NEW YORK NAT’S
Three of a Kind;

NICK NORTON’S CLOSE CALL.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

THREE OF A KIND.

“Ah, Mr. Norton, we meet again; and in you I see myself, as it were.”

“You have made a mistake, sir. I do not know you.”

SEIZING THE STOUT WHIP, NEW YORK NAT BOLDLY ADVANCED UPON THE LION.
CHAPTER II.

NEW YORK NAT’S OATH.

When the youths had risen from the ground and looked about him, it was full a minute before he realized just what had happened. He passed his hand across his forehead and said:

"Is my name Nicholas Norton, and I am that which you appear not to be."

"What is that?"

"The two had met in the city of New York, and in Bryant Park."

They had, in fact, met in the same spot. There had been a great deal of excitement in the air, and the two had found themselves in the same place at the same time. The young man walked alone in an uncertain way, which showed that he had not fully recovered from the blow, and after a long walk came to a handsome brown-stone mansion up-town. He did not run, but let himself in with a key that he had found in the library, where he found the bachelor occupant of the house enjoying an afternoon cigar.

"Ah, New York Nat! Am glad to see you. I have important news for you. Have you been to dinner? I have just finished," said Sherman Canfield, who kept Bachelor’s Hall in the handsome home of a friend who was then in the West.

"Thank you, sir, I have dined, and I got my desert in Bryant Park—so!"

"How, you are a little rough and bruised, while your eyes are inflamed! It was a severe blow, Nat. How did you get it?"

"My Double, sir. It was a knock-down blow, straight from the shoulder, but I am sure the hand held some blunt and heavy instrument of force."

"I will ring for some water and arnica, and dress the wound, for there is a cut, too, I see. But, you say your Double gave it to you?"

Sherman Canfield rang the bell, and, when the servant answered, A gave an order for a bowl of warm water, a bottle of arnica and some plasters.

The thing was soon brought, and the face bathed and dressed. New York Nat then said:

"I thank you very much, Mr. Canfield, and now I will answer your question—yes, sir, my Double gave it to me."

"The student who was your counterpart, and whom you thought such a fine fellow?"

"To, sir, but one I took for Nick Norton, the Yale student, whom, until I run him down, I thought was a detective on my track."

"I found that Nick to be a fine fellow, who was shadowing me as he believed me to be one who had greatly wronged him."

"Yes, I recall that Nick Norton told me of his Double, and mine, too. I now recognize you as Nick Norton the Student; and I am a detective—"

He made the clap his pretext and took him by the shoulder.

"Yes, Mr. Canfield, that is it. Nick fitted the fellow out well from his own garments, an immense collection of articles of value, clothing, keepsakes, valuable pillow cases, oaths, stole his jewelry, money, books, and in fact all that would bring a price, sending all off to a distance and dispatching them."

"And so warned a snake to life to strike him?"

"It is just what he did, for his Double was the student. He cut up, first, all the students of, and thus more than redeemed his honor, for the Double had so artfully actually misstook him for me, and my own sister, the Mascot Queen of the Unknown Detectives, saw him and said that he had gone to prison, for, strange to all, we were dressed alike at the time he was in New York."

"That is remarkable, indeed. But, where did you see this other Double of yourself, Nat?"

"In Bryant Park, sir, and of course I at once to k him for Nick Norton the student, and so spoke to him."

"Did he not hesitate to address him?"

He did, indeed; for, though I am quick and not easily surprised, he saw that I knew him to be the Student, and, without denying my charge or arguing, he dealt me the blow that sent me down as though he had used a cannon."

"He is a dangerous fellow, as well as a bad one, I suspect."

"My Double, and he has made me revengeful. I shall hunt him down; I have solemnly sworn it. I will keep my oath, and sooner or later track my Double to prison, perhaps to the gallows, for he is one to stop at no crime."

New York Nat, the chief of the Unknown Boy Ferrets, in speech and manner, showed that he had registered his oath and was resolved to perform it.

The Student Canfield had a vengeanceful, as well as a tiresless tracker, on his track!

CHAPTER III.

UNDER SUSPICION.

When New York Nat left Sherman Canfield, he drew his slouch hat down well over his face, went to an Elevated Railway station and took a train for up-town.

He got off at a rapidly settled part of the city not far from the Hudson, and walked rapidly to a pretty little cottage, where he found the over-crowded arbor under which there was no immediate neighbor.

A pass-key let him in, and he went up to the second floor, where he entered a pretty little sitting-room, and a bedroom adjoining.

There was an upright piano in the sit-
New York Nat's Three of a Kind.

CHAPTER IV.

OLIVE'S SECRET MISSION.

While Olive was taking Nat's breakfast from the basket, and setting it out temptingly upon a table, he took the paper she had marked, and read aloud.

"A most daring robbery and murder were committed last night in Bryant Park, where hundreds of people were within call and the daring perpetrator of both made good his escape, though it is hoped he will quickly be captured.

"The victim of robbery was Mr. Edgar George, a wealthy merchant of Water street, who intended to make an extended trip to the West to purchase some lands, drew from the bank at three o'clock the large sum of six thousand dollars, and before he reached the other side, sealed the wall and leaped down into the overgrown grounds of a once garden.

"The vast, lofty and rambling old mansion was as dark and silent as one of the vaults near by, for it had a history of crimes in the past, and was said to be haunted by spirits so that not even a policeman invaded its silence and gloom.

"Going to a basement door Nat opened it with a key he had, and entered, and at once struck a match, perfectly sufficient to the sound of hurrying feet down from the floor above.

"He had just lighted a lantern left near the door when into the basement bounded a huge dog that at once changed his savage look into one of joy.

"Well, Old Guard, you are well named, for you are ever on duty," said Nat, and went on to the floor above and leisure to the third floor, where he entered a large room, where there were benches, arranged in a circle around a table, behind which there were a few chairs.

"Passing on through the large assembly-room, as it looked, New York Nat entered a small room where there was a hand table, book-case, desk and other furniture.

"Upon the wall hung several large maps of New York City and its suburbs, the districts, police-stations, streets, walls, etc., and useful guides to the metropolis. But Nat seemed tired, for he soon put out his lamp, and retired.

"He had been dressed, when the dog gave a low growl and started down to the basement.

"Oh, Nat, you look like a wrench, and you have a pair of black eyes that are a wonder; but have you ever seen the sun come up on the "blow"?

"No, no, so far, though it is sure, of course, yet my appetite is not affected—any news?"

"I have brought you all of the papers, and there is news.

"What is it, sis?"

"Either you have committed murder, or your Double has."

"Oh, sis."

"I mean it, for here is an article that fits you exactly, of a youth who robbed a gentleman in Bryant Park last night, was surprised and held by a policeman, whom he killed by a knife thrust and escaped.

"See, the description given by the gentleman is exactly the same as that which I saw yesterday, and there are a number of others who saw you, or your Double, and search is being made for him, and the whole detective and police force.

"Well, I am decidedly under suspicion, and when next I go out I must be wholly disguised.

"It was that Double of mine and Student Norton's that held it, and I am only afraid the police will find him," said New York Nat.

CHAPTER V.

A DANGEROUS RESEMBLANCE.

Nice Norton was not a popular student in college, and deservedly so, for he was a handsome, dashling, noble-heart-
ed fellow, ever ready with aid for one in distress, and a keen ideal of young man-

The student all remembered how he had been delayed by one whom he respected, simply because he met him and recognized in him his Double, poor boy though he was.

They allowed him a generous income, and his rooms in college were handsomely fur-nished, and he lived well.

Seated in his rooms after lunch, he was engrossed in smoking his pipe and studying, when a messenger-boy came with a note for him.

A lady to see me at the hotel—well, I will run over and see who she is," he said, glancing at a card upon which was a name, and a prompt note to call at once upon a matter of importance.

He was ushered into a private parlor, and saw a lady dressed in black, with gray hair, spectacles, and a vail half hiding her face.

"Mrs. Chandler, I believe?" he said politely.

"Yes, Mr. Norton, sit down, for I have some especially to see you; but I see that you do not recognize me as one you meet at the F— Hotel, New York, when you were tracking, as you supposed, one who was your Double, whom you believed to be one who had wronged you greatly."

"Ah, yes, Mrs. Chandler, I recognize you now," he answered, wondering where he had heard the name before.

"My Double proved to me a Treble, and the one I was searching for."

"Yes, sir, and as you then learned, he was doing Secret Service work, though not under the control of the police."

"I am writing upon a murder case in the hotel when he came upon you, his Double, and now I come from him to tell you aloud what he had told me, and you may get into trouble through an act of his."

"Indeed! It will not be the first time.

"It has been done before, and where is he that can place his hands upon him?"

"Read this, please," and the disguised Mascot Queen handed the Herald to the young student with the notice of the robbery of Mr. Edgar George and killing of Police Officer Mike Dennis.

The student read the article to the end and then said:

"This is terrible! Mrs. Chandler, but a blind man could see, complimentary though the description is, that it appears to be of me."

"Yes, sir, and it is a dangerous resemblance, and under some circumstances might puzzle many."

"Now the one I come from, your Double Number Two, wishes me to tell you of his meeting with a female in Brooklyn, and mistaking him for you, and Olive told of the meeting of the two in Bryant Park, and the stunning blow which he told the lady that he was either student Nick Norton or the fugitive crook.

That is my Double, I'll wager a thousand on it, was the quickest man to strike a blow I ever saw, and, a hard hitter."

"When he found that he was suspected, he at once sought to save himself, and did."

"Then, soon after, he robbed Mr. George, whom he was pleasantly lying in wait for, having found out who he was and where he lived."

"Yes, and it was just like him to knife the officer to escape."

"Yes, that nameake and Double was born for the job. Olive is his Double and yours, and in the end he will run to earth."

"Now, as Norton, your honest Double, is the one suspected in the New York robbery, the purest batch of murdering men must keep in hiding, and should the detectives get on to his trail, at the hotel where you stopped, and they may do so, you can, of course, prove an alibi."

"Oh, yes, I was at a dinner last evening with friends."

"Well, should they come to see you, merely prove an alibi, and say as little as possible, about your story of putting them on his track, and nothing about Norton."

"Certainly, I will do as you wish, Mrs. Chandler, and as the one you come from sug-gests."

"I will leave the running down of the man whom I so recently recognized as one you met at the F— Hotel, New York, when you were tracking, as you supposed, one who was your Double, whom you believed to be one who had wronged you greatly."

"My Double was wont to carry a small ball of lead in his pocket, and he used it in giving a blow, and I know its force."

"He was caught at the trick here," said the student, and soon after he took his leave, still shading, Olive drove to the depot on her return.

"There are two New York detectives now, and they are whispering it about the hotel."

"I have seen two men hand from a New York train."

CHAPTER VI.

OFF THE SCENT.

It was last night when Olive camped Nat his supper, but she showed no fear of going alone into the grounds about the old man-sion, or in entering the "Haunted House itself."

New York Nat was patiently awaiting her coming and said quickly:

"You need not fear, my dear."

"Oh, yes, I went as Mrs. Chandler, and we had a long talk together, and he will have no trouble, Miss," said Olive.

"Good! that settles it as to the murder.

"You surely did not suspect that student, Nat?"

"Well, not exactly, and yet I wished to be sure of him to be certain of my other man."

"Well, he will give you all the aid in his power, will say nothing to the detectives more than he has to—"

"If they track him."

"They will, for I saw two of the chief's men get off the New York train which arrived just before the down train came in."

"That settles it, and they are already on his trail; but when they find they have the wrong man, their suspicions will return to me and I must look out, unless they get it from him, they will not know there are three of a kind."

"Very well, and they will be looking for you, the wrong one, while you will be on the track of the real murderer, and whom Student Norton says he is now convinced was born to be a Double, and to do the things he has done, and to give the officers an alibi, and did to their satisfac-tion, while he said pleasantiy, that he had no reason to rob a man of his money, as he would soon come into possession of a million only come early in the morning with the story of there being little news in those of the afternoon about the affair, and to-mor-row night you know, the clan of Ferretts coming to play."

"Well, then, I must put my trust in my Double, whom I find it very dangerous now to resemble."

Oliver took her departure, escorted to the basement door by Nat and the dog, and with not an atom of fear, left the grounds and re-turred to the cottage, and retained that she had done a very good day's work.

She was up early the next morning; Mrs. Herbert had Nat's breakfast ready, and so the two set out, the boy ferreting for the Detective, and she, with her knowledge, she made her way to the Boy Ferrets Retreat.

She was awaiting her, and seized the papers while she spread his breakfast out for him.

He glanced at the head-lines in the Herald and said:

"They have tracked Student Norton and been fooled."

"Now they have come back to me."

Then New York Nat calmly ate his breakfast, and then picked up the papers with the remark:

"Now, sis, we will see what they say."

And he began to read aloud as follows from the Herald:

"OFFICER DENNIS'S MURDERER!!

'A FALSE CLEW.'

'A DANGEROUS DOUBLE!'

'THE MURDERER AND ROBBER STILL AT LARGE.'

The detectives, police and reporters were working hard all day yesterday upon the murder case, but Police Officer Dennis lost his life and a citizen was robbed of a large sum of money, but without making headway.

"The mystery of the case, in fact, deepens, as there is another person brought into it, so as to be less a personage than a student of Yale."

"The description of the robber and murder-er met the eyes of the people of the F— Hotel, and they at once recognized it as an answer-ing to two of their guests, and telephoned for the chief to come up and see them upon the scene.

"He at once did so, and it seems that at the time of the murder, some months ago, in the F— Hotel, there were stopping there two persons who attracted considerable attention, from the fact that one was the perfect Double of Norton, and more, their handwriting on the register was similar, while, strange to state, each bore the name of Norton."

"One registered from New Haven, the other from Connecticut, and the clerk had considerable sport in getting them mixed."

"One was a student at Yale, he said, the other was then with his step-mother, as he said, a Mrs. Olivia Chandler."

"Whether they met face to face the clerks did not know, but both left the hotel and were forgotten until the perfect description given by Mr. George of his assailant brought the Doubles to the mind of the clerks again."

The chief at once sent two of his best men up to New Haven, and Mr. Nick Norton was found studying hard in his pleasant rooms.

"He heard the story of the detective, laughingly said that he was sorry he resem-bled the murderer, spoke of having met Double at the hotel some months ago, but could give no further information on the sub-ject, although he would go to the office of the officers an alibi, and did to their satis-faction, while he said pleasantly, that he had no reason to rob a man of his money, as he would soon come into possession of a million.
or two and had a most generous income as it was.

Thus was this clue destroyed, and the detectives were very rapidly on the track of Mr. N. Norton's Double, who is without doubt the murderer, and of whom nothing can be learned.

"And nothing shall be, Olive, for they are working in the dark, while we know who the murderer is, and will find him," said Nat, as he finished reading the article.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNKNOWN CLAN.

When the rain set in, and the old mansion was even more gloomy than it was wont to be.

It was very dark, the rain fell in torrents, and the winds dashed mournfully about the building.

How the New York Nat sat in his room, the lamp lighted, and engaged in writing, he did not seem to even hear the elements without, or the cracking of the house, which would have caused many others to feel that the rookery was peopled with ghosts, was indeed haunted, and that spirits of those who had dwelt there in the far by-gone.

Suddenly the dog uttered a growl, and Nat looked up from his work.

"They are coming, Guard," he said.

"Go down and meet them," he said, and in a few minutes steps were heard ascending the stairs.

"Ah, sis, it is you, is it?"

"Our steps sounded as heavy as a man's.

"I have on my storm boots, Nat."

"No, no, supper, so get through with it before the boys come.

Nat at once sat down to dispose of the substantial supper brought him, while Olive, glancing at the clock, said:

"You'll soon be all right, brother."

"Yes, I think so; but, throw off your wraps.

She took off her waterproof and heavy over-shoes, and her face when unveiled was not unlike that of a closed-fitting flesh mask, for the Mascot Queen was unknown by sight to every one of the band, save her brother, if not Nat's, with whom she should not be, and this mystery hanging about the girl but increased her influence in the organization of Ferrets.

Soon the boys began to drop in, all sizes, ages and make-ups, from the bootblacker and mud-splattered to the more exalted youth who held a clerkship or other position.

They met in the assembly room, took seats, or sat on the floor, while Nat and Olive seated themselves in the chairs behind the table.

The boys cast off their storm coats, and appeared in costumes, from the ragged paper-seller to the young dude of Fifth Avenue, and vell they were a motley lot, but bright-faced, intelligent, daring fellows, ready to obey any order of their young chieftain, one and all of them pleased with the life of mystery that they led as Unknown Ferrets, an enigma to detectives and police, and rendering daily the most valuable information as Secret Service agents, that were in hiding themselves and hunted by the legitimate officers of the law.

Thus was the "Man Ally," Sherman Canfield, all their information was given to the Secret Service chief, and he was their go-between, and aided and abetted from the discovery until they saw fit to disclose themselves in their true fight.

The Ferrets, you know, for they ranged from twelve to twenty in years, all gazed with wonder at their young leader, "Captain Nat," as they called him.

They saw by his scared face and the disordered coloring of the eyes, that he had had a rough time of it, and they were all curiosity to know what it was.

He was their idol, and in him and his Mascot Queen, whom they did not even know was his sister, they had most implicit confidence.

He had formed their band out of a lot of young toughs, led them away from evil lives, to become honest protectors of the place, and through all he had never failed them, and always proven equal to the occasion.

They were living well, occupying some of their positions of trust, they knew that their treasury was safe, and that the chief of the Secret Service held for them, payable on demand, rewards they had earned, and that he was accounting to the men, and also they knew that as yet he did not know to whom he had to pay it.

The Ferrets were therefore content with life, and working like beavers all the time.

Now, seeing that their chief was in trouble, they were anxious to know what had happened, and in dead silence awaited his hour to speak.

He soon did, telling them the story unreservedly, for he trusted them wholly, and there had never been but one traitor in the Ferret Clan, and this traitor had very quickly gotten rid of in a way that prevented his doing them harm.

"You have but to hunt for me, as it were, as you know me in my every-day dress—my uniform as it were—then will I at once go into disguise, having no desire to be picked up and in the end hanged by mistake, as the murderer.

"Find the fellow if you can, boys, and look for him under various disguises, too.

"The chief, of police, has offered a liberal reward, so it will add to our bank account if we catch him, and we must, for I have taken an oath to run him down.

So said Nat, and the clan of Ferrets hearing what was expected of them departed, Nat putting on his storm coat and escorting Olive home, after which he returned to his sleepy abode and soon fell into sleep by the howling winds.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DOUBLE OF TWO.

When the youth who had so quickly fell New York Nat, at seeing that he was suspected by the young Ferret, fled from the scene, he quickly sought safety by a turn around the Reservoir Square, and was soon back again in the Park.

He seemed to have a purpose there, and appeared glad that Nat had made no fuss over the assault upon him.

"He must come this way, for he lives over yonder, and is now in that hotel," he muttered to himself.

"If he does not, I am out a very snug sum of money, that will help me amazingly in the game I am determined to play to an end."

He walked about the Park until he saw some one approaching, and when he appeared to recognize, for he said quickly:

"There he is, and now comes my chance, for I see no other way."

"It is a daring move, but boldness wins every time."

Quickly he slipped up behind his victim, for such he was, and struck the blow that felled him to his knees, dealing a second one quickly when he had been needed.

The result the reader knows, that he robbed his half-stunned victim, darted into the arms of a policeman, and, failing to escape by his quickly-told tale, struck the fatal blow with his knife that gave him his freedom, but with a crime upon his heart of murder that dwarfed the one of robbery.

He was dragged to the Bowery, and, entering a small hotel, ascended to a room on the second floor, which he entered hastily.

A window was sealed with a strong iron, and one who looked down in the world, but whose appearance indicated that he had seen better days.

"Come, Brad, I'm in funds, and we must get out of this quick."

"Get a cart, and leave cash, so go down and square our bill and order a horse."

"A horse?" gasped the man.

"Bah! you don't understand the western lingo for a vehicle."

"Get a luck, then, though a horse will be needed for some one I have seen lately, and the youth gave vent to a bitter laugh.

Then he handed the man a bill he took from his pocket and started him from the room.

When his companion had left he took from his pocket a large leather wallet and opening it:

"Well, it was time I got this, for I was down to thirty dollars—let me see what is in it."

He took a roll of bank notes and as nearly as I could see, in the banks where he drew it, it ran up among the thousands, and he began to look over the money in wonder and delight.

Suddenly he gave a whistle and said:

"I am in luck for it runs up to seven thousand dollars, and particularly it had been repaired—I will wear it," and he put a diamond ring on the little finger of his left hand, which had been amputated, for it shall have been repaired.

Suddenly he started, and said:

"This won't do, for Brad will soon be busy and I must change my plan, for if a leopard cannot; or in other words rig up, for I'll have the whole police force looking soon for a handsome, well-dressed young fellow who has turned foot-patrol and murdered."

"Let me see just what I'll make of myself—yes, a student."

He stepped to a small trunk, unlocked it and took out a suit wholly different from the one he had worn, a wig of curling blonde hair, a pair of spectacles, high standing collar and red cravat, and high hat. He immersed in each change his plumpener, which gave his face a full appearance, and putting on the wig was soon riggled out and so completely disguised that with all his money at stake, he would never have suspected him of being the same person.

He certainly was an adept in disguise, and when his companion came in he started as seeing he supposed, a stranger.

"Don't get scared, Brad, for it is yours truly: but I find I am the Double of Two, and, as they may get into mischief I might have to suffer for it, so I change my looks—would you know me?"

"Never, Norton!"

"Well, I'll change you when we get to work, for you must get rid of that hang-dog look of yours.

"I have struck it rich, and what is mine is yours, so brace up, and there is before us a fortune, and a life of luxury, he sprang with all his money at stake, and I never forget you for it.

"Luck has been down on you of late, as it is on me, and I have done some queer things to keep life in your own way."

"But the tide is turning, and I am in funds, and we'll get along all right; but first, we must find a safe hiding place," he said.

"What have you done?"
New York Nat's Three of a Kind.

"Now I took you up to look over the hill, and you loved it; and I think my plot was possible with boldness and nerve could be carried to success."

"Now it is time to do the work up to a certain point, and I will carry out the balance, and you bet I will do it well."

"For a year and one and a half not so long, we will have to live on a fairly small income; and then will come a fortune which you shall benefit by as a trust fund to your education."

"I have the funds here to push our plot to success, and the result is well worth the amount we will have to invest."

"You know now just how matters stand, so what do you say?"

"I still hesitate."

"Why?"

"Well, one does not want more on his conscience than it will bear."

"You have one life on your conscience now, so what matters anymore."

"It was the last straw that broke the camel's back, Norton."

"Oh, yes, but you surely have not your load of sin yet."

"Why, young as I am I have to go first to answer for you than have."

"Why take the guilt on yourself?"

"Dead men tell no tales."

"But they haunt you?"

"I do not believe you."

"I would give much to recall my guilty act."

"Well, if you talk that way, if you are going to preach, we might as well part good friends, and I'll find some one else to help me; but I have a brother, friend, father and tutor to me, and I owe you a debt of gratitude I can never repay."

"Cut away from me you will go to the dogs, for somehow you are like a child, and honest and heart in spirit of yours."

"Come, Brad, brace up, for we must not part when so little stands between us."

"So little you say, and yet it is a human life."

"Yet thousands the every day."

"All right, Norton, I do not wish to part with you, for, in spite of all, I am very fond of you."

"As you say, I feel my helplessness, when alone, and had I not met you I would have confessed all and taken the consequences."

"Now I feel safe, for I am going to live as it comes, the bitter with the sweet."

"You are a wonder to me."

"A wonder to me."

"Yes, for you are so young in years."

"I'll finish it for you, and steeped in crime."

"Yes, I have lived several lives, and expect to yet, before I am hanged."

"You were not my fault, for I was made bad in childhood and then sent into the world to live by my wits, and they have been sharp enough so far to take pretty good care of me."

"You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, and were cheated out of your inheritance, you tell me."

"Because you avenged yourself upon the one who wronged you, you are dodging the galloways."

"Yet I know that you have a great big heart, for you saved my life at the risk of your own, and when I found that you were poor and I had some cash, we became sharers of my funds."

"You told me your story, and I have told you enough of mine to prove to me that the wrong gives me living, and I am going to have it."

"Now we are playing a game that puts the man against the woman, and we cannot keep us but a year or so, and I am plotting to live in luxury until we die a natural death, or a violent death."

The man shuddered and the youth laughed and then resumed:

"He had an idea who his visitor was, as he sent for him, as had a former one, and went willingly, though he had become bored to death receiving detectives and reporters, who, he supposed, were sent to get a story from him that would enable them to track his crook Double down."

"They were all particularly energetic in the search, as they wished to earn the very liberal rewards offered for the capture of the robber and murderer."

The police authorities had offered a couple of thousand dollars for the murderer of Offendor, and the old baron had said that he would give a thousand more, and Mr. Edgar George had asserted that he would not allow the man who ran down the one who ran down his assistant, for he had not lost a large sum in money, but a most valuable ring, an heirloom in the family, and important papers that had not been seen by visitors."

With such incentives, Nick Norton, the Double of the fugitive murderer and robber, had been waited for nightly by visitors. But when the messenger told him that an old gentleman at the hotel wished to see him, Nick Norton said, "Bring him up shown up to the room of 'Mr. Chandler.'"

He saw a saw-a-looking, elderly gentleman who might be a good business man, a little bent in form, somewhat round-shouldered, and carrying a gold-head ed cane.

"Mr. Nick Norton, I presume?" he said politely, when the door closed upon the servant who had ushered him into the room.

"Yes, sir."

"I am Mr. Chandler, as you see, but in reality your Double, Nat Norton, using this disguise as it is dangerous to appear as my natural self with the officers of the law upon my truck."

"I am glad indeed to meet you, sir, for we can talk over this strange affair and try to plan some way to entrap this Double of ours, for it seems to me he is as much like you as me."

"He is, and his resemblance to you caused me to address him for you, as Mrs. Chandler informed you when you were here."

"Is it not strange, Mr. Norton, if Mrs. Chandler, whom I saw here, was really an elderly lady?"

"Oh, no, a young girl detective."

"Her disguise was remarkable, as yours is, for you are young to be my Double."

"She was often described to me in Secret Service work, so we have to be thorough."

"But let us discuss the whole story of our Double, so I can get upon his track."

"The police and detectives are out after him, ordered by the reward."

"Yes, but I have faith in his cleverness to remain hidden from ordinary search."

"Cleverness! Indeed he is cleverness itself."

"Why, the fellow is a perfect wonder."

"Tell me what you know of him."

"Much, and yet after all, but little."

"Who is he?"

"I do not know."

"Is Nick Norton his name?"

"At first I thought it was, for he so promptly said, when I had met me: 'Why my name is Nick Norton, too.'"

"You do not think so now?"

"No, for I regard him as a most clever fraud."

"I took to him at once thinking of looking like my twin brother, and he was sharp enough to play it for all it was worth."

"He played the innocent kid, told me he had no parents, that they had died when he was a mere child, and the cruel people he had been left to had made him a slave."

"So he had run off and gone to sea, and so had roamed about, studying hard and trying to get an education."

"He had worked hard and saved up his money, and then had robbed of all."

"I at once took to him, fitted him out, and adopted him as a brother and paid his way in college, allowing him spending money from my income."

"He paid me back by robbing me and our fellow students and skipping away with the money and his education."

"I was not the wronged one, but he was so deep that when I catch him I will show him no mercy."

"Now tell me of his peculiarities, his expressions and all else you remember."

"Well, he was very fond of diamonds and flashy watch-chains, while he parted his hair in the middle."

"He was an athlete of the best kind, and in fact was very good in many ways that I never knew and forgotten, that I see him in dreams."

"As I have been," said New York Nat with a smile.
"You?"
"Yes, for I have had a strange, wandering life, and not been a sailor and a circus boy; in fact I still keep up my practice of circus tricks."
"I believe that they don't catch you and hang you for our Double."
"That is just what I will look out for; but what about our Double?"
"He knew as many tricks as a juggler, and could change his name wonderfully and his facial expressions also; in fact he was a born actor."
"Well, I am glad to get all this information of him for it will help me in my work."
"See, here you notice the result still of the blow he gave me."
"He is a wonderfully hard hitter and quick as a flash."
"If he got all the money the papers say from the gentleman he robbed, he will be a hard one to catch, and he will be."
"I am more than interested in his case, as he is my Double, and I have taken oath to capture him, and will."
"I hope so, and remember, I will aid you all I can, as the work by work and country."
"Now, I'll go and fetch some of his photographs that I have, and a few other things, and see if you will accompany me to my rooms?"
"I will go with you, but old men walk slowly, so said Nat, carrying out his being under false colors, and he accompanied the student to his rooms, and it was a couple of hours before he left New Haven on his return to New York, well satisfied with his visit to his own and the crook's Double.

CHAPTER XI.

NEW YORK NAT'S PERRETS SET TO WORK IN EARNEST TO HUNT DOWN THE SLAYER OF OFFICER DORMAN.

They were most anxious to do so from a spirit of revenge for the blow he had given their young captain.

They had realized fully that Nat was compromised by being tie counterpart of the murderer in appearance, and dared not appear upon the streets as his natural self.

They had in view one to track down who strengthened against his captors, was the hermaphrodite of a second self, and they set to work with this aim to view.

Then, too, the murder, the fact that he was a handsome young fellow resembling Nat, was all that the Unknown Boy Ferrets had to go on.

But, this was more than some clues they had to go upon, and had won success in the end.

As Nat's face kept him confined to his spookly quarters, Oliver also decided to take the trail, and she did so.

The first one she went to see was Mr. Edgar George, and she professed to be looking for an erring brother whom the description he had given of his assailant resembled.

In this way, by clever questioning, she got from him that he had first observed the youth in the bank, then on a car coming up-town, and that he was with a sober-faced man dressed in black, who had gotten off at Houston street and started toward the Bowery.

He had met the youth again further up-town in a hotel, and then had not seen him again until the assault.

The man had gotten off the car at Houston street and put a notice toward the Bowery.

"Now to track that man," said Oliver, after leaving Mr. George, and she went at once to the working place of several of the Ferrets and put them on that trail.

The next day they came to the hotel, where, as "Mrs. Chandler," she had gotten a room, and reported to her, she receiving them in their breakfast dress.

Fip was the first reported, and he said he had "done" the Bowery thoroughly, but that he could never find any clue to the robber and murderer.

It was ten o'clock when my first caller came, and I soon found from him a description of the prisoner that would fit any of them, unable to make them show them up, while I could see that the hotel people were not pleased that I advertised from their house.

"I quickly recognized the frauds, looking only for the reward, and picked out those who thought they could tell me about two fakes they had that were the men I wanted."

At last, at four o'clock, I sent word to the office to admit no one else, for I had found my man.

I imagined I could hear the sigh of relief the clerk gave.

"The man in question, strange to say, was a relative of Oliver's, and ws murdered, and he had once been a coachman in the family of Mr. George."

"What a coincidence, sir?"

"It was indeed."

"But to your story."

Dennis Ferrett is his name, told me he had just driven a party down to a European steamer, and was returning by train, when he was held up by the Bowery, and knocked down by a man dressed in black.

He had gone to the hotel in the Bowery, and from there had taken the same man and a youth.

"Did he describe the latter, sir?"

"Yes, but the description did not fit our man."

"He may have disguised himself."

"And doubtless did."

"He drove them to the Astor House, and they had with them a trunk and couple of grips, but stopped on the way down at a clothing store and made some purchases."

That looks suspicious.

"And he left them at the Astor House?"

"He was told to wait, and after while they came out and were driven up-town to the Plaza Hotel."

"With their baggage?"

"Yes, without it."

"And then?"

"He left them there, the young man paying liberally."

"Well, we must begin search from there."

"No, for there is another coincidence, as the same huckster being at the City Hall stand the next morning, was approached by one who looked familiar, and told to drive over to the Astor House."

"Soon the man came out with the same youth, the huckster is certain, though he had changed his clothes and appearance.

"The older of the two had also changed his clothes, put on spectacles, and seemed anxious to appear a different person from what he had been the evening before.

"The clerk that had recognized him, the huckster did not show that he knew them, or thought that he did, and this time they had the same trunk and grips, but another trunk, a new one, as well."

"He took all with him and was told to drive to a family hotel driven off by the Bowery.

"This he did and was again paid liberally."

"Oh, yes, crooks pay liberally always with other people's money," said Nat.

"There he left them, and he thinks they are still there, as he saw the elderly man.
New York Nat's Three of a Kind.

CHAPTER XIV.

STEP BY STEP.

New York Nat retired to his dreary quarters for the night. The finality of Sherman Canfield's invitation to remain there, as he wished to see Olive early in the morning.

He was greatly surprised to find the cottage door open, and Olive had been there, but she had not told him what she had been doing. He was therefore masters of the situation, and had the opportunity to get a glimpse of the man and what he was doing.

He heard a noise in the bedroom, and went to investigate. He found Olive sitting up in bed, reading a book. She was not thinking of anything in particular, but was engrossed in what she was reading.

"I am trying to understand the situation," she said, as she looked up from the book. "What do you think about it?"

"I think it is a matter of time before we find out," said Mr. Canfield. "We have been working on this case for a long time, and we have made some headway."

Olive nodded her head. "Yes, I know. But I still don't understand why this man is doing this."

"It is a mystery," said Mr. Canfield. "But we will find out. We have a good team working on this case."

Olive smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Canfield. I know you will do your best to find out what is going on."

"Of course," said Mr. Canfield. "We will not rest until we have the truth."
though he could not understand my reason for secrecy.

And so I left him, Nat, and I see no reason now myself to doubt that you have been shadowing the right man.

"Yes, sir," was the driver's reply.

"But now must I go and find out at the City Hall to whom a license was granted for a cab, and find the name of the owner, or driver."

"Yes, that will be the first thing to do, and if you can find out anything about the young Ferret at once started upon his errand to the City Hall.

It did not take him very long in that well-regulated establishment to find out who owned Hack Thirteen, and Nat at once went to the address.

"I'm in luck," he muttered, as the owner told him his driver was then in the house at dinner, having just come in to feed his horses.

The driver was a red-faced son of Erin, and looked a little anxious when questioned about his fares of the evening before, which convinced Nat that he had been in some work he would like to have kept hidden.

So the driver was asked:

"Come, my man, I know all about your movements, and I expect you to tell me the truth.

"Refuse and you will get into trouble, but answer my questions and you can earn a wire from the Taxing Office for yourself."

"I'll do it, sir."

"Where did you drive two men, a man of means, and drop them off outside her house, and then took out her baggage from the Hotel S— last night?"

The man drew a sigh of relief and proceeded:

"The oldest of the two picked me up on Broadway, sir, and I drove him to Hotel S—, where he got the youth and their baggage back.

"The younger man told me to drive directly to Madison Square, and I handed him the money I had paid him, well, half another back, and they drove away in that one, but where I do not know."

CHAPTER XV.
THE UNTWISTED SHADOWER.

Nat's hopes had brightened when he heard this, and he figured they fell below zero when the man told him that the two men had left his hack for another one there, and he did not know where they had gone.

I am shadowing a very clever crook," he muttered to his partner, who knows how to cover up his tracks well.

"The two evidently saw that advertisement, and recognizing that they were the ones wanted, lost no time in getting away.

"But, I fear they have left the city, and if so, it will be no easy task to track them.

"Ah! I had nearly forgotten the map found in this room with the blue pencil marks upon it, and the notes.

"That means that they have gone there, as they were clever enough to have that map marked to throw persons off the scent.

"They had barely left, and he left the paper with the figuring on it, and the elastic, and they were thoroughly proofed of their identity to have been left save by accident."

So nursed Nat for a minute or more, after hearing the story, he went and considered the number of the hack you transferred those men to?

"No, sir."

"Do you know the man who drove it?"

"Well, I can't say that I do and I don't."

"What do you mean?"

"I have seen him often and we nod to each other."

"What is his stand?"

"I've seen him oftentimes on Union Square when passing my hack, but I don't know much about him.

"Here, this in your pocket and drive me and if he is not on the stand question those there so that you will know who man you and tell you."

The man was delighted with his liberal fee, and Nat got into the hack, and not long after drove up at Union Square.

A look along the line of hacks showed that the one carrying his suspicious fare for was not there, so Nat's driver began to inquired and half a dozen different drivers said:

"It's Terry Cale.

"Yes, it's Terry Cale," answered the driver, remembering that he had once heard him called by that name.

"Where's his address, and what is his number?" asked Nat.

The men were all silent.

"They feared that their comrade had gotten into some trouble and they would not be the ones to give him away.

"So they lied without compunction and not one of them knew, he said, the address, or number of the hack, of Terry Cale.

"Terry Cale," Nat knew that was coming, so he decided to hide his time and find out in another way, and he was about to drive away from the stand when Terry Cale.

"He did not see the signaling of the drivers for him to go on his way, but Nat did and knowing the man, he having paid his driver liberally, at once hobbled forward with his gold-headed cane and called out:

"Quick, my man, drive me to the West Twenty-third street ferry.

"Glad to get more fare the man drove away, not understanding still the signals of his comrade.

When the hack drew up at the ferry Nat waited until the driver opened the door and said:

"Your name is Terry Cale?"

"Yes, sir, does your know me?"

"It seems so, you were hailed on Broadway last night by two men in hack Thirteen, and they were transferred with their baggage to your hack,"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did you drive those men?"

"Will, sir, they paid me well for my service, and says they was perfect gentlemen, but anxious to get away from the city, and so I didn't wish to cause 'em any trouble."

"You needn't mind if you drive above your fare by telling, and will get yourself into trouble by refusing."

"Oh, Len and I'll tell thin."

"Where did you take them?"

"Across the ferry."

"And then where?"

"I drove them to Newark, sir."

"Where did you leave them there?"

"At the depot, sir."

"At what time?"

"In time for the west-bound Express, sir, on the Pennsylvania road."

"What time was that?"

"It was nine o'clock, sir, when we reached Newark."

"And they paid you in a new crisp bill?"

"Yes, sir, do you know that?"

"Yes, and if you would like to exchange your crisp bill for good money let me have it."

The man quickly took out a new twenty-dollar bill, and Nat gave him other money for it.

Then he took the driver's number and address, gave him his promised fee, and left him, while he went to the Jersey Ferry and bought an excursion ticket to Newark.

Four hours later was again in his secret retreat, and when Olive came with his supper that night he said:

"So, I think I know just where to find my Double and his pal."

CHAPTER XVI.
A Mysterious Disappearance.

New York. Nat was up crowd in tracking a crook, and he went to work upon the information of the hackman as soon as he reached Newark.

He saw that the fugitives were very cunning in making their escape, as they had paid their fare in the hotel, and borrowed his hack, and therefore left no trace to the ordinary eye, by taking a hotel carriage.

This was the same hack in the street, and then had driven to Newark to take the train, thus as they believed, wholly thrown off pursuit when they did not even know that the one who drove them from the hotel on the Bowery would ever see the advertisement.

But Nat was up to all tricks and plans, and when he reached the depot at Newark he was not long in finding the porter who had handled their baggage, and this done he found out that they had purchased tickets to Philadelphia.

He at once returned to New York and dispatched two of his best Ferrets to Philadelphia, telling them that it was his opinion not the fugitives had left the hack in, but the Pennsylvania road to the Baltimore and Ohio.

This is judged would be their plan from the lines marked on the map he had found in their room.

"Telegram me to Freckles' care," he had said to Keno.

He ate the supper Olive had brought, and extended his home, to find, upon his return to the retreat, Freckles awaiting him in his room.

"Have a telegram for you, cap'n," said Freckles.

Nat took it quickly.

It was addressed to Mrs. Olivia Chambers, care of the town-stand where Freckles was then working.

"Tearing is open read:

Your friends left by six E. R. train on Baltimore and Ohio, taking tickets to Harper's Ferry.

"Await instructions at Continental Hotel here."

"Good! they are on the track they marked out to follow, and I will not be far behind them," said Nat, and seeing that it was past the hour he left the hotel in, and see Olive and then run down for a visit to Mr. Canfield.

This was hasted back, and telling Freckles to meet him with it at the midnight train for Philadelphia, and prepared to accompany him, Nat ran across to the cottage to say good-by to Olive, and, as was his custom, leave her in charge of the Ferret Band.

This done, he took the Elevated road down to the station nearest where Sherman Canfield lived, and found that gentleman just returned from the theater. Nat quickly told him of the discovery made, regarding the two whom he was shadowing, and advise:

"I have a disguise along better suited for my trip than this one and will take Keno along, sending Freckles back with any news I may get."

With a few more words of explanation, Nat and Mr. Canfield bade their farewells at the ferry in time to catch the Owl train for Philadelphia, and where he found Freckles awaiting him.

In the early gray of dawn they reached the Continental Hotel, Nat all muffled up, and the hack registered for both, and they went up to their room.

A note was left in Keno's box, telling him to come to Nat's room as soon as he was up, for a call was left at him at six.

Then Nat opened his grip and began to select another disguise than that of an old man.
He was soon riggled up in the dress of a countryman, a wig of red hair, long black coat, and a few minutes after six Keno and Flip put in an appearance in his room.

"They bought tickets for Harper's Ferry, and we are not very far behind them," Keno said.

So the party of four were to start for Harper's Ferry, Nat and Keno on the first train, Freckles and Flip to follow, and they were to be as strangers upon arrival there.

Harper's Ferry was reached late in the afternoon, and going to a hotel in the village, the two Ferrets began to make inquiries regarding the2

In small places strangers are noticed quickly, and Nat's Double and his pal were soon tracked to a stable where they hired a team to take them over the mountains to a village some twenty miles distant, and they had gone soon after their arrival in Harper's Ferry.

So Nat hired a team to drive him over the mountains, and Keno as the companion, while Flip was to remain at Harper's Ferry to interview the driver who had taken the fugitives a familiar way. In case they, Nat and Keno, should miss him on the road.

Freckles was to return to New York and reach the Percheron to the Percheron Band.

So Nat and Keno drove away a short while before sunset, and at midnight reached the little village where they hoped to find their game.

There was but one tavern in the place, and standing on the porch of the bar. There was a great blow of disappointment, for those who were to be just to themselves, and that was to go to bed, and that they did, hoping the morrow would bring them information.

But in this they were mistaken, for in the morning all their endeavors to hear of the fugitives were useless, as they seemed to have most mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER XVII.

A STRANGE PARTING.

New York Nat and his faithful comrade, Keno, were in the country near the little village, going miles and miles away in search of some clue to their lost game.

Of course they were too ashamed to let it be known what they were after, and only said they were supposed to expect to see some friends there who must have gone astray.

Mounted upon horses Nat went one way, Kenneth another, and they returned to the tavern to dinner.

In the afternoon they hired a boggie and pair of horses and kept on their search together.

It was just dark when they returned to the tavern, feeling very blue.

But there was nothing for them to do but wait until morning and then return to Harper's Ferry, where they hoped Flip could find some news of the fugitives.

It was just as they were retiring that a vehicle drove into the barn-yard, and Nat having a familiar voice ask if there were two young men there.

"It is Flip," he said, and in a few minutes Flip came to their room.

He was gladly welcomed, for it seemed an assured thing that he had news.

And he did, for he told his story.

That afternoon the driver had returned who had taken the fugitives on their way, and he reported that they had changed their plans and had gone on up toward a village in Pennsylvania.

They halted at night at a small place to resume their journey the next morning, and had met on the way a mountaineer driving a team and accompanied by one horse.

After some talk with him apart, the elder of the two men had engaged him, the driver from Harper's Ferry, to take him to the nearest station on the Western Maryland Railroad, while the young man had gotten in with the mountaineers, and driven further on to the mountains.

The latter had also taken the baggage of the two men.

After leaving his man at the station on the Western Maryland, the driver had returned to Harper's Ferry, and had been well paid for his services.

Flip, you are a dandy, for we had lost the trail.

"We dismissed our man upon arrival here, and you had better let your driver go back the first thing tomorrow morning, for we can get conveyances here," said Nat.

"All right; but I brought a double rig in case you had let your man go and wish to return to Harper's Ferry.

"Your man got back before I left, of course, for I only got the news late this afternoon, and then I came after you with all haste."

"I don't exactly understand their separating; but my Double is the one we are particularly after, and we must find out where he went.

"Did the driver tell you where they parted, and to what station he took the other fugitive?"

"You bet, Cap'n Nat, I got all that down fine.

"He says the country is very wild up that way, and very thinly settled, while some of the people are a tough set, and the man voted for your Double went off with looked like a tough one."

"All right, we'll get a rig here and go on the track of any Double that is there, and you can go with us to some village where you can get a conveyance to the railroad station where the other went, as he must be tracked also.

"Now, let us get what sleep we can, for you bet there is work for us to do in running down those two cunning foxes."

The next morning after an early break fast, the three young Ferrets started out with a driver for the same place which Flip described as the place where their two friends, as they called them, had parted company.

It was afternoon when they reached there, the driver finding the spot from Flip's description, and a wild place it was, with not a habitation near.

But there were the tracks of the buckboard, coming down an obscure mountain road, and turning then to go back.

There also were the tracks of the Harper's Ferry vehicle taking another fork off to the Western Maryland Station, as the driver said.

"Where does this road lead, driver?" asked Nat, referring to the one taken by the buckboard.

"I don't know, except that it goes up into the mountains where I don't much care to go."

"Well, I guess we can find shelter at some house there, and enjoy good hunting and fishing, for we are students out on a lark.

I am sorry our pard here is not able to go with us, but he sprained his ankle and must go home," and Nat referred to Flip who had been playing lame all day, to get an excuse to leave the others and go on the chase of the man who had gone to the station on the Western Maryland Road.

A bargain was made with the driver to take Flip to the station and as the vehicle rolled away Nat and Keno, slogging their grips upon a pole between them, started off on the mountain trail which the young murrider of officer Dennis had taken.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NICK NORTON'S ROMANCE.

STUDENT NICK NORTON sat in his pleasant rooms studying his lessons, and smoking his pipe for solace, when a knock came at his door and he impatiently gave a summons to come in. He did not like to be interrupted in his study hours.

His fellow students knew that he had rules as to his study hours, and never went near him then, and he was surprised at a call.

But he was always polite, and looked up to greet the one who entered.

To his surprise he saw not a fellow student, but an elderly man enter.

"Is this Mr. Nicholas Norton—in fact I am sure that it is from the startling resemblance to one who may be said to be your Double?" said the stranger.

"Yes, sir. I am Nicholas Norton, and who may I ask you are?"

"Henry Clyde is my name, sir, and I am here to see you upon a matter of great importance."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are welcomed, Mr. Clyde."

"Thank you.

"The man slipped into a chair and then said, as he glaced toward the open door of his room--"

"Is any one in there?"

"No, sir."

"I do not wish to be interrupted in what I have to say to you."

"I am all alone."

"No, no one can hear?"

"No, the walls are thick and have no ear."

"May I ask you to lock the door?"

"Nick Norton arose, turned the key, but when he again sat down it was at his table, the door of which was partly open, revealing a revolver within.

The young student did not like the behavior of his visitor, and was well aware that he was reported to always be well supplied with money.

But, sir, take my seat there, for you will find it more comfortable, and tell me why I am honored by this visit from a stranger.

"You have a Double and a namesake," said the man abruptly.

"Well, yes, a fellow claiming to bear my name, and who most closely resembles me in all but one thing."

"What is that?"

"Character."

"Ah!"

"He has none, is a bankrupt as far as honor is concerned."

"He has lately been suspected of a double crime in New York."

"I fear not; I fear that another has been suspected who is innocent, he being the guilty one."

"You were suspected?"

"Oh yes, but it amounted to little, as I proved a double."

"But what of this fellow?"

"You would know him if you saw him?"

"Would I know myself in a mirror?"

"Doublets."

"Well, what of him?"

"You do not like him,"

"No, I hate him."

"He has wronged you?"

"In a score of ways."

"Defrauded you of money?"

"Don't speak of the few thousands he defrauded me of, for I cared little for that."

"May I ask how he otherwise wronged you than by fraud?"

"First tell me what you know of him, and what is to you?"

"I'll make my confession later."

"I am here to help you."

"You know where he is?"

"I can take you to him."

"And will?"

"Yes, when I have heard your story."
"Mine is soon told—he defrauded one who befriended him, took him from a life of poverty and restored him to a brother. But that I do not care for in comparison to his having more deeply wronged me."

"In what was your brother, though I have not spoken of it to any one?"

"I will not betray your confidence."

And, with such silence, Nick Norton said in a low, earnest tone, and his face had become pale as he spoke.

"And the boy in me is in years, I am a man in feeling, and I fell in love two years ago with a beautiful young girl dwelling in the Adirondack hills."

"I went up there hunting, was accidentally shot by a comrade, and they carried me to her father's house, he being a farmer there."

"The daughter was my most devoted nurse for weeks, and I learned to love her devotedly, she being only a few months my junior in years."

"Her father had had her fairly well educated, and young as she was, she was the teacher of the country school near her home."

"When I asked her, we were engaged, and I insisted that she should go to New York to a fashionable boarding-school, I paying all expenses, so that she would be better fitted for my wife, the mistress of an elegant home some day."

"She went, and we were regular correspondents."

"That man, my Double, knew of my love for her, and he had seen her photograph and often said, that he was in love with it."

"When he left here as a thief, he went to New York, and, as my Double, pretended to look for the schoolgirl, but on the way he took that beautiful girl away from school, married her, and then deserted her in a Western city—curse on him for the act."

CHAPTER XIX.

NICK NORTON HEARS NEWS.

Nick Norton's visitor made no response to the charge made by him against his Double. He simply sat in silence awaiting for him to say more, so the student resumed:

"Yes, he went from here justly branded as a thief."

"He took hundreds of dollars from me, my jewelry and other valuables, he stole right in the student's room, and all his stealings and borrowings I returned, thank heaven."

"When he went to New York, and a perfect peacock, he forged my writing, wrote to the girl I loved, told her that as he pretend that the Pacific will go to the coast on business that would detain him a year, he begged her to marry him and go with him."

"He gave her an address in New York, sent her some money to make purchases she would need, for he knew all about my coin eating her, and the poor girl, believing that I wrote the letter, consented, and, leaving her school one evening with her, they were married by a clergyman living near, and started for the West."

"She was not long in finding out that he was a different man from me, and at last the truth dawned upon her one day when they went to visit Chicago, for so she had a substitute story of my Double, and she accused him of his treachery."

"He laughed at her and admitted all and she never saw him again for fearing she should see him, first robbing her of the jewelry I had given her."

"And the blow was a terrible one, more than she could stand, and she sat down and wrote two long letters."

"She sent them to her parents telling all, the other to me."

"In them she hinted that she could not live, did not care to do so, under her sorrow, and hinted that we would hear of her no more."

"She took her own life, then," said the visitor.

"Yes, for though I went to Chicago I could never find her, and I am sure that the high-spirited girl he had murdered suicide."

"Now you know why I hate the man who goes as my Double, and I will go a long way to see him hang, through the guiltless. His laws may not reach him for that poor girl's death, he can be strung up for another murder that he has committed.

"What was that?"

"Have you no knowledge of his crimes?"

"He has been here, and this afternoon he was arrested."

"Yet does he know with the knowledge of where is he?"

"Yes, he has reason for so doing."

"Where is he?"

"In hiding."

"How did you know of me?"

"He told me."

"Why?"

"He wanted me to come and see you."n

"For what reason?"

"To ask you to come to him."

"I will go, and take an officer with me."

"In that case you will not go, for you will never find him."

"You seek to lead me into a trap."

"Pardon me, but, as my son is, I am not a party in his guilty deeds," said the man, sternly.

"Pardon me, but you know the old adage that 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.'"

"Yes, but I am now acting only as a go-between in this matter. He knew where to find me and send for me in his distress. I obeyed his bidding and came to you."

"He is in distress, then?"

"Did I not tell you so?"

"No, you said nothing of the kind."

"He is but in distress, and the doctor says that he cannot recover."

"What is the matter with him?"

"He was going to a safe retreat in the mountains of West Maryland, when the wagon upset on the dangerous road, and he was terribly injured."

"If he dies from the injury he will but cheat the gallows."

"Very true."

"Why did he send for me?"

"He would tell me more than that he had a confession to make to you, and could not die in peace until he had made it."

"Well?"

"He wished me to come after you, with all haste, though you might arrive there to find him dead, in which case he would leave a written confession for you."

"I will go."

"I went to him at his call, and he sent me for you, so I made all arrangements for a quick return."

"When shall we start?"

"There is a train at eleven o'clock to New York."

"We will catch it."

"And he wished me to ask you to say nothing of the journey, taking care to leave all for your return, when you could bring back with you the articles taken from the student's room."

"Good! that alone will be worth going for."

"I will meet you at the depot on time, Mr. Clyde," and dismissing his visitor who had given him a much needed tip, he said to the man from his grip, gave a few shrill blasts upon it."

"This he repeated several times, and then answered with a smile.

"Soon after a man came in sight, a tall, powerful fellow, who called out:

"Mr. Clyde, I have a message for you."

"Yes, and a likely looking young chap he is, Well, we'll go to the house and have
The day passed and it was nearly night before Doc looked Flip up and handed him the following dispatch:

"Party at hotel here. Will await developments. F."

"The dispatch is from New Haven," said Doc.

"Yes, and the man is liable to move at any moment, so I'll keep close and you do too, to see what Freckles wires next."

Shortly after ten Doc arrived with another dispatch which read:

"Party and student take ten o'clock train for New York.

"I am coming, too. F."

"I'll meet the train, and you go with me, Doc," said Flip, and when the train rolled in they there to receive it.

"By Jove, there is Capt'n Nat with his friend Nick."

"The first time I've seen him since he left me with the man in black coming along with a youth who was the image of New York Nat their chief."

"Don't he fooled, Doc, for it cannot be Cap'n Nat, "learning when I did, though, it is his Double certainly."

"No, it is not."

The two then saw Freckles quietly shadowing the man in black and his companion,

"Well, Freckles, you are on your way to New York," said Flip.

"You bet."

"And Cap'n Nat's got him in tow," Doc said.

"You're away off, pal, for that is not Nat Cap'n Nat but his Double." "I can't believe it, and am going to speak to him."

"Don't be a fool, Doc, and spoil all, for I know what is being done."

"Yes, Doc, you let Freckles alone to carry out his plan, and I'll go with him, while you report at the station that I left the captain and Keno in the Maryland Mountains, and that Freckles and I am shadowing a man in black. I am going to, and this is the student double of our chief is with him."

With this Flip and Freckles got into a cab, the driver of which had orders to follow a hack that had just driven away ahead.

I went to the station with him, put up at the same hotel, and kept right on his track.

"He made certain inquiries about a student at the college, and after supper went up and called upon him."

"He was there an hour and then came hastily away, and at the hotel, got his grip and drove to the depot."

"But I never lost sight of him, and we must not deviate from the slip, Flip, for as I go right on, then I must somehow've got the idea that he has got that student away for no good."

"So said Freckles, and Flip responded."

"Well, we'll see what it is, for you are to go with me, Freckles."

"Then he told his fellow Ferret where he had left New York Nat and Keno, and how he had pushed on to shadow the Man in Black."

When the train left, carrying the Man in Black and his companion, the two young shadowers were in the same car with them.

"We dare not get off at their station with them, Flip," said Freckles.

"Why not?"

"Well, it may be imagination, but I think the fellow in black is onto me."

"You think he suspects you?"

"Well, it would be easy enough if the way he did.

"You saw dodged him from New York. he certainly saw me in New Haven, and again at the ferry in New York."

"He looked at me when I bought tickets in Baltimore, and if we get off at his station it will create suspicion."

"True, we will go on to the next, as our tickets call for.

"Yes, the time-table makes it seven miles from their station, and we can get a rig and dinner there."

"All right."

So the young Ferrets saw the Man in Black and the student get off at their destination, while they kept on.

They could not but notice that the Man in Black seemed to be looking for them, as the train rolled away, for certainly he must have noticed Freckles.

They had then put off at their station, they found it but a platform on the side of the road, a shed for freight and passengers, and one person, which was a dwelling, store, post-office and ticket-office.

To their regret they found that they could get no conveyances to drive them to the station they had passed.

They explained that they had passed their side of the road, that the agent had but one horse, and could not get away to drive them over.

He also told them that the dirt road was several miles longer than the railroad, and it was a rough walk.

But there was a train by in the morning, and he could accommodate them for the night.

So they were forced to remain all night, but were made comfortable, given a good supper, bed and breakfast, and the next morning caught the train to find, upon their arrival at the station, their game had been passed early for a long drive over the mountains.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MEETING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

The mountainer drove away from his cabin, with Nick at his side, and darkness set in he went within and closed the door, for the mountainer had at that time no idea of feeding his two horses, several cows, pigs and chickens.

The interior of the cabin had two rooms, one a kitchen and sitting-room combined, the other a bedroom.

In the latter there was evidence that the lone dweller there, whatever he then was, had in the past been a man of refinement and education.

There was a shelf of books that showed much reading over, a violin hung on the wall, some sketches in pencil and in color adorned the place, and all indicated that the owner was other than a rough mountainer.

Henry Clyde, when the reader cannot but recognize as the Man in Black. was shadowed by Flip and Freckles, the young Ferrets, paced up and down the room for some time, then took a lamp of flame and turned to the book-shelves for companionship.

A dog lay on the hearth before the fire, and a couple of bottles were on the table, but Henry Clyde took no interest in his company.

The fire did not give light enough, so he lit the lamp and looked over the books.
CHAPTER XXIV.

A SURPRISE FOR THE MAN IN BLACK.

The two reached the cabin, and placing a bundle and satchel before the young man, the other stepped aside. There was no sign of hostliness in the manner of the one standing, but it was somewhat solemn.

"We are the things, so look them over while I get dinner."

The man who addressed him as Norton opened the bundle and there found shoes, a suit of clothing and a hat. Tied up were a pair of boots and a change of underwear, with a feather-bed. The young man looked them all over carefully and then turned to the satchel.

In it were several changes of underwear, collars, cuffs, socks and handkerchiefs and neckties. There was also a suit of clothes, a spring overcoat and a revolver.

"Here is all that I need, Brad, and I tell you I am too impatient to wait for the return of your friend Clyde, who may not be back for several days, you say."

"Well, I will take Clyde's buckboard and horse and drive to the station, leaving it for you to bring back when you take the rig he has back, again."

"You know best, Norton."

"I tell you I am too impatient to put my trust in the horse he has back, he may not delay longer, so I will start as soon as you have dinner."

"All right, you are the best judge, only I wish to take such a risk."

"The risk is not as great as you think, and I am too well posted to play a false card."

"Besides, would you have me back down now after all that has been done, after you have played your part so successfully?"

"Oh, no, for the stakes are worth the risk, I suppose."

"I only wish the game had been played to a finish, and I remain here anxiously awaiting the result."

"All right, you shall hear from me from time to time, and you will always write in the secret key which you have a copy of.

"There, now let us eat and I'll be off, and I'll write you soon."

"I will remain here with Clyde until you want me."

"All right.

"But where was it done?"

"In the valley, at lunch, when a drug did the work, and Henry Clyde took him away in the wagon to let him fall over a cliff, and thus make sure."

"All right, you have done well."

"Yes, Nort, could there be sent you to?"

"All right, the old man and his wife treat me well, and yet I am anxious to get away, for you know my work has just begun."

"Yes, I know."

"But this was the very place to come to hide, and to bring him and end him, for no one could track us here, and there are so few people in these mountains that I have not seen half a dozen since we came."

"There were such from all cursed detectives, they be ever so clever; but come, we will go to the cabin and have dinner."

"Yes, I want to see his clothes and what he brought with him."

"They are all there awaiting you, and as soon as Clyde returns you can start, and the two pilgrers walked on toward the cabin."

"Did you break down?"

"Yes."

"Where is the horse and buckboard?"

"In the valley."

"Well, we will go and fetch him back after awhile, and now you must wait Henry Clyde's return and he will take you to the station for a few days makes no difference after you have waited so long to make your play to get Nick Norton's fortune."

"That is what I want, part."

"I had a foreboding of evil when I saw you drive away, and then I found it. Unfortunately it was nothing more than a break-down."

"Was it the buckboard or the horse?"

"Too bad; he broke his leg; and for you I have to pay Henry Clyde for him; but then that is little matter as you have plenty of your New York hound left, and will soon come in possession of Nick Norton's wealth."

"Oh, I don't mind paying for the horse."

"But how long do you think before Henry Clyde returns?"

"Not for a couple of days, I guess; but what did you do with Norton's cap and clothing?"

"All are with the buckboard."

"That is safe, as no one goes that trail, Clyde said."

"Did Clyde go that way?"

"Yes, he drove away about five miles, so as to pass the cliff over which he was to throw Norton's body into the torrent."

"Very well, did he?"

"Yes."

"That is all I wish to know, for you are not a prisoner, my man!" came the stern response, and a revolver muzzle was thrust into his face.
New York Nat's Three of a Kind.

"Yes, and we will catch him there, if I am able to walk the distance," returned Nick. "But Keno was not able to walk, his heels were much inflamed, and Nat decided to be in the saddle as the fugitive murderer had doubtless reached his hiding-place.

Thus several days passed, Nat, rigged out in his usual manner, as the bounty hunter and host, hunting about the mountains with a boy of thirteen for his guide.

Keno was not yet gotten well enough for him to walk, Nat set out one morning alone, determined to go to the nearest cabin.

He was supplied with a good lunch, and the boy put him across the stream, using a mule as a ferry.

The guide walked and set out at a brisk gait and before noon he came in sight of a cabin.

He was greeted by the barking of half a dozen dogs, but a woman called them off, and then said: "So you concluded not to go to Henry Clyde's, sir?"

Nat saw that he was mistaken for his crook Double, and so said: "I see you mistake me for my twin brother, who came into these mountains some days ago, and whom I am now in search of."

"Well, you are as much alike as two peas, sir—I guess my mother'd hardly know one from t'other; but he's gone away."

"Gone?"

"My husband, Jake Gurls, rides the mail along the range and valley, you know, and he got a letter from an old friend, Bard Neblet, who used to live up the moun-
tain with Henry Clyde, to meet him at the forks of the road with the buckboard, as he was a friend who was coming to spend some time in the mountains.

"Jake he met him, and your brother come home with him, but he's gone to Clyde's, now, left this morning."}

"Where is your husband?"

"He's gone on his ride to-day."

Nat thanked the woman, got her to direct him the nearest way to Henry Clyde's cabin, and declining the hospitable invitation to remain to dinner set out again on his tramp.

The sun was an hour high when he came in sight of Clyde's cabin, and he was surprised to find no one at home.

But Nat was as patient an Indian and had as much patience in declining sun as some one would soon put in an appearance.

That some one did be seen, and at a great distance, he quickly learned that the man in Black as the one they had been tracking as the pal of Norton, the crook.

He expected to see Norton also, and was ready for a deadly encounter, while he could not but wonder why he found that man there.

Mistaken, as he saw, for the man's pal, New York Nat most cleverly got the man to commit himself, and then suddenly thrust a revolver in his face and demanded his surrender.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Confession.

Caught as the Man in Black's nerve failed him and he broke down utterly.

Nat saw his opportunity and at once made use of it, for he said: "Take me to Bard Neblet, I know more than you think, I do, and if you wish to save your neck I advise you to turn State's evidence without further ado, and I'll take you to him too."

"I know that your pal, Nick Norton as he calls himself, robbed Mr. Edgar George in New Haven, and to escape, killed Police Offi-
cer Dennis."

"I know that he went to a hotel on the Bowery, where you were, and have tracked you to the hotel up town, where you played professor and miss in the morning."

"I tracked you both to Harper's Ferry, then up into the mountains, and while he was there I remained with him. You wrote to meet you, you went away, but you were shadowed on your journey, and—"

"Say no more, I'll confess all—See some one is coming there!"

Nat was cautious about a trap, and did not turn until he was convinced between him-
self and those who he said were coming.

To his joy he recognized his thief Ver-
rets, Keno, Flip and Freckles, and he greted
them with great enthusiasm.

They were in a buckboard that belonged to the mountaineer where Nat and Keno had been staying, with a twelve-year-old boy, was their driver and guide.

"Hooray! you have got our game, Cap'n Nat," and then he proceeded to explain:

"We both shadowed him to New Haven and back, but were not able to get off at the station where they did, but went back to it, and found they had gone.

"But, we could not get a rig for love or money, so hoisted it and ran upon the cabin where we found Keno, as big as life.

"He told us where you were gone, so we chartered this buckboard and horse, got the way for ourselfs, and were here to find that you have got the Man in Black.

"But, cap'n, where is his pard, your Double?"

"I fear he is dead," said Nat, turning to-
his prisoner, who cried eagerly.

"Not yet, he's not dead! He has not been murdered."

"Where is he?" sternly demanded Nat.

"I'll confess all. I'll tell you that I am the victim of unfortunate circumstances; that I inherited a fortune, and was defrauded of it by one of the crew.

"When he was rich, with my inheritance, and I poor, I met him one day—Henry Clyde and I met him.

"Well, we had words; he struck me, we fought and I killed him.

Then we fled, Henry Clyde and I, and sought a refuge here."

"After some years I left, but Henry re-
mained, and, in knocking about, I would have lost my life but for the pluck of a young fellow who saved me.

"I found him to be bright, clever, an urban, a knuckle-bone and a killer of the world, but morally bad.

"He seemed to gain a great influence over me and we grew thick as thieves, and the two us in Black as the one they had been tracking as the pal of Norton, the crook.

He expected to see Norton also, and was ready for a deadly encounter, while he could not but wonder why he found that man there.

Mistaken, as he saw, for the man's pal, New York Nat most cleverly got the man to commit himself, and then suddenly thrust a revolver in his face and demanded his surrender.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Unknown Triumphs.

The Ferrets for their prisoner drove down the mountain on their return to the station where the Man in Black had hired as Henry Clyde, and where he had left the victim, Nick Norton, in an asylum near Baltimore.

"Take the train off of you, if you will pledge your word not to escape," said Nat to Bradford Neblet.

The pledge was gladly given, the team was returned and paid for, and Neblet reported that Jake Gurls, the mail- rider, would take Henry Clyde's horse and buck-
board back to his cabin that he might left there and then taken the train for Baltimore.

Reaching Baltimore, the party went out to the asylum, and after Nat had had a talk with the superintendent, Nick Norton was quickly brought out of the dark. The whole plot against him was revealed, and his rescue by the Ferrets made known.

New York Nat found the superintendent most willing to place the seal of secrecy upon all that had happened, as he did not desire to have it exposed how he had been gulped into receiving a sane man into his institution.

Once free again, Nick Norton gladly gave his thanks, and the Ferrets let go, as the man had spared his life when he could have killed him.

So the Man in Black received his freedom and was kept a prisoner by Flip until New York Nat should drive him from New Haven that their brewing story might be properly told.

That done, he was to allow his pal to go free.

Resuming his disguise as an elderly gen-
tleman, Nat went north to visit his friends Norton, Keno and Dennis, and they found upon their arrival there at night that Nick Norton the crook had arrived only two hours before they had gone to his—his vic-
tim's—own rooms.

To a knock at the door he called out:

"Nick Norton immediately entered.

At sight of his Double and victim, the crook uttered a loud cry of alarm and stag-
gored back, for he seemed to feel that he was faced with another. But, before he had a moment for thought, New York Nat sprung forward, revolver in hand, and in a moment the neck of his enemy was broken. The steel manacles upon the astonished young criminal, not having been decided, between Nat and the student, that there should be no publicity to the affair, Nick Norton pledging himself to this effect, and Nick Norton was wished to remain unknown in the arrest, and to let the crook suffer for the murder of Officer Dennis alone, his other crimes being unreported.

So it was that Nick Norton was taken from the room, Nick Norton bidding his Ferret friends good-by with many an expression of friendship, which were on the way to the train to New York.

It was midnight when Nat parted with Keno and Freckles, after their arrival in the Metropolis, and alone he held his prisoner to the home of Sherman Canfield, who was just retiring for the night, but came down-stairs quickly at the call of the young Ferret Captain.

"I will leave him with you, Mr. Canfield. You can telephone to the station for officers to come and take him in charge, for I am not yet ready to throw off my mask of secrecy, and you must know that we are not legitimate detectives. You can tell the chief that the Unknown Ferret, known as murder at large, was brought to the New York office, and to place the rewards to their credit, as he already has done in many other cases. You will have the face of a man needed hanging this fellow down.""}

While this whispered conversation with Sherman Canfield, New York Nat left the house, and telephoning for officers to be sent, it was not long before the Student Crook was placed behind Iron bars, the Chief of the Secret Service only knowing that he had been run down by the mysterious Clan of Ferrets, who were still unknown to him— still an enigma to the force.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BOLD RESCUE.

It was some weeks after the capture of the murderer of Officer Dennis, that New York Nat went to a little town in New Jersey, while in search of another criminal, and, as there was a circus in the place, at the time he was exposed to it as the best spot to find his man.

While strolling through the tent where the wild animals were kept in cages, Nat suddenly heard a savage roar, a shriek in a woman's voice, and the alarms cries of a doomed one.

He turned to behold a sight that fairly froze his blood with horror, for a huge lion had managed to tear open the door of his cage, and had sprung out, almost lighting upon the form of a young girl who had fallen when she attempted to fly.

All present stood spell-bound, while the savage beast approached the prostrate form and placed his enormous paw upon the young girl's body.

There she lay, wholly conscious of her approaching danger, yet not daring to move, while the lion with a low growl and angry switching of the tail, turned toward the men as though daring them to interfere.

But one motion was present who dared the fury of the enormous brute.

That one was New York Nat! At his feet he had seen lying a heavy cage, while some keeper had dropped there in his terror and fright.

Seizing this whip Nat advanced toward the lion, and with a loud command upon the glaring orbs of the ugly beast.

The horrified spectators gazed with dismay, while the lion turned his head, and hardly believe their eyes when they saw the lion's tail fall, his head drop, and, obedient to the lash of the whip, the king of beasts turned before his master, man, and snaked away from his pressing refuge under his cage, just as his keeper came rushing to the scene and mastered him.

Seizing the young girl by the arm, as she staggered to her feet, New York Nat was startled at her sudden cry:

"Oh Nick! Nick! Is it indeed you to whom I owe my life?" "If you refer to Nick Norton, miss, he is my friend, and my Double I may say; but, I am not a Nick Norton."

The girl was very much moved, and Nat led her out of the circus tent, and to a carriage, and as they drove through the town he discovered that she was the young girl so cruelly deceived by the student's Double, for he had heard the whole story.

Then he told her that Nick Norton had been killed by her, and that he bitterly moaned for her.

"Yes, I intended to take my life, but came to my better senses, and went to work, intending to make money, with which to track that man down and be avenged upon him, and, then, if Nick still loved me, I would find him and tell him all," she said.

Nat told her that Nick Norton had need for her to track the one who had wronged her— that he had been run down, tried and sentenced for life. That gave her a divorce from him, while Nat could answer for it that Nick Norton still loved her. That was the truth the wronged girl soon found out after, when Nick Norton, in response to a letter from the young Ferret Captain, came after the girl he still a love for her, and fondly loved, to take her back to her old home. There she was to remain until he could make her his wife, after he had completed his course at college.

Thus had New York Nat, by the merest accident met, and by his courage saved, the beautiful girl, and Nick Norton with the affection of a true heart and a noble nature.

THE END.

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