit into it as one does into a big apple. Mr. Thomas preferred a three decker, the top layer having a thick spread of orange marmalade; but that is a matter of individual taste.

Harding and the parson continued their conversation as the party squatted by the cooking fire and the coffee pot.

"I'd be afraid of such a place," remarked Pendergast, the respectable funeral director. "It may have a graveyard."

"No fear!" Harding told him. "The Huron Indians spent a lot of money on their funerals. They made what you fellows call a high class job of it. There were thirty thousand or more Indians who had their winter villages scattered on rising inland ground throughout this peninsula. Every twelve years they had a day of the dead. In preparation for it each family in the four great tribes disinterred the bones of their relatives from the local graveyards, and wrapping them in fresh beaver robes, they proceeded, in deep silence and with measured step, on processions along forest trails to a central place where they assembled to hold the feast of the kettle and deposit the remains in a great common pit. In its centre stood three pots. Its floor and sides were lined with beaver robes. After the remains were laid in place, the tribes cast most of their valuables into the pit in token of their grief and sorrow. Different customs, nowadays, Pendergast! Twelve years after you lay a corpse away, his family have not only spent all his money, they have forgotten all about him."

The discussion was interrupted at this point. A stiff-jointed, be-whiskered man of middle age arrived on the scene. He was wearing his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and appeared considerably annoyed.

"Did you see my sign 'No trespassing'?" he inquired in some heat.

"No," Thomas assured him. "We didn't! We thought we were beyond the pale of civilization here."

"Well, this is my private property," the newcomer announced. "I'm J. Ephraim Brown. I'm a Justice of the Peace. I'll make a case of this."

"Recently appointed?" Thomas inquired.

"Yes, just got my patent last week," the J.P. replied.

"Well you'd better look up your law books," Baptiste told him. "These are navigable waters and we're here on the shore under riparian rights—I'd have you know that!"

"I'll not have people desecrating the Lord's Day on my property," the Squire assured the party in unctuous tones.

"But we have to eat," Burgoyne suggested.

"You fellows have no business fishing on the Sabbath," the J.P. warned them. "It's a clear infraction of the law. I'll make a case of that!"

"I suppose, Squire, you'll adjudicate the case?" Thomas inquired.

"That I will."

"And I suppose you'll give evidence against us, too?"

"Yes."

"You'll have a lot of trouble, proving to yourself that we caught fish to-day! We were fishing last evening. What do you say to that?"

"Oh let's discuss that matter when we get into Court," Bob suggested. "I'd like to ask your Honour, in the meantime, if you'll sell me this point of land?"

"Yes, I'd sell it at a price," the owner admitted; "but I wouldn't think of discussing business with any man on the Lord's Day."

"Your religious scruples evidently don't prevent you looking your acres over on the Sabbath," Harding went on. "Suppose you step back with me a moment, and I'll show you what I'd like to buy, and you can show me where I'll get an entrance. Mr. Thomas here will write you on the subject later. Come along, Thomas, and get your instructions."

It was thus that Robert Harding located a northern camping site on the shores of Georgian Bay. He afterwards built a log chalet in a clearing which he made. The most interesting architectural feature of the structure was an immense rough stone chimney against which the entire building appeared to lean. Many a happy summer Bob Harding afterward spent in the Country of the Hurons.

CHAPTER XVII

An interlude

As for the preposterous years from 1922 to 1935 inclusive, we here give them the cold shoulder and stride boldly by them with our chins tilted in the air. The reader—if there be still one in our company—is himself a first hand authority on the social, aesthetic and economic malformations that developed in those hectic times of the Great Troubles. Perhaps he then had his own fingers scorched plucking chestnuts out of some fire. In any event, he lived during those years of spiritual blight, and most likely, too,—he lost. So he would only be reading what might be written on them in order to criticize and ferret out e·gre′gious mistakes. So close at hand are those times that the gospel truth about them might seem a car′i·cature. What had been laboriously fabricated touching them is plucked out at this point—as a favour to the reader. All such material should be stored away to mellow as hard, sound winter apples do.

The happenings of those years do not concern this story much, and that little can be told in a few words. As to those characters in our story with whom we are now parting company—with a God-speed—a few brief news items concerning them may prove of interest, or, leastwise, be not amiss.

Go-by Speers' trees have grown to bear choice fruit, and every one about the Aux Saubles, save Go-by himself, has grown a little older. The Rev. Mr. Burgoyne was called suddenly from this life some years back, and the two of us—the writer and his patient reader—have the faith to believe that he is safe with his loving Saviour on the farther shore. On his death, his dear lady recovered her health—quick as an answer to prayer—and after a short but seemly interval, she married a tubby, wealthy manufacturer of table delicacies who has since cheerfully extended her travels to the uttermost part of the earth and would joyfully send her farther if that were possible within the law. At the moment, we read by *The Lakeshore Gazette* that she is on the Mediterranean with a party of friends from the Mountain City and is having a delightful trip. Mrs. Sarah Boniface of 5 D'Arcy Street remarried, and is keeping her husband and a fish-and-chip shop at the Junction. We recommend her place highly to any hungry young fellows with good stomachs who may be driving through that way. We pass them on as a pointer—to take home to their waiting wives—that strips of parsnips rolled in a corn-meal batter, the way Mrs. Boniface-Tompkins bulks up her fish,

and cooked in boiling vegetable oil, taste better and are quite as indigestible. The notorious Aaron Burke died in gaol one spring before the robins had time to get back; and the Coroner's Inquest being held in the evening hours, Aaron's ghost got a fine write-up in the morning papers. Sergeant-detective Marshall Pickhall (now a retired Inspector of the Force) is hale and hearty in his seventies, and may be observed, often on a summer's morning, fishing for small mouth bass under the bridge at the Narrows. His *Reminiscences* came out the other day, and in these he makes extensive reference to the Thomas Wilson Murder. The present writer took the volume to bed with him and read it with great interest and profit. Apparently Pickhall remains well satisfied with his solution. Thomas Jardine made a power of money out of his land sales, but slick stock salesmen got him separated from his wife and into a cushiony suite of offices in the city. They elected him a Director on the Board of a Company Organized to Manufacture Easy-riding Spokeless Wheels under Patent Rights. After that, Thomas did not waste his substance in riotous living nor did he fritter it away. It went as quick as one can sign his name on the dotted line. That loss broke the spirit of the man and for years now he has been lying all clover clad, the grass thus getting the better of him. His widow, Agnes, lives in a cottage at Aux Saubles and it's a mystery to her neighbors how she manages to get by with her chin in the air.

Of the characters whom we carry forward with us, Robert Harding has been living a busy life, and perhaps a useful one, in its way. He turns the scales at 182 pounds, and is as straight as ever but at forty-seven no man is throwing shadows west. As for his wife, the reader knows—because he has already been told it—that it's worth anyone's while to drive out to see Sally among her flowers. We here pause to remark, and our language is plain, that no woman looks altogether lovely till time and kindness have written her character upon her face.

By-the-by, we came within an ambs-ace, or a little jimmie at most, of forgetting to mention Robert Wilson, the ex-gardener, and his matrimonial care. That would never do at all, at all! We make haste to correct this oversight; but if the reader is not interested in Robert Wilson and his blond whither-away, he may skip along blithely to the next chapter—and no harm done.

When the Depression broke upon us splattering us all in the fall of 1929, Robert Wilson lost his job in the village factory, and on that befalling a person of his age, he had as little chance of getting steady work again in this life as a back-number has of finding a sale on a newsstand. His family, consisting of wife and four children, thereupon went on Relief; and at this

writing, the Wilson family—consisting of the wife and seven children—are well, thanks be!—but they're still on Relief.

It's worse than being in gaol for a father to be sitting about the home doing nothing—with his children needing little things and the wife talking; so at first, Bob Wilson bestirred himself picking up odd jobs at the Harding place and elsewhere. He was happy and encouraged thus pottering about, but that didn't continue for long. Mrs. Wilson soon found that the money which her husband thus earned by turning his hand to honest work so reduced the family's Relief Allowance that it was quite impossible for her to keep things going. When Bob secured a temporary job, the family were taken off Relief, and it took a fortnight's time and much talking to get them back on the rolls again. Willy-nilly, the father was therefore obliged to sit about the house twiddling his thumbs. So there you are! It is possible for a family to live and increase on Relief—statistics and Mrs. Wilson prove it; but it's utterly impossible for many a family to live honestly on Partial Relief, which is merely another way of saying what the law is.

All we can tell of the subsequent affairs of this unfortunate family is what Robert Harding came to know; but, in our opinion, what Bob Harding didn't know about what was going on round the Aux Saubles was not worth anybody's while asking. Bob got the later information, which we now detail, from Jackie Wilson, then a ten-year-old, who occasionally stuck the man up for a quarter to help keep the sun shining.

Of course, we know that, with things looking hopeless, a middle-aged man will settle down to put up with his troubles as a dog does with his fleas, and that this very settling-down makes things more hopeless still. In the midst of the Depression, what most bothered Robert Wilson was the finding of a little money to buy his smoking tobacco. On the sly, he rustled up a job delivering dodgers from door to door. He knocked a dollar a week out of it. The work was off a bit from Aux Saubles but within walking distance. However, Mrs. Wilson came at last to hear of it; and as was quite proper, she demanded the dollar and she took it out of the man as one takes a bone out of meat.

"You know, Mr. Harding,—" the son, Jackie, thus opened his heart —"I'm real sorry for my Pop. Ma won't even let him have the money to buy 'baccy. And you know, Mr. Harding, a man ought to have a little 'baccy. He gets no fun out of things. What has the man to live for? But I fixed Her! Says I to Pop, 'Pop, let's blow in the dollar!' So we went down to the store, Pop and me, and I got some suckers for the kids, and Pop, he laid in some big plugs of smoking 'baccy."

"And then I suppose, Jack, you had a merry row?"

"Sure, there was the devil and all to pay—there always is; but Pop and the kids, this time, had their pay for the troubles."

It was shortly after this conversation took place, that Pop Wilson took french-leave of Aux Saubles He skipped out on his wife and got a job up North peeling 'taters, or such like, at a lumber camp. For a day or two, the man's nefarious conduct raised a noisy hullabaloo in the village; and the deserted wife never wearied talking of it. In time, she located the fugitive, and she thereupon swore out a warrant before the local J.P. to have him arrested and brought back for wife desertion and non-support. Taking a trip up North at public expense was agreeable to the local police, and Wilson was brought back in custody to face the music. Whatever happened at his trial—and on this we are not quite clear—Wilson was thus replaced in the custody of his wife and he became again a charge on the Relief Rolls of the Municipality.

Time flies quickly, and in the fullness of it, Mrs. Robert Wilson had another baby, a good one, too. Of course, the Public Health Nurse was dropping around giving Mrs. Wilson all sorts of sage advices. To say the least of it, the arrival of this child was quite unexpected so far as the Health Authorities were concerned. The two ladies got their heads together. They promptly sat on a Ways and Means Committee; and when they rose, they did more than report progress and ask leave to sit again.

The next post brought a letter to the husband and father requesting him to call at his earliest convenience for a Conference with the Medical Officers of the Health Clinic. Down there, Wilson went promptly—as the father of a family on Relief felt more than duty bound to do. He came back in terrible perturbation; and was off, fast as an Irish settler, to lay his burden before his friend Harding, who had done many little kindnesses for him in the years gone by.

"Do you know what those demned doctors . . .?" Wilson exploded, after giving a brief re′su′mé of the conference.

"I've a shrewd notion," Harding nodded. "Suppose the word ended with ectomy?"

"They can all go to bloody blazes!" the aggrieved one declared, amplifying his assertion, and interlarding his remarks with come choice ex′pletives. "Has a man no rights in this bleeding country? They haul me back when I skip out, and now they won't leave me alone and whole! This thing is going to drive me crazy!"

"Why not go crazy?" Harding inquired in all seriousness. "I've seen several of these mental hospitals, Bob, and let me tell you they're mighty comfortable places. You could actually earn your keep in one of them. The food is good, and if there is any scarcity, I'll certainly see that you still get your tobacco. That would solve all problems, because your wife can't move in with you—down there. I'd acquire a *queer notion*, if I were you—just a gentle, harmless, slant, you know—nothing dangerous—merely something that will make you a bally nuisance."

"Like I were Napoleon Bonaparte, eh?"

"No," Harding advised him, "that would scarcely do. That might be dangerous. We don't want any dictators in this land of the free. By George, you might succeed, and turn us all out shouldering arms in a totalitarian state. Can't tell what a paperhanger or a gardener might do in that line—if he got going. No Wilson, try being a policeman and start directing traffic. All you need for that is a smart military carriage and a red flag. Think it over! In the meantime, suggest to these doctors that they have your wife down for a conference."

The next Saturday afternoon, west bound traffic on the highway west of Aux Saubles was diverted by an orderly fellow who seemed to understand what he was doing; and after two hundred and thirty some cars had been turned north on a five mile detour, an excited motorcycle traffic officer arrived on the scene and demanded of Wilson in a high squeaky voice: What *the hell* he thought *he* was doing there.

"Diverting the traffic," the honest man explained, and he ordered the official away to procure a suitable road sign. Wilson kept smartly at his job till he was dragged from the scene, protesting.

As that official detailed at length to the local magistrate a few minutes later, Wilson's further explanations seemed a trifle incoherent; nor could his Honour make head or tail of the story the accused told. However, in view of Wilson's general good character in the community, he was let off with a severe caution, there being no profit in fining him for being drunk, the fellow being on Relief.

But when the offence was committed again, it became necessary to quote His Honour, that steps be taken to abate the nuisance. Two M.Dees were thereupon commissioned to examine Robert Wilson's head, and on their report he was formally committed to a hospital for the insane. He found comfortable, peaceful quarters awaiting him there, and plenty of tobacco and good books, also. He is doing useful work in the cow milking department,

but he breaks out directing traffic about the grounds every now and again, in order to keep his job sure and steady.

Scarce was the man settled down in this comfortable snuggery, ere he discovered that there were other inmates in this Institution for the Insane, who were there for reasons that were good and sufficient to themselves or their families but which had no honest connection with the condition of any one's head save that of your friend, the Taxpayer, who is obviously *non compos mentis*, or, as they shorten it—a nin′compoop. As Bob Wilson remarked, in a recent interview with the writer, a herd of government cows is not necessary about an asylum in order to have steady milking going on; but his observations are obviously of no value—the fellow being officially insane.

A kindly word should be said at this point on behalf of the man's poor wife. She makes a journey down to visit her husband every Sunday morning, taking with her little parcels of candy and fruit which kind neighbours contribute for this purpose. We note, also, that there has been no further increase in the Robert Wilson family, a matter which is highly satisfactory to the public authorities.

CHAPTER XVIII

Enter Miss Claire Jardine.

And all this has brought us on a Canterbury jog to The Pines at the Aux Saubles, where we arrive on Saturday the 7th September, 1935, to sample some of Go-by's early apples and pay the place our final visit. To welcome us, the air is clear and amber-shot on the afternoon of a day that bespeaks a breath of log fire to break the chill of its close.

The scene is a sprawling living room, which has so much double-diamond glass in its west wall that we're really in a sun-room which looks out over a closely mown sward to shrubs that are fruiting with haws and thinking seriously of turning.

The day's small business is over. Robert Harding is lounging in an easy armchair and has his shoulders and head immersed in the sporting pages. His wife is behind him a little way and is standing before a deep casement window that fronts the drive up which we jog. She is busy arranging a bowl of autumn flowers and indeed, she probably sees us. The flaming sword-blade of a gladi′o·lus rising out of a blue larkspur sea—to light its tawny shipping—is getting some thought and gentle attention.

The telephone on the table rings. Harding rises, stretching himself, as healthy creatures do, and goes (left) to answer it.

"Yes . . . Claire," the lady heard her husband say in a pleased, chir′rupy tone. "Of course, I can . . . No, not a blessed thing to do—"—the other voice took some time—"Yes, delighted to drive you down. . . . What's that? . . . Of course, we can! . . . At five o'clock then . . . We'll pick up something to eat on the way. . . . Oh you have, have you? . . . Be sure to wear them, then. . . . Yes, see that you're ready!"

That matter attended to, Bob went into his indolent lounge again and his head went into the newspaper.

From its chink in the hearth floor, a cricket scraped a note on its leg, and the pulsing silence was then broken by the mantle clock chiming the third hour.

"What comes out of silence and a sigh?" Harding inquired, as he chased a news item over onto another page. "That one sounded to me, Sally, like a long . . wave . . wash. Not many sorrows, I hope, in one big sigh?"

"I was merely wishing, Bob," his wife observed in a quiet drawling tone, "that you'd be more discreet in your affairs with Claire."

That was always Sally's way—as the reader knows. Nothing cryptic, No! Direct action was her policy. She never edged into anything . . . She splashed right in. There, in a nutshell, one has her.

"With *Claire*?" her husband repeated.

"Yes, with *Miss* Claire Jardine!"

"Be discreet?"

"Yes, be *more* discreet!"

"In *my* affairs?"

"Yes, in your *amatory* affairs!"

"Great jumping Jehoshaphat! What the devil are you driving at?" the man grunted with a taste of irritated surprise in his voice.

He turned his body half round in the chair and twisted his neck, but found that his wife was facing the other way. So he ducked back under his paper again to do a little thinking.

The crickets held the concert stage all to themselves and marked the passing pause with a note on the fiddle every quarter minute.

Harding sensed that the air in the room was vibrating with feeling; and his mind worked quickly. This, he realized soberly, was no time to laugh lightly and snap one's fingers. No! Out of a clear sky, a flash had come with no premonition to soften the shock. A storm, he knew, was brewing and would break over him directly. If it's going to rain, it's sure going to rain, he thought, and, by George, there's no help for it. He was caught out in the open and there was nothing for him to do but let his back take the weather. It would have pleasured him choicely to have been elsewhere, however; and he swallowed a powerful wish for that same. In brief, he was considerably disturbed.

"It's not that I mind, of course, Bob, you know," Sally told him after the silence had sunk into the body of the matter "—but it's the gossip—the *gossip*!"

"Gossip? Yes, that's what Aux Saubles is principally noted for," the accused remarked from the dock. "Pardon me for saying it, Sally dear, but you're associating too much these days with a select, middle-aged group of

scandal-mongers. Those girls are getting too old to sin with relish themselves, so they spend their time thinking up sins for others."

"It shouldn't hurt you to leave my friends out of this *personal* discussion," the lady suggested.

"Very well," Bob told her with feigned calmness. "Still take it as read that I esteem them evil-minded, and I think some of them are blowsy and dowdy, both. Honest now, Sally, don't they save up bits of gossip for their committee meetings and conferences? I know *those* girls . . . I *know* them . . . *well*!"

"Anyway, they've never found any occasion to gossip about your wife, Mr. Harding!"

"O haven't they?"—in tones of honest in·credu′lity. "They scandalized poor Mr. Burgoyne and mortified him till he was nigh to weeping and ashamed to come to this house."

"And about *what*, pray?"

"About that red-headed woman up the river road where he used to sneak every other night—and his own dear lady kept travelling out of the country."

"That's positively absurd!" Sally exclaimed. "Mr. Burgoyne! Why I didn't even like him."

"Of course, I know you didn't and I know the reason why. If you'd had your own sweet way, you'd have redded—*ah*, that's it—that's the word—you'd have *redded* him out of the house the way you try to redd out the crickets I bring in. By-the-way, I planted three jolly, little, black, fiddlers in here on you yesterday."

"And what was the *why*?" she asked, with an elevation in her voice.

"The harmless man indulged in puns. He was afflicted at times with paronoma′sia. I'll admit when the humour was on him, he punned me half to death. No one with Irish blood in her veins, Sally, can abide idle play upon mere words. But for all that, he was a downright dandy Angel, and as your grandmother would have said: May God rest his sweet soul in peace. The man's spirit got mighty little rest at Aux Saubles."

"I don't believe this story of yours, Harding," his wife told him with some heat. "When do you say that talk was?"

"If you'll cast your mind back, it occurred, Mrs. Harding, immediately prior to my starting in to attend regularly at the Church of St. John, the

Martyr. You'll mind, perhaps, you thought, then, I'd sustained a sudden change of heart. All I was doing, Sally, was saving my wife's face. My efforts on your behalf, on that occasion, cost me also a memorial window. You've perhaps noticed that I haven't darkened a church door since I assisted in carrying Mr. Burgoyne's coffin out of one?"

By his wife's crisp, clipped, formal voice, Harding knew that the lady had a little say all made up to say: and he realized, at this point, that his interjections were ill timed. She would choke or scream, he fancied, if she didn't get a fair chance to deliver her observations and thus clear her mind of them. So he decided to let her *redd* it up. He now retired to a strong strategic position. Deep silence, he decided, would do the talking for him. Silence is often a husband's longest and strongest suit.

Sally was still working hard with those flowers.

"Of course, I agree with you," she then set in to tell him in a voice pitched slightly off centre, "that young girls, nowadays, are nice looking creatures . . . waspish, even, in their pulchritude . . . and youth does count so, doesn't it,—with middle-aged men? You know, Bob, I'm fond of Claire; and if you have to go wandering off, I think you've made an excellent selection. You always show good taste. She's a bright girl, mentally keen—intellectual, rather—and right on her toes. She takes music seriously and she's up on theatricals, too. She's a well-groomed, pretty girl, I'll allow; and since she's come back, her make-up is quite subtle. I fancy she uses a paste rouge. Her eye lashes are long and fetching; and I'm sure they are her own and that she curls them with a gadget. Her complexion is certainly pink and white, and though she goes after the outdoor-wind blown effect, she's always so feminine . . . so sweet, so frank . . . so ingenue. She makes a romantic winsome picture. I'm not sure but I think she uses mascara; and her mouth is shaped to sweet roundness. It really has a baby bowness! Her half-opened lips of fairy, Bob, are dyed a cherry red. She just looks like love and roses, doesn't she? . . . and I suppose, Bob, she tells you that she understands you better than your old wife ever did, eh?"

She didn't appreciate it or intend it either, yet there was a harshness in her voice and an undertone in her remarks that were rasping her husband's feelings. There's a comic side to a wife's jealousy—but it does not show itself much to the man who happens to be the personal subject of it. Harding felt hurt, and he had to hold himself back from falling into a sulky pet.

"I think that's a horrid way to talk of Claire," he protested. "I'm surprised and shocked. You!—of all women under the sun! She's been a

staunch friend of mine ever since she was a little toddler—I didn't know that sort of jealousy was gnawing you. What of it, if she does fix herself up a bit? They're all doing it now, young and old. For that matter, women had rouge pots in the days of the pyramids; and away before that in the Stone Age. Even Huron Indians had them. If they think these last touches make any difference, let them go to it!"

Sally gave a delphinium spur a cuff on the lug.

"There you go with your back chat again," she objected. "Do you ever take anything seriously? Don't think for a moment that I'm jealous. Of course I'm not! But I really think it would look better, old man, if Claire would meet you here. It would look more all right if you picked her up here to take her to road house conferences and chicken dinners. If you did that, it would be everybody's business which would make it nobody's. People wouldn't then be casting sly hints at what is going on behind my back. Of course, I'd be nice! There's nothing cattish about me."

"Doesn't Claire often come here?" he inquired, gingerly.

"Not as often as she used to," his wife told him crisply.

"Huh! That's not telling me much," Bob pointed out. "You used to have her here all the time between sleeps, if my memory serves me right."

"Oh yes, she comes," Sally admitted. "—She comes, of course, drops in. Yes, drops in. I know we're older now and Claire belongs to a younger set. I suppose she thinks her mother and the rest of us are a parcel of old fogies. That makes a valid excuse for her. She acts quite friendly to me, I'll admit; but the smile she has for me nowadays is as set as an old maid's coiffure. There is something of intrigue in her eyes as if she was sizing me up or holding something back. I positively feel it!"

"Your eyes are not very friendly either, Sally," he told her, "if their story is what your tongue tells. What's the innuendo in these remarks of yours? Are you suggesting that I'm a silly old sugar daddy or that Claire has designs on your middle-aged husband—or both or which or what? No action lies, you know, for alienating a husband's affections."

"Oh, you've been looking that point up, have you?" Mrs. Harding inquired. "No, I'm not charging that against Claire, I really wouldn't do that. The point is, the community think you have designs on *her*, and that your wife is a stupid ninny. Anyhow, if she has designs, the girl's playing fair. She's not feeding the old lady peppermints while making eyes at the husband."

Sally Harding was a fair-minded woman. She would dust the scales to give anyone a just weight; but she was in no humour, at this moment, to give anyone more.

"Well," Bob agreed, "I think you have made a reasonable proposal and I'll take it up. Yes, that's a fair deal! I'll not ask the girl to walk up here from the village every time I'm going to drive her anywhere; but I'll certainly drive her in here often enough that all the ladies will know that you know that I'm running her around. I'll also tell you every place I've taken her so you'll be ready for those girls. Is that satisfactory?"

We regret to say it did not close the matter; and this is indis′putable evidence of how unreasonable women are.

"I hope you don't think, Bob," his wife went on after a pause, "that I'm asking too much? I know, of course, that men stay young minded longer than most women do, and that a flighty surge is liable to strike them at any age. When they're getting on, the climax is sometimes quite critical. An old nurse we had used to say that every man has his goose-month—whatever that is. And, of course, a man's love is not continuous; so what can a wife do about it?"

"Oh come now," her husband interjected. "How could a man love one woman as he ought to unless he has a mild affection for the whole sex? So you think I'm growing weary of you?"

"That's not the right adjective," she explained. "I think your fancy has faded. I know it must be distressing to you to have a wife growing old on your hands—and a woman who has babies does age so blazing early. Her bust gets so out of shape, and, somehow, she cannot tuck her buttocks under her tidy. She's sure, too, to have a slack under the chin and a bump at the back of her neck or else she puts on crow's feet and looks scrawny. In either case, she loses grace of movement and acquires posture faults and little tricks of deportment enough to annoy any self-respecting husband. Why, Bob, I've been taking steam baths for my figure till I've been well nigh suffocated—and *what's the use*?"

"It's certainly a compliment to me that you're not letting your figure go," her husband grunted. "I've never noticed anything the matter with it. Isn't it all right?"

"Of course, you haven't," she told him with some disgust, "and that's because you've not been even interested enough to look! An old wife loses the charm of novelty in her husband's eyes. I didn't get a fair chance at the start! A woman should be at least ten years younger than her husband and

then with care she could hold him until she had him planted with a stone keeping him in place. A young woman like Claire can *hold* your aging heart. She can keep making up youthful to the end because girls are all made up nowadays, and no man can notice any difference. It's different with women who are *now* growing old. My hair used to be soft and pretty, 'least you said so—and now it's losing its bloom and vigour; yet I'm afraid even to give it a rinse for fear you might notice it and not like it."

"Think its gold is changed and faded?"

"It wouldn't matter so much," she admitted, "If you were tubby with a protruding paunch, but you, somehow, manage to keep yourself slick and slender. You're always so in character!"

"Ah, now, that's better," he encouraged her. "That's more like your style! It's praise and a little faith that transmutes a man's soul. A fellow distinguished in any crowd!—that's the way to lay it on. Women, young and old, they turn around to have a view!—and so on."

"But what can an old woman do?" she demanded. "If I got my face lifted —I honestly believe it should be shelled—had false eyelashes glued on, my eyebrows plucked, my hair set and my mouth shaped, you'd think me a silly looking old freak and you wouldn't speak to me for a week. Not that I mind a few grey hairs coming; but, Bob Harding, you're making my soul grey!"

"I'm not disputing what you say, Sally," he told her in an even voice without looking around. "In fact, what you say may all be true. But all they spell is that things have reached a crisis between us. Obviously, things can't go on like this, can they? What do you think would be the best and fairest arrangement for us to make?"

"Yes, I suppose, Bob, it's a crisis," she agreed, "and I know we mustn't let things go on like this; because we only have one life to live and there's no sense making a hell out of it. I've never been a clinging, possessive wife, and I don't intend to become one. This marriage business is a living relationship; and if the breath goes out of it, it becomes a horrible canker. To live like that would be disgusting. So I don't wish to hold you, Bob, if you don't want to stay; and if you wish to put me away from you, just say the word—and I'll go. . . . It's heart scalded, I am, Bob Harding! We're spoiling the bread and spilling the wine of life. Sure, it's a blazing shame, it is, entirely!"

A tense catch in her voice and the break into the vernacular brought the man to his feet. Clearly, she was now talked out. Sally must have got the flowers arranged to her satisfaction for he found her standing erect and

looking out away over beyond God's-speed. He put his hand gently on her shoulder to turn her face but she stood rigid and her body seemed to resist. Her finger tips were pressing hard on the wide window sill and tears were running down her cheeks and splattering unnoticed on the flowers in her big, blue bowl.

"Perhaps you're right," he told her in a quiet tone. "Things can't go on like this without growing every day worse. I think, myself, the best thing for you to do is to pack up and go away."

"And where you going to send me?" she asked him.

"I'm not going to send you anywhere," he told her. "There's no boss about this house. You can go where you please, woman; but don't overlook the fact that I'm going as part of the luggage. Let's drive up Monday morning to the cottage? The summer folk will now all be gone. We can knock in a week up there without offence to God or man. I'll look after the fish if you take charge of the frying."

"Let's!" said his wife. "Let's clear out from all the cares of the world to a little lone home of our own."

"Yes, to live and do no thinking! Who knows, we may find ourselves again, and in the seeking find a saner happiness?"

She had turned away from the window and was making dabs at her eyes.

"To be quite candid, Sally," he went on, "I'm now giving you a close inspection, and as to your figure, your blazing hair, and those other important details you mentioned, I think you're passable enough for a husband who is himself a little descended into the vale of years. True, you're a bit puff-faced at the moment—but Tears, we're told, are the mothers of the rainbows. A hearty, splashy, girlish weep does a woman a power of good. Just relax! as they say in the hospital when a fellow is going under."

He was poking fun at her, she knew that; but what could she do about it? The only sentiment a man's wife ever gets out of him she must extract out of whimsical banter. Her mouth was timidly working on a smile which her eyes had begun.

"Do you know, Bob Harding, what I think you are? What I think my charming husband is?" she asked as the smile broke in spite of her best efforts to the contrary.

"Something swank, I hope," he told her,—expanding his chest. "A strong man, I suppose—a strong man who grows through silence—gathering

strength?"

"I think you are a sweet old cheat!"

"Not so," he answered her. "Not so! Staunch to the eyebrows, Sally—ever faithful and true—one of those strong, silent, dependable chaps."

"Faithful! Oh yes? . . . 'Faithful to thine Cynara—after thine own fashion', eh?"

"Don't start quoting at me, Madam," he told her, "or I'll tell you you're stormier than Hadrian's sea—yet do I love to live with thee."

"Don't be trying to beguile me with your blarney, Bob Harding. This is downright serious business—and I mean it!"

"Now, that's a bright idea," he told her, taking his chair and tossing her over a pillow to another. "Let's hold a special meeting, convened on short notice and with only one matter on the agenda. I'll open proceedings by stating that the affairs of this going-concern have reached a critical juncture and that this meeting has been called to consider one matter only—that matter being Miss Claire Jardine. Are you agreeable to that, Sally?"

"Yes."

"And I go further and say that if the affairs of this important concern are to be saved, all parties present must exercise their judgment in a calm, dispassionate way and make a full and frank disclosure of all matters within their personal knowledge relating to the item on the agenda. Are you agreeable to doing that, Sally dear?"

"Yes, I agree to that."

"That's fine!" he assured her and there was an amused glint in his eye. "Now, ladies first, always! Go ahead, Sally. What do you want to know?"

"I'd like very much to know what your intentions are with reference to this young lady."

"The gospel truth is, Sally, I haven't any."

"Oh, you haven't? I think the two of you are pretty thick. Everybody's talking about you."

"Yes, but Claire and I have always been that," he reminded her—"as thick as molasses pull. My stand-in was always better than yours. Used to be jealous, weren't you? Truth is, you're jealous still!"

"That's soft soap, Bob. She's twenty-four, now."

"Is she? Improved with age, I'd say. Good looking and a smart dancer. Splendid pair of pins under her! Holds herself right! I always fancied red hair on a woman. She's a girl one can talk to. Wish you'd presented me with a daughter like that. We've specialized in boys, haven't we? What good are boys to a father? All a dad can get out of his growing boy is '*huh*!' A mud turtle has nothing on a man's son in the matter of shells. I have to go to Goby to get the intimate low-down on my own sons. A girl is a friend and confidante with her dad. I like the present crop of women, Sally. They're frank and straightforward. They haven't been trained to breast the wash of life by hanging their clothes on a hickory limb and not going near the water. They prove stronger swimmers because they know of the brine that's there and so don't swallow it."

"Yes and you'd marry Claire too, if you had me out of the road!" his wife told him. "I just know well you would. *Wouldn't you?*"

"That's not a proper question," he told her. "That's hypothetical, and doesn't come within the scope of our present meeting. In a business conference, men do not discuss what they'll do when a company goes smash. The courts or something attend to that. I can tell you, though, that Claire has no intention of marrying me."

"How do you know?"

"I happen to know that she's going to marry a young fellow who has a job in a college down below. The man, himself, probably doesn't know anything about it. But Claire will catch him, all right! She has the blood in her that makes a good mouser. Fact is, I promised to drive down with her this evening and bring him up to Aux Saubles. By-the-by, I promised, too, that you'd put the blighter up to-morrow. I wish, Sally, you'd phone Claire that I'll be an hour late owing to an important business conference that is now in progress. She may believe you. I'm sure she wouldn't believe me. That girl is like her mother. She bosses me round something awful and asks too many blazing questions."

Mrs. Harding attended to that little matter graciously enough and the conference was resumed.

"Now it's my turn, Sally," her husband informed her with a smile. "Tell me, first, what has happened to all those pictures of Claire,—in all stages of development—that you had littered throughout the house? Have you been *redding* them up, too?"

The explanation he received was somewhat lengthy but didn't ring the bell so far as Bob's mind was concerned.

"Anyway, tell me, Sally, why you always took such an interest in that youngster?"

"I liked her Bob, and we had no little girl of our own."

"Yes, true so far as it goes," he chuckled; "but you don't ask me to believe, do you, that she was merely a neighbouring child who was running in as a little visitor?"

"I was good to her, Bob, but I never spoiled her."

"No, you didn't spoil her, I'll admit," he agreed. "What you did was to boss her around, correct her, straighten her clothes on her, drag her off to clinics and generally play the responsible Irish granny to the little youngster. The point is, Sally, you were not—*in character*, ever. I found out, long years ago, that the way to get my wife in high good humour was to make a great fuss over the little Jardine girl. And, by George, I've played up to you fairly well, haven't I, now, Sally,—honestly?"

"Yes, I'll admit you have."

"And tell me, old thing, what fetched us out to Aux Saubles? That isn't the right word, either. You were drawn and I was dragged. Yes, and don't let me hear anything about one-cow's milk either. Was it not that little girl?"

"Yes, it was."

"That's the way, Sally! You're a good sport," her husband told her with admiration lighting up her face. "Really, this has been a lively meeting of shareholders, hasn't it?—Stormy at moments, as usual—owing to a crisis—but ending amicably without any change in management. Carry on, old dear! But in that connection, I should explain to you, general manager, that I was obliged to elucidate this whole matter to your darling daughter some years ago. Her enquiring young mind made her a bit nosey, I could see, as to my motives in taking such a keen personal interest in her affairs. You are aware, perhaps, of the curious notions young ladies get into their heads. Well—Sally—I must be going. But let me suggest that the two of you go into a huddle. Have a conference, Sally. Tell the truth to each other and shame the devil. But, for Heaven's sake, don't let any of those old girl friends of yours catch the two of you with your red heads too close together. The inference to be drawn might create another scandal in Aux Saubles."

"Half a minute," his wife called to him as he was going out the door. "I have a few questions I want to put to you."

"Touching the matter of this conference?"

"Not exactly—but touching *you*."

"Ah, my dear lady," he told her, laughing, "couldn't think of it! It's never regular to discuss any matter that is not set out in the agenda. You are quite out of order. But I promise you one thing, Mrs. Harding. If you ever find out anything about me—and do so on your own and without making a single enquiry—I'll sit in with you on another conference—and I'll tell you all about it."

CHAPTER XIX

Enter Miss Mary Brown.

The following Thursday afternoon found Mr. and Mrs. Robert Harding loafing at their cottage on the Georgian Bay. The day had promised bright and clear; but lowering clouds had driven the truants within doors, and gusts were now pelting rain on the roof and bending the flimsy drapery of a silver birch to play tick-tack on the window panes. A strong blow from the north was herding its flock of sheep across the bay, and the long, slow wash of surf was sounding a dull undertone along the nearby beach.

Within the cottage, crackling wood in the stone fireplace cast a cheering, flickering glow and the smell of its acrid warmth pervaded the low-slung living room. We find Mrs. Harding at a little melodeon pedaling wind for its reeds and extracting soft flute notes, some of which were playing puckish pranks with her tune. Husband Robert was sprawling on a couch near the fireplace; and yawning deep and hearty. This storm was the only visitor that had called upon them since their arrival north, and, as usual, the company was proving a domestic evil.

Mrs. Harding turned her head to break the companionable silence that had settled down between them.

"Come, Bob," she suggested, "put a little life into this party. Let us all join together heartily in singing 'From Shifting Sands He lifteth me.'"

"No," her husband grunted. "Suppose you strike up 'Let a little sunshine in.'"

Sally found him a book and advised him to read it.

"Not for me," he told her as he turned the pages over. "Thanks kindly! These fellows close themselves up in a poky apartment in a big city and pour ink wells over the mean, restricted sort of life other people are living. Fancy I've tasted as much fresh killed meat as this young blighter has. Why should I partake of his left-overs warmed up in a stew?"

"I thought you might like that one—it's English, you know."

"Suggest a dog likes the smell of his old kennel, eh? Thanks, but I don't think I'll risk another novel on current English life. Let a fellow retain some of his harmless illusions! Let's hope whoever wakes in England finds others

there than inconsequential people riding a merry-go-round in hourly fear the boiler will explode under them. Same old country, I fancy, Sally."

A rap came to the door and Harding answered it to welcome their neighbour, Mrs. Brown, who had walked across in the storm. The bedrabbled little woman was breathing tensely as she explained that she had hurried over to have a chat with Mrs. Harding on the quiet. Her husband was away with their car. Sally superintended the removal of the visitor's oilcloth coat and high rubber boots and then took her in to sit by the fireplace. Quite evidently, it was a hen party and Harding made himself scarce. He stepped into the kitchen to put the kettle on, and he loitered there.

By the time the kettle was singing, his wife called to him, and he then rejoined them, bringing a tray with tea things on it.

"Mrs. Brown is terribly worried about her daughter, Mary," Sally informed her husband, as he did what he could to warm the ladies up, "and we've decided to talk the matter over with you, Bob, and see if you can offer any helpful suggestions. Mrs. Brown seems to think you are a competent person; in fact, she has a higher opinion of your judgment than I have. I tell you that, of course, to flatter you. We must break right into the heart of the matter quickly, too, because she is anxious to get back home before her husband returns."

"And what's the trouble about Mary?"

"Mary is twenty-three now," Sally reminded him, "and the girl wants to get married. She's been keeping company this while back with Jim Fletcher. You'll remember him, Bob? He did odd jobs for us. The squire has no use for him. Hasn't had any since they had a row about a boat two or three years back. You recall they made a case out of it. So Mary has been slipping out on the sly behind her father's back—and all that sort of thing. Well, to cut the matter short, Mary wants to get married, and what's more, Bob, she ought to get married. You don't mind me telling all this plainly, do you, Mrs. Brown? Fletcher's willing but the squire won't hear of it!"

"Why doesn't the girl step out the front door and make a quick job of it?" Harding commented. "I'd nab the fellow quick, if I were Mary."

"Ah, but that's where the rub comes in," Sally told him. "Fletcher's on his uppers. He hasn't anything to support a wife. He has his old mother on his hands and he's on a rented place with last year's rent in arrears, and no stock or equipment worth while. Mary hasn't a cent of her own, and the squire tells her that if she marries the scoundrel, he'll have nothing more to do with her."

"Does the squire know the condition his daughter is in?" the man inquired.

"Yes, he does, now," Sally went on. "They broke the news yesterday and there has been a violent scene. You know—highly indignant father—disgrace to a respectable family— The squire is taking it badly. Mary is puff-eyed and off her food, and the church elder is kicking furniture around and breaking dishes."

"And what does he suggest?"

"He thinks she should go away to the city for a trip—at least, that's what Mrs. Brown suspects. She was asking me, Bob, whether you'd be willing to have a talk with the squire and see if you can change him?"

"Oh do!" whimpered the visitor. "Things are just simply terrible with us. See what you can do, Mr. Harding. What can I possibly do? I haven't the strength, no, I simply haven't the strength left in me to oppose him—alone. Perhaps you'll do something to change him."

"Your husband and I have been neighbours and friendly for years," Harding told her, "but we're scarcely intimate enough to justify me stepping in and telling him how to manage his own family. However, he couldn't do anything worse than tell me to mind my own business. But how could I make an excuse, even?" he asked the woman, who was sniffling.

"We can't go through the winter the way things are," Mrs. Brown sobbed. "He'd pay quite a bit of attention to what you'd say."

"Very well," Harding promised finally. "I'll drop over and see the squire to-morrow morning. But it might not be advisable for me to tell him that I'm doing so at your request, Mrs. Brown. You have to live with him; and Mary and I don't. Tell Mary I'll be over and that I'll say she asked me to."

"Oh, Mary knows I'm here," the mother explained. "'Twas Mary made me come. She was ashamed to come herself."

"Well, I'd do quite a lot for Mary," Harding told her. "She was always a pleasant friendly little girl. Tell Mary to cheer up and not worry. If she never does anything worse than fall in love and have a baby, she has less to answer for than her father, good and all as he is. By-the-way, is this Fletcher fellow any good? Will he make her a passable husband? I trust Mary's not marrying him just to save her face?"

"No, she's really not!" the mother declared. "Mary's fond of Jim—and I like him myself. They'd get along first rate, if they had any sort of a start. He

has as much, anyway, as Brown and I had when we moved up here. We were hard enough up, the Lord knows, till Ephraim fell into a little money."

"Your husband has done well since," Harding told her kindly. "You should be proud of him. He's a man of substance, and of influence, too. I often wonder how the locality would get along without its squire who is the back bone of the church."

"You have to live with a man to know him," his wife exclaimed; and then she shut up.

"I'll call in the morning early," Harding assured her, as he escorted the troubled woman to the door. He had offered to drive her home, but she wouldn't think of it. She wanted to slip back quietly through the pasture field the way she came.

Bob Harding stood watching her slim figure as she hurried homeward, and as the rain came down in fitful sheets, his mind travelled far back along the mucky lanes of memory.

Mrs. Harding came to tell him to close the door.

"Do you chink you can do anything, Bob?" she inquired anxiously. "I hope the squire won't have you run in. It's hardly fair, is it, to ask you to be sticking your nose into other people's business—is it? You come all the way up here to get away from trouble, and trouble comes walking right in on you,—with a handkerchief to its face! But it is shocking, isn't it? I think Brown is a brute!"

"You're still cross with him because his breachy cows trampled your flower bed. You're a hard-hearted woman, Sally, and you never forgive or forget."

"I never had any use for him," Sally declared. "He's a smug hypocrite. He's bad at heart, that man Brown is! You should have heard what his wife told me. That sanctimonious skinflint! Church Elder! Faugh!"

"I never heard you suggest before, Mrs. Harding, that going to church did a man any harm. If you knew the squire as well as I do, Sally, you'd certainly give the man full credit for the decent things he tries to do."

"I think religion's intended to make the heart better and purer," Sally told him as he was replenishing the fire in the hearth. "I don't think it's intended as a cloak to hide vileness."

"Oh, you do?" Bob commented. "If that's its purpose—to make the heart better—it's been at work untold centuries without accomplishing much.

Strikes me, it's given as a solace for grief—to lighten the burden on hearts that are heavy laden. But if the hearts are corrupt, it won't even do that. Did you hear of the scene they had at old Widow Pujollis's funeral down at the Harbour side last week?"

"No?"

"The relict was a religious body—at least she never missed a service till she was swollen up with the dropsy. They gave her a fine funeral with a limousine for the casket and three clergymen attending. I'm opposed in principle to motor funerals, Sally. Proceedings move too quickly. Things are timed like a radio programme. All this expedition doesn't give the connection time for a get-together, to weep and break the bread of loving kindness. Funerals used to be fine for splinting old breaks in the family tree. They don't work that way nowadays. Well, as I was trying to say, the corpse and her daughter, Mary, hadn't been speaking for twenty years. The girl had lipped her mother in soft-soap making time and as a hasty reply, she got a dipper of lye in the face that blemished her for keeps. Of course, Mary came to the mother's funeral and wept heartily. But as the pallbearers were manipulating the heavy coffin into the narrow hall, something in Mary's mind broke loose; and can you imagine what that fat, wet-faced, middle-aged woman did? She burst forward and drove her fist through a framed chromo of the mother that hung by the mantel piece. Splinters of glass went flying over the floral tributes. 'Sh! Sh! Hush!' urged the clergyman who had just finished his funeral discourse to the sorrowing friends assembled. 'Our dear sister is overcome with grief.' The truth is, you see, a little hypocrisy is often needed as a covering just for decency's sake."

"Yes," Sally remarked, "and the daughters would hurry back from the grave to stage a row over dividing the furniture. I know the family. They have fighting blood in them. But it's another Mary we're talking about. Think you can do anything for her? I'm real sorry you're being put to this bother."

"Oh, just spare your sympathy," her husband informed her, with as pleasant a smile on his face as ever you saw. "It may seem a curious thing to you, Sally, but it's one of the most pleasurable things for me I can imagine, this stepping over to-morrow morning to talk to Squire Brown about the affairs of his daughter Mary."

The next morning, bright and early, Robert Harding picked up one of Burgoyne's walking sticks and struck off across the fields to have a heart-to-heart talk with his neighbour, J. Ephraim Brown, J.P. It was Thursday, the

12th September, 1935, and the weather had not yet quite made up its mind what sort of a day it was going to be.

Despite his wife's dero′gatory remarks touching the squire, which the reader has overheard in part and to which he should pay no attention—the woman not knowing what she was talking about—Harding felt confident that he would be able to arrange to his entire satisfaction the little matter that was bringing him on this errand. From their first meeting, he had always taken a keen interest in the squire and his affairs. As a result he had studied the man closely, and he felt in consequence that he knew him intimately, indeed.

Every rural community that boasts a post office and a municipal hall has a respectable elderly resident, somewhere thereabouts, who started life doing odd labouring jobs and drifted into farming for himself. By industry and frugal economy, he accumulated some money which enabled him, during the years that followed, to dabble in local business ventures of one sort or another. He is now reputed to be well-heeled and is living half retired on one of his farms, though still after the honest dollar and as busy in the hunt as a bird dog in a likely covert. One sees the veteran dodging about at all hours dickering over livestock and giving careful, personal attention to the money he has out at interest in the community. Such was J. Ephraim Brown, J.P.,—a close, careful, shrewd, hard-fisted, religious-minded and proper-living man. He had family worship every morning without fail; and in his prayers, it was a favourite phrase of his to petition the Almighty to vouchsafe to prosper His servant in all his undertakings. Nor did the squire make any bones about it, that, taking things by and large, the Lord had done so. Ephraim had assisted matters greatly by keeping a large roll of the Ready always on hand that he might profit by the necessities of less favoured persons. A neighbour who felt himself hard pressed for a little cash found in the squire a friend who always stood ready to buy half grown hogs and lean cattle—if the price was right. The reader will visualize the type quickly when told that the squire had a desk in the corner of his sitting room, one of those roll-top affairs that pull down to lock the drawers beneath. It will help also when we state that he always voted the same way and that he was as firm and unbending in his opinions as was the bottom of his kitchen chair.

Harding was ushered in to find the Squire seated before his desk and fingering some papers. The welcome was not an unfriendly one, though it was evident that Mr. Brown's mind was pre-occupied and that he was feeling grumpy.

The caller was not dry as to the reason of his coming. He got down to business at once.

"I dropped in, Squire, to speak to you about your daughter, Mary," Bob remarked, as he laid his hat and stick on a clothless table and seated himself comfortably without an invitation.

"My God!" the father exclaimed. "Has she been bleating around the country already? I wish, Harding, that people would mind their own business!"

"True enough," the visitor told him in friendly tones, "this is not my personal concern, but it happens to be my business at the moment owing to the fact that your daughter asked me to call and see you. No, I don't think people are doing any chattering yet; but, of course, the whole countryside will be talking about you unless prompt action is taken. I'm sorry, indeed, Squire, that you're having this trouble; but facts must be faced. Life, friend Brown, is not always swallows against a bright blue sky. You and I are men of experience. We know enough to get in out of the rain. As a man of sound judgment, you should get this girl respectably married off without any loss of time."

"I've already told *her* that I'll have *nothing* more to do either with her or her affairs," the squire exploded, bringing his desk top down with a bang.

"If you noise that decision abroad," Harding cautioned him, "the first thing, you know, this fellow Fletcher will decide that he'll have nothing further to do with your daughter. His friends will banter him. He'll tell you to keep your daughter. The affair'll be a feather in his cap. The disgrace will be on your family. Have you talked this matter over with your pastor? Of course, that's only a suggestion!"

"I certainly have not," Brown replied. "His wife's a spreader!"

"Yes!" Harding nodded. "Scandal flies on the wings of the morning. I suggest you still have the bird in your hands. Better clip its wings or wring its neck—or something."

The Squire's temper had been rising and it now boiled over.

"Harding!" he exclaimed, "I've told the girl . . . I've told her mother, and I now tell you, that she can pack out of here. If she doesn't, I'll make her life miserable for her! Tell her that! Tell her she's had her last meal here! You might as well talk to that desk—I'm *made up*!"

"What I really came to suggest to you, friend Brown, was that this fellow Fletcher— —"

"He's no good," the other interrupted. "He's absolutely no good! Has nothing . . . no prospects . . . nothing!"

"Sober and industrious, though! What he needs, Brown, is what you found when you had nothing—that's an uncle to help him out—give him a boost up, you know."

"An uncle?—A boost up? . . . I hope he finds one!"

"Who knows, Squire? You touched your uncle for three thousand dollars and got away with it—slick as you please! That was a fast one, Squire! Never asked to pay the money back, were you?"

"What do you mean?" the squire exclaimed. "You're daft. I owe no money!"

"Don't let us bandy words or speak in riddles, Squire," Harding suggested. "I'm referring to the three thousand dollars you borrowed, Brown, from your uncle Thomas Wilson. Nothing hidden or obscure about the transaction, was there? You gave the old man a mortgage as security. It was registered and appears on the abstract of title of the parcel of land which I bought from you."

"Yes, but it was discharged!"

"True enough!" Bob agreed in a patient explaining tone of voice. "Of course it was; and quite in order, too. After old Wilson was killed, you were appointed administrator of his estate, and in that capacity, you gave yourself a discharge of the mortgage he held against your property. The point I'm labouring to bring to your attention, Brown, is that you never paid the old man his money or accounted for it after his death. If young Fletcher finds an obliging old uncle somewhere to lend him three thousand dollars, I trust he will pay the old man back in better currency than you used when you squared your accounts with your old uncle, Thomas Wilson."

"You're talking damned nonsense! That was years ago. Everything was cleared off and forgotten."

"You didn't pay the loan off after your uncle's death," Harding suggested, "because neither the mortgage nor its proceeds appear in your accounts as administrator."

"It was paid off before the man's death!"

"If it was, then you committed perjury, Squire. You stood up in the box and swore that you hadn't been in touch with your uncle for years before his death. You swore that you knew nothing concerning what moneys he had received or about his business. Like to read your evidence over? I have it lying somewhere about the house. Man, you were in no position to pay that money back in those days. You were hard up. You had the bailiff in on you for taxes."

The Squire was on his feet and stomping up and down the room.

"Look you here, Harding," he exploded, "did you come in here to insult me? If you don't get out, I'll put you out by the scruff of your neck!"

"Sit down, Brown," the other remarked quietly. "Pray be seated. Your actions irritate me. You've had these little incidents in your secret places for well nigh onto twenty-four years. It should be a jolly relief to your conscience to find a friend who also knows and to have a confidential chat with him about old times. If you don't sit down and behave yourself, you'll find yourself making your little excuses before a larger audience. If you find yourself there, don't forget that you've given testimony on these matters on another occasion. Refresh your mind, and in no circumstances contradict yourself. Whatever your story was, always stick to it."

The Squire had taken a chair. He had the look on his face of a man who has a bad crick in his back.

"There's one little sequence, however, in the affair that you should get yourself all primed up to explain," Harding went on. "You'll be called on to explain how you got your hands on the duplicate of the original mortgage. That duplicate had been in your uncle's possession because I find on making a search that it had been mailed to him direct from the Registry Office. It was not among his effects when the old man was shot, because the police made a careful search, and did not find it. Yet when I bought my property from you, there it lay amongst your title papers snug as you please; and I have it in my possession, now, as an *interesting* exhibit. How did you get your hands on that duplicate? You will kindly prepare to explain that little point to the satisfaction of the jury."

"Must have borrowed it!"

"Yes, you borrowed it the night you ransacked the Wilson house," Harding told him. "When you shot the old man and the woman, you ransacked the house from top to bottom. Among other things you carried off every paper the old man had relating to the money he had loaned you. Not a single scrap did you leave behind you."

"It was some bastard of an Englishman who shot him. The jury found him guilty!"

"Yes, that was convenient for you, wasn't it?" Harding observed. "I suppose the poor devil was hanged. At this late date, I don't suppose the State will hang another man for the same crime; but for safety's sake, they might put him away and give him healthful exercise making big stones into little ones."

A streak of sunshine came slanting through the window and fell athwart the folded desk.

"I'm glad to see it's clearing up," Bob remarked casually after a pause. "Pleasant, isn't it Squire, to feel the light of better days around us? I'll have to be strolling back. Promised to drive my wife to town to get some supplies. But, by-the-by, Mr. Brown, I mustn't forget the pleasant little errand that brought me over. As I mentioned before, your daughter, Mary, asked me to drop in and have a chat with you. I think you would be well advised, Squire, to have the marriage take place immediately. My wife and I will be leaving next week and Mrs. Harding would like, of course, to attend the wedding. I suppose you'll have the ceremony in the church and a reception here later? I've no doubt you will get along with your son-in-law quite so-so—if you make the necessary effort. In fact, Squire, you have many excellent qualities. For instance, you and I, have always got along well in a neighbourly way, and I have no doubt our friendly relations will continue. You'll be desirous, of course, of making a suitable provision for your daughter on her marriage. Very creditable to you, indeed! She's always been a kind, agreeable girl and I hope she will be happy. I suggest you give Mary three thousand dollars as a wedding present. That will be ample to set the young couple on their feet, and a girl brought up in such a thrifty home will know how to take good care of money. Have you that much in the bank or will you have to drive over to town and arrange for it? The way we'll carry this little matter through is quite simple. You'll just make out a cheque to her for that amount, now, and let me have it. I'll get it certified and deliver it to the blushing bride with her father's compliments at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony. A knowledge that everything is in order thus will give your prospective son-in-law that inner sense of certainty that prevents any possible hitch in such matters. Nothing like getting irksome business details dispatched, eh? What say you, Squire? While you're at your desk, you may as well write out the cheque now—and then we can call your wife and Mary in and advise them to get busy with their arrangements."

"It's a terrible deal of money," the Squire protested as he turned to his desk, and opening it up slowly, applied himself to the matter at hand.

"No, I differ," Harding observed genially. "Strikes me as a suitable and appropriate gift, having regard to your position in the community and the circumstances. . . . Thanks awfully! Now, perhaps, you'll call the ladies in?"

Harding had risen and was preparing to take his smiling departure as Mary and her mother entered.

"I've had a pleasant chat with your father," he informed the hysterical girl, "and I've found the Squire, as always, a reasonable-minded man. In any event, he has shown himself a·me′nable to my friendly suggestions. He agrees with me that it is best, in the interest of all, that your marriage take place immediately. He is also of the opinion that it had better be a quiet little affair at the church with some sort of a reception here afterward. So all that should make you and your mother happy. So far as your future prospects are concerned, I think your father's intentions are indeed generous. He has not only told me what he intends to do for you in a financial way, he has implemented his promise by intrusting me with the funds, and the completion of the financial arrangements is now entirely in my hands. So you may inform your young man that your father has already done what I consider generous in the premises. But I re′ally must be going. Better kiss your father, Mary, and dry those tears."

Mary rushed out of the room bawling.

"Good morning, Squire. . . . Good morning, Mrs. Brown," their visitor remarked in cheery tones as he left them. "I see the weather is clearing nicely. Tell Mary, for me, that she mustn't forget to send Mrs. Harding an invitation!"

Sally Harding was busy in the kitchen when she heard her husband arriving. He was whistling *The Blue Juniata*, which was always proof positive that his spirits were riding high. She went out to meet him and observed a boyish grin on his face.

"How did you get along?" she inquired impatiently.

"Everything hunk-a-dory, my darling rib. I fixed the little matter. The wedding is on. 'Twill cost you a present. When will we be driving into town?"

"Oh yes! But tell me, what did you do? Did you let him know what you honestly think of him?" the wife asked when she got him into the kitchen.

"What an idea, Sally! The squire knows that I appreciate his qualities rightly. Had a brief chat. Slightly grouchy and headstrong at first, the squire was—but agreeable toward the end. I fetched him round. I persuaded him. You know the way I have? I fixed him with my eye. I poured sound sense into him as sunshine streams through a window. I lit up some dark passages. The man's not only doing the agreeable, he is doing the generous. He'll not change his mind, either. I have his cheque in my pocket. Inspect it, my dear! You see I speak words of truth!"

"Will you kindly sit down in that chair, Robert Harding, and explain?"

"Explain what?"

"Explain to me, Bob, what this whole business means!"

"Means?" repeated Harding, as he picked up his stick and then turned facing her from the doorway. "It means, Sally, that you have an extraor'dinary husband. You should be proud of him. You should keep your eyes on him. He has such taking ways!"

"All I can say, Bob, is that you are an everlasting mystery to me! Yes, a blazing mystery—a stranger yet!"

"Perhaps that's what keeps the heart of things ticking," he told her with a gentle laugh as he swept her a graceful bow. "*Strangers yet*, eh?—

After years of life together,
After fair and stormy weather,
After touch of wedded hands,
After Love that understands
Joy and Grief and Heart's Regret—
Man and wife are strangers yet!"

Bob Harding steps out into the sunshine.

Curtain

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

When nested quoting was encountered, nested double quotes were changed to single quotes.

[The end of *Robert Harding—A Story of Every Day Life* by Patrick Slater]