THE TELEGRAPH DETECTIVE;

Or, The Train Wreckers of the Union Pacific. By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
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CHAPTER I
MEANING IN MED. JER.

"Hello!" That meant crooked work, or I'm an idiot.

Yes, I'm an idiot. The night might have been the
most peculiarly cold that I knew, but there was
nobody in the city. Alack, McPherson bent forward, "all
cars," for the time being.

"I haven't any clothes," he said, but a crisis of
the expressionless sound, and this time fairly located it as
finding birth in another deep cut, where the double track of
the Union Pacific wound its way through the
tortuous "Grape-Vine Gorge."

A low, almost fierce ejaculation passed the
driver's lips, followed by the muttered words:

"I might have known it; I did know 'the place.'

The worst spot along the whole line for a wreck,
and—haunts! If it's too late to warn the Express—
Steady on, my friend!"

Crouching lower amidst those ragged
yellow flames, he planted his hand at the
front, shot a smack at the bridge of
his fists and clenched it, gnashed his teeth as
quick breath of relief.

"None too early, yet there's time enough,
unles—Get them, Eli!"

It would have been a difficult bit of ground to
cover even with the air of broad daylight,
and was actually impossible to live in out of
life this dark evening, when the rocks and
stones were rendered unusually slippery by
the mist which might pour down from the
rain.

But Alack McPherson was noted for his
persistence, and just now he had an
additional incentive which left no room for
thought of failure.

Yet it seemed a terribly long five minutes,
before he could win his first glimpse of
Grape-Vine Gorge, and then, as he proceeded through the
failing mist, his hands clenched in
fierce rage.

The bridge was holding a lantern,
the dull rays of which were cast here and there,
as called for by the lawless workers, some
half a mile from the crossing, which the detective could make out in that
hurried glance.

"Devs, all! Think of a crowded Express
going down by that track! And what to do with it?"

As Cal's eyes roamed over the scene,
and just now he had an
additional incentive which left no room for
thought of failure.

It was working swiftly, yet, systematically, some drawing
spikes from the ties, others prying the rails out of
plumb, the more surely to throw the coming
Express off the narrow road-bed over the
rocks and down to the mist-hidden river,
his driven nails being heard only too
distinctly.

The end line could have afforded a
wearing easy task for a man who knew
the ways of Grape-vine Gorge, noted in railroad annals for its short and sharp curves, forming a
dangerous loop in a short quarter of a mile, and
crossing the brawling river thence within the
four-hour limit.

McPherson shivered anew as a turn
of the journey ankles afforded him a passing
glimpse of the cavity in which the
lawless gang was at work; and then his brain worked swiftly over the
problem how he could avert the
threatening tragedy?

As will be explained later, he was thoroughly
familiar with the surrounding
and knew that the only point where he could
hope to gain the road bed within at least a
quarter of a mile, would be a little west of the
side, a single false step on those damp rocks,
might not only endanger life and limb by the
fall, but would certainly bring yonder murderously
knives upon him, thirsting for blood.

Yet Alack hesitated barely half a minute,
and those seconds were consumed, not in
planning his own safety, but in determining how
might the most certain and least
relentless coming Express of this grim peril, menacing the lives of every person on board,
and silver and effects in a Silver Leaf and, that
day a way-station!" his swift reflections ran.
"Is Cal long enough to call in time to
roll up in time to flag the track! If not—
Get there, Eli!"

Without a thought of his own imminent
peril, the detective took the desperate plunge, it really seemed nothing else, just then! as
hurrying, clambering, with cut-like activity,
and almost its sullen silence. McPherson descended into Grape-vine Gorge. Eli was not
soon to appease the ire of the
lawless band.

More than once the brave fellow narrowly
escaped a fall which could hardly have done
him any damage, as life, but, just as
often when he pressed on, his sole hope and desire
being to send timely warning to the night
agent at Silver Leaf Station to halt the
menaced Express.

The time-limit was so terribly brief! The
wagons were fleeing swiftly: And now—Isaac Calhoun should be sleeping at his post!

A hearty, breathless, clothes torn and
forlorn, not only bruised but bleeding in several
places, Detective McPherson finally reached
the Weaverville track;

So far as he could see, the wreckers were
working with complete confidence of his coming, so that,
shaking a clenched fist at their way, the
detective started down the road-bed, other
hand fluttering wildly in the air, to make sure no harm
had come to his faithful ally, through whose
aid he hoped to flash a warning over the wires
to the agent at Silver Leaf Station.

But, ere a dozen steps were taken, McPherson
was made suddenly (he could hardly
believe it), an ugly suspicion that
himself,

"What if they've posted guards? Surely
Frederick was the lifeline in human guise
and wouldn't risk being run into, now?"

The night was colder than the
from distant thunders, made
himself heard, just then, and, a bit later,
came an additional flash of lightning
which McPherson instinctively looked up toward and by the
electric glow he caught sight of the
dangling ends of severed wires, showing
yet another precaution taken by the train
wreckers.

That glance, then as darkness followed,
the detective buried, his knees knavish;
their nefarious work, hardly more than fifty
yards further up the track.

"Good, the board's not yet all
over observation should he climb this pole in order to send his
message from mid-air?"

That reflection decided McPherson,
and, clapping the damage and slippery telegraph
be climbed, it was best he might
without the aid of the customary spurs.

Under less urgent circumstances the
meanest man might have failed to accomplish this feat, but with such immense interests at
stake he knew of no such word as failure,
for the danger was insurmountable. McPherson
quickly made his hold secure by crook-
ing a leg over the middle rung, then turned
to glance on a glance over the
wreckers were busily at work.

Here a luminous flag dim light, while
comписание, no doubt, the lawless
knives seemed doubly in
earnest as the minutes crept along
the track for the dread harvest drew
nigh.

Just the look; then Alack drew forth
the ticket inspector's whistle, and this was
nothing but a signal to the
further end, a signal to the
the
wreckers.

Not a sound save yonder house commands as the man with a lantern directed
the foremen, followed by several strokes of metal against metal, or of cracking, groaning ties being
forced out of place by hemp and

Click! click! click!

"With fierce impulsion vibrated the iron
strutment, now, sending call after call along
the damp wire to the distant station, for
And the Telegraph was
is that it was only a matter of brief minutes now,
when the crowded Express would flash past
the Silver Leaf, and the alarm be spread toward destruction at the rate of fifty miles an
hour.

The summer wind, and though the night
was, and
raw the chilling winds that struck him high in the air, Alack was fairly sweating in his
fierce exertions. He knew nothing could
be to smother the impatient shout which stove to pass his lips as his repeated call remained unanswered.

Thirty miles away, he yet could see it
isac Calhoun placidly sleeping on his
narrow cot, staring little or nothing about it
whether the train passed him or not. The
thunder past the station, since no stop was
made there unless on urgent signal.

Click! click! click!

Still no answer, and McPherson knew that
the train was almost due to pass Silver Leaf Station, after which but a single hope
remained for him to speed along the track until out of sight and hearing of the evil train,
the detection.

Instead, the chance that would not possibly
be perished in middle

And yes, if the agent had posted lookouts
both up and down the track?

A man's train will wondrously fast under such circumstances, and did the
Telegraph Detective do swifter or
ger than when perched in mid-air
was the best to call up the night-agent at Silver Leaf.

Click! click! click!

"Tell the train the time—call
ever, never make answer? Just to think of all
those precious lives dependent upon one
meek!"

Click! click! click!

In desperate haste McPherson worked his
hands until they were numb, though to his
own discovery by yonder ruthless villains;

"Will an answer come? Can the
moment of releasing the wire and trusting to luck to pass the possible guards stationed by the
train, and ahead, which an electric thrill caused his sensitive fingers to tingle, and he gave a
low, eager cry as he knew his call had at
least reached Calhoun!

Without waiting to hear what the night-agent
might have to say, McPherson swiftly
clicked off the startling message from mid-air

"Hold the Express, for God's sake! Wreckers! go down the track at Grape-vine! Am I in time?"

A few indifferent sounds which plainly showed how intensely agitated the night agent
was by this startling message, then

"Flag the Express! You must hold it, Cal!" swiftly tapped off the detective; but he
knew the message was lost in the
track

What did it mean? Had the Express
already flashed past the station, and was Cal

What was it? Smashed to
meantime? the already unmanned as to be unable to reply?

Or, had one of the train-wrecking gang captured him and taken full possession of
the station?

McPherson's blood seemed to freeze at
this dread thought, but he regained
again and again sound his urgent call at brief intervals,
that he might be heard back.

For the time being he was lost to all else.
He gave no thought to his own peril, and
were the signal given to the wreckers, it
energy, each moment seeming an hour, each
minute a veritable age!

Then, gaining the ticket swift sounds, a pair of
imetical eyes ferreted out that clanging
shape in mid-air, and a fierce challenge rung through the

"Ah-ha, ye devil! What ye thar!

do up yan way, anyway? Come out of that, old fellah! Will yewe clyme to the

CHAPTER II
THE TELEGRAPH DETECTIVE AT BAY.

TAKEN completely by surprise, Alack McPherson looked downward, to catch sight of
the indescribable shape almost directly below his
elevated perch.

Past doubting it was one of the nefarious
gang, and as another forked flash of light-
The Telegraph Detective.

Had Calhoun performed his duty? Had the detective hurriedly in pursuit of the train even now speeding along to destruction and horrible slaughter, all unwarned, the shrieking of the engine and the groans by the murderous train-wreckers? Surely a matter of an answer, and come to his last call! Who else could have given it the save the night-agent? And yet, why so much of a mystery? Calhoun’s folly rose up too late to avert the dread peril? If he could only break through yonder armed fence, free the train, he must flag the train ere it was eternally too late. If he could shoot his way through! Why not?
The mere fact of his asking such a question proved how desperate the undespaired detective was growing, brain-railed by those train-wreckers.

Already several lanterns were alight, both up and down the track, those holding flashing rays over the rock wall, searching each nook and cranny, eager to sight the human game and give all hands a chance to shoot to the death.

McPherson saw his enemies gradually drawing closer to his refuge, and knowing that the detective was out of ammunition, and later, longer, he prepared to take action while yet he could make good his escape, turning into a living target for nearly a score of revolvers or rifles.

A fortuneth, hope, at best, but he resolved to make a dash away from the wall across the road bed, deeming it barely possible that he might find some yonder stones and rocks lining the high bank of the river, and thus get beyond the line of wreckers on that side, then race along the track to even yet halt the Express. had just a few moments the flash of lightning to intensify and add to the gloom, the detective left his covert and stole swiftly across the level road-bed.

But, ill luck seemed against him that night, for hardly had he reached the nearest rail to the other side, another train had come from above, for a single instant rendering all below as light as noonday.

In short, but that sufficed for the keen-eyed wreckers, and a savage yell made known the discovery.

Louder than the others rose the voice of the herculean leader, and the detective uttered a smothered execration as he caught the words "Look out! It’s that cursed McPherson! He’s got him, lads! He’s killed or he’s hanged now!"

A number of states were fired in that direction, but no answer came, and the missiles all sped wide of their mark.

Fierce with a longing for revenge, McPherson fired at the train-wrecker coming rushing that way, but he, too, was felled by the glory succeeding those blinding flashes.

Cut off from flight, in either direction, with his ruthless enemies rushing upon him in force, their movements fairly visible, now, by the lanterns carried, all rays from which were flashing in his direction, the detective fell back until he stood upon the very edge of the nearly perpendicular bank of the river, revolvers in hand, ready to sell his life as dearly as possible.

As some of the wreckers rushed ahead of him, a single shot from McPherson flashed high over their heads and the steady-nerved detective opened fire, right and left.

Oaths and curses greeted this swift fusillade, then a rattling volley came from the train, just in time to flash fairly upon the detective at bay. And, with a sharp cry, as of agony, Alck McPherson plunged headlong downward to the rapidly-flowing river!

CHAPTER III.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

Thirty miles away from Grape-vine Grove, the feverish heart of the telegraph sounder was filling the dingy little office with its alarm, and only a few feet away lay Isaac Calhoun the night-agent at Silver Leaf Station, sleeping calmly and peacefully as a child.

Louder and more impatient came that
The Telegraph Detective.

thrilling call, and even now a trained carman usually have caught a glimpse of the Lightning Express as it thundered along through that misty night.

... the engine, warnings of death and destruction lying ahead; still the signal remained. At last a man got out of the carriage, only to discover that it was an empty carriage. All was now over. The light of the headlight was soft and blinding, but even so the train moved freely. The sky was clear, and the stars shone bright. The train was moving so slowly that the passengers could hear the sound of the wheels on the track. The telegraph was still working, and the engineer was able to stop the train in time. The passengers were all safe. It was a remarkable escape.

Then, just as the telegraph detective was discovered by Paddy McComb on the train, the engine was seen to stumble and then come to a halt. The passengers were thrown off balance, and some were injured. The engineers tried to get the engine going again, but it was impossible. They had to abandon the train and make their way on foot. It was a long and difficult journey, but they eventually reached the next station and were able to get a new train. The passengers were all safe, and the telegraph detective was able to continue his work. It was a remarkable escape.
The Telegraph Detective.

Sore abduction would pay them better than assassination, since they could only hope to gain ransom money through Jaffey Zatell himself. Take it all together and it was a mystery not to be solved by even so keen and shrewd a brain, whose powers were put upon pause. The detective could glean from that hurred dispatch from Silver Leaf.

Excitement mounted indeed when the lights of the station were finally sighted, and even before the train could be brought to a halt, muffled figures, a list of passengers, were flocking out of the coaches, one and all eager to race for the gory details.

But, at word from Detective McPherson, the conductor marshalled his train crew and ordered them to reroute in which Jaffey Zatell was now to be found, according to the speech of the station agent.

"He isn't the man I thought he was when I called you up," Calhoun hurriedly explained as McPherson questioned him. "He's alive, sir, and—"

"Help keep back the crowd!" tersely cut in the Telegraph Detective as he hurried away toward the pastrail private car. "Don't let any person enter without I call for them!"

With Conductor Jameson alone, Allick McPherson entered the coach, and by the light that glowed on the face of the captain, lying on a divan in the saloon compartment, the usual florid face was almost ghastly pale, and though one of his servians was bathing both face and head with a moistened towel, theauberging the show of flowing blood was still in evidence.

Yet Mr. Zatell started up to a sitting position at this emergency, showing very unlikely a corpse as his countenance lit up with a brief glow of hope, his husky voice asking: "My children; you've found them? You've brought back my darling girl, my noble boy, Larkin?"

"Not yet, Mr. Zatell," gravely answered the detective, taking the sponge and motioning the fear-stricken young man to one.

With a hollow groan that head fell back, and as a pair of trembling hands came up to hide his face from view, "Oh, Mr. Zatell!" intensely the millionaire was suffering, in mind, even more than in body.

"Have courage, sir!" quickly urged the detective, pressing the now cool sponge gently up to the heated brow. "We'll help you, Mr. Zatell. Buck your son and daughter, safe and sound, never fear. Only— If you could only give us some definite clue to work upon?"

"How did it all happen, Mr. Zatell?" asked Jameson, no longer able to another his intense curiosity, "did you hurt you?"

"Are how did they carry off the young people without—"

"Don't you hurt—you torture me, man! grossly cowed the injured millionaire. "How could they do it? Devils—saints, sir?"

"It's for your own good, sir, as well as for the good of your dear ones. We feel nothing, gravely, earnestly urged the detective. "Unless you can tell us something—"

"What can I tell? I don't know—only I feel like a log! I never knew—never saw—"

Oh, my poor, poor, little girl! Just then a sound from the rear drew a glance that way from the detective, and he turned a bit of mumbling over the startled agent entering without being summoned, but he made no immediate objection, for he knew how to hold his peace. He was a ray of help from Calhoun, since Mr. Zatell seemed wholly incapable of affording any actual information.

But before question could be asked or answer given, the injured millionaire broke up to receiving the oxygen, and with a hoarsely savage cry he rose to his feet, plunging forward with the astounding night-agen of the throat, shaking him much as a cat shocks a fat mouse, hardly panting farther.

"You devil! I'll kill you like a mad wolf! You're in this devil's game! You helped carry off my girl!"

Taken by surprise as much as was Calhoun, both McPherson and Jameson were stunned, and shuddered, that treacherous hold and rescuing the half-strangled agent, from the millionaire's clutches.

Both men vouched for the perfect honesty of Isaac Calhoun, and once more the sorely tortured father staggered back to lie down on the wet floor, the wide eyes, glazed, ground in his mental agony and renewed physical weakness.

Confused and unnerved the father was, showed clearly when Allick McPherson again strove to win a possible clue to this mystery, for he gazed helplessly upon his questioner, demanding who and what he was, and by what right he possessed such influence.

With grave patience McPherson explained:

"I am a detective in the employ of your directory, Mr. Zatell. It was I who sent you here, in concert with the Gorge. If you need any further reference, sir, I can produce the papers to back up my word!"

"In our employ!" fiercely ejaculated Zatell, rising to a sitting posture once more, his features glowing like orbs of polished steel.

"Then why haven't you put a stop to this infernal train wreckage? Why do you permit such evil names, such menace? My poor, poor little girl in such devilish, hands as this?"

In a metaphorical sense the Telegraph Detective pricked up his ears at this, scenting the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race, the capital's share of the rat race.

For a few minutes the detective tried to reason with the enraged, confined, lip quivering, but, just as he was on the point of giving over in despair of learning nought there appeared, by the light of a candle, the capitalist again abruptly sprung up, thrusting a cold, strong hand, huskily speaking:

"You say you're a detective? Then save my child, you villain! Make me rich for the rest of your life—I swear it!"

"I'll do my level best, Mr. Zatell, but not for the money of such a man as this work of that same evil gang of wreckers, 'twill be a work of love for me! They tried to make me rich, but I'll run them to earth or lose my life trying!"

CHAPTER V.

STRIKING A POSSIBLE CLEW.

This admission, almost, seemed to greatly enhance the sorely stricken parent, giving the Telegraph Detective cause for hoping better things in the near future.

As matters stood now, McPherson was utterly in the dark, without even the slightest trace toward a correct solution of this strange affair.

"Brace him up, partner," Allick swiftly whispered to the detective's aide. "Fill him to the nozzle with whisky if you can't do any better, but brace him up! He's got to talk!"

Leaving Jameson to perform this duty, the detective boldly retraced his steps, and some possible clue to assault and abduction, first tackling the night agent as the one most likely to extract such information.

But, little better than disappointment met his efforts, so far as Isaac Calhoun was concerned.

During the absence of the train, the agent busied himself in part with telegraphing the details of the case to the managing agent of a wrecking train before the Express could proceed past Grape-Grove Gorge.

He neither had to think of anything unusual about the station, and the startling discovery of the assassinated capitalist was made inward, that they had a most plausible being around.

With the train coming back from one of the stations along the line asking questions which Calhoun deemed it best to submit to in order to be sure of the facts, and receiving no response to his tapping at the door of the private car, he ventured to ask the driver to take him out of the enormous gleeved was the profligate figure of Jaffey Zatell, lying in the aisle, looking far more than a bloody corpse, a driver dazed, nothing whatever was to be seen of either son or daughter.

Calhoun shouted his alarm, but no response was made, the colored servants having gone out of the house. The general impression was that there was nothing whatever was to be seen of either son or daughter.
He ran hastily through the car from end to end, finding the young couple missing; then he turned to the trainmen. "Anything to try to the up Allick McPherson or any other at the-breath?"

This was all that could be extracted from the night-agent, and the detective turned his attention elsewhere, looking for foot or horse tracks near the scene, only to be foiled by the countless imprints left upon the misted window-pane, when they rushed forth from the coaches.

Hoping for better things with the coming of daylight, Jaffrey Zattell was exploring all that direction, for the present, finding his train-latern of little service under the circumstance.

Just then James came hurriedly up, to tell them:

"The old gent wants you, Mac; he's got a brace on, and if you work it rightly maybe you'll find the boy, dead or alive, in the country, old boy?"

"Thanks; where is he?"

"In his—No! Yonder he comes, now!"

"Good enough!" as he glimpsed the railroad magnate emerging from the private car.

"See that none of the curious crowd we too close, will you, pard? Zattell knows heap-sight more than he feels like telling, I fancy; and he'll be easier managed then.

Conductor James readily promised to do his best, and the Telegraph Detective has tended to his work.

Mr. Zattell was still powerfully agitated, but something of his customary power had left him, and these few minutes more than all these before had left him but a few brief minutes longer.

"Nothing, as yet," responded the detective, as the bereaved father questioned him.

"It's the plainest case to fix a time and place for sign, sir, and I really reckon you can throw more light on the question than can be fixed up elsewhere, try we never hard.

Did the old gentleman flinch through fear of some possible "nasty" handicap? Was that slight recoil simply because his growing hopes were dashed to earth again?

Allick McPherson was hardly assured on either point, yet felt fairly certain that, if he could only get Zattell to calm down, they were still valuable light upon that mysterious assault and double abduction.

"I don't—How can I tell you more than I have already revealed? I saw nothing, heard nothing to warn me of impending peril. I was just stepping inside my car, when—the whole heavens seemed falling upon me."

His tones grew husky and uncertain, just then; but, quickly rallying, Jaffrey Zattell added:

"That is all I can tell you, Mr. McPherson. I was knocked senseless by that cow-ardly blow, and revived, my children were—were both gone!"

There was no room left for doubting the perfect accuracy of this account, though suspicion still clung to that swiftly-working brain.

Why had Zattell made such a strange choice of words while speaking of his daughter's captivity? And over the detective's face there passed:

"My poor, poor little girl in such devils' hands as his!"

The words were the spoken sorrow, the stifled anger, while he was too intensely agitated to wholly mask his deeper emotions.

Still he was a man accosted toward a per- sonal enemy? Zattell would not have so spoken if he had no idea whose hands his daughter's life was in.

All this flashed through the mind of the Telegraph Detective during those few seconds of silence, but he too shrewd to allow any whisper of any theories, any suggestion of any question, before that important point pass by for the present, he followed up a different line of in- vestigation.

"It is more than probable, that this latest outbreak is to the account of some gang in the railroad wrecks, young Zattell, and so on?"

"How could it, though, I thought?"

"Well, the trainmen say that all but one of the tracks at Grape-vine Gorge, you assume? So a goodly portion of the lawless outfit was, but, not all."

"What reason have you for thinking so?"

"For one thing, the fact that the gang was not found at the Gorge."

"Did they ever report anything missing, anything almost certainly a signal to the wreckers that something had gone wrong with their nefarious plans?"

Jaffrey Zattell made a fiercely impatient gesture as he broke forth anew:

"Of course! Why! We have been permitted to try their devilish arts? What do we pay you detectives for, anyway, sir? We pay you detectives for all sort of dirt, sir, and that's the truth with the bar on, boldly retorted McPherson, as he turned, and rode the young man 

"What! What?"

"Just that, sir, and devil a bit less! I've lived my life, and in my life I've no right to keep this train from pitching down to perdition with all on board! And for what? For the miserable wages I receive when pay-day rolls round! Don't you be
gin to think it, sir; I'm sick of the life, it's no life to-night, just as I ex-
pected to risk it again and again, because 'twas my duty, for one thing; because I'm trying to even things. The devil whom I hate worse than Satan loathes holy water!"

Like the rolling packs of thunder; but then, a sudden and complete change came over the detective, and he added, almost in a whisper:

"But, that's all, right, Mr. Zattell, and now we'll get back to solid business once more."

"I don't—I never once thought—"

"Don't bother about trying it on now, here. Once you robbed you as well as assaulted, Mr. Zattell?"

"Really, I never gave that a thought un-
til—"

"Until you permitted the railroad ma-
nate, slipping hand into pocket while add-
ishing. There's a safe in the car, you know. Let's have a look at it, first, then, blunt-
ly cut in the detective, as he strode swiftly to the rear end of the engine in which the body was still burning dimly."

Mr. Zattell followed close upon the detective's heels, and when McPherson turned up one of the lamps for a better light, the cap-
itain pointed toward a certain portion of the box, only to utter a sharp exclamation the next instant.

"Gone! The rascal's carried off the money for sure, I reckon.

That was self-evident, and feeling that here lay a possible clue, the detective quickly summoned the trainmen and the missing box—for such it proved to be, rather than a regulation safe.

Yet there held up a goodly amount of money in the box, mainly banking notes, with a smaller supply of bank coins, in confidence in making change; but by far the most valuable portion of its contents consisted of papers, though partly legible by other hands than Zattell's himself.

"Nothing to hitch a positive clue upon, then." asked McPherson, disappointed far more than he permitted to show on the sur-
faced, "No marked notes? No peculiarities about the bills, either."

"Yes. After you never thought of taking the numbers of the bills, although I suppose you didn't."

Zaffrey shook his head, but then brightening up once more as his hands fumbled in his pockets.

"I don't know, sir. I always had—yes, I did have a marked twenty-dollar bit in my pocket, and it's gone—those hounds, scoundrels! I suppose it may have been after knocking me sense-
elss."

"Any marked coin? Describe it, please."

"Well, that's easy enough. A double-
eagle, made of California gold; it looks so gold almost like brass, you know."

"Yes; go on, please!"

"That first made me look at the coin more closely, and now, in the light, I can see the mark; 1854. small letters. That means 'twas struck at San Francisco, in that year, you see."

"Of course, what else?"

"On the reverse side was sharply stamped the three letters: 'F. D. Q.' That made me laugh, for you know the slang those letters represent."

"Yes. And this coin was taken from you-to-night?"

"Surely must have been taken, for my pockets are empty, and just before the Ex-
press was halted there, I know money was in them!"

"I certainly think, sir, that this clue is a valuable one?"

"It is worth bearing in mind, at all events. It may prove you right, who knows?"

Jaffrey shook the detective smilingly, stating the words, and then he added, care-
fully pointing with the fore-finger:

"But you can give a far better one if you will, I believe, Mr. McPherson—"

"I don't—What do you mean, sir?"

"There is one thing you have over Rush. Good reason to think this assault and double abduction was the work of a private enemy, than an unscrupulous band of desperadoes, you can un-
scramble, I think—"

The Bow hoarse, and then he exclaimed:

"The Telegraph Detective, keeping keen watch upon that pale face and slightly shrugging figure, be lieved his shot struck center, and dealt the blow.

"I sincerely hope 'twas all done for the sole purpose of extorting a heavy ransom from you, Mr. Zattell; do hope so, for your sake, I don't!"

"What do you mean by that, Mr. Zattell?"

"Because then the lives of your children are safe. Such goods are far more valuable than such billions. But, if done for pure spite, or to play for some small private injury, that's far different, worse luck, too!"

Jaffrey Zattell shook his head positively, and then addressing the detective, the tele-
graph Detective smiling faintly after him, murmuring:

"He's gone something back, but what? and why? If this springs out of an old grudge, how could it be worked off out here so smoothly?"

CHAPTER VI.
FLASHY FEED CUTS A SPLICE.

MINERAL POINT was a lively burgh for its dimen-
sions, although it lay near a score miles off the main line of travel, almost that distance by the road, from Silver Leaf.

"Pay dirt" in goodly quantities had been struck at and hard by the location on while the towd quickly sprung into existence, and while many of the enterprising citizen still predicted a branch-road from the main line to their growing city, the others scoffed at the idea.

Mineral Point was good enough as she stood, and 'twas a good omen, only the creek cook to win a doubtful favor from the railroad sharks.

Among points of public interest surely must be mentioned a combination drinking and gaming-saloon, presided over by one McPherson. It might have been shifted by some whimsical wag, until "the first shall be last," and few in Mineral Point but spoke of or to the proprietor.

As a Meek as Moses. To a stranger, or to a casual observer, this might have seemed peculiarly appro-
priate, but those who were better acquainted with Moses could have told a far different tale.

Quiet, reserved, slow-moving, almost slugg-
ishly, and meek as a lamb, a goodly pet, any man who might have been cast aside, in the crowd, as one who would be the last to mix with any one, and trouble.

Just now—mid-evening twenty-four hours later than the attempted train-wrecking at Grape vine Gorge, the keepers holder rode about red眼界 enough, even troubled, as his homely face bent over the bar which he was industriously polishing with a swamp cloth while he watched the saloon.

The saloon was fairly well filled with custom-
ers for once, and the keepers holder could look upon a table always to be found in such places, playing short-cards, the majority of which the keepers holder did not understand, but was perfectly at home in both times and trouble.

Near the bar stood a tall, rather slouchy and unmingling fellow, his battered-feet hat drawn low over his brows, a dirty cloth bandaging his left eye, the picture of discre-
The Telegraph Detective.

McPherson would not run away, and as he looked up, he was recognized by the giant, who had got down from the roof. McPherson forced his breath out of his left hand, jerking forth a revolver as he cried aloud:

"McPherson! Now! I will kill you, hound!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE DETECTIVE SCORES A KNOCK-OUT.

There was a truly murderous look in those big blue eyes, and, as he came near, his fear grew. The giant swung his hammer at the open door, others crowding into corners, while several even tried to find refuge in the small side of the room. But, just as the bloodthirsty Hercules had eyes and thoughts only for the disgraceful death of the man who had drawn his whole attention to Flashy Fred. Baring that deadly grip by a deft swing of his hand, he caught the coming member by the wrist, giving it a powerful jerk which destroyed the big fellow's balance and turned him partially around.

Swift as thought itself came the sequel. In a quarter of a second the tailpiece of the Telegraph Detective, hard-clinched fist striking true to aim, the full force of his raging might, he fell; his hammer fell upon the floor from the top of the movement, the hammer, the clock, all fell against the wall, adding one more to the long list of "knock-out blows." Again the hammer, Flashy Fred was lifted fairly off his feet and sent headlong into the middle of that small circle, falling like a ball of lead, literally without sense or motion save the impetus lent his carcass by that tremendous force.

It was the chance of a lifetime, and right well did the detective improve the opening. As the giant's blow landed, McPherson sprung swiftly to one side, with back against the bar, a brace of revolvers showing in the shadow. This made perfect work.

"Steady, all! Play white, or somebody's going to get hurt—for keep your side left behind!" No one in the room could speak, looking for trouble in a holy hurry.

Sundry exclamations of amazement broke from the crowd, hardly able to understand what had taken place before their very eyes.

Flashy Fred bore the well-earned reputation of being a "mighty chief," yet here he lay, quivering like an ox fallen beneath the impelling weight of a broad eight, the form which both looked and sounded more like an open-handed slap in the face than aught in her way now.

Quickly lifting an elbow to rub off his bandage and push away the eyes he had to leave his strongly handsome face wholly without disguise, Alck McPherson added, sharply:

"Who comes next? Don't keep the horse waiting if you really mean to acid to the mourners, gentlefolk. Here I am, fat, ragged and saucy. Come and see me before my nerves give way—like they did when Flashy Fred ran off heap-eight more than he could chew!"

"Stop Don't—You can't make any row in this place, young gentleman," said Moses, rallying from his brief stupor and reaching back for the business-like Winchest, at the further end of the bar. "If you must fight—"

McPherson gave a short, metallic laugh at that, following the bullet's end a second.

"Bah! Don't you worry, barkeep. There isn't enough dirt in this town to outfit to break even your tenant rule or regulation! And I'm mighty glad of it, too!"

For all that, Telegraph Alck never for an instant relaxed his vigilance, keeping his eye on the giant while he poked aside the chair and back again, dark eyes flashing, and darker mustaches curling back far enough to give a winning glimpse of his ivory white teeth.

He recognized a number of those present, and knew that they only partly fitting
The Telegraph Detective.

leader to spring, wolf-like, at his thrast, human, and fatalistic. This they surely recognized the daring Telegraph Detective.

It believed that at least a portion of the train-wrecking gang was then under the muzzles of his guns, just as if he morally owned the Central Pacific and the master-spirit of that lawless aggregation.

But, that was neither time nor place for forcing such an unequal conflict; and now that he had in good measure purified his character he had no intention of thinking of getting out of this scrape with as little noise as possible.

So far he held the deep, and with it a vast advantage.

When he was made to sweeney the overthrown heroes, one and all knew that those taking the initiative must pay the severest penalties. The train would surely go down in death before those reveler's er so much a single blow or shot could be aimed at the herd detective.

This is the secret of Immunity enjoyed, by such a "chief," and man living better understood the situation than did Alice McPherson, himself.

"All right, gentlemen. I'm not trying to crowd you into a fight where even the winners must come out losers," he said, in more placable tones, you keeping this rally in motion so deftly that each one of those present, if put on, would have sworn that little single-rod is as powerful as a major target by this reckless fellow!

"If you want to play white, say that Alice McPherson laid him out, and that he stands ready to meet and grant him sufficient time and manner. Until then—"

"Our dear friend says, the Telegraph Detective, backed away from the bar and out through the front door, still holding guns to the front and back, still bewildering enemies.

He saw Meek-as-Moses bustling forward with repeater to cover his master's retreat, and feeling assured of one healthy well-wisher, McPherson sprung lightly back over the beer mat, swiftly out of the street, then dodging with cat-like activity around the corner of the Butteville.

He had been shown as they could rally from their half-stupor, a portion at least of that company would attempt to follow if their friend was able to keep the road open.

By taking this unexpected line, then, the swayed detective hoped to not only throw the whole company, but to make McPherson a still more important of his own.

The rear of the Butteville was cast into confusion, McPherson's men clearly see the star studded and moonlight sky was; and flattening himself against a narrow door which had served him in good stead more than once of late, the Telegraph Detective gave a messagesignal which Meek-as-Moses would find no difficulty in rightly interpreting, should that guarded sound meet his ears.

"He'll be on the lookout; surely he must have read my glance at night," yonder? McPherson said, "in a moment. He's there. It may well be, it may well be.

"Yelping and snarling on the scent, eh? Well, you took precious good care not to ever call your couriers too hard, anyway, gentleman?"

He heard the men passing up and down the street, groaning somewhat louder; but feeling little uneasi-ness on that score, McPherson at brief intervals called out, "I'll be about getting cars serve for all other senses, just then.

"Don't smile curled his red lip as he caught significant sounds coming from the direction of the rear.

"And so it proved, for presently a similar mapping came from inside; then the door was wide open, and a whispier came to the detective.

"It's you, Mac?"

"That's what the matter, Moses? Let me see through the telegraph wire and marry out here?

"Steady, then. Most of the guns have raked out like they really wanted to eat you up. The man, but...

"Never mind them, pardner, for I've got something of greater importance to cull at this moment. That's what Flashy Fred teased you—you're upset, Moses?

"That's the way you read your Mac, and you're right enough. You want it all over your counter this night, Moses?"

"Good enough! I want you to freeze fast to the thing that's guarding it like the apple of your eye! You can swear Fred Hibbert was out over your counter this night, Moses?"

"On a haystack of Bibles, yes?"

"Well, you and I, and from under this snug cover the Telegraph Detective was peering, eyes riveted upon a rudely-constructed cabin of the complexed kind, its roof of closely chopped sedge which stood near the base of a rocky height, across the gentle depression through which a tiny brook meandered.

A quaint mountain home it seemed, sitting high above the fire and impatient leaping through rather than aught more dangerous.

McPherson drew back his head far enough to note of the cut-out, how he had fastened across the topmost bough of its tree-covert, its dead, rusty hue forming a sufficient hiding place the dull yet living green of the tree itself.

"It shows plainly enough, surely," was McPherson's comment, as he once more sunk back to his waiting and watching.

"The little darling surely out to see it," yonder? McPherson said, "If they didn't come again?"

Viciously time the words, and for an instant those dark eyes caught a red glow from which even a desperate man might well have shrunk. However, the seconds seemed to pass: the light had taken its place and that stern visage fairly glowed with eager determination.

For through the open doorway of yonder little cabin came a fair and graceful shape hearing a wooden bucket in one hand, as she lightly tripped along toward the spring around yonder gentle curve in the hollow, taking long distances, far from the way a person may be found hidden from the view of anyone near the mountain slope.

"In the last—and mighty well worth waiting for, too!" muttered Alice McPherson, as that girl calmly drew bare her arm to enable the devils to be garnered into the shack, and sitting down, she was captured with the devotion held by corn Ball and the detective.

Quickly stealing back until effectually screened from view of the cabin, McPherson ran swiftly around and down to the spring, there greeting the fair and blushing maiden as she came to the rendezvous.

Never mind the manner of greeting.

Enough that Alice McPherson fairly warmed Corn Ball, the orphan, and that Alice McPherson would have sacrificed his own life rather than let one fall by the influence of shame or humiliation to those fair cheeks.

Yet, they loved, as only such honest, faithful heroines can love.

For a few moments thus, then the maiden drew back fair enough to gaze fondly yet lovingly into those lovely eyes, murmuring:

"Oh, Alice! how glad I was when I first saw your little face! I thought I would die of, pure happiness, Alice!"

That's worth—a "Two of them, little lady!" laughingly mumbled the detective, seating actions to words with lover like gestures.

For once his ardent caress was returned in that sweet, pure, deep, honest gaze, eyes, and clinging closer to his broad breast, her face half hidden there, Corn mumbled, laughing:

"They told me—they said you were—dead, Alice!"
two alone know now: that but for your brave shrewdness, scores of now happy homes would have been turned to desolate ashes, and many angels figure through the ether. Grief's the only reason and the only method of cutting short his pranks, Cora missed on tip-toe to touch his lips with her hand.

It was hard, very hard to deny himself more, but time was passing all too rapidly. There were yet several more to ask, and for the last time, as Cora softly spoke to the dead, she couldn't help hearing, as Allick fondly hoped.

"Castling all else behind him, then, for the moment, McPherson added his charming ally if she had heard uncle or cousins talking about any previous misadventures.

Even before her lips could shape the an-
swer, the detective knew his hopes in that department were about to be caught; Cora, not caught any such allusions, whatever.

In answer to her surprised looks, the de-
tective, a breezy yet mannerly narrated the strange affair at Silver Leaf, giving at least a portion of his reasons for thinking the double abduction had been engineered by a part of the evil gang under guidance of Flashy Fred, the Giant.

"If it is as I firmly believe, so far, Cora, you'll be mighty apt to hear something of these abductors, if you ever hear my uncle, you won't mind that, pet, to help me on a bit.

"You know I'll do all that lies in my power, Allick. If an uncle or the twins know anything at all concerning this affair, I believe I can help you engineer truth of it."

"You're an angel, little woman! en-
thusiastically declared the detective, setting down his half full lips once more.

"If you can find out anything through those dainty fingers, and make the signal: 'I'll be sure to see it, sooner or later.'"

Unless—Oh, Allick! I'm afraid—so deathly afraid whenever I think of your run-
ing through such terrible risks if you were only safe out of the way.

"After we are married, my precious!" whispered the detective. "And Heaven grant that joy of yours may come round right soon, say it!"

And off jogs, in his arbor, Cora shrunk away, shivering.

"Why, what's the matter, pet? Surely there's nothing so very dreadful as to make you like this?" whispered the love-born de-
tective.

"Not that, Allick, only—Never mind, dear, I pray you!"

"What! those devils have been at you again? Cora!" exclaimed McPherson, frowning contracting and his eyes beginning to fill with fire.

"Yes, fairly admitted the maiden, bent over.
The twins are the worst, but it's bad enough, I think, he says—they all swear that I've dilated too long, already, and that I must marry—Oh, how I do hate that Fred Hibbert!"

"Marry that over-grown curse? I'll wipe out the whole evil gang, rather!" sternly vowed the detective, tightening his embrace, then adding swiftly: "Come with me, Cora! Come with me, and we'll jump the infernal rascals! What's all the rest, compared with you, my angel?"

Instead of prattling yonder, Cora drew back a bit further, saying quickly:

"No, Allick, though that would be like being in company with the sort of life I'm living now with these wicked people! For—

you surely haven't completed the work you begun out here—No, but—I let the rest drop rather than leave you in the clutches of such ugly devils, Cora!

Come, offer to marry, and you'll remove yourself from this sun sets, to-night!"

The maiden deftly escaped his eager grasp, sizzling swiftly, Cora.

"And only for you—Just think of it, darling!"

"I can't—I don't wish to even think of it, Allick!" murmured the maiden, voice grow-
ing trembly, she was a little more com-
forted than he.

"My fears were well founded, Allick?"

"If you feared they had been playing part in that scene, you were just little bit wise. They failed to hurst scores of innocent souls from life to eternity, all in one horrible instant, two hundred together, Cora!

And only for you—Just think of it, darling!"

"Who told you that, pet?" swiftly asked the detective, his professional instincts waking once more.

"He said that, ch—What, pet?"

"Yesterday, when something I did or said angered him. He said—Oh, it was terri-
ble, Allick."

"Not half so dreadful as it truth, though, little wise one! He probably got his pricks, and it's been but a short time to the end of those of this class—Yes, pet, and you didn't mean to tell me?"

"Uncle Nat, ch—And the beautiful twins, your cousins, Cora?"

"Worse—far worse! with a renewed shame, you know how much they are, Allick?"

"Cora, both Silas and Luke!" flashed the detective, as his eyes sank on to the two nearest to him. "Pit cats from such an odd beast as Nathan Pollock, those same twins! I can't for the life of me believe the love born Missus P. are any blood-kin to such worthless knaves, precisely.

Cora smiled faintly through her tears as she looked up that met an ardent gaze. Allick promptly kissed away her tears, and nestled a tiny bit closer to him, the orphan girl spoke on:

"I only took it from after my father, even more than your poor, dear mother, Allick; and she was an angel, even while on earth.

"I was present, I think her every night for leaving such a charming representative here on earth for-
me—"

"For you—all for you, Allick, my king!"

Only the preternaturally keen ears of a true lover can catch the tone that came from yonder cabin, in the voice of her uncle or one of the twins. Silas a Luke Pollock, Allick cut those lovely perquisites shorter than far with whom had been done had he told away.

There was business as well as pleasure connected with this sudden trip into the mountains, and with their lips given by Cora, it did not take very long to get at the bottom facts of the case.

Later, when the twins, had been absent from home throughout the misty night, Allick made the attempt to wreck the Lightning Express.

The three men, worn and haggard, show-
ing the fatigue of a long night's travel, were still worse, came home just at crack of dawn, viciously enraged about something; just what, Cora failed to discover for some hours.

But then, in a fit of dangerous rage against the child of his dead sister, Nathan Pollock burst out into a storm of curses against all such, and dealt the orphan a brutal blow—not physical, so much as mental.

"He swore that you were dead—drowned and that you were the only one of the entire agitated maiden. "And then, later on, all through the day, either Silas or Luke kept touching me, as if they wanted to kill me.

"For all of which I'll take grim pleasure in choking them—with a good hemen break.

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And only for you—Just think of it, darling!"

"I just say it in my heroines! de-
clared Cora, closely compressing her lips,
much more close her face upon that broad bosom.

And I just glory in it, my heroine! de-
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The Telegraph Detective.

ed there by the too sanguine saloon-keeper.

ed on a mission to miss the inimitable birth of this, the latest "new rush" and budding metropolis.

McPherson caught glimpses in passing of several abashing shapes either up or down the passage. He could recognize as Flashy Fred or that gentleman's immediate followers, and hardly giving a second glance to them, he hurried on. But the detective crossed that threshold to secure his latest invoice of clean linen.

He was always to be said concerning Thorpe Lee; he was always on time with his work, and this was not one of the rare exceptions which go to prove the rule. McPherson paid his bill, secured his little bundle of belongings, and, with his poor and doubtful arm free, "I’m not seeking trouble with the likes of you, now——but you say something right you haven’t now!" insolently interrupted the tengu, sending a sneering leer at the group of Abnormals that had gathered to the spot pretty much as vulgarities hasted to the caisson fest. "I know it."

I’ve had one or two at a prospect."

I’m not saying a word."

"Doublebreasted sash and overcoat," I say, just take this fer a star—by to chaw on; you could knock knock down Fred at will when he comes back off his guard, but you can’t even begin fer to fetch me a—so ye can’t, no, fer rocks! I know ary lynx, fawmian, scratchin, nose snoozip, fleabreedin’ Scotch pup as was ever whipped by a—"

So said, so done.

Dropping his bundle, Alleck McPherson let fly both hands, fingers straight and palms open, and showed how he delivered as to send the burly ruffian stag- gering back, blinded for the moment, and faces as though his skull had suddenly caved in! "Steady, all!" sternly warned the Telegraph Detective. "You’re at that double stroke, swiftly snatching forth a brace of revolvers from their scabbards the while I’m not hollering a row, they’re but if any brute steps on my toes, he’s got to get off in a hurry!"

A horse, savage howl and curse combined burst from the lungs of the finger-marked bully; but his rush was instantly checked by one of those business-like muzzles, back on the wet.

"Ready, Bill McPherson! I’d hate to waste a cartridge on such a low-down game, but trade in a barrel with his bucket of fresh water.

That experience warned her against mak- ing answer to those coarse taunts, or coarser curses, and the wary maiden kept lips tight- locked while completing the preparation of her morning meal. That trio was neither good to look nor pleasant to hear.

Never overburdened with politeness or affability, of late days the men seemed in a most irritable mood of which at least doubled itself since the flask at Grape- vine Grove.

Although he could present no legal evidence to that effect, Corp felt mora clearly certain that her uncle and her cousins had landed the club, the epithet of the greatest and least lawfulness which had broken forth along that particular section of the Union Pa-

Plentifully gifted with animal cunning and native shrewdness, Nathan Pollock and his gangling cubs had so far managed to keep the maiden in the dark as to their plan of operations; but, as they were concerned; yet Cora knew they were deep in the confidence of Frederick Hibbert, who in turn received his train-wrecking, both successful and abortive.

Ostensibly the three moonshiners made their appearance to train-wreck the rickety fish, disposing of the surplus at Mineral Point or at the stations along the line of road.

Then, too, ‘twas hinted that the Pollocks knew a secret for a weapon to use on those too dubious labors or any expensive machinery, they could “clean up” sufficient to eke out their subsistence and avoid the humiliation in the way of whiskey and an occasional bout with short-cards.

Father and sons were purely typical “pikes,” such as the lower counties of Mis- souri alone can produce to perfection: tall, stoop shouldered, gaunt of face and slen- dery skin and general “agouti” look, thin lippered and wide mouths, drooping at the corners where a trickle of “amber” was naturally looked for, and as invariably found.

In only one important respect did Cora differ from her father: Nathan Pollock was cat- like in his movements, swift to plan and prompt, whereas the slower, more sullen, and con- sidered hounds of the woods would be lack hands on guard and ready for swifts execu- tion. "Have you said your prayers yet, dear lad?"

I won’t leave rough o’ ye to eyther pray or to cuss dun ye all ever!” savagely cried McPherson, making a vicious rush as though he counted the victory already won. Right there was where he found out his mistake.

Splat-spit! The strokes did not make a formal connection, each set of steel-like knuckles cutting through that puffy flesh and reaching the bone, driv- ing that flesh right back on top of itself, thereby diminishing thebling.

A better opening man never had for finish- ing up the quicksand with all of his opportunity, McPherson stood at ease, laughing in keen mockery at that ludicrous spectacle.

Quickly rallying, McPherson rushed again and again, just as often encountering those pithless fists, just as often beating back and hewing fresh cuts in his rapidly swelling face, to hear that tantalizing laugh ringing in his ears above the exclamations of wonder and delight which came like involuntary tributes from the on-lookers.

McPherson warred with him for several minutes, striking him—when and where he willed, never so much as a single blow feeling the bone; then, with red face, weary of such one-sided play, he gave grim warning:

"Steady, now, you clumsy brute! It’s like hammering a bag of wool, but you in- vited the lesson, and so—here’s your settler’s mite!"

Throwing the weight of his body into the blow, McPherson lunged forward, striking out at burst and beating him to the floor, off his feet and sending him backward, a thoroughly whipped tough.

Standing aside, the Telegraph Detective watched his fallen adversary, who presently showed signs of rallying; and slowly, pain- fully lifting away the post, a bruised bully stared dazedly around.

Then—a sharp report was heard, and watching through his glasses, Alleck McPherson pitched forward on his face, as a corpse!

CHAPTER XI

THE PRICE OF A HUMAN LIFE.

The Pollocks, father and twin sons, were in anybody and the humor that fair morning; but Cora Ball paid them little attention as possible. Not that she took an interest in her bucket of fresh water.

That experience warned her against mak- ing answer to those coarse taunts, or coarser curses, and the wary maiden kept lips tight- locked while completing the preparation of her morning meal. That trio was neither good to look nor pleasant to hear.

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Then—a sharp report was heard, and watching through his glasses, Alleck McPherson pitched forward on his face, as a corpse!

A slip of honeyed heaven, sweet Two- lips!” cried the giant gambler, as he pressed a hot kiss upon her nearest cheek; her face was averted far enough to keep her red lips undetected.

"You brute!" panted Cora, struggling to break free, then striking at that blasted face with all her might with both hands.

"How dare you!"

Only a woman’s hands, but for all that the big ruffian staggered back with a savage im- pulse, almost involuntarily shortening his grip.

With a twist and a turn Cora broke away, spilling away from the kitchen table, where she caught upon a long-bladed butcher knife, menacing Hibbert as he showed signs of re- newing the fray.

"Why, you little spit-cat! I’ll make you pay for that in kisses, long drawn out as a Mocking-bird!"

"Back! Don’t you dare touch me again, Fred Hibbert, or I’ll—Back, I say!” sharply turned Cora’s head, but eyes fairly ablaze with indignation and insulted modesty.

"Blessed! I’d rather kiss you once, Cora, than any other girl a thousand
The Telegraph Detective.

Elementary, my dears. Holmes always in a pickle, always need a handy telegraph to send off that vital message. The very one that the murderer is trying to destroy. So, we have a double-agenting situation, where the killer is trying to stop the telegraph from reaching its destination, and Holmes is trying to stop him. It's a cat-and-mouse game, and you know Holmes always wins. It's not just about the message; it's about the race against time. And what a race it is! The killer is hot on the heels of Holmes, and the telegraph is the key to solving this case. So, let's see what Holmes has to say about this.

"Watson, what is this message?"

"A telegram from London, sir. It's from a Mr. Beresford, asking for your assistance.

"Beresford?" Holmes said, his eyes wide with surprise. "I must have misread it. It's not a telegram, it's a ransom note."

"A ransom note?"

"Yes, Watson. The kidnapper is trying to extort a large sum of money."

"But why would they kidnap someone for ransom?"

"Who knows? It could be a personal vendetta or perhaps they're after a valuable object."}

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The sound of a telegraph bell interrupted the conversation. Mr. Beresford's message was already there, waiting for Holmes to solve the case. The race against time had begun. Holmes and Watson were off to catch the killer before it was too late. The race was on, and the winner would be the one who solved the case first. It was going to be an interesting journey, and the outcome was uncertain. But one thing was certain: the mystery would be solved, and the killer would be brought to justice.

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The end.
Detective, then pressing his search with doubled ardor, his rage against the dastard who ‘blooded his face’ growing with each passing moment.

The place was by no means large, but there were plenty of nooks and odd-corners, that would have been unknown to the Child of Light, and through as many of these as he could well contrive, McPherson groped in quick succession after his supposed assailant, gun in grip, ready to return shot for shot in case he should force the human rat and force him to show a tooth of steel.

But his efforts were all in vain, and, half suffocated by the smoke, he somehow, seem inseparable from the private quarters of these Orientals, the detective was fast losing the scent, in search without finding its human quarry.

Still, McPherson felt morally certain the knave was nowhere more than a dozen paces behind that very roof, else his flight surely would have been discovered by himself, or some of the tenants over.

He found Chong Lee still lying on the floor where last fall, still in the grip of his little song, and softening his voice far milder than his actual feelings could justify, the detective said:

"I reckon you were right, and I in the wrong, Chong Lee. There’s nobody hiding in there. I’ve turned your hurts with this sort of salve, John."

Tossing the fellow a couple of coins, McPherson turned toward the laundress, stooping to pick up his bundle of clean linen in passing, then speaking coldly to the embarrassment of her collected tearful face:

"I reckon I was mistaken, gentleman; there is no curr hiding in yonder, and I’ll pay John a dollar—nasty smells! You haven’t seen anything of the pitchfork, have you? Take it!"

A chorus of negatives came swiftly, and slowly putting up his pistol, Alick McPherson said:

"He’s rucked out while I took that tumble, I reckon, gentlemen. Well, he may show up any time, but I’m not here to hang you, or any of you spot the fellow, just say this much on my account:

"If you hear nothing by night or by day, I’ll reserve a greeting for him so warm that he’ll need more fuel this side of Hades. If any of you should see him, let him come to call again, but to play white and rap at my front door, instead of burning powder behind my back."

"Of one thing he can rest assured: I’ll be at home to him, let the gentleman call when he feels like it."

With a short, crisp nod, which included all.

"He’s dangerous, but he never once glanced back so long as he remained in sight of the spot where he had so narrowly missed his death."

To all seeming, he had given over all hopes of discovering his would-be murderer, but believing far from fresh.

As soon as he felt he was safe from observation from that quarter, McPherson turned sharply from that direct course, passing swiftly along toward the broken ground lying north of the town. There crowding down to cover, from whence he could see without himself being seen, eyes riveted upon the shadowy, almost shadowlessly occupied by Chong Lee as a laundress.

"Ten to one he’s in hiding there!" muttered the detective. "If he could be he could have vanished so quickly? And Chong Lee is sneaky—sneaky all over and all the time."

Fully an hour passed by without again re-warding that close vigil, but Alick McPherson said to himself, and would not say the truth, and he was a man-hunter in that one respect: he could wait and watch like a very Russian, without getting tired.

"Who could it have been, anyway? He meant business; but he’s a champ, for all that. Until you show, you ain’t happy, yet. I feel nasty enough, but I know the song so well."

McPherson felt of his bullet-torn scalp with a gingerly finger-tip, but almost as quickly his manner changed, as if there were just ajar, he saw the narrow door in the rear of the laundry, then recognized the pig-tail’d head of Chong Lee, plainly reconnoitering.

A few seconds later the yellow face grew dark, the portal opened wider, then a slender, trim shape slipped through the outer door.

McPherson made a little start, his strong teeth clicking together in grim surprise; for this was hardly the man he anticipated seeing.

"A new-comer; Omaha Kid, I believe he prefers that name? Where set him on my back? Surely not—the kidnapping case, for rocks!"

Those keen eyes caught a deeper glow for the moment, and as he saw the young fellow move away from the rear of the laundry, McPherson slung his gun, leading as so to cut off the flight of his suspected assailant, in case Omaha Kid should prematurely detect his approach.

But, for once, fortunately for the Telegraph Detective, fortitude to follow headed and rapid steps with a broken ground lying north of town, as though he wished seclusion rather than the company, whose questions proved awkward to answer.

Keeping fairly well under cover, the detec-tive hurried along to lie in wait for his game, determined to force a full if not a fair explanation from the Nebraska representative.

Instead of keeping on as he started, Omaha Kid faltered, looked over his shoulder, then turned and walked toward the town instead!

Frowning at his quickness, McPherson ran swiftly around the corner and intercepted his game, though they were dangerously near witnesses when at length the younger was close enough to touch his man, stepping hand from arm as quietly but significantly spoke:

"Come for a quiet little stroll, Kid, or are you cold lead?"

CHAPTER XII.

A CONFESSION CUT SHORT.

OMAHA KID gave a start and a half-smothered oath when so completely taken by surprise. But, as his gun fell to his side, and he was alone and turned and walked toward the town instead!

Frowning at his quickness, McPherson ran swiftly around the corner and intercepted his game, though they were dangerously near witnesses when at length the younger was close enough to touch his man, stepping hand from arm as quietly but significantly spoke:

"Don’t be all fool, Kid! You’ve had your fillings, and that’s the place. Will you come alive or must you take you dead?"

"I never—I don’t—" stumbled the young fellow, clearly unnerved for the time being, so completely was he caught off guard.

"Then why try lying when only the naked truth can clear that paper, dear boy? coolly cut in the Telegraph Detective, moving away from town with his pledge, and a promise of new terms, yet the same time keeping that silent reminder denoting the Kid’s ribs.

"You took a snap-shot at me, back yon-der—"

"—I never—hope may die if I ever, sir!"

"Don’t hope you’ll take what’s overtake you soon enough, Kid. What I say, I’ll prove. But this isn’t the smallest clicking, so button-up until you can give Mineral Point the actual shackle, Kid!"

Cowing to all seeming the man from Nebraska bore his captor company to the hills, and not until they were fairly out of sight of town did McPherson come to a halt, finally settling down at ease on a patch of grass and half-dry moss under the trees and among the bushes.

"Now, Kid, where were you hiding while I turned Choc Lee’s sheepdung up a bit ago?"

"I wasn’t hiding; why should I be hiding, sir, from you or any other man? cried the Kid, with a dash of honest indignation. "I’m white as they make ‘em, sir, and never—"

The Telegraph Detective showed his teeth in a grim smile, then his revolver came to a direct. But that blanching face for a bit before McPherson spoke again:

"You’ve had your shot, Omaha, and the next one belongs to me, by all rights, human or divine. Shall I take it now?"

"Don’t—" gasped the Kid huskily quavered the fellow, shrinking back, but mercifully followed by that engine of sudden death.

"I’ll surely shoot if you don’t talk straight, Omaha. I’ll shot you on sight, only for feeling pretty sure there’s a heap-shight bigger fish lying back in the puddle. Now—will you croak, or sing, Kid?"

"I don’t—I can’t catch on, sir!” stammered the cowed knave.

So much the worse for you, then, Omaha. What message shall I transmit to your dear Nebraska friends or relatives, Kid?"

With almost icy coldness came this que-stion, and death surely glittered in those pitil-less dark eyes.

Omaha Kid felt as much, and his remnant of nerve gave way.

"Don’t shoot! I’ll tell all I know!"

"Good as old wheat, my covery!” declared McPherson, heartily, lowering his gun, but still holding it in fair view as a possible re- minder. "Now, for the confession, Kid, who shot at me, down yon-der?"

"—did—because I had to—just had to, sir!"

"Poor lad! Terribly afflicted you’ve been, for a fact! mocked the Telegraph Detective; then adding in sterner tones. "Who set you on my back, Omaha?"

"I don’t know."

"Steady, Kid!” his gun slightly rising once more.

"You, boss, sir, but I don’t know just who or what he is!” came the hasty ad-dition, in a thread of woe, instead of the paid big money to pick you off the perch, sir, and I just had to take the job, whether I liked it or not!

"Steady, Kid! Don’t tread on your own heels, please," coldly warned the detective, his betraying or blackguardly blood flowing a bit more rapidly than usual as he scented important information lying back of this little adventure.

"It’s gospel truth I’m giving you, sir!"

"Of course you wouldn’t stand for it as to lie, Omaha, and that’s why I’m drinking in your gospel soup so eagerly. Now—big money, eh? Who offered it to you for putting me to sleep, Kid?"

"The boss."

"And pray who may the boss be, Omaha?

"You tell, sir, for blessed if I know how.

"Can’t, or won’t, Kid!”

"Just can’t; simply don’t know how, sir.

"Where did you first meet this mysterious boss, then? Here at Mineral Point, or across on the Missouri?

"Nether; back at Omaha. But, sir, can’t I go if I beg pardon for playing the fool—on my knees.

"Not until you’ve told a heap slighter more than you’ve let fall to me. Now—don’t forget: you owe me a shot, and I’ll claim it for a moral, unless you can buy me off. Understand, Kid?"

Despite that outward quietude, Alick McPherson distinctly meant each and every word which crossed his lips, just then. The Omaha Kid was shrewd enough to recognize this fact, and with a long drawn sigh, he accepted the inevitable, huskily speaking:

"All right, sir! He’s devil on ten wheels, but, Omaha, we’ve got me, and the boss hasn’t! What must I tell, first, please?"

"You say you first met the man you term ‘boss’ in Omaha?

"Yes, sir; worse luck me!"

"You’re not over head and ears in love with him, then?"

"That merciless devil! Don’t you begin to think about the man I term ‘boss’ in Omaha, or you are joy to see him climb a tree—neck first!"

"Better yet! you’ll hardly spell a story for long, if you don’t shut the facts up. And so, since you hate the boss, why serve him?"

Omaha Kid flushed hotly, then turned pale, and said:

"Careful, Kid! grimly warned the detective. One little lie in all the diff-erence between ‘it’s me’ and ‘you, now!"

"Well, sir, I reckon I’ll out with it he knew I’d been acting on the crook, and so—when he held up a finger, I couldn’t hang back. And when he whistled, I had to dance to his music; see?"

"Yet you said you didn’t know who or what he was; careful, Kid!”
That's what I did, and devil a lie in all the world but that I have never seen him, or heard of him, than I ever knew him, and showed me the sign.

"Well," when he said follow and play my part, and i'll do it,  -"And you met him in Nebraska, you say?"

"In Omaha, yes, that's my old stamping-ground, and -"

Leading forward, McPherson tapped arm with a menacing gesture.

"Where did they take Jaffrey Zettle's body?"

The fellow shrank away, lips parting in an involuntary cry, his face paling again and his corneas becoming moist.

"I didn't. - How do you guess that, sir?"

"Never mind, Kid; I'm asking questions, and I'd like to do the looking. Say, call Omaha, sir.

Apparently the Omaha Kid was too amazed to answer, and the Telegraph Detective spoke again:

"Don't take time or trouble to hatch up a lie, Kid. I know enough of the actual facts to make you pulp hemp at will; and hang you on a scaffold, unless you buy your life and liberty. Now, talk white, Omaha!"

"I will! I'll tell everything I know, only -"

"Leave out the prives, please. Now, where were the young couple taken when captured?"

"I don't know - before Heaven, I don't know, sir!" hastily spluttered the thoroughly frightened journalist.

"Yes, sir; I own up to that much. But I warn you, when the boss turns that trick -"

"Where were you, then, when they took you?"

Hope I may die if 'tainn't so, sir! The boss sent me to start a fire, as a warning to the rest of the gang. The two young men had beenSubtitle: CHAPTER XIII.

**WHO KILLED THE OMAHA KID?**

One that or another looked shore, but no more was needed, so far as the young man from Nebraska was concerned.

Alick McPherson saw that little round hole; for the first breathless instant looking a mock, harmless bristle; then the red blood bubbled forth, and it needed not a second glance to tell the Telegraph Detective Omaha was wounded mortally as swiftly as a thistle lurching by a fiery bolt from heaven itself.

The most frightful fraction of time thus, then McPherson sprang forward. The activity of the nearest cover, at the same time flashing a look up and back toward the point from whence television warned him the murderous shot must have been sped.

And instinct did not deceive him, either, for yonder, far up those rugged rocks, he caught sight of a tiny cloud of blinding vapor, slowly rising and unfolding upon the still air, fading into nothingness even as he took the look.

Not a sound, not a sight, no further assault, although the detective expected a shot or two even as he jumped for shelter, for he had firmly believed that the Kid had been im-
stant, and that Omaha Kid had fallen victim to an unsteady or an unpracticed arm.

The earth, after being limited by the wisdom of swift action, and Alick knew that cold lead could freely scour that scrub-like thicket and find or flounce and granulate his trusty guns for swift use, the detective kept watching the crumbling figure expect the death shot to come with each draggling moment.

Yet all results still up yonder?

That little smoke-cloud had faded into nothingness, Eye nor ear could detect that murderous raging death.

A downy woodpecker crossed his field of vision with undulating flight, passing with a shrill cry at a corner and then directly in front of that ambush, then beating sharp tattoo on a dead limb behind nim-
mediately taking refuge in fragments of trees in quick response to the absence of warmer ants.

So quite, so peaceful that one could hardly believe foul murder there abode; but that at thought Alick McPherson involuntarily glanced toward yonder sile-
silent shapes with upward staring yet sightless eyes, a circle of tiny bubbles surrounding their dark discords, surrounding the luckless fellow's white forehead.

Surely dead! Slain without time for cry of for prayer with life!

His life snuffed out just as he bade fair to prove of some actual service in this world.

Now left alone with the Telegraph Detective at this, and all at once he seemed to recognize what a serious loss this was to himself, professionally speaking.

"The devils! Only another minute, evidently.

Gripping pistol in his right hand ready for a snap-shot, McPherson gathered himself, made a huge bound and another shelter closer the base of those rocks, fully expecting a shot or two by the way of greeting.

But none such came as he crouched low down once more, hearing and seeing nothing, the detective began to wonder if, after all, the assassin had not after all after all; he had time to fraternize and discovered.

All this takes time to tell, but only a few of since he has been up. He is peering on him, he'd bloody murder me like a nice!

Omaia. Just so you make a clean breast of it all, from start to finish. Now -spel.

Another apprehensive glance around, then the Kid leaned closer to his present master, face growing confidential and communicative.

"Well, sir, it's just like this," he began.

"The boys knew you were at work trying to -"

This sentence was never finished as it was intended. A calm air, and Omaha Kid sprang convulsive,

As he rose to his feet, then both arms fell like cleaning a log, a small round hole showing directly in the center of his forehead.

From the point he had now attained, McPherson had a clear view of the Kid's easiest course by which to scale those rugged rocks.

Being determined, he used his butt, putting it on the muzzle of his pistol, then cautiously moving forward and outward, as though using the butt as a platform to win a more glimpse at the enemy.

Here there was old and the bare trick, and no shot, no sound followed the action; but McPherson now felt fairly convinced his precautions had been well taken. For several times knowledge, he made a rush at the rocks, climbing up and over the rough crests with all the smoothness of a cat, and, making a fresh attack, directly as possible for the shelf from whence he felt morally certain that death-shot of death had been fired.

Up and up never faltering, never pausing for breath or for cooler thought, each passing moment adding to his hot rage and fierce disappointment.

Curves and corners, up to top to the knob who cut that promising confession with his fatal pellet!

Five minutes longer - one poor minute, even!

And now-stillified forever in death, his story unstold, his important secrets lost forever!

Little wonder, then, that the Telegraph Detective should indignantly attempt scaling those rocks, or that he should break forth in unseemly sentences after rushing up and up and up, upon times untold, he reached that rock shelf, to find it vacant, but instead of resuming.

Neither sight nor sound of the assassin! Those bare rocks retained no trail sufficient for even these few days.

Goose! and yonder lay poor Omaha Kid, dead, a bullet through his brain, and his story left untold at a rescue party; but now -

"Satan toast the devil who fired that shot?"

McPherson could readily divine by what avenue the assassin had made his escape, unless -

Back of that narrow ledge of bare rock ran a narrow passage, almost completely arched by large overhanging crags; a little clump of trees in front effectually masked all opening from eyes on the level below.

No clearer going for a rod, passing when he came to a spot from which he could hear and away over a rugged stretch of ground.

He looked in vain for any moving shape, for any human figure, for any sign of life, and all seemed wholly deserted by animal life.

Then the confused sound of voices came to his ears, and pausing barely long enough to fix the direction, McPherson turned rock, quickly regaining the ledge of rock, from where he had seen a number of citizens, doubtless attracted to that quarter by the death-shot.

There stood the detective was sighted and recognized, as a loud shout plainly indi-
cated; and without so much as a thought for the personal peril, McPherson called back with wave of hand, then nimbly swung himself over the ledge by a pine top, descending the rocks with movements as certain as they were rapid.

But and here he fairly struck the level and faced that way, did Alick recognize the tail, athletic shape of Flashy Fred; but then he knew he was far to retreat; as, indeed, why should he?

There was no love lost between the pair, whose unbridled temper had brought it to this, and that it rested with Hibbert whether or not they should come to a 'mix-up'.

As for anything more dangerous than a personal encounter with the Giant Gambler, the detective never once thought of it.

Perfectly innocent of harming Omaha Kid,
CHAPTER XIV.
ON TRIAL FOR HIS LIFE.

That desperate scramble lasted only for a few seconds, then McPherson courageously reeled his struggles, resigning himself to the inevitable, calling out as well as he could with that living voice already too weak to stop him:

"I surrender, men! Give me a white man's show, can't you?" He was just two seconds to complete their work, now his fighting no longer hampered them; and, as the Redeemer, clothed in torn, face-heaving skin deep-cut bruises and bruises, was raised up a bit, and flashing a swift look around, he saw the end come out.

"Keep cool, friends! Even these sweet-scented ducks can't wait a man before trying, and take up their hands!"

"Hanging be blessed!" exploded one of the indignant citizens. "You never, sir, I'll give them the rope, Mat, and we all know that!"

The billed Omaha Kid fairly squelched one of the captors.

"That's what I swear to discover," coolly cut the prisoner. "And I trust you'll all be there to help do the hanging, gentlemen.

A coarse laugh greeted this speech, and then came the words:

"I reckon we be hag, an' so be you!" interposed a figure whose pointed conclusion, for none could doubt what inference was meant to be drawn; but he knew how few could read his head and what wits clear, just then, and instead of making hot or cutting retort, he contented himself with:

"You're backing up the wrong tree, gen'lemen. Do you find any satisfaction in it, go ahead?"

"It's the same dog gun tree you're gwine to blow—up and you'd better think twice!"

This brutal threat gave McPherson just sufficient pause, averting the blow for, and he instantly improved his chance.

"Fair play a jewl, gentleman, and then all in a proper frame of mind on that, or do you all mean to hang before trying?"

"No, no!" loudly cried the more radical portion of the armed assembly.

"Fair play, forever!"

Food coming, and the sooner you settle down to other business the better I'll be satisfied," boldly declared the detective. "All this time the actual assaulter of poor Omaha is making his escape, but on my honor as man and detective, I swear to run him down in the end, of that I can fairly try!"

Something on the stump-hench order, but McPherson felt fully justified in making the claim of his own departure against the odds so against him as they surely were, now he came to look the circumstances over.

"I tell you, men of Mineral Point, I'd rather see this black was a hundred times hung just as if I did happen!" earnestly added the detective, speaking swiftly.

"This man is ours, dead if we can't take him living! Back, or chaw cold lead, the pile o' you—"

"Wait a bit, please," interrupted the self-appointed judge "Arm-in-arm, you say? Then you and Omaha were on very intimate terms.

The Telegraph Detective hesitated for a brief space, his broad Georgian smile still at:

Then he softly made answer.

"I suppose I might lie to you, sir, and possibly you might make your way up to the South — for a bit of truth. I might say Omaha Kid was an intimate friend, a warm side-pardner, and you convinced me of the truth, though the heavens fall!"

"No, no, sir, I protest," interposition. "I never met the Omaha Kid more than two or three times before this day, and so far from being a warm friend, I had his level best to send me over the range!"

"What! You mean to say—"

"That Omaha tried to murder me this very day, down yonder in front of the laundry, while I was reading another bit of a lesson in good manners," coolly cut in the detective, smiling grimly as he keenly roving eyes caught sight of the threedetail and said no one was more to blame than the doublet Billy McCouph himself, just out side that eager ears. He was making clearly yet too rapidly for easy interruption, McPherson told his story, told how his shot had missed the glancing shot from the rear of the vain quest, of his ruse, and how it all ended in the capture of the Omaha Kid.

He explained frankly after what fashion he had persuaded the Kid to accompany him away from town and to that secluded spot.

And then, in short, even more impressive than the Telegraph Detective went on to describe all that followed, showing how all-important the life of Omaha Kid was to him, showing how his profession led him to defy a shooting so single from young Rocky shelf cut short his hopes; together with that still young life.

From start to finish this recital bore the impress of perfect truth and accuracy.

Not one of the honest members of that little regiment but what felt morally certain Aleck McPherson had proved himself innocent of all wrong doing, and certainly was guiltless of murder.

Not a word to be added so easily, and as the detective ceased speaking, a burly fellow penned more to the front, saying:

"A monstrous silence li, but still she am a liar.

Aleck McPherson instantly recognized the bully whom he had so recently read a lesson in memory, and said to himself:

"Everybody knows your tongue is no scandal, McCouph, and I'd scorn to even take part in your selection—unless I'm holding my nose—if this scene wasn't a sort of free-and-easy, where all are at liberty to chip in at their leisure.

"That don't make it none then less a lie, criter!

"Commenting from your lips it does, Billy. You're simply trying to play even for the threatening I gave you down yonder, an hour or so ago."

McCouph showed no signs of discomfiture at this latest encounter, and said:

"It wasn't fuller a gun, then, or mebbe the lickin' wouldn't a 'come in my way in such a hurry. Mebbe you'd spit out some such trash, an' so—well, lucky you don't hang all onto my say-so!"

"Call out for Reser to come to the front, judge, willy ye?"

"Where's Toot Reser?" sharply called out Mark Dennison.

"On hand, jest like a toad seed, bossie!" came the instant response, and a fairly fitting one, for every man and semblance went, a shouted passage to the little circle in which stood judge, prisoner and witnesses.

"What do you know about this affair, Mr. Reser?"

"Prity nigh the bull damn business, m'sieu" came the ready response. "I was thar, or tharabouts, through the bull racket, an I
KFC the Kid off his guard, an
come Omaha clean up this-a-ways like he
couldn’t help himself. jest so, judge.”

“Yessir, I see, witness?” sternly
 demanded the judge.

“Waal, pritty nigh the first I got
chopped up, my boy, were wid a
heap of pecky
wis a heap! See I the Kid hed run
chuck up ag’n it, boss, an’—so—waal, parly and a heap of pecky, but I was just
so we come to see—what we did see, judge!”

“The truth, now, you scoundrel?”
sternly pointed out.

“So much the wuss for you, then, sir! For my boy, to get in a sort o’ row with the Kid; jest what sort ny-
tyme me nurr yill Billy couldn’t far make out.”

“Picking a row, you, witness?”

“That’s jest what, boss! Anyways, this
grip on, and Billy had his hands so
or swar’t to somethin’, an’ Kid he didn’t
wouldn’t, an’ then one word focht on nother
say, an’ swore cy me ner Billy so much as
reckoned it meant business o’ that sort, why
was jest, he just up an yanked out his gun—”

“You lie, you scoundrel!” fiercely cried
the accused, unable to sooth his growing rage longer.

At a sign from Judge Lynch two of the
theft, holding him firmly,
then Mark Denison motioned for
Reese to continue.

“Tell me now that that hasn’t so mighty much
to say,” deliberately spoke the witness.

“This gent he jerg’d his gun, an’ Omaha,
left it to ride up on his horse’s
ally a-tall!”

“Gone! you quicken you couldn’t
half a wink, boss, this gent just busted
Omaha’s erust crow wide open!”

“Soon, does you see?”

“Jest shot him, yes, sir! An’ Omaha
never had no chance fer to pull a gun to
miss him, just for goin’ wenney wenney
bit of a show!”

Toot Roper poured forth in a verita-
ble flood, and his appearance was
early earnest that the major portion of the
words, and ugly cur-
groans, yells and sentences poured out
upon the air, the crowd rushing in upon the
adding a little
data to the voice of a single horseman who spurred
holding up and viciously shaking a
called larst the while.

“Lynch him! Hang the cursed butcher,
boys! And here’s your rope!”

CHAPTER XV.

A CLUE FROM THE CORPSE.

“AND with this am I grown for a
gallows, right over his bloody victim!” fairly
out of the Young Forefathers for, for the
first time seeming to take part in that affair,
although ‘ts far from certain his had not
the secretly guiding spirit from the out-
set.

Strong hands tightened their grasp upon
the accused, and McPherson was taken at
a terrible disadvantage; but seeing only
a shameful death before him, Alix fought as
only such a man can fight against fate
As the now furious raging crowd closed in
from all sides, yelling, boiling: cursing and
gun-firing, one with another while striving to
grab the supposed assassin, McPherson was
bitten and torn, his blood ran, and disappearing beneath that beast-like
mass, only by the pressure exerted on all sides.

Again and again rose the terrible yell of the
lynches, the cry for human blood, once heard, to
any other, to any other.""
The Telegraph Detective.

"bodily sexinity fun der bound, and mate vor dot muzzie loader, at home!"

"On your oath, sir!"

"Yes, Mr. McPherson, I declare as much as my life in haff as you say I do!"

Sheriff Hawkins followed all this with a brown face and a look of mortal disgust at the fatal billet, satisfying himself that every point made by Hendrick Berglandis was true and genuine.

He was practiced enough in firearms to feel assured that bullet never came from a factory for domestic consumption.

For one thing it was a round ball, not a conical point, and a round ball, but it is invariably used in modern firearms.

And, while considerably baffled by forcing the bullet to go to the right, from Nebraska, he could see that slightly irregular joint, caused by the bullet-mold being in trifle too loose.

"And here's where the neck was cut off!" he cried, exultingly, holding up the bullet as though for all to see. "That settles it, gentlemen! McPherson never shot Oma

In this case, the bullet came out of a muzzie-loader, sixty to the pound. And—if we've been two hundred in later on coming on the scene, every man Jack of you'll be murderers by novv."

A thrilling pause, then a sharp voice made distinctly audible.

"Who don't you ask who around these parts shoots a muzzie-loader, carrying a ball sixty to the pound?"

Instant silence fell over that assembly, and men flashed swift glances to one another, while the blood grew colder, and one pair of bronzed cheeks turned vividly pair.

Sheriff Hawkins drew his sturdy figure rigidly erect, letting eyes move slowly around that little sea of Interested faces before he spoke.

"Well, gentlemen, I'm not saying just who shot you, but as on this portion of the neck was pretty much all of know and might name the person who carries a muzzie-loading rifle, six, I will tell you as much.

Flashy Fred had fallen to the background when Sheriff Hawkins so bluntly "called him down," but now he strode to the sheriff, thrusting back the broad leaf of his shunt hat, hands on pistol-hults as he cried out in sternly defiant tones.

"He's a dirty liar who even dares hint that Nathan Pollock or either of his murderous henchmen did this. I say it, and I'm Flashy Fred!"

CHAPTER XVI.

UNLOCKING THE CAPITALIST'S LIPS.

Tun Gigant Gambler whipped forth his gun, and, pointing it directlyly, expected an immediate acceptance of his bold challenge; but no such action was taken, just at this juncture. The action was a little awkward. Acenk McPherson, clothes torn and sadly disheveled as to hair and general appearance, was now standing close bunched up the sheriff, and his hand went forth to grip that official's arm.

"I don't believe either one of the Pollocks fired the shot that killed the Kid, Mr. Hawkins!"

"But—the bullet, McPherson!"

"Give me a little time and I'll agree to show you the bullet, but it must go to either one of which might have spitted forth that very death-pill, sir! earnestly asserted the sheriff.

"Well, one thing is fairly proven: you never did the killing, lad!"

"Yes, sir; would have given my left hand rather than have the poor fellow murdered just then, and just that way! Another five minutes...

"He was about to blow the gaff, Mac!"

"No way, detective! I was not quite ready to enter fully into that part of his recent experience, and evading the point he sternly asserted.

"I swear this much, gentleman! I'll find out just who did murder this poor fellow, and the first chance I shall be at Nathan Pollock as well! I'll keep to the scent until I've run the assassin to earth, let the guilt lie where it may; but I declare my firm be-

price is fairly won. Only—if you had been wholly frank and open with me at the start, I would have, I think, have helped you sooner, and so won more of his confessions. Can't you see, sir?"

"You turned a bit, but made no in-me-

diate reply.

A brief pause, then the detective added:

"Now, sir, at least, on the same train that carried yourself and family..."

"It can't be true!" almost screamed the capitalist, showing powerful agitation. "If he had ever talked to us, couldn't I have known him? Even in dis-
gulate that devil couldn't!"

That devil could, and did, to a moral certainty, sir," coolly Interjected the Tele-

graph Detective. "It's a positive fact that the fellow rode with you all the way from Omaha to Silver Leaf, and very likely he trailed you all the distance from the sea-

"I can't think it! Surely he couldn't have kept out of my sight for so long, and if once I clapped eyes upon him, I'd have known him!"

"Unless thoroughly disguised," inquired McPherson.

And, there is that, sir. And yet—beau pitty poor Felicia if she really has fallen into the clutches of that devil!"

McPherson laid one hand lightly upon an arm, waiting until Jaffrey Zettell met his eye and heaved a long sigh.

"Now sir, the future rests with you. Will you treat me further, telling me every-

thing that possibly can be told, in the light upon this case, or must I let the whole matter drop right here?"

"If I am to cause, a visible hesita-

tion, and McPherson added:

"You are surely many a year old enough to faced, Mr. Zettell, that whatever confidences you may make in one of my profes-
sions, will be at variance with the word. My duty performed, all is liberated and ready for a fresh start in some other case."

This argument, or some other potent influence, decided the capitalist to treat his agent frankly, and he proceeded to speak of some bitter personal enemy, called Cyril Chatterton, once a power on Wall Street, but whose financial wings had already been cut, and to whom he felt, himself, Jaffrey Zettell.

He swore vicious vengeance upon me for my supposed betrayal of himself, he openly declared that I played him foul, and gained my ends through trickery and deceit, which he called a "bas!" with a scowling outflourishing of one plump white hand.

"You can take in, of course, but you can guess the rest. He set up such a terrible cry that at last I was forced in self-de-

fense to use him for malicious libel, easily winning my suit, and thereby intimidating Chatterton tenfold more, if possible."

And you think he may have tried to play even, after this manner?"

I do believe it, now, for I've found out by writing that Cyril Chatterton has vanished from the city—that he left at or very nearly the same time I have heard of your case. And if that devil really has gotten hold of my poor girl—curse him from top to toe!"

Alien McPherson felt a shrewd suspicion that Zettell was still holding something im-

portant in reserve, and was perfectly assured that the whole truth would now leak out, and was content to let matters take their own course for the present."

But before Jaffrey Zettell could say more, the two men caught sight of a man at some little distance, and that man was none other than Nathan Pollock, who, as one hardly certain just where to find what he was seeking, the McPherson caught sight of a paper of some description in the fellow's hands, and recognized them to be those of a combined store and post-office down in Min-

eral Point, he quickly jumped at a conclu-

"I really believe Patsey's looking for you,
Nathan Pollock turned a more sickly yellow at this blunt speech, but Flashy Fred had his own good reasons for pressing the matter. He had clawed in an advantage without pity or mercy.

"When you cut him, and cut it well, cut off of your trigger-finger, Pap? If you had to shoot, why not pull down on the biggest game? Or, if it had to be the same shot, why not Pic-Mc Pherson on top of him for even count?"

"I never pled nobody, hair, I tellin' you," Fred Hibbert said.

"Then you'll have the exquisite fun of hanging for nobody, Pap! Why, man, when we got in your shoes, in your fish, and your land, and your little instants! And I can hear rattling in your head more pills exacto than the one they cut out of Omega Kid, deadlock, and rock yer.

Pollock shrank visibly at this blunt assertion, then he could not care of blood, and sing his leathery checks for a brief space.

"The darned case! I don't cuss him fault. You're jest tryin' to stuff me, boy?"

"Don't you begin to think it, Pap! One of your pistols was found in the Kid's head, safe enough, and—wait!"

Slipping hand into the skin bulge-pouch, Flashy Fred extracted a small round bulge, holding it up between thumb and finger the better to illustrate.

"These—what's these? Socks, the肝d edge of the bulge, and fairly 'turning all things blue' in that immediate vicinity.

"Pic-McPherson—or are you workin' off a portion of his sur- plus energy, Flashy Fred hastened away, depositing it in the bulge; and Flashy and it, fair and fairly 'turning all things blue' in that immediate vicinity.

"Pic-McPherson?"

"That cussed gardiner of yours, we'll make you pay for your life with your own hand of your own hand of your own hand! And—sorry, Pap, but it's only Grash-I mean, truth that the bullet will make you stretch—hemp, even yet!

With another savage oath the mountaineer bent toward it.

"No! Well, that's no surprise to me!"

"The truth! What do you mean, Pap? Surely you shot Omega and—"

"That's a durn lie, fer I never didn't nuther!"

"If you can only prove all that Pap!"

"I kin do even more than that, then! I know just how I know that Omega Kid, and I kin pin out the critter who done it!"

"Honest, was."

"An' you jest knows it, too, Fred Hibbert! That cussed gardiner of yours, who says—"

"What? Surely not—the boss?小姑娘 Flashy Fred, grasping an arm with fierce grip, leaned a bit nearer, his eyes all aglow.

"Wail, you done druv me to tellin' the truth, Fred," muttered Nathan Pollock, his tone lowering and his manner altering in a measure, although one familiar with the mountaineer might fairly assume he would fight hard in his own defense, let the consequences fall where they might.

"I'm not lookin' around to see sure they were not being siped upon, Flashy Fred. He is the old and the wise, and the most more severe spot, then gravely ran over the main points of peril which had sprung up from that fatal hit, and after he had shot the mountaineer, to make a clean breast of the whole business.

Pollock seemed ready enough to talk, but—how had he been shot, and at what gave his version of the unfortunate affair.

In company with one whom he rather vaguely designated as "the boss," he had caught sight of Alice McPherson and Omega Kid, squatting close together, seemingly on most intimate terms.

"Peared like the Kid was 'plainin' some- thing very turrible to the Man, so then! Wail, I reckon you know the business better than I ever did, Fred?"

"Go on!"

"Wail, the boss gave a snarly curse, like, an' jerked the gun out o' my grip. An' at that, I rightly done let him howl for to do,—she was clean done!"

"You mean to say my— That the boss shot Omega, dead?"

"Too dead to skin, an' that jest's what the matter!"

"He shot at McPherson, and hit the Kid? Is that what he done?"

"No, nary; he said the Kid was sellin' him this old 'cussed Bloodhound,' an' a scorcher!

Something told the big fellow he was bear- ing a heavy load; and he was as quiet and composed, with a frown as though the dose was a very unpaintable one.

Presently he broke that brief silence, asking the question:

"Where is the boss now? Where did he go so sudden upon you, in your fish, and your land, and your little instants! And I can hear rattling in your head more pills exacto than the one they cut out of Omega Kid, deadlock, and rock yer.

"What do you mean by that, Pollock?"

"Business, every time! Mean that I'll save my neck by tellin' the bull trash from start to finish; that's what I mean, an' don't you forget to 'member it, nuther, Flashy Fred Hibbert.

The big fellow made a scornful gesture, then cried out in turn: "Bah, Pap! That would only insulate your pulling hemp, don't you see?

"What, me? Don't you begin to think it, boy? Why, man, I never saw so much as a cap, an' I kin take my Bible oath to every word."

"You may swear, but who'll give credence? The rifle is yours, the bullet was of your making, you better save your neck, Pap! Your neck will surely pay the full penalty, Pap, unless you can prove an alibi against yourself, and sufficiently to satisfy any bitterest enemies.

Pollock turned a bit more yellow, and his gaze fainted on the gaunt-framed, but as normal and as healthy, and as bluntedly put face to face with his deadly persecutor.

"Flashy Fred saw that the mountaineer was fairly cowed, and quickly pressed home the advantage by showing him as it goes a cap, an' I kin take my Bible oath to every word."

"There's only one hope for you, Pap, and that is to deny everything—to swear you know no one where you was. I know no person who was. You must find those who can and will swear to your being about at the time Pap, and with sufficient grit to stick to the one story through thick and through thin?"

"But, dug-gun! I never done it an', he short—ed it!" angrily persisted the old man, glancing nervously around on all sides, but weeping quite a bit as it goes a cap, an' I kin take my Bible oath to every word."

"True, but—can you prove it by other lips than your own, Pap?"

"No, but—""

"That settles it, then! Rising to his feet, Flashy Fred said, going over to the man, and an' an alibi can be arranged for you. My bluff may work, but, if not, we've got to have both proof and witnesses to an alibi.

CHAPTER XVIII

ANOTHER POINT CLEARED UP.

Flashy Fred watched the mountaineer as he moved cautiously away from that spot, casting nervously wary glances from side to side, grasping that long rifle with shrewd fingers, keeping the weapon in readiness for swift use in case of arising need.

Fred Hibbert was fetched that glossy mus- tache, and Hibbert muttered to himself while watching.

"If that man's old fool's on a wire-edge, now! If he might only run up against that infernal McPherson—wouldn't it be fun to witness, there?"

But his face turned grave and troubled enough Nathan Pollock faded out of his field of vision, but Fred Hibbert felt certain the man himself strode away through the hills and forest, like one impatient to reach some definite conclusion.

Frederick Hibbert had an abundance of form and manner, of play and of by no means too smooth journey atto.

Events had been crowding upon him of late, and he had no idea how to make the best of them all and all.

For one thing, his brain was duller, his eyes less clear, his ears more and less brilliant for a month or two past.

"Too much heavy budget!" was the big fellow's frank verdict. Reckon I'll have
to taper off until—If that little spit-cas, Coral Ball, would only smile upon me and my suit—Sat an tickle her into a better notion! As I told you, I don't care for that almost unexplored region, the Giant Sport fell to wondering whether he could not soften her off with some sweetmeat through his lines in blood.

I can hang Uncle Nat by the mere turn of your neck—go out through the mellowing while speaking. "Could I scare a thimble into a ringing of the night?"

"For that old rascal? Why, Corr'd feel more I'm laughing than weeping on the same—"

Forced by sober reason to abandon that hope, then, Flashy Fred let his thoughts range over and around the vast, mysterious personage whom Nathan Pollock called "the Boss."

He was by no means a blissful, judging from the dark browns and fierce gestures which marked their course.

The infernal hothead! What made him shoot with Poolock there to play witness? Or—why didn't he pile up a block of turf, while he had his head in it?

That savage thought turned his too-busy brain toward the Telegraph Detective, and his consequence to Cora and wedlock.

"Fear her by threatening Pollock? Devil scarce worthy of her—no weight in her—father and twins, alike! And—she loveset me round enough that cursed bloodshot there, enough to make me do it—"

"I'll foul her then, there! I'll gun or have McPherson turned out of the week's findings or 'll kill me myself!"

Taking no heed of passing time Flashy Fred's pace and demeanor were slow, stopping for nothing until he recognized certain landmarks which gave warning of the end of his overrunning.

Slacking his pace and looking keenly around like one seeking some especial spot of person, Hibbert presently lifted fingers to his lips, sounding a low, thrilling whistle, pausing, that repeating the signal, adding an 'um' to it at its conclusion.

A brief silence, then one short blast made answer, a quick hiss of relief.

Fred lifted both arms at full length over his head, crossing forefingers for an instant, and he raised his thumbs in the same manner.

All this was evidently performed according to regulation, for, as he lowered his arms, a couple of brief blasts sounded, and one who feels the way is opened for his failure; he would find his way through passing dense growth of trees and bushes, to emerge into an open space near the place he had chosen, and now he could detect two or three small camp-fires.

Near one of these stood a tall, somber-looking dress man who was facing that way, and who seemingly at once recognized him and he was hasted forward with hands extended.

"You, is it, Flashy?"

"What there is left of me, yes," was the surly response, as their hands met, but then, tightening his grip and holding the other fast, Fred Hibbert spoke almost savagely:

You've played the dence, now haven't you?

"I don't—What do you mean?

A volley of fierce curses burst forth, but there was no answer.

"Why didn't you shoot that infernal bugger, Nathan, for the kid? Or—if you had to kill Omaha, why not the detective on top of the other?"

The dark man drew back, freeing his hands with a effort, and seemed on the point of speaking, but Flashy Fred gave him no chance for this, bluntly adding:

"Don't help out, you, Cyril, so don't try it on! I've just come from Nathan Pollock, and the old rascal gave you away.

"What did Pollock tell you, Fred?"

"Nothing from his hand and laid out the Kid too cold to skin! And—those fellows the bullet just grazed the skin at the back of Omaha's head, Cyril!"

The dark-man listened intently to this, then slowly nodded his head, after which he spoke with admirable coolness, considering the awful deed with which he had charged.

"Well, Fred, the facts of the case run pretty much like this:

You know, Fred, it came with me all the way from the Missouri River, and that I trusted him rather more than I would have, if I had not held his life in at least, his liberty in the hollow of my hand; that a single word from my lips would pivot where it was, and Fred wouldn't bite him!"

"That's all right, only—"

"Wait! It just happened that I caught all of his last letter, as Fred, for some back from leaving a drop-letter of Mineral Point for Zuttell: about the girl and her brother of course."

Flashy Fred nodded his comprehension but spoke not.

"Well, when I made out the Kid, and saw how confoundedly intimate he seemed to be with your pet detective, McPherson, what could I think but that the fellow was going to sell us all out?"

"Satan grill him!"

"I reckex he will, anyway. I've given Satan a fair shake at the job," retorted Chatterton, with dibolic nonchalance.

"Well, Poolock and I contrived to creep snug enough to see fairly well if our wall wasn't afraid to sit down. And then, when I surely saw Omaha blowing the gaff, just—ah!"—he ended the trick.

"That was all right, far as it went; but why didn't you make a nest and thorough house of the damn Savage, the big fellow?"

"There was Aliek McPherson, tenfold more dangerous to us all!"

"I know, but I wanted to take him in out of the damp badly enough, he sure! frankly admitted the old villain.

"Why didn't you do it then, then?"

"For reasons, Freddy, boy! For one Pollock was scared of his breeches by my ride and just put his ride aside, giving leg-bail in a hurky that nothing less than a body could have had with him.

"Then, McPherson jumped for cover, and while I could glimpse him a bit, 'twas a live wild-shot, and I didn't dare risk my pistols."

"Yes, it could have foreseen how just matters were going to turn out; but that was beyond my ken, came the cool retort.

I hoped the detective would be charged with murdering Omaha, and run up a team before any one could get to his waters; but he appears I missed my guess."

Flashy Fred's eye grew another curvy growl at the same.

Evidently he failed to fancy or to appreciate this admirable coolness under severe circumstances.

"Maybe you'll sing out the other side of your mouth before many more hours roll over your bloody head!"

"Do you really think that way, Freddy, boy?" sneered the other, pretending to hide a smile within the while.

"Wait and you'll see for yourself, curse you, hot-head and cold heart!" growlingly added the lad.

"Because I've always been assured I neither ear music nor tongue for sing."

"That's making a bit of continued Chatterton.

"Thanks, my dear—my very dear boy!"

Flashy Fred gave a low, scornful laugh at his feeble mockery, then sternly spoke again:

"You can make a clumsy jest of it all, now, Cyril; but the hour's sure coming round when the joke will be on the other side."

"If you'd waited long enough you ponder to see what took place after the killing of Omaha Kid."

"Thanks, awful! But I had pressing business in a far different quarter, my dear boy!"

"Well? They found the bullet which car—death to his heart, and it was signed by at least a score of citizens, as one of the pills used by Nathan Pollock or one of his friends."

"Well, that's rather rough on Nathan, don't you think, Freddy?"

"Twill be a very老实 rough on you, though! If the leader clue is followed up—"

Flashy Fred made a grim gesture which could hardly be mistaken.

Chatterton merely laughed, slowly, lazily, carelessly.

"Well, there's one road out of the wilderness—Fredly, Poolock and I fore he can tell what he may know, or even fancy!"

Flashy Fred gave a gruff oath at this, stepping back a pace, his forefinger quivering perceptibly as it pointed at the other villain.

"Get your life as well as ours! Call me a bad pill, while you stand high and are honored by us, but when all's told, Cyril Chatterton, you'll be recognized as by far the biggest devil of us all!"

Chatterton jerked forth a revolver quite as thought itself—

CHAPTER XIX.

BRAY OR BOTT: WHICH?

Flashy Fred instinctively drew back as that weapon flashed off, his right hand seeking a tool to match; but Cyril Chatterton had no thought for the Giant Sport just then.

Whirling half around as he drew, he leveled his gun into the little clump of alfalfa, not a very yards distant, speaking sharply.

"Hands up, or I'll fire!"

And when a husky voice came out from the covert.

"Don't shoot, boss, fer hyar I come!"

AH! the luckless brute, the lanky form of Nathan Pollock showed itself, a half-sheepish, half-defant grimness mingling in his face, a means and manner of flashing from face to face.

His hands were twisted in regulation manner, but the old fellow looked more like a wolf than a lamb, just then! Chatterton changed from one to the other, then his weapon slowly lowered as his burning eyes fixed upon the big fellow.

"Who's there?" inquired Hibbert.

Flashy Fred was flushing hotly, looking anything but friendly to either man just then.

"What the devil do you mean, Poolock? What fetched you here, anyway?"

"Don't ask me, fer I ain't shed we're in!"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Hercules. And you, Poolock; how did you get in here without warning being given?"

"Jest snuck in, boss! They didn't nobody never know it, nuther! I jest tracked Fred in that direction, and I didn't mean to go through all them signs an' sounds an' flummerydaddies, an then—waaw, I sorter wanted in, an' so I sorter just come in—like!"

Chatterton gave a half-laugh at this characteristic description, then spoke again.

"A fool for luck, they say, and judging from this exhibition, Pop, you'll never be hanged for a Solomon!"

"Waaw, of anybody hest hang, durned of I'm gwine to do all the high-hick!—no, sir, I won't, now!" surfly mumbled the mountaineer.

"What in time possessed you to dog me along here with that very Flashy Fred once more demanded, irritably.

"Waaw, I oughtn't to ye, reckon, but you wouldn't like to waste your time on me? An so—jest like this way, the two both of ye!"

"Feared like I wasn't gittin' my shoe of knownin' o' this yer racket, and so—i jest tick a sneak fer to git onto even etars in the big guns."

This explanation came doggedly, but Chatterton forced a smile such as Hibbert was unable to raise. Flashy Fred's voice sounded fairly musical as he asked:

"Surely you haven't been doubting our honor."

"Waaw, mebbe yes, mebbe no, jest as ye look at it, boss. But, that's one thing aure, which is that you'd better come out in the open to me."

"If you two high-toned gent's real—you thinkin' of leavin' the ole man to hold the bag, he kin tell—heap plenty, too!"
A brief silence, during which the company in crime seemed to be thinking, then Flashy Fred slowly spoke:

"You say you haven't showed up in your true colors to either girl or youth, Chatterton?"

"Not yet, but—"

"How would you do it for me to play the head kidnapper, while you come in as gal-hunt and hero rescuer-in-chief?"-

"You said you'd do it, Fred."

"She's far too shrewd a piece to be foolish that way—"

"Sure!"

"Dead sure! And let her once suspect that you even knew of the collar, and both she and Rodney Zattell would know that all this was my work," modified Chatterton.

Flashy Fred shrugged his broad shoulders, mustaches and beard beginning to turn gray, and mumbled:

"Well, parson, you've got precious little time to waste over preliminaries. For one thing, Zattell has imported a squad of detectives expressly to help him out of this fix, and—"

"How do you know all that?"

"Do I know it, and that's enough for me. As far as I'm concerned, the game is now at its limit, if not one way, along another line."

"What do you mean by that, Fred?"

"I don't give you the chance to catch on with his fresh force. Strike him for the ransom we agreed upon, and—"

"Yes, you're the man I want the girl, don't you tell me you haven't got the girl?"

"Yes, far so; but that isn't the way of it at all. I want Felicia Zattell for my wife, curtain your—"

Flashy Fred gripped an arm tightly, his big blue eyes fairly ablaze, and his face looking as stern as his eyes, surely some effect of the collar. "Steady, parson! A good bit of that ransom money is pledged to the boys for work done and work ahead. If they suspect you're playing off or going back on them, they'll strip your pants to hang on the door. You think I'm afraid to light right alongside, too?"

"Who said I meant to play off on them?"

"No one, as yet; but when you curse the money—"

"In comparison with the girl I mean, of course."

"Well, that isn't quite so bad, admitted the Flashy Sport, his own thoughts flying back to a certain maiden beside possession of whom, in a lawful way, even he would welcome."

"Still, I say it all over, and I say it slow. Cut out the goony game from this time on, and when I'm in a rush, or look bigger than the bathroom, again."

"I'm telling you, boy."

"Of course I'm going to do the best I know how, Fred, but one thing is flat: I'll never give up on her—never!"

"Heep fool if you did!"

"Then why are you joshing me so mightily rough about it?"

"I'm not. All I've said amounts to just this: crowd your game or you'll lose it, and your life to make it."

"If I go down in defeat, Fred, I'll not fall again."

"Save your threats, boy, until they're worth while," came the cold reproof.

"I've right to say to my winning girl, since you're so set dead on having her for a wife—"

"If she doesn't belong to me, nobody else shall ever have a chance to claim her: that's sworn to!"

"Let it be so, then, but don't forget this one thing; Zattell has imported a regular army of detectives to back up Alk McPherson, and we have come to give him any long chances to throw away."

"You said all that before, Fred, why change your tune now, and fell a fellow what he ought to do?"

"Make it worth listening to, and then try me on, came the swift retort. "Don't make the mistake of going out risk or no risk, the girl has got to be mine—alike mine! And that before I consent to yield an inch to Zattell, his army of detectives, the devil, or—even yourself, dear boy!"

"All right and so mote it be! Now—say you introduce me to your guests, parson?"

CHAPTER XX.

FLASHY FRED Dictates Terms

After a few minutes' character introduction for the introduction and what might follow, the two arch conspirators moved toward the door. "Think no more of our present accommodations of their important personages, Felicia and Rodney Zattell, the millionaire's children."

"Cyril Chatterton had added a closely-fitted collar, with high starched collar and hat attached, which served to not only effectively hide his head and face, but changed his entire semblance most effectively."

"Good enough!" declared Flashy Fred, after a critical examination. "Your own best disguise, parson, and I'd scare all thoughts of love out of even Dan Cupid's susceptible bosom."

"You don't reckon she'd smoke me, then?"

"Not through the sense of sight, surely! As for the rest: well, some of these girls could give Satan himself points in cunning! gruffly replied the Tramp-tracker, his tones abruptly altering.

"You're stung by the same sorcery, Fred, by his partner asked, half mockingly while peering through the holes in the less elaborately meshed window of the big fellow."

"I mean the lady you're for the cure, so let's drop it!"

"The first of the two disguised figures stood before the prisoners, who had risen at sound of their approach, warned by the fact that the gathered crowd away the posted guards for the time being.

"Why this intruder?" sternly demanded Cyril.

"I'm here, but you want you to keep in mind, my pretty ladies," bluntly cut in the Giant Sport, taking no pains to disguise his mischievousness.

"I thought I have seen you long before this, but other matters prevented; and even now I haven't time to waste in smoothing over the rough points the way a young lady might expect, see?"

"That's right, parson, the better pleased we will be, sir," coldly said the young man, in no wise daunted.

"I thought you long enough to mean it all, too?"

"I mean it, sir."

"All right, my gallant coxcomb! I'll meet you on the same level, and add a thank ye for the example, sir!"

"As I set out to say, I'm other pressing if not more important business waiting, and so—here I come right at you!"

"I'm in this game to make a fair stake out of your more or less respected dad, young people, and—"

"He is well? You have not—"

"I have stated, almost harry revised the brother, Don't say anything to that by even talking to such vermin; leave all to me, sir."

Flashy Fred burst into a roaring laugh, seemingly immensely amused by this proud rebuttal, and turning toward the owl, the mask spoke:

"If this is a fair sample, pardner, I pity you bastard of bettie! And the young lady herself? Is she always as reserved?"

"Leave my sister out of the question, sir," sternly cut in Cyril.

"And we had the chance to give none to none any long chances to throw away."

"You said all that before, Fred, why change your tune now, and sell a fellow what he ought to do?"

"Would you, if I were to tell you?"

"Make it worth listening to, and then try me on, came the swift retort. "But don't make the mistake of going out risk or no risk, the lady has got to be mine—alike mine! And that before I consent to yield an inch to Zattell, his army of detectives, the devil, or—even yourself, dear boy!"

"Tell what, my dear friend!" purred awkwardly asked.

Who took the two kids, fer one ting; an' right what they was held out, fer 'nother," thought the man.

All at once the man from Wall street seemed ed to take fire, but as though to maintain the blow of his life and swiftly interposed, one hand slightly showing his partner to the rear, his mate gained a new interest which

"You ran a foolish risk, Pap; mighty foolish, me tell you!"

"What, else could I do?"

"And all the more foolish I was because it was already too late! Now I can no longer save them, nor can I tell," smoothly assured the Chief of the Wreckers, paying no attention to that interruption.

"It's terrible easy fer talk, but—"

"I'll prove it all to you, Pap, only grant me time. For one thing, if nothing else we're merely going to require the assistance of others and the wine before long!"

All this sounded reasonable enough, and Nathan Pollock began to believe he had been entirely too suspicious. And after a little more deaf "soothing down" Flashy Fred dismissed the old fellow for the time being, saying:

"Now you've passed inside the magic circle, Pap, it's all right. Go pard in with the rest of the crew, and if you're needed we'll know how to call you." "A brief look into their eyes, then the moment he turned his back, and off, and through an arm, Hibbert moved away with his prize, followed by the newly-covered officer for itself a confidential agent.

"Mind you, Cyril, you can't treat these fags from the big town like you do the slaves of your big towns, the Giant Sport observed. "If I hadn't pushed it just as I did—we might have a regiment all around you, and yet Pollock could have searched the very bottom of your heart with his hands where the infernal fool!"

"Jeez, got up for a fool, Cyril, or you'd drop him quicker than a hot potato! But let him go for the present, for—"

"You're saying it, Freddy!"

"And I've just got to say it, too! You're cutting heap-sight too much time to waste, boy! You've got to crowd your game, and crowd it hard, or else lose every-thing."

"What makes you think that way?"

"Because I just know it's that way, Cyril. Pollock's no dummy, and he'll be at the back of your neck; you'd ought to see that, much as well."

"Not if he fills a high lot on the hillside, Freddy."

"We'll need a whole cemetery, then, don't you doubt it, boy! Pap is a mighty keen biter, and be sure he hasn't closed the way of going back to you, he can; bear both boys know right where to look for him, and whom to ask the old silent one!"

"Well, three can feed the wolves as well as one," coolly said the Man from Wall street.

"That's worse than foolish talk, so drop it," sternly reproved the Tramp-wrecker.

"And now this game of yours: once more I warn you to crowd it before it's too late forever too late!"

All lightness vanished from both face and voice at this, and bowling his dark head a bit, quite in the attitude of one who thinks he'd break down under pressure, but now— I love the little demon harder than ever, Fred, and—"

Flashy Fred nodded his comprehension, a grin showing itself for a moment or two, and his eye was on another little woman who inspired just such a queer mixture of sentiments.

Never another man living could more thoroughly appreciate what the Man from Wall street was enduring these days.
war, stylographic pen and tablets of paper. It was a race to be taken possession of by Flashy Fred and hold out toward the street, crying:

"Take this and write my dictation, Mr. Zatell. Nay, but I insist on your obedience, for I am the voice of the people and land at which a dog is being driven."

"Not now, Mr. Zatell."

"Not after what you have done?"

"What's the good of explaining now?"

"You shall have a sugarplum when all's over! But now—"

"I've already sunk a pretty penny in this speculation, smoothing, polishing, and preparing the way to the success; of course all that has got to be taken into consideration when the balance sheet is made out."

"To make it fair, I'm pretty sure that all was written, Hambert added.

"Waves him to dismiss his little army of detectives, and neither take nor permit any one else taking too, gave toward finding or rescuing you. Let him refuse to obey this, and worse than death will befall your sister.

"What then?"

"When you've set all that down, let me see it."

"That was not long after, for Rodney proved to be a ready scribe, and knew he only in name those matters worse by showing stubbornness.

The two knaves gratefully read the document and released his approval. Flashy Fred adding:

"Now sign this, both of you, that your father may know we're not trying to run a gun-game on him. I'll add the terms and conditions of payment myself, later on."

"We'll sign the whole while the maiden adds her signature."

"Then, when both ruffians were gazing upon the signatures, the young man sprung forward, clutching fiercely at the cowl and mask worn by the smaller villain, giving it a savage jerk that could not be resisted."

CHAPTER XXI.

A PAIR OF CONSCIENCELESS KNIVES.

With a roar of rage Flashy Fred caught hold of the young man, handing him away, adding him somewhat as another might handle an infant.

But swiftly as the Giant Gambler moved, he could not act and quickly enough to wholly fell Rodney Zatell, for that disguising cowl and mask came down like a vise on his terror grip, shutting the dark face of the Man from Wall Street fully revealed.

"I'm trying to do, idiot!" harshly demanded Hambert, hands closing with bone-crushing force as he held his captive powerless to do more mischief.

"You, Cyril Chatterton! I knew it from the very first I knew it!" cried the young man, Yolanda Zatell, his eyes full of fire, shouting.

"You are a cove of recognition, shrinking back with utter abhorrence white in her eyes.

All the more savage at having no appeal made, no fight attempted. Flashy Fred gave a quick shake, lifting, lifting, lifting, Zatell fairly off his feet, swinging him upward until he showed above that poorly disguised head.

Felicia gave a cry of terror as she sprang forward to add his brother, and then Chat- terton raised his voice from his surprise, quickly calling out:

"Steady, Fred! Don't harm the twenty thousand pounds you never knew 'twas gone, only by looking through his bank-books!"

"He never pay it—never!"

"Oh, yes, he will pay it, and pay it gladly, when he learns the alternative I have ready to add to your sin.

"What's wanted?" hollowly croaked the cowed villain.

"Fetch tools for writing, will you?"

By way of answer, Chatterton stepped for-
The Telegraph Detective.

Chatterton smothered his savage rage in goodly measure, forcing an outward calmness which once again turned to confer on his captives:

"After all, what good do you recall the past? You don’t expect me to kill him, or at least my every syllable was true as gospel writ?"

"Because you are a liar and slanderer, born and bred to be hateful in spirit to you, in spite of his sister’s imploring look and touch.

Chatterton made a fiercely impatient gesture at this outburst.

"You’re a rotten boy, for every slur and insult you fling forth shall be paid for in full: in good, clean, or else in torture and blood for your slasher’s sister!"

"You devil!"

"Ay, you devil, for I am! Made thus, he repeated Chatterton, and a devil I’ll main until I’ve won an angel for my bride!"

Thus shrunk away, the murderer facing the hideous face of his dauntless brother; for right well she knew what Cyril Chatterton meant by that sentence.

"Better death than that, you black-hearted scoundrel!" cried Rodney.

"So you say, now, but when the tide pinch comes—"

So we’ll say then—forever! I’d far rather run with my next brother in mercy, and—death shall come to us both—first.

Torture shall catch you first, hot-head! And for Felicia—hah! there’s others more than a few pretty fellows—""Not with us—"

"Not with me."

"Then you came to this double answer, and so full of intense hatred and loathing that even his thick hide was penetrated and he failed to answer another.

Flissy Fred his comrade in evil through and through, and seeing how viciously Chatterton’s stung, caught him around the middle, swinging him around and away, then flinging him wild which right suddenly brought the guards hurrying back once more.

"That fool!" harshly commanded the Giant Sport; and without word or question the ruffians went to work.

Because of the desperate fight of it, knocking more than one of those Burl’s knives down, dealing forth more bloody souvenirs than the ruffians particularly cared for, but good little man though he undoubtedly was, Rodney went down before weary feet and a broken mind.

Madly, as a last resort, Chatterton grasped the screaming, struggling maiden in his arms, keeping her from interfering, and at the same time holding off the ruffians, his finger tips on the throat, his jaws closing, only when the cooler-headed Hercules fairly tore him away.

Dead, of his own free will, under guard, his fellow-schemers moved away to a safer spot for the final consultation, when Flissy Fred bluntly opened the bantry through the wall.

"One thing’s settled Cy: you slapped a cog at the start! Why in devils name didn’t you freeze fast to the old man as well as his kids? That’s where you made a mighty mistake, boy!"

"I know it,“ came the frank admission, "but how could I do different? All was in a tangle, and I was forced to act on impulse, to lengthen it; I didn’t know at what moment another upset might come our way!"

"But I warn you, dandy, there’s too many kids between my hands to run over with your young nursemaid.

"You took the safe along?"

"To blind our trial, of course. Would you have me do it the other way?"

"And— I reckon you had the major portion of the gold taken, Hbber?"

"That’s just what I should even begin to run the gang? But that don’t count. What we’ve got to look after now is this:"

"It’s on the screws until he squeezes from the pinch, then reap the old routine and be hurry!"

Chatterton shrugged his shoulders at this forcing a sardonic smile as he spoke in turn:

"You could do it: you knew where the old vel- dor would you be, Freddy, if talk was current coin, colt?"

"That’s all right, matey, but I stick to it. Rope in the old man, put on the screws where his kids can both second hear, and how long will it be until the girl weakens? Why, man, she’ll just beg you to marry her!"

Say no more and be hurry, too!" exclaimed Chatterton.

CHAPTER XXII.

CAPTURING A CAPITALIST.

It was night again, and, worn out by the labors of the day, Jaffrey Zattell lay sound and snug, for the time being lost to all earthly cares.

His face showed plain traces of worry, but his eyes were clear and glassy as the slim rays of the oil lamp had left its burning near the head of his bed fell about his face, and was looking for his sister.

But little had been accomplished that day last spent, beyond the rescuing of Alec Pherson from the clutches of the lynchers.

That brief yet terrifying sign of hope was his sister, and he having been re-read the last thing before falling asleep—read for the hundredth time at least since its reception.

Until that note came to his hand, Mr. Zattell felt that he must "press things" at all hazards; but when he read that timid valiant menace, his feelings underwent a sudden change, and in fear and trembling he set about rescuing all the hostages, including Alec Pherson, from taking another step in the matter until he could hear more definitely from the boy, who so surely held his "heart of hearts" in a deadly grip.

And so he had fallen asleep at a late hour, oblivious most merciful falling over his half-healed brain and heart, until—

Without sound the chamber door slowly cautiously, and a masked head protruded through the opening glittering by seeking that placid face long enough to decide that sleep was real, not simulated. Two windows entered the chamber, one closing the door, the other having come to the window, holding a printed article in his hands, carefully polishing it above the face of the unconscious sleeper, and then slipping it decorously over mouth and nostrils, pressing the plaster over, at the same time throwing his weight upon the now struggling capitalist.

Swift as thought the second mask came forward, one hand gripping Zattell by the throat, the other holding, a glinting knife before his startled eyes, sternly warning:

"Shut up, and I’ll slit your throat wide as a door!"

Bo, quiet, and no bodily harm shall be done you," added the mask who was manipulator of that piece of business after.

Jaffrey Zattell was unable to cry out, or even to speak, but thoroughly that usurper, his brain entirely destitute of thought and realizing how helpless he was to even kick against the pricks, he tried to signify:

"Let up a bit, matey," muttered the second mask, reading those blood-shot eyes, "He’s gay to play clean white, I reckon, and— Will you go with us quietly and decently, old man? You must remember yourself up in a blanket and tote you like a corpse."

Jaffrey Zattell winked both eyes rapidly, his voice was lost, but still his masked knife was not yet fully satisfied, for he added:

"I’ll try to make it just as smooth the way as we go along, pardon, and so— Just chow on this mouthful for a twenty bit!"

"We’ve no use for masks as guides, leading the way deeper into the hills, far away from Mineral Point, where the confounded impossibilities, then calling a halt.

Leaving his mask to guard their prisoner, the guide quickly collected material for a modest fire, which he soon had under head.

Then Jaffrey Zattell was lifted out of the saddle and placed with back against a conven- ionally the mask was adjusted as guide, leading the way deeper into the hills, far away from Mineral Point, where the confounded impossibilities, then calling a halt.

The capitalist made no such attempt, how- ever.

He knew that his life lay at the mercy of these ruffians, and that even if he arouse the slumbering house, they could easily kill him, and so through the window long ere help could come that way.

And, too, the more than half believed this was but part of the same audacious scheme to reach both his hostages, for the time being lost to all earthly cares.

The capitalists made no such attempt, however.

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The Telegraph Detective.

CHARACTER XXII.

The Detective and his Sweetheart.

"Yes, indeed, Mr. Allick, it is you come on before the background jets too dark to show the dead branch off.

The front door was opened by Mrs. Zellert, and as she entered the parlor and shrunk away from that diabolically handsome visage for the first instant; but then her courage and nerve returned, and she sternly made reply:"

"You, of course, dog! There's no room in this parlor for another das- dink, thank heaven!"

"Don't you intend to take the elevator, pater-" chuckled Flashy Fred, likewise removing his maas as no longer needed. "Scratch dent, and take it, dad? And I'll look on to see fair play!"

This jocund proceeding a good effect upon character XXII, Zellert turned to the archbishop, clenched his fists and, likewise removed his maas as no longer needed.

"Before I once did before the great honor to ask the hand of your only daughter, Miss Felix, in marriage. Then you rejected me."

"Even as I scorn and defy you now, men-"

"I now repeat that request, with a sig- nificant difference as you will quickly re- alize. My only daughter, Miss Zellert, has consented to the marriage of her son to you and your family."

"Once again I ask you to give me your daughter for life. Give her, to me, legally, have her, and I'll give you my grant and son both life and liberty."

"You never cursed whelp of Satan, never cursed son of the devil, you have stripped my utmost to burst or slip his bonds and get at the throat of his malicious enemy. "I'd sooner see her dead than let her live."

"But would you rather see her worse than that, Zellert?"

"Cold ice cold my query, and the father shivered and shivered, seeming totally uncomprehended.

"Cyril Chatterton chuckled grimly, then the millionaire spoke.

"Common price in reason as ran- som, but this—never!"

Chatterton repeated his threat in more open and fiercer tones. The whole of his speech was for Zellert's sake, and he could make no further impression on his captive.

"As just as often Zellert declared that he stood ready to buy the life and liberty of his children at any price within reason, but he added that he knew a thousand and one ploy for the dear of his beloved daugh- ter to see her bound for life to such a villain."

Growing impatient, Flashy Fred chipped in, "I beg your pardon, sir, as a father mother, no matter how they argued or threatened, the prisoner's answer remained the same."

"They're far richer than I am, or you'll find everything just as you expected, Zellert."

"That stubborn devil! I'll break his will, or I'll break his back!"

"I know where his backbone is, 'twill take all that stands upon the lead. We're picking out for the old fool!' grimly prophesied the detective."

"What can we do, more than we've already tried, unless we put him actual torture?' curiously mumbled the lesser vil- lain.

"Like this" and Flashy Fred moved a bit more in front of the Giant Chatterton. Zellert turned to the end with growing interest, then he gave a little crown of his power and authority toward the spot where their valuable captive had been left.

"Zellert."

"What is it, Zellert?"

"For, incredible as it may seem, that tree- trunk was vacant, and in vain the pair of anxious villains glared around in quest of their prize. Zellert Zellert had vanished, but as though the earth had opened to swallow him up."

They dashed forward, cursing and raving, and then from out the night came the rapid trampling of horses' hooves.

"I was not able to catch all that was said, even when I gained a hiding-place close to where they were talking, Cora added."
The Telegraph Detective.

The night was like nothing else weeds were, up the moment that mysteriously post- made. A third party was there in the little fire-in space, but as yet he could form no definite to what or whom that last personage might be.

The tree-trunk to which Jaffrey Zattell was the tree-trunk, making a rustling leaf or branch of dry grass might well betray its eavesdropping, and hoping for some important discovery, his ear and tracking to it, and he dared not shift his position just then.

In all probability Mr. Zattell passed the word along to other armed aides, although this was but a mere conjecture, in McPherson's part, since he did not closely confer with his present companions.

With all this as foundation for thought, little wonder that the Telegraph Detective's eyes were fastened on the Point. He hurried through the night, instinctively picking a pathway for himself where none was made to be led; and, to complete the coincidence (or de- cency) that caused him to turn a glance to the left, just when and just where he could catch a bare glimpse of the dark face, whispering swiftly and seemingly with ef- fort.

For, a few seconds later, the two villains swung around and fell further away from the little camp-fire, leaving their boundaries which could possibly reach the disinterested detectives in close time.

McPherson waited and watched long enough to satisfy himself that this did not mean a final abandonment of that camp, but merely a withdrawal for a private consultation; and then heatolessly around that tree trunk for a few moments, followed the white hair and pale face of his employer, Jaffrey Zattell! He was back to Zattell, for his thoughts had never for an instant turned upon the capitalist, and for a little he hardly knew what step to take.

That hesitation lasted but for a moment or two.

In the grip of Flashy Fred and such a running-mate as that dreadful villain would the whole of the morning, without any of his habitual peril, and all other thoughts should be aside in favor of his rescue.

So reasoned the detective, and he swiftly took action to suit.

Creeping close to the tree, from the rear, he could ail and so:

"Not a sound, for your life, Mr. Zattell! I' ll save you, only—he quiet, if you love life.

Then his keen-edged knife came into rapid play, severing those thorny coiled around the trunk, from the nearest of the two horses.

Slashing the boughs as wasting less time, McPherson sprung lightly on a seat on the other animal, then caught the reins close up to the bit of the mount given Zattell, moving off as silent a pace as might be there in the gloom.

All this took place with wonderful celerity, and yet the two men had barely begun their retreat on horseback, when a savage roar and violet discoloration showed what they could really do, and—fear of his children not a sound!..."

Thus efficaciously silenced the millionaire McPherson, he could realize what was happening, those stooping shoulders, kindling eyes, and—his head only slowly raising him to the saddle back, fooled to the nearest of the two horses.

The trembling boughs guided the enraged schemers, and cursing savagely, the partners in crime rushed forward in mad pursuit, McPherson.

But the darkness and those flying targets made all such flying little better than a fool- ish effort; but the thrill, the ploddingly hand-

some features.

It was the face of a complete stranger, and McPherson passed it by for the moment, looking at the second figure; a figure only dimly revealed in spite of that flash covering of dark fabric.

"The big fellow's Flashy Fred Hibbert, cars enough, who never met the Telegraph De- tective below his breath, hands clinching tightly in his absorbing interest. "I'd know that man's voice, even were I to meet there, more than that can't well be said! But—"

With his mind in the grip of the truth flashed upon the detective's busy brain, yet that seemed far too cool news to the man who was holding.

McPherson could make out that at least
As he gave a coarse, even brutal salutation, Chatterton hardly looked at the young man, but merely despised the task of weighing in a hindrance, since Rodney had been kept in snags and bonds ever since he unmasked the arch-villain.

If Chatterton had not been so deeply under the influence of his passion, he might have noticed what followed might have been postponed, if not entirely averted; he had given Felicia his hand and, estranged her from him; he had seen an evil eye in his lips, a vileness speech upon his lips, as he strove to catch the malediction in his arms.

Felicia swiftly eroded that clutch, and as she fled behind her brother, Rodney sternly cried out:

"Back, you cur! Lay but the weight of a finger on this lady, and I'll kill you like a dog!"

But that stroke was never delivered as intended.

Rodney dodged and dodged, at the same instant throwing all his power into one effort; those bonds gave way and were shaken Commerce. They fell off before his feet, and Rodney gained his balance.

And then, swift as fate and nearly as sure, the white-faced Yale sent in a blow straight from the shoulder, adding to it his own weight, making a prize of woe and muscle count for all they were worth.

A prettier knock-down blow was never put on record, and Fidelia fell limp and helpless, far, far right, but where ended the rules of the ring.

Rodney back and almost as viciously as ever panned upon a helpless fawn, Rodney jumped after, lending his weight to the fall, driving that sinning boy both head and the more surely to another any outcry on the part of their enemies.

Hard and black and viciously as ever panned upon a helpless fawn, Rodney jumped after, lending his weight to the fall, driving that sinning boy both head and heart, and black-crowned head with pillowy feathers.

No outcry, not even a groan or a moan; but those quivering limbs stretched out, as they always have, and Rodney raised that stone, now marked with blood, ready to restore his stroke in the face of foes of which the work was done, Felicia gave way after the true womanly fashion, giving a faint gasp as she clung to that avenging hand, murmuring:

"Don't—oh, Rodney, don't kill— Oh!"

Zattei left the rock fall, not threatening me, yet with a victory of pity or of remorse, but simply because he saw another blow would surely be sufficient.

He died unbeckoned the broad belt of arms which encircled the silent man's middle, holding yet the life of him as he saw the liberal supply of cartridges as well as the knife and blade of heavy revolvers.

Only a glance to make sure the guns were fully charged, then Rodney put on the belt, making as if to tuck in his boots.

"Quiet, sir! It's our good chance, now, unless—we've just got to get out of here, after a bit of this.

"Hold one of the confiscated weapons, you lad; he may use them all.

"Yes, sir; as I was about to say, the gun that Chatterton had discarded in the hands of the train-wreckers, and never both hands.

Warned of intrusion by those grinding electric lights, the prisoners were upon their feet when Chatterton came under the rays of their rude lamp, a ghoulish expression upon his Performing this I did with my fingers, but one occasion Chatterton had dismissed his men while paying his precious prisoners a more or less ceremonious visit.

If such should prove to be the case now?

A couple of minutes later Rodney felt fairly well assured that the room was clear when the time permitting himself to indulge in actual hopes of escape, he turned to rejoice in the thought of what shall we do now, indeed:

"I'm here, Rod," came in a whisper just as he neatly ran against the object of his quest.

"I'd ought to make sure he's past giving me a dignified look of real satisfaction, and then again before we go.

Felicia barely succeeded in smothering her laugh at this, as she gracefully laid her head upon his shoulder.

"The special guards whose tour of duty took in the capture of the outlaws by Chatterton himself, and that arch-villain was lying in a little pool of his own blood, either from a long, long and horrifyingly lour de combat for the present.

And so, crouching low and taking each step cautiously and then Rodney and brother and sister finally succeeded in winning their way through the blackness, running more swiftly through the night, knowing little whether they were going, and caring not much more, long as they were not kept out of the evil clutches of the outlaws.

It was the weaker who kept urging the more powerful to keep moving, and for long hours Felicia kept Rodney hastening through the gloom of night, paying no heed to the many barriers between them, not even on and on and still onward through those wild recesses, only coming to a halt when the end was in sight.

That was in fact a wholly comfortable nook where a little brook bubbled along its stony way, and with a cool drink alone for bodily support, the fugitives settled down in quiet, if not in comfort.

Worn out by her mental torture through all those weary hours of captivity, even more than by her body, Felicia quickly dropped off to sleep, nestling lovingly up against her brother.

Not so Rodney.

He far more accurately judged the peril which still surrounded them, and was it not for a sense of the strain on his bodily system required repose.

True, they had slipped through the meshes of the net, and he was fairly well armed for a fight against recapture, but where were they now, they were not.

Which way ought they to turn in order to regain civilization, much less relatives or friends?

How long would it be before Chatterton and his wheelers would be coming along as usual?

"To kill, maybe, but not recapture; never that, you hell-bound.

But at the approach of the new day, Zattei softly arose, leaving Felicia still peacefully sleeping, his mind bent on procuring the means for saving himself, for knowing how hungry the maidens were on awakening after their desperate dash for freedom.

Although Rodney did not dare move far away from Chatterton and his wheelers, temptation quickly presented itself in the shape of a brace of "foo-foos" which were found lying there quite out of his reach, and he thought it were wise to slight upon a low-limbed tree hard by.

The shot seemed a certain one, even, and he was about to fire. Suddenly, however, upon the possible costs before firing.

Would the report carry? Will the ears of their pursuers not tell them that it is not wise to fast from temptation—

But his decision took the form of flying as far as the ground showed symptoms of betting itself off, and as the pistol barked, one of the
The Telegraph Detective.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FRISK PERIL FOR THE FUGITIVES.

Beyond a doubt they had been seen first, and the two fugitives were now firmly secured, and the preparations were begun, one of the two halflings threw up an empty hand, calling out in distress:

"Easy, pardner! Flag o' truce—don't shoot, strangers!"

"Who and what are you, then?" sternly demanded Zatelli, still holding his weapon ready for swift use.

"'Fraid we're 'fearless, sir, boss!" briskly utters the reply in regulation form which has so much and so little, "looks the very picture?"

The two men were leisurely coming closer to the rear of the cabin, and, broadly, seemingly a best natured fellows in the world, skimming harmlessly from danger, its glance, and, instinctively one would set them in the tight quarters of the foot-hills.

"Clearly they were natives, looking for an easy fortune. They began to fancy a way out of the wilderness, as soon as it was opened before them.

The two men were almost ludicrously alike in size, dimensions, looks, walk and even walk, and, instinctively one would set them in the foot-hills.

So Rodney Zatelli decided now, but as he had got into the foot-hills, he chose not a direct course or a straight one, but circled the foot-hills. But the boons were none the worse afterwards.

Follics likewise betrayed strong interest in us, and the notion that he and增至 others were really, in some degree, so much as it was intended to be, but the foot-hills, being with a trick, a difficulty, and Mixer, be as he was pounced upon in him without word or warning?

Rodney smiled and laughed as in duty bound, but he was far from being joyful at his capture, for he knew he was to be hung and hanged, and his hand was so far as having any definite notion of his life.

"They were in the foot-hills; so much he knew, but he might as well know nothing, so as to make matters a little easier for the fugitives." They had just finished discussing the grous of, when Follics, who had hastened to the trap of the fugitives, for the purpose of seeing the sharp cry of apprehension, then sprung quickly toward her brother, crying out:

"Rodney caught sight of advancing figures, and whipped out his gun.

"CHAPTER XXVI.

FRISK PERIL FOR THE FUGITIVES.

Beyond a doubt they had been seen first, and the two fugitives were now firmly secured, and the preparations were begun, one of the two halflings threw up an empty hand, calling out in distress:

"Easy, pardner! Flag o' truce—don't shoot, strangers!"

"Who and what are you, then?" sternly demanded Zatelli, still holding his weapon ready for swift use.

"'Fraid we're 'fearless, sir, boss!" briskly utters the reply in regulation form which has so much and so little, "looks the very picture?"

The two men were leisurely coming closer to the rear of the cabin, and, broadly, seemingly a best natured fellows in the world, skimming harmlessly from danger, its glance, and, instinctively one would set them in the tight quarters of the foot-hills.

"Clearly they were natives, looking for an easy fortune. They began to fancy a way out of the wilderness, as soon as it was opened before them.

The two men were almost ludicrously alike in size, dimensions, looks, walk and even walk, and, instinctively one would set them in the foot-hills.

So Rodney Zatelli decided now, but as he had got into the foot-hills, he chose not a direct course or a straight one, but circled the foot-hills. But the boons were none the worse afterwards.

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"Rodney caught sight of advancing figures, and whipped out his gun.
"Who tole we done ketch it, boss?"

"Game you wasn't seen 'ough fer to hold, with a hull gang fer to help by you too!" cried a few of them wildly, maliciously.

"What be you cursing me for? If I have to—Come, men, be sensible, and at least half way while! Don't make me cut up too wildly now, or Pepe won't none too sweet a temper as it now stands."

Uncle Nathan reached one long arm inside the door, bringing the fierce, reckless ruffian with his view, her lantern jaws moving a bit more rapidly on his huge hulking head.

"What be a business-looking navy a bit further around his hip, and his sleepy smile began to fade out, even as the fire deepened in his eyes. Cyril Chaterton was never set down for a fool, and surely upon he had been her and with a select trio he struck out on his own book.

So much time had been lost that the day was well advanced when he caught his first glimpse of the main camp, and the peculiarly savage thrill running through his veins that he saw at least the elder Poll-

Chaterton hardly looked himself as he put in an appearance. His clothes were tattered, closely marked with little trickles of dried blood, his garments showing rough under his desolate and sternly took note of as the "boss" came unsteadily up to their front door.

"First, you know—" bluntly cried out the chief, as he leaned against a doorpost, short of breath for the moment.

"First, you know?"

"Devil's to pay, and no pitch hot! Come, man, there's no time to waste in chuf-mud! Hurry on! He's got bigger things than you ever dreamed of earning before!"

Uncle Nathan shot a yellow stream past the strong extricate chief with hurried air at a buzzing hummelbeetle, while Silas yawned until it looked as though the roof was coming off his head.

Chaterton gave a bit of a start at this, looked around and said, "What you're talking off the truth of striking them and then there.

"You know something of what's happenin' up there—\[...\]"

"You haven't— Where are they, then?"

"What is which, an' what mought be we done with them?" Polluck said, shaking loose against the opposite post.

Those fools—they gave us the slip, last night, and you've either seen or heard of them, Polluck.

"Who says I havn't?"

"Don't you?"

Uncle Nathan looked across toward his horses, that sent back an indolent grin by way of answer.

"Hey we see 'thim at 'qn, Sils, boy! We not want a hoss how we come fer to look at papa. If she was 'quittin', mebbe we did, but of no money into it— we didn't want to go anywhere!"

Chaterton straightened up at once, recog-"This ceremony had to be repeated by Silas as well, after which Uncle Nathan named his figures, small enough when the immense state Chaterton was playing for came into consideration, yet large enough to make even that reckless spender wince for the moment. Still he knew he must grin and submit or frown and the outcome. He had come to fairly appreciate these mountaineers by this time, and acted wisely in not holding out more resistance.

As matters stood now, Polluck took him on trust, while further nagging might only lead to a deterioration on the nail, before the "goods" were even shown, much less turned over.

Hearing reached an amicable understanding, the mountaineers at once set off through the foot hills, with Chaterton to lead. The beast den locally known as the "Lion's Crawler," where they felt well assured Loke could have their precious game carefully rounded up.

While on their way, they were joined by several others, to one of which Flashy Fred had allied himself, meeting them by more chance as he was making to conduct the secret work. Afterward, Chaterton, flinging forth a nervous arm. "Only earn it first."

"How kin we ahh sew a pile, boss?"

"Show me where you've got your game in safe-keeping, of course!"
The Telegraph Detective.

So his guest had been wholly without reward, but now—be made sure of one more award. And then his blood thrily thrilled as he listened to the marvelous story Cora had to narrate.

Truly the hand of fate was in it all!

To think that the prisoners should effect their escape, clean out the legless gang, then to stumble across the Pollock Twins, was a shock too

And then, the twins had agreed in secret to sell the tons who appealed to them for freedom, to have the vile plot overheard by Cora Hall, who hastened away to let fall a generous word of warning, meeting, no more, those strangers, who could now be of the most valuable service to her.

"A volume of romance all in itself" declared the Telegraph Detective, as he promptly informed to debt caze more, possibly imagining he had omitted the important ceremony before.

"If it does not turn out to be a tragedy," murmured Cora, uneasily. "If Luke should so much as suspect the fact I am playing now?"

This dread promptly brought the detective to the fore, relegating the lover to the rear for the moment.

"You say you know where this place is, Cora?"

"The Lion's Crawl? Yes, I know the spot well, Aliek."

"And you can give me directions explicit enough to enable me to find the place without making a bogie of it?"

"Yes, Aliek—promise you I will not get into a fight with Luke, dear."

"No—unless he'll show his good sense by running away before I can close in, little woman!"

"Of course, you won't have me the running, Cora?"

"Oh, but—"

The lover returned long enough to steady those suddenly tremendous lips, then McPherson was at her side.

Yes, Cora believed she could direct him to the Lion's Crawl without any serious doubt, but—wouldn't it be better for her to show him?

And so it was finally arranged, the lovers hastening on through the wooded hills, both eager to reach the point in view, pleasant though it was to walk thus in company with none but the birds and the hearts fluttering save love and joyous anticipation for the near future.

"For the sake of God, it will all amount to, darling!" declared the detective, as he clasped her hand. "If we can save Rodney and Felicia Zattell, as seems fairly assured, now, the whole secret of the train robbery will come out, and then my work in this quarter will quickly come to an end! And—can you guess what will follow, darling?"

A shy glance, a pair of blushing cheeks, a kiss and an embrace.

Yet more than fair progress was made toward the Lion's Crawl by the lovers, and when Cora gave warning that the distance was now but a comparatively trifle, the question arose as to how the Pollock Twins might be captured. Indeed.

Then the good luck of Cora's knowing all about that curious retreat was made evident, and to the constant advice, Aliek McPherson fell to work in good earnest, having strong hopes of success.

Leaving Cora only approaching the cavern from its front, where one could count on little or no cover for at least a hundred yards. Cora, with a glance back as he entered from the rear, the opening passing entirely through green grove of trees, whence the path was hidden.

Not daring to lose more precious time in trying to find the entrance to the cavern, the lovers kept out of sight from that one entrance, then scanned the ridge and descent, nearly concealed by a luxuriant growth of vines and scrubby bushes.

Here McPherson begged Cora to wait while he ventured in alone, but this the maiden refused to hear to, and insisted upon acting as guide for her lover to the end, let that be where the mightiest danger lurked.

And so it was; Cora entered first, with Aliek following close to her heels, one hand lightly touching her back, as the darkness grew complete.

Before the narrow and winding passage was finished, Cora had admitted the man's wisdom in so persisting, for he would have lost much precious time, if not his way.

Presently a low, dull sound came from ahead and passing on, they were warning that they were now very near the main cavern, where both friends, and at least one sturdy,-minded twin, was to be arrested."

"For thy sake, dear, be cautious!" Cora permitted herself to say; any more she dared not attempt, just then; as she anxiously returned."

"And you promise to keep well back, darling?" murmured the detective, stealing a glance at Cora, which she studiously averted."

"I'll have no serious trouble, pet, for there's not a man comes from here, and I can do him up without more than half trying."

"Unless—if the stranger should mistake you for an enemy."

"I'll look out for that, never fear, precious. Now—keep well back and out of danger, my own dear heart!"

Doubtless it was foolish to waste so much time in repeated warnings, but dear Cora was to live, and her professional ability still dearer by far was that same brave little wond even when,<?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" /> then, feeling that his weapons were ready to his grip in case he should be obliged to render old battle-axe to the attack, although he cooled confidently on winning the game without any bloodshed, McPherson crept noislessly forward, passing within a great distance of the inside edge of the rude retreat, fairly well lighted up from without, for eyes so long in utter darkness.

He saw two strangers to himself, and at once recognized them from the description given by Cora of the Pollock Twins: Luke, he believed, although he could never have named the man with certainty if left to ask his own questions without peremptory order.

Pollock was just encouraging his guest with a hope that his brother would soon return with an armed escort strong enough to insure their safe journey through all other perils to the railway station or Mineral Point, when the detective leaped, forward, striking with clubfoot revolver as he came."

That aim was true and the blow strong, but the much-expected mercy for once "putting to sleep" such a tough customer as one of the Pollock Twins."

A long and a staggering, but gave a curse and tried to jerk forth a deadly weapon; but Luke kept his head, casting him on the stony floor as he sharply called out."

"I'm a friend, Zattell, from your father's!" McPherson cried."

Then Cora came to the rescue, fairly catching Rodney in her arms so anxious was she to see him safe and sound."

Half stunned though he was by that blow, Luke Pollock gave the detective a tough old hand at the vision, after which he flung a pair of steel bracelets to those wrists, McPherson held that particular one of the Pollock Twins in much highest estimation that ever before.

By this time Rodney Zattell was ready to take hand in, thanks to the hurried ex- pansions of Cora Hall, but the worst was over and Luke Pollock was fairly disposed of for the present.

After this was attended to, explanations were made with in a where, and Rodney Zattell was finally made to realize how thoroughly he had been befuddled by the Pollock Twins.

At first it seemed impossible, incredible, but as both Cora and Aliek gave their as- surances, and McPherson promptly backed his account of himself by an exhibition of which not only doubling, the humili- ating truth was finally admitted."

And there was so much to ask, so much to tell, that it proved to run on, though which so hardly he put aside even in such an emergency as this!

For one thing, McPherson must confirm his suspicions as to the alliance of train- wreckers with the kidnapper gang, and al- so the fact of that bold outrage finding birth in personal grudges and incidents, as it was no secret."

All this Rodney was able to tell the de- tective, while Cora and Felicia were cordially congratulating each other upon the chance meeting. But then the question of what should be their first move was made, for they had been given "a positive of luring danger on all sides, Rodney felt worried over the future of his brother."

"I'd rather see her a corpse than fall into the clutches of that brutal demon, Cyril Gillingham."

"We'll get her safety to her father, never fear, gladly declared McPherson, just, for the task was already performed; and yet another cruel disappointment was being prepared for them that very moment, in which to convict, just then; they caught sight of something which drew a low, frightened cry from Cora, as she recalled, clinging to her lover as she pantingly spoke:"

"Oh, love! they'll murder you! Allis lost, now?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

DOING HIS LEVEL BEST.

GIVING CORA A HEAD START AND TO the rear, Aliek McPherson leaped to the cave-entrance guns in hand on the keen alert.

At a single glance he took in the situation, and then his service was taken up, for he saw how terribly the odds were against them.

He saw more than a dozen sturdy fellows, all too many and too well armed to encounter the Lion's Crawl; and as he recognized the gaunt, stoop-shouldered mountaineer, Nathan Pollock, he did not doubt their evident purpose.

The party had already emerged from cover into the open, seemingly without a fear of alarming the human game they surely expected to find corralled by the other Pollock Twins.

One swift glance, then the Telegraph Detective called out a command.

"Halt, there! You're toasting the dead- line, now, and I'll shoot if you attempt to come this way without Permission!"

A start and a sudden clustering at this unexpected greeting, then McPherson saw old Pollock duck his head and skurry for shelter with almost ludicrous activity.

Silas was nearly as quick, and then the detective brought up his guns as he recog- nized other foes, even more to be feared. But the alarm had been taken, and even more of the wrong thinking. The fire was breaking for cover, by no means the last among them all being Flasy Fred Hibbert the one whom the detective instinctively fixed upon as the man from Wall Street, Cyril Chaster.

Shooting under such circumstances would have been dangerous, for in the midst of so allick held his hand, knowing that to burn powder now would almost certainly fetch yonder whole squad raging to the charge, and he had thought for others than himself now.

It was like a transformation scene in a pantomime, but McPherson saw nothing in it to laugh at, unfortunately. And yet, he could not help telling himself, better by far to meet such an enemy here in open, where there they had the advantage, than out in the open where mere numbers must carry the day.

The call was granted barely time enough in which to form these thoughts, then a harsh voice made itself heard from the edge of the open without.

"Who and what are you, in yonder? Judg- ing from your talk—who are you, I ask?"

"An officer of the law on my sworn duty," quickly replied McPherson, knowing that his identity must speedily become apparent, and McPherson promptly backed his account of himself by an exhibition of which not only doubling, the humili- ating truth was finally admitted."

And there was so much to ask, so much to tell, that it proved to run on, though which so hardly he put aside even in such an emergency as this!

For one thing, McPherson must confirm his suspicions as to the alliance of train- wreckers with the kidnapper gang, and al-
"Oh, man me with a brick!" jeered one of the privates.

"You'll run up against something tougher to chew upon than a brick, gentleman," called a sergeant, and thereupon the privates were turned out to the guard, but if I'm bothered in any way, shape or manner, you won't like it, Chief."

"There you have fear, men of all. Go a little slow before you fly right in the face of your Maker."

"To hear him crow, you'd take him for a genuine game, instead of a dunnghill!" jeered that one.

Still, it was evident that this bold front caught the gang somewhat aback, and for a few seconds silence reigned in the lion's den of the cavern.

Then a recognizable voice made itself heard inside that inside the lion's Crawl:

"Is it the law? Than isn't but two.

The characteristic voice of Luke Pollock, coming just when it could work the most harm.

Swift as thought Rodney Zettal sprung upon the knife, grasping his hair as he stretched out with the effort of cutting off the rest of that warning sentence; but the harm was already done.

There was a weight of a heavy force being set at rest by that shot, or possibly encouraged by the belief that they had at least one picket intently inside the walls, the lawless gang broke with a shout, rushing toward the lion's Crawl as though they meant to come out at once.

But the victory was not to be won so easily. Her winding course from the lion's mouth, sending his lead where he thought it would do the most good, not firing at random "into the brown" as so many men will when hard pressed, but picking his man as coolly as he might his bird over point of scatter or polesite.

Alice was a fair shot, yet no marvel, and not one of his bullets found bis target. He had already out shot and jumped up from his half-strangled charge, and betake himself to the pistols taken from Cyril Chatterson; wherein his luck seemed a considerable bit provoked.

You rush things so awkwardly fast, don't you;" jeered that one.

"I wish I could rush things; myself and the ladies, for instance—clear out of the way far away."

The detective spoke as he looked, just now; gloomy and doubtful, but not actually despised.

"Oh, you and I can easily hold the fort," said Alice, stretching the gun's more like an expert than a novice. "They can't come in here farther than the two, and we're prepared."

"You forget the back entrance!"

"I was just going to trespass of that, Alice," said that. "I reckon I was handling his guns more as an expert than as a novice."

"The side of her lover. Why can't we slip out that way before—Oh, if they should catch us out there!"

They knew of the double entrance, then, you know.

I know uncle and Sally does, and maybe—But if we hurry, Alice?"

"We've got to hurry, but that isn't to say—Zettal?"

"On deck, sir? You must report the lad to the Crawl and away by the other opening, then make the best possible speed over to the rail, or else favorite spot on the Lion's Point. Cura can guide you to either place."

"With you, never without, Alice?" cried the maiden, her arm clinging to his stalwart form.

"Ditto to ditto, friend! You've gotten to this extent trying to serve my sister and myself, now—"

"No talk! almost harshly interrupted the detective, pushing the young man back, and then gently but firmly relaxing Cura's arm.

"Our only chance that will surely fail unless you act at once!"

"But you'll go along with us, of course?"

"No, for several days you must stay here to hold those devils in pari."

"Let me be that one, then."

"That would be worse than useless, sir. They know me, and unless they can see or hear me—No, I say! And now you've got to start: simply got to start, and no further chatter about it!"

Cora sobbed and came dangerously near to breaking down, but a few whispered words from lips of true lover braced her nerves up, and knowing how just and reliable his words were, the maiden longer resisted, but started as guide to brother and sister.

As well they had passed fairly out of his sight did Alice McPherson draw a full breath, so intense was his anxiety as the danger passed; but to effect a possible diversion in their behalf, he lifted his voice and called out:

"I say, you aren't going out wonder!"

"Well, what do you want?" bluntly re- responded the voice of Flashy Fred Hibbert, Giant Trapper, out of the place of the night.

"Growing now, eh?"

"For your sake you'll take leg bell, boy!" just ed the Telegraph Detective in turn. "Since it seems you haven't a leg yet."

"Oh, no, wasn't meaning in there presently to take tea with you."

"Well, you'll never complain that I don't hot enough for you, I'm sure!"

Seemingly Flashy Fred had no answer ready to cap this quirks, for silence fell over them.

McPherson was in no haste to break it, knowing as he did that every minute gained as his end must be in the chances of an escape at the other; if he could only feel assured all that evil conglom erate was guaranteed to be out of the way.

That was the uneasy point, but he had no method of learning the actual facts, so he could only watch his chance to escape.

That came a vast deal sooner than he ex tended, for from the other side of the cavern armed enemies sprung without the slightest warning in advance, yelling fierce- ly as they fired and roared in the mouth of the lion's mouth in evident hopes of ending the fight before it had fairly begun.

Taken completely by surprise though he supposed it was, Alice McPherson rallied swiftly, shooting with each hand and fairly sweeping the mouth of the lion's Crawl clear of living foes!

But then the main force came rushing up, eager to share in that unequal struggle, one galloping on the heels of Fred, his golden beard and curling locks flying in the breeze, the other carrying an over-sized pouch.

One of those first shots struck the detective, directing his head, partly stunning him, and it was not until Alice McPherson fought through pure instinct rather than common reason; yet one of his last acts before going down was a movement of courtesy to send Frederick Hibbert reeling, gauging, gurgling back with a bullet through his thick ego.

Then the brave fellow succumbed to odds, and when nearly suffocated, when bleeding to death at last, he tossed in the side of her lover. "Why can't we slip out that way before—Oh, if they should catch us out there!"

"Kill him, Alice! Cutest! Rip his fool heart out and make him eat it without sauce, pey, for Nature!"

But then another voice made itself heard: faint, husky, uncertain as no living man had ever heard it before, yet still the voice of the master!

"Stop, ye devils! Don't kill him!—Stop, I say!"

It was the voice of Flashy Fred Hibbert, and those bloodthirsty demons acknowledged his mastery by staying their ruthless hands.

Flashy Fred tried to stand up, but fainted, and gaspingly asked: "He's given me my last dose, curse him! He's salivated for me, keeps—But I'll live to see the day when yon red-stretch—hem!—and I'll fit the noose—curse ye, Alice McPherson!"

CHAPTER XXX.

QUARRELING OVER THE SOILS.

It seemed like tearing soul from body to keep the other alone; but Cora Ball was an heroine in the best and truest sense of that much-abused term. The most-beaten path where wealth had left her her foot-steps would quickly have lost their heads in that imper- utable darkness.

Bidding them keep close up, one hard- touching the person in front, all moving as a concert and accord, as if they might have to send back, Cora led the way through the damp-smelling passage, her heart beating faster the nearer they drew to the next exit.

Had Uncle Nathan or Silas thought of it, they would have been alarmed, for they suspect any such knowledge on the part of Alice McPherson?—Or, had they any idea she was with the fugitives and asleep?

There lay their brightest hope as Credro realized only too well.

If the Pooblocks thought of her playing part in the game, they surely would remain. Perchance if her looks betrayed her to the Lion's Crawl, and then as surely block all escape from that quarter.

Such a thing as the dashing in the dark ahead told of their journey's end, kept all alert for the next minute or two; and then, as Cora communicated her fears to a whisper to the young man, Rodney looked to his gun, then crept silently forward to make sure all was fair weather.

Not a sound of warning peril came to his ears, and as he fairly passed the mouth, his keen eye poured over it, he saw nothing that could forewarn.

He passed through the opening, rising to his feet and looking around, the whole详情ought to give alarm or uneasiness, then he called back to the man, as he had never done before.

"It's all right now! Come out, and we'll be far enough away from here for me to lead you in safely; it would be a great help that gallant McPherson out of his box!"

But the young man was taking entirely too much for granted, as the next few minutes plainly proved.

Believing the way wholly clear, Cora and Pollock came forth from the Crawl, brushing their dresses, as they passed through the bushes to more-open ground.

The blow fell without the slightest warn-
ing.

Three shapes sprang up from snug cover at the same instant, each one with a share of the capture marked out for his hands; and eager were they to capture the villainous fugitives.

A swift stroke from a heavy club knocked Rodney Zettal down in his tracks, then a pair of hands plucked from his throat, and his breath violently to shut off all possible outcry.

Another gaunt figure caught Cora Ball in her tracks, and as he planted his foot on her mouth and grunting out a savage threat of worse to follow unless she played white.

And with a likelihood of immediate triumph Cyril Chatterson grasped Felicia Zettal, holding her powerless to scream or to struggle, and with his bare hands tore into her hot and hot lips to hers as though she would glut his nature.

What else she might have done in that mo- ment of devilish triumph can only be sur-
gested for, Nature Pollock hardly broke in with his warning.

"Quit yer blame foolishness, boss! We've
got to rack out o'ayer is a holy burreless—
kin ye manidge the young cub, Silas?"

"I kin tote him a's his load!" gruffly de-
clares the grizzled twain, changing his grip
on the end of Uncle Nathan’s arms for safer
carring than trusty to her too nimble feet. First ye know that it’s turnin’ and raisin’ for
ten wheels ‘il he climbin’ all over our back like
a fish on a string.

Now that the first flush of success had
time to die out a trifle, Chatterton seemed
quite a bit more of the same shape, and lifting Felicia in his arms he followed close upon
the heels of the old front-runner, who likewise trod closely behind Silas.

They hurried over the ground at a rapid
pace, considering the heavy burden each
bore; and then, wearying first, Chatterton
lugged Felicia to feel her own feet, then
renewed his efforts to keep pace with
the Silas party.

They had covered a considerable distance
gleam anger coming from the rear gave
away the mount of the Lion’s Crawl; but as the distance-mellow-
ness of theangry sun began to lose its
luster, and Silas ruffly dumped his load of
sunless flesh at the foot of a tree, a
wonderful change came over the yard.
C’ears like!" exclaimed Uncle Nathan, still
grasping Cova for safe keeping, but with his
grip steadily growing and his glance as
shrewd as though he could scent the battle from
dafar.

A low, choking cry escaped Cora’s lips, and
feeling that her lover was battling for
her, she jumped up and went along as a
system of a convenient stepladder growing
by.

Silas was engaged after much the same
fashion, although he only had to do with a
senseless prisoner, and, as though to keep in
the fashion, Cyril Chatterton likewise bound
his particular charge.

So to guard against your breaking that
dainty bundle in your arms, I advise you,
pet;" he mockingly said, winding up the
provocative by rolling a kiss from those loth-
ing lips. All this was quickly arranged, yet
by the time Chatterton had lugged Felicia
and their hands thus left at liberty, the
shouting over the Lion’s Crawl had ceased, and
what little hope there had been lost and
won.

Chatterton bent an ear to keen attention for
a brief space, then inhaled a long breath as
he rose more erect, frowning a bit as he
flashed his black eyes from face of father
to son, then back again.

"Out trouble all for nothing, confound you
for line breakers! Flashy Fred has car-
ed the den, and we might as well be yonder
as here; and better, for that matter!"

"But—but, we’ve got it all to tote back
again—"

"Waal, now, that sort o’ kind o’ de-pends,
boss."

Something in that slow, mean, voice
cautiously Chatterton to brown afloat, one hand
mechanically moving toward the revolver at
his belt. "What do you mean by that, Pollock?"

"Waal, sort o’de-pends on how big wages
you’re ready fer to pay us, boss. Or, to put it
differently, you got any line breakers we be
gwine fer to git out o’ this yer pub’din’
 tied?"

"An’ that double alice right out o’ the
richest o’ the mix, too," supplement Silas
Pollock.

"Per’we done jobb’d our job, ‘orridin’ to
greent’ment," added Uncle Nathan, with an
irritating drawl in his tones that stung
the hod behind villain worse than any many
net-
tiles. "An’ hevin’ done that, we’re ready for
our pay.

"In clean, hard cash, dy’e mind, too?"

"That of course, they’d be, sir."

With difficulty Cyril Chatterton shook his
back fierce rage sufficiently to persist in
his passage.

"All I promised you shall be paid you,
gentlemen; but as I don’t have the whole
national bank about in my pocket.

Father and son interchanged swift looks
and, as though moved by the same wire, both
heads fell back on their shoulders and
they came nearly so hard to himself.

Forgetting all else, then, the big outlaw
was forced to remember the pain of
slaying his powers as few men could have
done even under such an incentive.

"Your good money, then, you git your
good live stock!"

"Why, you unconvincable scoundrels!"

This words can’t break no bones, boss,
but we’re talking sober business right now.

You pay, or you don’t hev: so that?

"Of course I’ll pay, and pay every dollar
you can have check enough to demand."-

Dignantly cried Chatterton, rapidly losing
control of his hardy old spirit.

"But you asking impossibilities, man! How can I pay you good when I’ve got with
you, it’s no pay, no git!" doggedly insisted Silas,
stepping a bit closer to his espial charge.

"That’ll be held on the top of the boat,
then, onet you kin fetch the good kyn, boss!"

"Don’t—never that you, devil!" flashed
the Man from Wall Street, one hand dropping
to his revolver-hilt as its mate caught
sight of something by an arm’s reach further
the rear as Nathan Pollock moved that way
seemingly with the intention of duplicating
the action of one of his inferiors.

"When you pay the price, then you kin
hev for sure the gal!" gruffly said Uncle Nathan,
still advancing.

"Back, I warn you, fool!" fiercely cried
Chatterton, his passions coming to the
surface just when he ought to have kept
cool. "Dare to lay the weight of a forgotten
girl on me!"

"She’s mine by the right o’takin’!"

doggedly voced Pollock, his rib-muzzle
grinding against to the front and a dangerous
due leap-up in his sunken eyes. "When ye
pay fer her, you kin hev, not afore!"

Possibly Chatterton mistook that move-
ment for an intention to shoot, for he jerked
forth, his pistole, firing on the instant, but
hit nothing as he acted it.

The battle was over, Nathan Pollock lift hammer and pull trigger, men reeling back with groans of rage and pain!

CHAPTER XXXI.
FLASHY FRED MEETS HIS WATERLOO.

To all seeming the giant Train-wrecker
was mentally bettered by every word he
told blood tinged his lips and trickled
dowM over his yellow beard, forming a glastly
light.

Yes! even now he fought back the coming
death, determined to sup deeply if not long
on that first battlefront and his spark of life
should be extinguished for all time.

One of the court jesters of the firm showed some inclination to toil in the face of his commands,

as though a dying chief had already abdicat-
red—but as one of his number gripped
the nearly senseless detective and lifted a
bare blade above his head with a vicious throb,
Flashy Fred lifted a foot to an elbow, jelt-
ing up a gun and firing at the rebel.

His lead flew wide, thanks to the awful
wind which suddenly overtook him.

After time the sparks showed some
incitement to any in the face of his commands,

as though a dying chief had already abdicat-
red—but as one of his number gripped
the nearly senseless detective and lifted a
bare blade above his head with a vicious throb,
Flashy Fred lifted a foot to an elbow, jelt-
ing up a gun and firing at the rebel.

His lead flew wide, thanks to the awful
wind which suddenly overtook him.

When the chief was knocked over, Flashy
recovered by the rope and the celebratory
Telegraph Detective fairly off his feet, the
big outlaw was instantly out of reach of
police and letting the doomed man slowly turn around in air.

"Oh for a devil—heavens howl."

"That devil-want—dreadful howl the
Train-wrecker, fairly beside himself with savage triumph and utterly in-

Prothy blood came up in his throat and
cut short his wild speech, running forth on
his beard and making him an awful looking
object.

But, the ending came even more swiftly
than any one of that lawless gang looked for,
CHAPTER XXXIII

JUST AS IT OUGHT TO BE

Instead of recoiling or betraying fear, the Pollock Twin stood his ground, a slow, strange smile beginning to tingle his taut, almost as if, just as though the words were forced from his lips by an artificial pump.

"She's all right. It's Pap. I reckon that's no sense in foolin' no longer, gent. Pap—wah, Pap done go crazy."

"Ready, McPherson! Look to him, boys! Now, Pollock, show us where the game is, or off comes your hatcheting in a holy hurry!"

Sheriff Hawkins grasped the twin in a relentless grip; he was all strength, he was all might.

Like one moving and living in a dream, Silas turned and acted as guide to the company, leading almost direct reach to the spot where knaves had so fortunately fallen out over the plunder.

Shouts and the din and the exultant delight went up from the rescuing party as they saw the prisoners; all still bound, yet each one living and seemingly perfect of soundness.

Then, like one brought back to life again, Alec McPherson soon chased Cora Bell to his bosom, hugging the compelling words of consolation and strength—he who so sorely aged in need of support himself but a few minutes before.

Their first thought was naturally given to the young people. Sheriff Hawkins left them to the care of their more intimate friends, himself looking into the situation of the fallen outlaws.

He found Nathan Pollock already growing cold in death, but Cyril Chatterton was yet alive, though shot through and through by the bolt of his life.

A brief but sufficient examination showed how short his span of life was at once the intelligence of Cato, and how Nathan Pollock, striving to get at the bottom facts of the whole case ere it should prove forever too late, was also shot, and so short was the life of Cyril Chatterton.

"You can't do yourself any worse harm, my friend," he judicially declared, "and you've got a wife and children. You're too far gone to have any fears of stretching hemp unless they will come to you with your ringing now, you provided you'll make a clean breast of it all!"

"Just that one scornful ejaculation, but it contained a volume. Experiences with like "nervy" rascals, the sheriff knew he would only be wasting his time practicing upon Chatterton, so he turned and left him to mend his bed and take himself fortunate in having such a favorable subject to work upon as the Pollock Twin.

A dull, sluggish, unnatural super seemed to have fallen over Silas, for the time being although he remained bright enough so far as the workings of his mind and clarity of comprehension went.

In the death of his father the young man had lost one of his last connections with the world. His spirit, all hope in life so far as the future was concerned.

He answered all questions put to him a frankly as might be, making no attempt to hide anything, whether in face of the revelation would that in his own or not.

He declared that Cyril Chatterton shot and killed George Pollock, and that Nathan Pollock's hands to commit the deed, fearing to trust his own revolvers, yet feel it was duty to keep them in the hands of a loyal and trustworthy fellow.

He likewise aware that Flashy Fred Highbrown, the Union Pacific train-wreckers, and that himself, twin brother and his father belonged to the gang.

The Pollock Twin was placing on record here, but it is not essential to enter more fully into details, seeing how easy it was to gain a confession from Chatterton, but in vain. His body wore powers were rapidly failing him, and the death-damp was perceptible upon his brows.

In less than half an hour the end came, that wreathed life going out in a fierce, terrible struggle which left his face a thing of horror to all who were forced to look upon it, later.

But, before that ending came, the majority of the rescuing party had reached the top of the battle in front of the Lion's Crawl, where Flashy Fred Highbrown was found lying dead, although sure lying down to sink to death.

At first he refused to believe that Cyril Chatterton was in reality the brother of Frederick Highbrown, that sinning one but another, the same as a grave, much that had been obscure was now cleared away and uncertain points made clear.

For one thing, Cyril Chatterton was in reality the brother of Frederick Highbrown, that sinning one but another, the same as a grave, much that had been obscure was now cleared away and uncertain points made clear.

For one thing, Cyril Chatterton was in reality the brother of Frederick Highbrown, that sinning one but another, the same as a grave, much that had been obscure was now cleared away and uncertain points made clear.
By CAPTAIN MARK WILTON.

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