

A MAN ADRIET

by
BART KENNEDY





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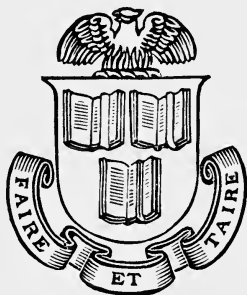
A MAN ADrift

Being

LEAVES FROM A NOMAD'S
PORTFOLIO

By

BART KENNEDY



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TO MY WIFE

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. FINDING A SHIP	I
II. MY FIRST VOYAGE	17
III. ADRIFT	40
IV. LIFE ON AN OYSTER-BOAT	43
V. FIGHTING A NOR ^W -WESTER	6
VI. ON TRAMP	77
VII. BILLY	81
VIII. SHOVELLING	95
IX. AT SHAFT 19	106
X. IN PRISON	119
XI. NO MONEY	144
XII. THROUGH THE ROCKIES.	152
XIII. MAXWELL	172
XIV. SIMILAKAMEEN	191
XV. THE CHILKATS	212
XVI. FROM VICTORIA TO NANAIMO	223
XVII. WITH THE INDIANS	234

	PAGE
XVIII. A NEW PHASE	245
XIX. EARNING THIRTY DOLLARS	262
XX. LOUNGING THROUGH SUNSHINE	277
XXI. OPERATIC FORAGERS	298
XXII. HOW I "RAN PROPS."	308
XXIII. THE BOWERY	319
XXIV. NO PLACE TO SLEEP	330

A MAN ADRIFT

I.—FINDING A SHIP

I WAS in Liverpool, with just a shilling in my pocket, wondering vaguely as to what I would do. It was in the beginning of January, and the day, though cold, was pleasant and bright. The clouds sailed along so beautifully, and looking up into them made me think of the strange lands I would like to visit. I was young and eager to see things. Here I was in Liverpool—the key to the whole world. Surely I would find a ship to take me somewhere — anywhere. There were thousands of them lying in the docks. I had walked miles and miles that day, looking at them, and occasionally asking to be taken in one of them. But the mates shook their heads when I told

them that I had never been to sea before. They wanted men who knew the work, they said. I was only a raw greenhorn, who would be in the way!

But still I felt that I would go somehow. Some chance or another would turn up. I had never seen ships before the morning of that day. But I had thought and dreamed of them ever since I was a lad. And now they seemed so beautiful to me, just like the pictures I had of them in my mind. They looked so calm and strange; their tall, straight masts and their furled sails and rigging looked so fit and beautiful. They had a curious air of travel and great distances. You felt that they had come from places a long way off, and that they were going to places a long way off. About them was something magical, fine, and strange.

I was without friends and alone, but before me was the big, mysterious world. What it held for me I could not tell, and I hardly cared. My great desire was to see and feel and experience—to meet new and strange phases. To live is a fine and

brave thing, even if you have neither a penny in your pocket nor a home nor friends. It is only the weakling and the coward who is afraid of life.

The day wore on. And the red of the sun lay upon the broad Mersey, glowing up and throwing into odd relief the crossing boats. Soon the river was full of swiftly - rushing lights. Whistles and horns were blowing. I stood and watched till darkness had fully settled down. The life of the river was full of charm and mystery. Where were the vessels going, and what did they hold, and who commanded them? Might not that big, slow-moving steamer yonder—full of lights—that loomed calmly along, be going to the far-away Indies, or to China, or to Australia? And the sailing ship over there, that was being towed along by a tug-boat? Perhaps it was going round Cape Horn, or around the Cape of Good Hope, where tossed the Phantom Ship—the ship on which was laid a curse till the Day of Judgment. When this sailing ship got outside into

the open water her sails would spread out like the wings of great, great birds. And the winds would carry her along over the great sea-waters. And at last she would come to a port in some bright land. And the sailors would then go ashore and see things that were wonderful and full of a curious beauty. My mind was full of these thoughts as I looked out upon the river.

At last I turned away and walked up towards the middle of the town. That night I would find a cheap place to sleep, and on the morrow I would look around again, and try and find a ship. As I went along a street I noticed a big coffee-house. In I walked, and for threepence I got a big mug of hot coffee and some thick slices of bread and butter. Now I had ninepence, and for sixpence of it I could get a bed that night. During the day I had noticed a lodging-house having a sign in the window which read to the effect that you could get a good bed there for sixpence. I would sleep there that night, and in the morning I would still have

threepence left for breakfast. Then I would set out again in my search for a ship.

I was going along looking for the street I wanted—the street in which was the lodging-house. It was a little hard to find. Suddenly, as I was turning a corner, a voice shouted out, “Hello!”

I wheeled round and looked. A man was standing in front of me. “Come along,” said he. “I want to talk to you.”

I hesitated a little; and then I went on with him. After all I was strong and vigorous, and I was not afraid of things. I was well able to look out for myself.

The man seemed to be half drunk. His head was sunk down, his shoulders were bent, and his gait was slow and uncertain. “I could easily knock him over, if he attempted anything,” I thought to myself.

“Don’t be afraid; I’m not going to do anything to you,” he said, as if reading what was in my mind.

“I don’t see how you could,” was my comment.

“Neither do I,” he said, with a laugh, as he looked me up and down. “But that isn’t the point.” He paused for a moment. “You want to go to sea!” he said suddenly.

“How do you know?” I asked. We had now come to a halt before a shop window, and I looked full into his face. It was a round face, with big, bleared eyes. Not an inviting face. There was something in it I couldn’t understand. It was the face of a man who holds things back. “How do you know?” I asked him again.

“Because I saw you down on the docks to-day. I saw you go aboard a ship.” I looked at him in surprise. “If you want to go to sea,” he said, slowly, “I can put you in the way of it. I can take you to a boarding-house where they will keep you till they find you a ship.”

“But will they keep me without money?” I asked quickly, “for I have only nine-pence. And will they be sure to find me a ship?”

“They will,” he answered. “And here’s

another thing I have to tell you. It's next to impossible for you to get a ship here in Liverpool without you are taken from a boarding-house. So the best thing you can do is to come along with me—that is, if it's a ship you are looking after."

I thought for a little. "Well, I will go with you," I said. "That is why I came to Liverpool—to get a ship. It's a strange thing, though, that they have places where they keep a man for nothing, and then find him one."

"It isn't so strange as it looks to you," said the man, with a laugh. "But you are green, you know, and you don't know the ropes. If you want to know the reason of it, it is because every man who ships gets an advance note for two pounds. This note isn't paid till the ship is a few days out at sea. You give this advance note to the boarding-house master. He keeps you and finds you an outfit, and after you are safely gone he gets the money. Now, do you understand?"

I did. It was all clear enough. I was lucky to fall so easily into the right way of things, I thought. Here was all the trouble taken right off my shoulders. I was sure of getting away. But I was a little puzzled, however, as to why a man who had never been to sea before should get an advance of two pounds. It struck me that perhaps sailors were scarce. But I thought it well not to inquire too closely into things. One must not look a gift-horse in the mouth.

We were going back in the direction of the docks, and I was filled with joy at the thought that soon I would be on an outgoing vessel.

Suddenly the man stopped, and pointed to a big public-house. "Let us go over there and get a drink," he said. "You tell me you have ninepence. In that case you might as well treat me for the trouble I'm taking on your account."

To this I assented, as it seemed a reasonable request, and we went over to the public-house, where my guide refreshed himself with "three of whisky,"

while I took a glass of beer. The whisky seemed to warm his feelings towards me, and he asked me a lot of questions about myself. But I had little to tell him, for my life so far had been most uneventful. It had been dull and grey, like the town I had come from. The last place at which I had worked was a mechanic's shop, and I still wore my rust-stained slop and overalls. I had a woollen scarf round my neck, and wore a flat, greasy, peaked cap. I was just a young workman who was going out into the world to seek his fortune.

After we left the public-house he let some light into the mystery of a man being able to get an advance note of two pounds who had never been to sea before. Ships could not leave port without a certain complement of hands, he told me. The number was regulated by the tonnage of the vessel. And on the day of sailing there were usually one or two hands short. It was then that the boarding-house master came forward with men he had picked up anyhow. Even though the men

were not sailors, the law was complied with, and the ship was free to go. My guide was a "runner" for a boarding-house.

We turned down a narrow street which ran into the Docks. "Murphy's boarding-house is over there," said the man, pointing. We walked across the road to it, and he gave three knocks on the door. A girl let us in without saying a word. "Is Murphy in?" he asked her. She did not reply, but pointed to a door at the end of a passage. He walked to it, and pushed it open, bidding me follow him. The room we entered was rather a large one, and there were four men in it sitting before a big fire. An oil lamp stood on the mantel, throwing out a small light. One of the men rose up and turned round. "Murphy," said my guide, addressing him, "here's a man for you." Murphy looked at me with no particular expression in his eyes, and said, "All right, let him sit down." Then he turned towards the fire again. He was a man about fifty, with a dark beard and a pale, hard-looking face.

My guide left us, after shaking hands

with me, and I began quietly to study the other men. They were evidently in something like the same circumstances as myself. They were silent when I came in, and they remained silent. It was a strange scene. One would have thought that the men were waiting to be led out to undergo some awful experience. There was an air of subdued, sad expectancy about them. And for the first time that day I began to feel depressed. The travel-pictures in my mind became dulled. Perhaps, after all, I had made a mistake in trying to go out into the world! And doubts began to assail me. Was this the right way to go about getting a ship? Wouldn't it have been better to have kept on asking the mates for a berth myself?

All at once Murphy got up and left us without saying a word. And then we gradually began to talk. Soon I found that my first surmise was right. The men I was amongst were not sailors. They were simply working-men who wanted to get out to other parts of the world. This was the only way they could

manage it, for they had no money. One of them, a young fellow from the country, spoke of the difficulties of getting work in England. He hardly liked the idea of facing the ocean. He had heard that sailing was a hard life—that men were often struck and ill-used. But there was nothing else for it. And the others talked in a like strain. Times were hard: but the real reason they were here was because they were impelled to move by the wandering instinct that is more or less strong in every human being—an instinct inherited from a far, dim past, when men wandered over the face of the earth as hunters. Living through the dull grind of monotonous labour had quickened it, and brought it to the full in the men with whom I was now talking.

To work day after day, month after month, and year after year in the same place and at the same thing is maddening. A man either becomes a clod or dangerously thoughtful. And when I began to think of the work I had been doing for the last four years, my spirits

rose again. I was glad to be on the eve of any change, however hard it might turn out to be. I was willing to dare or go through anything. And the pictures and dreams of the morning when I was going from ship to ship came back to me. Things would turn out all right, somehow.

Murphy came back after an hour or so, and showed the four of us up to the room where we were to pass the night. There were some sacks filled with straw for us to lie on, but there were no blankets. We had to make the best of it by putting off our coats and covering ourselves up with them as well as we could. The night was very cold, but I hardly minded it much. I was thinking of what might happen on the morrow.

When we came down in the morning we got some hot coffee, and a two-pound loaf of bread was divided amongst us. Then we sat and talked till the middle of the day. At about one o'clock Murphy came in and beckoned to me. He was a man who did not waste words, this

Murphy. He came at once to the point. "Off with your slop and overalls," he said. "You look too much like a mechanic." I obeyed him. Then he motioned for me to follow him out. There was a sailor's bag lying at the end of the passage. "Take it, and come along," he said again. "Your outfit's in it." I picked it up. It was very light and easy to carry.

We were soon going along the docks. It was a day like the day before—bright and clear. "The vessel I'm going to put you on," said Murphy, "is going round Cape Horn to Callao." He then let me know it was a steamer, and he instructed me to tell the mate or the purser to make the advance note out to him when I signed as able seaman. He gave me his full name on a piece of paper, so that there would be no mistake. I told him I didn't like to sign as an able seaman, for I had never been to sea before. But he informed me that if I didn't sign as an A.B. I couldn't go at all. "Besides, there's no sailorising

to be done aboard a steamer," he said in conclusion.

When we got to the steamer, however, fate was against me. They had got a man ten minutes before. So Murphy and I trudged back again to the boarding-house.

But the next day I was luckier. Murphy shipped me, along with two of the others, on the *John Gough*, a big steamer bound for Philadelphia. She made the trip across in from twelve to fourteen days. She carried freight and some passengers. When we were aboard, the bo'sun—a stockily-built man with a red face—joked Murphy about his dry-land sailors and the kind of outfit he sent them to sea with. "What have you put in their bags?" he asked. But Murphy took it calmly. Such things had been said to him before.

The articles were signed, Murphy had gone ashore with the advance notes, and I was lined up for muster with the rest of the crew. We were dismissed after the mate had inspected us, and I was

going aft for the fo'castle. Both ends of the ship were the same to my bewildered eye. A sailor stopped me. "That way, Greeny," he said, pointing forward. "Go on, you damned Paddy West, dry-land sailor!"

I looked at him, but said nothing. Then I walked forward. I cared little for what any of them said to me. I would soon get to know my way about. And I was happy. My dream was realised. I was actually going. I had found a ship!

II.—MY FIRST VOYAGE

I

WE were running swiftly through the smooth river. Liverpool was fading off into the distance, and I was wondering by what turn of chance I should ever see it again. I had no desire to go back, but the thought worked idly through my mind as I turned and looked off over the side of the great vessel. At this time I was standing on the forward deck with the sailors. We were grouped up in front of the two bo'suns, who were portioning us off into watches. It fell to my lot to be told off for the first bo'sun's watch—the port watch. He was the red-faced man who had joked Murphy about the outfit he was sending me to sea with. The outfit, however, was no joke as far as I was concerned, for Murphy had put

neither oil-skins nor sea-boots into my bag. Indeed, there was hardly anything in it that was serviceable for the crossing of the North Atlantic Ocean in mid-winter. I did not know this at the time, but a sailor informed me of it with much scorn and epithet, as he critically watched me unpacking my bag into my bunk in the fo'castle. I was hardly fascinated with his way of putting truths, but I felt that the time was scarcely ripe for objecting. Besides, I was so filled with the thought of being actually aboard a ship that what he said didn't trouble me much.

It had just gone two bells in the first dog-watch (five o'clock in the afternoon) when the word came for us to shake out the foresail. What shaking out the foresail meant I had not the faintest notion. But I got ready to do something or other. A couple of sailors jumped up into the fore-shrouds and climbed like cats up the rigging. I paused a little, and then I too jumped up into the shrouds, and was up alongside

them in no time. Though I had never been to sea, I was a good climber, and I saw at a glance that at least there were sure hand-holds and foot-holds about a ship. It was rather unfortunate my going up as I did, however, for it made the bo'sun and the rest of the watch think that I knew my work as a sailor.

“Lay out on the yard there,” said the man to whom I was near in the rigging. This puzzled me altogether. “Where?” I asked. He swore, and asked me what I meant by coming aloft when I didn't know my duty. I did not reply to this, but stopped where I was and watched. By this time six or seven men had got up, and were spreading themselves out on the yard on both sides of the mast. I now grasped what was meant. The idea was to loosen the close-furled sail. Quickly I got out along the foot-rope with the rest of them, and began to tug at the rope that fastened down the sail to the yard. “Pass the gasket,” said the fellow alongside me. Again I was puzzled. “That thing in your hand,” he

added with a grin. He meant the rope I had been tugging at, which in the meantime had been taken from round the sail and passed from hand to hand till it had reached me. I passed it to him, and then we all got down on deck. It was my first lesson in sailing.

And as I stood on deck with the rest of them I felt that I had emerged from my first trial with at least some success. Afterwards I found out that it was most unusual for a "Paddy West" sailor to go up aloft at all. Invariably he stuck to the deck like wax.

At the end of the first dog-watch—six o'clock—we went into the fo'castle to have supper, and then I learned why it was that a man such as myself was called a "Paddy West" sailor. It seemed that one Paddy West, of Liverrool, a boarding-master, was notorious for shipping green hands as able seamen. Hence the nickname. Murphy, who had shipped me, was only one of the smaller fry of these villainous boarding-masters. But Paddy West had dignified the calling with his

name. All sorts of shady and wonderful stories were current concerning him. He had sent "greenies" to sea with bags filled with straw for an outfit and so on.

It was at supper in the fo'castle that I began to realise that shipping as an able seaman when you didn't know the work might not turn out to be altogether pleasant. I saw that the regular sailors had a strong animus against the men who did it. And there was a good reason for this feeling. They had to do the work of these useless men. The sailors had not enough sense of the relation of things to grasp the fact that the real fault lay with the shipping companies. They only saw and knew of men who had come aboard under false pretences. And, as they felt they were wronged, it was only human for them to make it as hot for these men as possible.

And they did so. One of them shoved me aside when I reached forward to take some food from the table. "Don't get in a sailorman's way!" he exclaimed, roughly. I turned quickly round to him,

and would have got very much more in his way, but the strangeness of the place and surroundings had a sort of quietening effect on me. Anyway, I could wait. It seemed that the law of the fo'castle was that the sailors should eat before the green hands.

The supper consisted of fresh boiled beef, potatoes, soft bread and butter, and biscuits and tea. There was enough for everybody, for there was always plenty of food on an Atlantic liner. It wasn't the same as it was on a deep-water ship, where you got nothing but your pound and your pint. Here it was plenty for everybody.

After supper came yarns about all the lands and all the waters of the world. The talk was the most interesting I had ever heard. I listened breathlessly. Here were men who had been everywhere, and my respect for them grew to such a pitch that I almost forgot to think about the sailor who had shoved me aside roughly. They talked in such an easy way about being in places thousands of

miles apart. "When I was in Calcutta," one of them would say, and then the same man would perhaps the next moment say: "Yes, I shipped with him on a barque out of 'Frisco." Or another fellow would say, "He was combing the beach in Honolulu when I came across him." The whole world and its waters had been covered by these few rough men in the fo'castle. Listening to them filled me with ambition to do likewise. At last I felt that I had found my true vocation—to go on always wandering from place to place.

One of them suddenly noticed me listening eagerly. "Look at the dry-land sailor," he shouted, with a laugh. And then came the yarns about Paddy West.

After eight bells I was out again with the watch on deck. The ship was still running smoothly. She had not yet got out into the broken water.

The sensation of being on a great steamship when she is running swiftly through smooth water is magical. You feel as if you were steadily flying through

space. There is neither jar, nor toss, nor jerk. You hear nothing but the faint rumble of the easily-working engines.

II

TOWARDS midnight we were out in the broken water. We were meeting the swells, and the vessel began to heave, and the wind got up. Then the word came for us to brace things up before turning in at eight bells. So we went round the ship, loosing the down-hauls, and hauling each halyard or brace tight in turn. The foremost man would slip the halyard from off the belaying pin, pay it out behind him, and, as four or five of us grabbed it, he would give out the shanty or song. We would haul as we sang, and haul and haul till the bo'sun, who stood off watching the sail, blew on his pipe for us to stop. At this the foremost man would spring forward and bend up the halyard on to the belaying pin. When everything was braced up, I was told off with another man to go

around the ship and coil down the sheets and halyards.

Eight bells rang out; the watch below came up on deck to relieve us; and we went forward to the fo'castle. I was beginning to feel sick. Sea-sickness had not entered into my calculations when I was looking for a ship in Liverpool. But I fought hard against it. And when I got to my bunk and lay flat on my back, I began to feel better. I would soon get over it, I thought.

The day had been a long one, and I was very tired. I tried to think over all that had happened, but I could not connect one thing with another. A confused jumble of pictures and happenings was passing through my mind. Now Murphy was bringing me aboard — now I was walking along the docks — now I was hauling on the halyards — now I could see the wideness and the far reach of the sea — the sea I had always dreamed of. The stars were reflected in it. The soft moonlight was shining upon it. How beautiful and magical it looked, this sea! And

then a face came near to mine, a curious, strange face.

I fell asleep.

Hardly was I asleep when a hand was on my shoulder. "Turn out! Turn out!" shouted a voice. "It's eight bells! Turn out!" I slowly got up, and got into my clothes as well as I could. The ship was now heaving more than ever, and I stumbled heavily against a stanchion. My head was light, and when I took a step it seemed as if my body had no weight. But I managed to scramble on deck somehow. Here I felt a little better—cold, raw salt air revived me. But when I staggered aft with the rest of the watch, I began to feel worse. When I took a step I could not feel my feet. I was horribly sea-sick. The ship seemed to me to be going all ways at once. I would have given anything to have been able to lie down in my bunk. But this was not to be thought of in a man who had shipped before the mast. I had signed as an able seaman—as one who was able to steer, splice, box the compass, and do

other shipmanlike things. And here was I as useless as a log. The thought of it added to my misery.

I was shown scant sympathy by my mates on watch. They acted impatiently and brutally towards me. And this was hardly to be wondered at, for they had to take upon themselves my share of the work. I had come aboard under false colours.

How I got through that watch I never knew. I remember falling down, and one of the men kicking me. I could not, of course, do anything back, but I turned round so as to see his face, and keep it well in my mind. The moon at this time was shining brightly. This man had kicked me, but there was nothing for it but to wait my time. There was no use of repining, or, indeed, of saying anything while I was powerless. And not only was I powerless in body, but my will was powerless, too. I felt myself getting afraid. I began to be a coward.

I was sick for two days and a half,

during which time I had to do my four hours on and off with the rest of the watch. All that time I could eat nothing, and I got very weak indeed. The man who kicked me was especially brutal. Some time after that he struck me in the face, blackening my eye. I could hardly stand up at the time, but I looked him steadily in the eyes, and said: "You shouldn't hit a sick man. Besides, this sick man will get well."

And gradually I got well. I believe thinking of this man helped to cure me. Whenever I saw him I smiled. Whenever I met him I looked straight in his face. And as I felt the power coming back to my limbs I was filled with joy. The time would soon come!

At about the sixth day out, when we were nearly half way across the ocean, I was thoroughly used to the motion of the vessel, though, of course, I knew very little of the work. Still, I was beginning to be of use, for I was quick, and I could haul powerfully on the halyards and braces. The strong air of the ocean was

putting a vigour of life into me such as I had never felt before. It was a wonderful sensation, after being shut up all one's life in a dull, sodden, black town, to be out in this vast open of moving waters. It was fine to feel the clean, fresh, sharp wind striking full into the face.

On the seventh day out I felt fit for anything, and I thought the time had now come for me to settle matters with the sailor who had struck me when I was sick. It was our watch below in the fo'castle, and I noticed him standing near his bunk. My eye was still sore and black from the blow, and when I thought of it I smiled to myself. I had him now. He was there, and I would see what he was made of. I looked carefully over him, noting where and how I would hit him. I never thought that he might get the better of me. I just felt that I could annihilate him. I would like to kill him and pitch him overboard, I thought. Even though a man did not know his work, striking him when he was helpless was no way to right things. And the

shame of the blow swept through me as I walked up to him and said :

“You struck me when I was sick and not able to do anything back. Now’s your time to strike me again.”

The rest of the watch, who were sitting about talking, looked at us, and became quiet. Something was going to happen! It was a rare thing for a green hand to talk in such a way to a sailor. “And you kicked me, too, when I was sick,” I said again to him, keeping my eye fixed on his eye. “Come on. Don’t be afraid.” I gave him a push with my open hand, and backed quickly a couple of paces.

He said nothing, but came for me. I backed again—it was a big fo’castle—and then I sank myself down a little to the left and reached out. It was a feint. And as he followed over on that side, I turned to the right like lightning—jumped—and landed my fist heavily on the side of his face. The ship chanced to be lurching towards me at the instant I struck, making the blow more effective. He staggered against the side of a bunk

and before he knew where he was I was right close up to him, pounding him in the face and ribs. The first blow had knocked him stupid, and he was not able to give me any return. Besides, I was too quick for him.

And now he was down in a heap, his face all over blood. I dragged him up by the collar, and asked him if he had had enough. He had! Dropping him again, I turned to the rest of the watch—who were all eyes—and said quietly, “I’ll fight the best man in this watch.” There was no response.

III

AFTER all, there was not much real sailing to be done aboard this steamer. The main work was to keep everything clean, to holystone decks, polish brass work, and keep the paint free from dust. It is astonishing how dust collects at sea.

The steering was done by four quarter-masters, and four men were selected for the lookout. So for all practical purposes

I was as good a steamship sailor as anyone else. I could push a holystone with the best of them—no great feat after all. And I could haul strongly on halyards and braces. Usually the sails were only put on the vessel to keep her steady in heavy weather, or when the wind was blowing from the wrong quarter.

One night at twelve o'clock a short hurricane came down upon us. I'll never forget that night to the end of my life. It suddenly became pitch black. The moon and stars, which had been shining clearly a moment before, were blotted out. There was nothing for the watch on deck to do but to grope slowly along like blind men. And then the hurricane dropped on us. It was as if the sea and the heavens and the thunders and the great ship suddenly became one in a horrible, indescribable uproar. And the wind came with such fury and force that it drove sensation from the body and thought from the brain. We could do nothing but gasp and hold on to something with the death-clutch, and bend

down our heads so as to get a chance to breathe, for the force of the wind striking a man in the face would choke him. And if he let go what he was clutching on to, he would be dashed down.

All this was going on in blind darkness. I was gasping and shrinking and clutching. The end of things had come! Immense seas were sweeping over the ship. I was so stunned that I did not even feel fear. I was just a blind, clutching thing, from which sensation had been suddenly driven.

All at once the hurricane died down. Its end was nearly as sudden as its beginning. It had only lasted a few minutes. And the stars and moon came out again, shining clearly. But the seas were with us—the gigantic, sweeping, awful seas. The hurricane had swept out into the distance—a flying, tremendous, shapeless thing of destruction.

All through the next day we strained through these terrible seas—as if we were following in the wake of the hurricane. The forward-deck had become

most dangerous. One had to wait amidships at the beginning of the main-deck and watch for the instant when the ship settled down and became steady. Then was the time to make the dash along the deck for the fo'castle. The ship only remained steady for three or four seconds, and if one waited too long the sea would again be thundering over the deck. If a man were caught in it, he would be swept overboard. And once overboard, he could never be got again. No boat could be sent after him.

I had the bad luck to be caught in one of these seas. I had just come from the cook's galley with a kid full of potatoes and meat for the watch's supper. I waited amidships at the main deck for the vessel to steady herself before I made my dash forward for the fo'castle. As she steadied, I dashed along the fore-deck, but I had hardly got three-parts of the way when I slipped down. I got up, but I slipped again, and this time, before I could recover myself, the sea was upon me. Where the kid and potatoes and meat

went to I don't know, but I was picked up and swept against the foremast as if I were a cork. I flung out my arms and clutched the fore-halyard for my life. And I twined my legs, too, around the big, stiff rope. There I stuck. But again a sea thundered over the deck. It struck me, and washed me from my clutch on the halyard as if I were but a feather that was lying against it. The awful force of the water did not strike in a straight direction, but it seemed to whirl in a sort of circle, spinning me round and round like a top. Strangely enough, I kept my senses, though I felt that I must be overboard. The water was boiling and fighting over and around me, when suddenly I struck against something hard. Then the next instant I was heaved up clear out of the water, and I found, to my utter surprise, that I was still on board. By a miracle I had been swept into the lee scupper, and kept there I don't know how. I crawled down into the fo'castle. I was glad to be alive.

Many a poor fellow has met his death

by being caught and carried overboard in a heavy sea. Occasionally the sailors used to tell of it in their watch below. How poor Tom was carried off, and never got again, in a big blow as they were rounding the Horn, or how poor Bill was gone overboard an hour before he was missed at all! There was not a sailor in the fo'castle who had not an actual first-hand knowledge of some such sad experience. Some told of chums who had gone out suddenly into violent death. Lowering a boat for a man was rarely ever of use in rough weather, though a boat was always got out if it were humanly possible. In the winter time the North Atlantic, or the Western Ocean, as the sailors called it, was of all the oceans of the world the most dangerous and ugly in this respect. Squalls and short hurricanes were incessantly springing up in it. And it was so terribly cold. In fact, in the winter time some sailors would not ship for a trip across it at any price.

At last we were off the banks of New-

foundland. The weather had moderated, and the fogs which usually lie here in the winter had lifted. It was a relief to feel the vessel running with something like smoothness after its heaving and stressing through the heavy weather. It had grown much colder; the halyards and braces were bedded in ice. But I did not mind that much, for one of the sailors had given me some socks and mittens; and the bo'sun had given me an old pea-jacket that was very warm. My fight with the sailor had created a favourable impression on my behalf. I was green, they said, but still I must have something in me, and in time I would make a good sailor-man!

We first sighted land one morning at sunrise. It came up on the horizon away off on the port-bow. We were holy stoning decks at the time, and one of the sailors said to me: "There's America!" I looked at the low-lying, dark line. The voyage would soon be over now! The thought filled me with joy, but with the joy was a tinge of regret

at leaving the ship. I was getting used to it. It was so fine to feel the press of the great, strong winds, to see the vast, heaving stretch of the ocean. There were times when it brought terror, but still I loved it. It appealed to something that was in my blood—to some instinct I had inherited. The great, free ocean!

And here was the land! one of the lands I had dreamed of when I was a boy. It was becoming clearer and clearer, this land that at first crept up on the horizon as a faint, dark line.

It was cold, but the morning was most beautiful. The sky was so blue and clear, and the sun, which was well up now, was shining with a searching, northern softness. The strange, clear beauty of the morning, and the sight of the land off in the distance, brought to me a moment of curious, intense feeling. It was a higher and more acute feeling than that of happiness. In it was sadness and joy and everything. It was as if I had suddenly realised in this scene of ocean, air, and land all the longings

and wishes of my life. I had come to it through suffering. I was but a common hand working on the ship, but to me came this glorious, strange moment.

The next day and the day after that we ran along favoured with calm weather. The voyage was nearing its close. And soon the pilot came aboard, and then in a few hours we were grinding, grinding our way through the thick floating ice of the Delaware River. Off from the bank of the river stretched a country that was winter-bound. It was cold and hard-looking, this country, but I was glad to see it. For who could tell what it held in store for me?

And now we were tied up to the wharf. We were in Philadelphia. The voyage was over. Busy men were rushing about shouting English in a curious flat accent.

The next morning I left the ship for good. It was on a Sunday. And as I walked through the streets of Philadelphia I felt strong and hopeful, though I had not a penny in my pocket. A new world was before me.

III.—ADRIFT

THE magic of a great town!

A man goes into it when he is hard up and lonely and wearing shabby clothes, and he is touched with the general movement, and the ever-passing crowds and the bright, tempting displays in the shop windows, and the long, clean streets. The curious, mighty magnetism of the town possesses him. He has been off in small, lonesome places, looking for work, or he has been working his way hither and thither, making a bare existence by the doing of stray, odd jobs. Or he may have been going along over bare, winding country roads that seemed to go on without end for ever. He has been so long communing with himself that he feels the need of contact with other human beings. He wishes to be near people and to hear their voices, even if he may not speak to them. The people

he has seen off from the town have been but stray and passing, even as himself. Lone ships that move on and on till they are lost in the dread, mysterious distance.

Men who are adrift.

It may be that a man has come from some foreign place where things have gone hard with him. He is now approaching the great town of his native land, and he is thrilled, for here at last is something that is akin to him. Vague though it be, this kinship has for him a warmth and a sense of rest. The people who knew him once may be dead or gone, or may not know him. But still there is for him the town. The town that was here long, long before him; the town that will last long, long after he has crumbled and gone to dust. The town that is his town, even as it is the town of him who is fine and great.

Or it may be that a man is one who may not go back again to his native place. Now he is approaching a strange town--but still a town. He is glad to get to it, even though he be penniless.

Even though he must face strangers. How glad he will be to see the spires of its churches arising in the distance! How glad he will be to hear, far away, the faint, faint sound of its mighty life. It is far off, this town—but he is coming to it! He is coming to it.

And who knows what chance may do for him? Who knows what may happen to him through the magic of circumstance? He may, in a street, find a purse of gold. Then he will go and buy himself a good dinner, and new, fine clothes. He will stretch himself in the fulness of the pleasure of life. In the life of the town! Yes, give him the town! The town where no one knows him—where no one knows of what he has done—where he may begin a new life—where fortune may await him. And he goes on with firm stride. Soon he will see the spires arising in the distance.

The magic of a great town!

IV.—LIFE ON AN OYSTER-BOAT

I

AFTER many days tramping I found myself in the city of Baltimore. Here I shipped on an oyster-boat to dredge for oysters in the Chesapeake Bay. The wages were fifteen dollars a month, and one had to ship for a month at least. And you were bound by the same laws and rules that you would be bound by if you shipped on a deep-water vessel that was going to round the Horn—"Cape Stiff," as the sailors call it. You were the captain's machine—his slave. He had power to strike or shoot you if he thought it necessary.

I shipped on a small schooner, and sailed down the bay.

On the way down to the dredging grounds we had nothing to do but to sail the schooner, which was an easy

task, as there were, all told, ten men aboard. It took us two days to get down, on account of head winds.

A word about the dredging outfit of our schooner. She had two crab-winchs amidships on the port and starboard sides for winding in the dredges when they had filled with oysters. It took four men to a winch. Fastened to a stout, fifteen-fathom rope, a dredge lay on either side near the gunwale. In working time these were put in readiness to be heaved overboard at a word from the captain, who then steered the boat. The gunwales were cut away, and rollers put on a level with the planking of the deck, so as to allow the dredges to pass easily. The dredge was triangular in shape, and was simply a strong iron frame with a steel chain bag pending from the large end. Across the mouth of the bag was a steel bar, in which was a row of long, sharp teeth. These scraped in the oysters as the dredge dragged over the bed. Each man was armed with a "culling hammer,"

Life on an Oyster-Boat 45

a hammer with a long, narrow head and a long shaft, which he used for breaking off extra shells that were stuck to the oysters, and for separating the oysters from the loose shells when the contents of the dredge were dumped on deck.

One day's work was much the same as another.

About an hour before dawn, the cook, who lived aft with the captain in the cabin, would come forward to the fo'castle, where we slept, huddled together like rats, and inform us that the time had arrived for us to sally forth to toil. Reluctantly and unjoyfully, we would arise at the sound of the cook's voice and put on our clothes—that is, if we had been warm enough the night before to take them off. Blankets were scarce. The captain didn't care whether we froze to death or not. All he cared for was to get work out of us.

After creeping shiveringly out of the manhole and on to the deck, our first job was to haul up the anchor and loose the sails. We anchored every night in

any small bay or cove that came nearest or handiest. Getting up the anchor was always a terrible job, because of the raw, damp winter wind which was usually blowing before daylight.

“Breakfast!” the cook would shout, and one by one we would file into the cabin to eat.

Whilst breakfast, which usually consisted of codfish-hash, bread, and coffee, was being doled out in detail, the schooner would be making all speed for the dredging ground. Arrived there, we would get to our places at the winches.

“Heave!” from the captain at the wheel, and splash! would go both dredges simultaneously, as a man from either side heaved them overboard. The speed of the schooner checked considerably as the dredges dragged over the oyster bed, gradually filling with oysters, which were scraped into the chain bags by the tooth-bars.

“Wind!” the captain would command when the dredges had passed over the whole width of the bed.

Life on an Oyster-Boat 47

With a will the whole of us would suddenly bend our strength upon the handles of the winches, and wind with all our might and main. During the winding the schooner would be tossing about like a feather and shipping seas. It is well to remark for the benefit of those who don't know that the short choppy seas of a shallow bay are harder to contend with than are the gigantic, awful swells that are to be met with in mid-ocean. Proportionately, there are more ships lost in the shallow, choppy waters of the North Sea than anywhere else.

Oh, the terror of that awful winding! I'd sooner help to take in frozen sails in a gale off Cape Horn. Every nerve, muscle, and breath was strained to the tightest possible tension. If a man slacked up the least bit it was instantly felt by the rest. All had to fuse their strength into one desperate whole. The cold seas washed us from head to foot, but in the horrible strain we didn't notice it. Wind! wind! wind! Would the infernal strain

never cease? It seemed as if every fibre in a man were cracking. I had never felt anything like it before—nor have I since, though I have done the hardest and roughest sort of labouring.

Up! up! At last the necks of the dredges appeared above the gunwale rollers. Up! up! and they were on deck, and their contents dumped out in a heap. Then we fell on our knees and commenced to separate as quickly as possible the oysters from the loose shells, flinging the oysters behind us to form a pile. Any extra shells that were sticking to them we broke off with our "culling hammers." As soon as we had got all the oysters out of the heap we quickly shovelled the loose shells, the stones, and the seaweed overboard. "Culling," as we called the picking out of the oysters, was a sort of rest after the terror of the winding. By the time we had got out all the oysters, or, usually, a little before it, the captain had put the boat about—so as to cross the oyster bed again—and was ready to give the word to heave the

Life on an Oyster-Boat 49

dredges overboard. Thus we never got a real breathing spell.

Again would come the terrible winding, and again would come the culling.

This awful work would continue without a break up to sundown, barring a few moments we got to snatch a bite of food. At sundown we made fast the dredges, washed up the deck, and made for the nearest cove or harbour. Arriving there, we let go the anchor, and took in and furled the sails. After that came supper, and then we filed, wet, weary, and dejected, into the fo'castle. The day was ended.

II

STILL, there were fine moments in the life, as there are fine moments in all lives, however sad or hard they may be. It was fine to stand on the foredeck of the little schooner and feel her rushing towards the harbour when our day's work was done. It gave one a sense of rest, a sense of peace. The jib of the schooner

stood out like the wing of a giant bat. I used to think and wonder about many things then. I used to wonder how long I would be a dredger. Though the life was hard, still in a sort of a way it appealed to me. Being faced with grim, iron facts has a charm of its own.

The dredgers had a saying that if you ever once got the dredging-mud on you you would always come back to it again. And, indeed, there were fellows who had been at it years and years. At the beginning of every oyster season they would turn up in Baltimore, and greet each other, and compare notes as to what they had been doing since the last season.

Often there were black tragedies in the life. Bodies of men were found floating in the Bay. They had been murdered and pitched overboard by the captains and mates.

As a rule, the captains were a lot of brutal bullies. If a man didn't have the fighting instinct strong in him he was very apt to get knocked about. If you sailed down the Bay with some

Life on an Oyster-Boat 51

captains you had to be ready to go the whole length of the rope. You had to be ready to out with your sheath-knife and give the whole blade of it into the mate or captain who offered to strike you. In no other way could you keep up your style as a man. Fighting back with your fists wouldn't be worth a rap. You would be knocked flat with the butt of a revolver, and like enough get the life kicked out of you. Some captains used to have loaded revolvers lying within grasp while the men were actually working over the oyster bed. There were laws, to be sure, against the ill-using and killing of men, but the laws didn't work.

A word as to the way we used to get our food. First the captain and the mate would eat. They, of course, would have clean plates and clean knives and forks. When they had finished eating, two of the men would be called in, and the cook would ladle out the food for them on to the plates that the

captain and the mate had just used. When these men had finished, two others would be called in; and so on, till every one on board had eaten. During the whole course of the meal the two plates and the knives and forks would not be washed. You had to eat from the dirty plate of another man, or two other men, or four other men, as the case may be. If you were out of favour with the captain, you were kept till the last. The idea was to take up as little time as possible in eating, and to save the cook trouble.

I remember getting into a row over this custom on one boat I was on. The cook was called Scotty. He was a mean-looking little sailor man, with a scarred face, and hard eyes. He was the captain's toady. But for all that, he was a stout, hard little block of a fellow, who would fight till he dropped. For some reason or another, he didn't like me, and I didn't like him. We used to scowl at each other now and then. One morning I came aft into the cabin for breakfast—I believe I

Life on an Oyster-Boat 53

was one of the last two men—and suddenly a sense of revolt filled me at the sight of the dirty plate I had to eat off. Why should I be a dog any more, I thought? Why shouldn't I have a clean plate like a man? I turned to Scotty, who stood scowling at me, and I asked him roughly why he didn't give me a clean plate. Scotty was so surprised at my asking this that the scowl left his face. He was dumfounded. It was as if a dog had spoken. Scotty lived aft with the captain in the cabin, while I was only an' ordinary dredger, who lived forward in the forepeak. The cheek of my asking for a clean plate was something unspeakable. And rage took the place of surprise. He swore at me horribly. He would show me, he said, and he raised his fist to strike me. He knew he would have the captain and the mate at his back. Besides, to tell the truth, he was a plucky little fellow. But I had had enough of the whole thing. I determined to take chances—if necessary—on getting a long drop and a scragging

rope. If I fought I'd have to go to the whole hog. The chances were I'd get shot. If I killed anyone, there was no chance at all about it. I'd get hung.

But my blood was up.

As Scotty raised his fist to strike me, I rose suddenly and let him have a swinging blow full in the mouth. His head struck against the bulking of the cabin. And I rained half-arm punches on his face till it was a mass of blood. He fought me as well as he could, but I was a much bigger and stronger man. He hadn't the ghost of a show. And all the time I was punching him I felt I was fighting with a rope round my neck, and when that's the case a man might as well go in for a sheep as for a lamb.

And the whole infernal degradation of the life broke in on me like a lightning-flash while I was fighting. I thought I might as well end it. And I tried to kill Scotty.

But he got away from me up the cabin steps and on to the deck. He realised

that he was in danger of his life, and the animal instinct to save himself came uppermost in him. The fight had been knocked out of him.

I followed him up on deck, where I was faced with the captain and the mate. But I was ready for them, too—and seeing that I was ready they came to the conclusion that the easiest way out of it was the best. The captain calmed things down. I suppose it dawned upon him that it was no joke doing a man up who was ready to fight for all he was worth. During the whole affair the men—my mates—stood in a group forward. They didn't offer to interfere.

After that I always got a clean plate.

The dredging season began in October and ended in March—the six coldest and hardest months of the year. Once I was on a sloop that was frozen up in solid ice for nearly a month. Then we had a good time. Nothing to do but to eat and sleep and go ashore occasionally for water. We were anchored about a hundred yards from the shore, and we

had cut a channel through the ice, so as to get the little yawl backward and forward. One afternoon another fellow and myself got the yawl ashore, so as to bring aboard a barrel of water and some flour and bacon. It was freezing very hard. We loaded up the yawl, and began to work our way back to the sloop, but when we had got about half way we were blocked up. The loose ice floating in the channel had become frozen together. We worked for an hour, and made hardly any headway. And one hour reached into two hours, and two hours into three hours. Then we saw that perhaps we couldn't make the sloop that night. So we thought it better to make for the shore again. But in this we were stopped, too. The loose ice had frozen together behind us. Nor could we land on the ice on either side of us, for the reason that there were large pieces of loose ice on both sides of the yawl, and stepping on them would mean falling into the water, which would mean death. The lads on the sloop kept

shouting to us from time to time to cheer us up. But we were getting anxious. If we had to stay in the yawl through the night it would mean that we should be frozen stiff by morning. And now darkness and night had come upon us. We worked on and on, smashing at the ice with our oars. And after what seemed to me an eternity the ice slowly began to move. We fought it foot by foot along the channel to the sloop. They had put lights on the roof of the cabin, so that the reflections would show us where to strike at the ice. At last we got near enough for them to throw us a rope, which we made fast to the yawl, and then, with the help of their tugging, we got alongside the sloop. They pulled us aboard, and gave us a big stiff drink of whisky, which fixed us up all right. It was midnight. It had taken us about eight hours to go a hundred yards.

On Saturday nights we would go to Cambridge—a little town on the eastern shore of the Bay—and tie up till Monday

morning. Then we would get an advance perhaps of a dollar apiece from the captain. Armed with this we would go up into the town to have a good time. You could buy a lot of whisky in Cambridge for a dollar. And whisky is what we all bought. In other words, we used to get drunk. Then we used to fight with one another, or fight with the police, if they tried to interfere with us. We were looked upon as the scourgings of the earth—which, as a matter of fact, we were. The dredgings of the earth. We were a bad lot. But we weren't too bad to do the beastly work of dredging. Yes, we used to get drunk. And why not? It was the only thing left open for us. We were a dirty, rough lot of uncouth men, we dredgers.

Years and years have gone by since that time, but the faces of the men, the dredgers I knew, are still clear in my memory. Aye, their hard, weather-worn faces rise before me. Where are they now? Where are they gone? Drudges of a dredge. Where are they? Nobody

knows and nobody cares. Poor human driftage! Dogs for everyone to throw a stone at. I have an affection for them all. My comrades in hardship and misery. There is nothing brings men so close together. Aye, I have a fondness for them all. Even poor little Scotty, whom I fought with, I would like to see even him.

There was Dublin. A fine fellow was Dublin. He was an Irishman—a Dublin man. Nobody knew his real name, and nobody asked it. His town became his sponsor. Indeed, many of us dredgers had almost forgotten our real names. My name was Reddy—because I had red hair. And there was Galway Paddy, and Tom Conroy, the Connaught man, and Belfast, whose town, too, had become his sponsor, and lots of others.

One Saturday night, Galway Paddy wanted to fight me. We were all of us having a hilarious time, for the captain and mate had gone ashore till Monday. So the whisky was flowing, and we were singing songs, and telling one another

where we had been and where we hadn't been. All at once someone began to talk about fighting, and one word brought on another, till at last Dublin challenged Tom Conroy, the Connaught man. They agreed to fight on the after deck. It was a dark night, and one of us stood on the roof of the cabin holding a lantern so that the men could see to punch each other. Dublin was a good man to fight, but on this occasion he was too drunk, and the Connaught man knocked him out in short order. I stood on the wharf—the boat was made fast to a big pile—and cheered on Dublin, who was my particular friend. When he got knocked out, Galway Paddy, who was backing up the Connaught man, challenged me to fight. I liked Paddy, and having no reasons to quarrel with him, I declined with thanks. I used to make it a rule never to fight without a reason. But he persisted, and finally he made a rush for me from the deck. I was just getting ready—much against my will—to let

Life on an Oyster-Boat 61

him have a hard left-and-right, when, to my intense surprise, the indomitable Patrick suddenly disappeared. It was dark, and I couldn't make out where he had got to till I heard a voice down beneath me spluttering out: "Reddy! Pull me up! I'm dhrownin'!" It was poor Paddy. As he was making the drive for me he stepped on nothing, between the boat and the wharf, and the first thing he knew was the finding of himself in the icy cold water. I yanked Paddy up. It was a good job I was sober enough, for there was nothing for him to grab at, and no room for him to swim. He would have been drowned, sure enough. This stopped the fighting.

But Dublin, I often think of him. He was a fine type of man, though he was but a rough hulk of a dredger—a magnetic, able man, who never had had the ghost of a chance in this big world. And right here I would like to say a word concerning labouring men. It is said that they do not think. This is not true. I, who have been a labouring

man, bear witness to the fact that, in the main, men who are rough and illiterate have more vigour of thought and imagination than the men who have received educational advantages, and who are alleged to be intellectual. I mean that they have more genuine mind-power. The labourer is faced with grim, iron facts, and his judgment—whatever its scope—is evolved from a first-hand experience of actual life.

Poor Dublin! He was drowned. He was lost at night in one of the sudden squalls that come up in the winter time in the Chesapeake Bay. He was sculling a little yawl to the schooner he belonged to. The squall struck the yawl and capsized her, and Dublin died fighting in the cold waters. God rest him! He was a brave, fine man, though he did get drunk, and though he did fight, and though he had been in prison often and often. He would give the last cent he had to a stranger if the stranger needed it. He was sympathetic and noble, and, above all, brave.

Life on an Oyster-Boat 63

He was my pal—my friend. There was something fine in the expression of his face. He had blue eyes and fair hair, and he was a middle-sized man of a powerful build. I never knew his real name. Everyone liked him. Dredger though he was, tramp though he was, though he had known the inside of prisons, I am proud of having known him, of having taken his hand, of having been his friend.

V.—FIGHTING A NOR'-WESTER

WE hauled in our dredges, and headed for Black Walnut Harbour, which lay off about seven miles to the north-west. We had been dredging for oysters all the morning. Our little schooner was not more than twenty tons burthen, and there were seven men of us aboard, all told.

The weather had begun to look ugly, and the captain thought we might as well be getting in to harbour. All the morning there had been a nasty swell rolling, and now and then smartish spells of wind. We thought that, likely enough, we would be able to weather it out till sunset. But white caps began to show on the waves, and far off on the north-west the sky was gradually darkening.

We were in for a nor'-wester, sure enough, and a nor'-wester always means business. It was near the end of the

Fighting a Nor'-wester 65

month of December in the shallow, dangerous waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

Suddenly, as I was coiling the dredge rope round the neck of the starboard dredge, the nor'-wester smashed down on us. The jib bellied out, and strained as if she would break away. I rushed forward to ease the sheet. We were in it. Right in a whirl of flying, cutting spray, wind-gusts, and claps of thunder. It was dark now, and the tops of the waves looked like the edges of big, tearing flames as the streaks of lightning flashed on them. We were shipping murderous-looking seas.

The harbour we were making for lay off right dead in the eye of the wind, and, in fact, was no harbour at all for a nor'-wester, but there was no other place for us to make for. It was Hobson's choice. Go in or stay out. Besides, there was a small bend in it to the west right over at the end. If we could make this we would be sheltered a good deal.

Beating up in the eye of the wind meant making very short tacks with

everything close reefed and the sheets hauled down flat. We took the foresail in altogether. Then we worked slowly up with the jib and short mainsail. It was hard, cold work. The frost numbed my fingers even through the thick mittens I wore.

By this time it had lightened up again, but the gale broke along harder than ever. The captain was at the wheel, with the lappets of his sou'-wester tied down over his ears. His brother stood by him. Victor was forward tending the jib sheet. Jack and I were amidships hanging on to the mainsail halyards. The schooner was labouring terribly, and it looked as if she might swamp. If a big sea were to bear down upon her before she had recovered from the sea before, the business would be done, and we would be fighting for our lives in the cold waters. We would struggle a little and die like freezing, drowning rats. She was of the wrong shape and of too small a tonnage to be a good, heavy-weather boat. In a gale of wind there

Fighting a Nor'-wester 67

is nothing like having plenty of tonnage under you.

After a long and hard time we beat our way up to the edge of the harbour. How we managed it I don't know. It was one continuous, desperate fight with big, chopping seas and a wind that cut you and wrenched you and stung you to the bone at the same time. All of us were drenched through and deadly cold. Only for Frank, the cook, managing to make us some coffee we would never have been able to do anything. Hot coffee, mixed with whisky, is a good drink or a tight place.

Sloops and schooners were straining and tugging at their anchors inside the harbour. They had been caught suddenly, as we were caught, and had no time to make for a better harbour from the nor'-wester.

Now we were in and close up to the bend. If we could make our way up it would be all right. But we couldn't. The wind was so strong that we were not able to make the very short tack

necessary to get in. So we had to let our anchors go right where we were. The minute they chocked the schooner up we began to pay out all the chain we could afford. In heavy weather the more chain there is out to the anchor the better chance has it of holding.

For a while we seemed to be all right. But all at once our anchors began to drag. They were too light. This had been the chief reason for our trying to make the bend. The other boats in the harbour were holding their own, but they evidently had much heavier anchors compared with their size than we had.

Drag! Crunch! Drag! There was nothing for us to do but to let the anchors go altogether. We fixed buoys on to the chains before we cast them off, so that we could find them afterwards, and then we turned and made for the mouth of the harbour again. There was nothing for it but to run out into the nor'-wester and take our chances till the gale wore itself down. It was like running into death.

Fighting a Nor'-wester 69

Right near the edge of the harbour we collided with a big schooner swinging at anchor. Both of us suffered. She had part of her bowsprit wrenched off, and our fore-shrouds were torn away on the port side. For a few seconds the boats closed and seemed to grapple together.

At this point the German who belonged to our crew got on to the big schooner to help to push our boat off. In a minute we were free of her and rushing on before the gale, but when we looked round for the German he was gone. He had stopped aboard the big schooner.

We could hardly blame him, however, for our game had too many chances of losing in it. What we were going to do was not very clear. The object of going out again after we had lost our anchors was to save the boat. We were staking our lives for it.

And it looked as if we were going to lose them. No one could tell what would come from one minute to another. We might be swamped—or something might give way.

And now an accident happened.

The wooden jib-traveller broke away all at once, and Victor, who was standing on it, was flung overboard. He had been jamming the jib sheet to leeward with his foot. The big iron ring at the bottom of the sheet, which ran along the traveller, had caught in the middle of it, and the traveller had suddenly smashed upwards through the force of the wind on the jib.

I saw Victor flying up in the air as clean as if he had been shot out of a gun. I rushed forward and flung over the end of a rope, but I could see nothing of him. The sea had swallowed him right up. It is awful to see a man go to death in such a way. We all shouted. The captain flung out the only life-buoy we had. Lowering the little yawl that hung astern would have been worse than useless. It would have lived no more than a few seconds in the sea that was running. We could do nothing.

The jib was flapping viciously. The first thing to do was to let it down with

a run, which I did. Then I thought I heard a voice coming from somewhere forward. I turned my head, and I heard it again. And then I worked my way slowly up to the bowsprit. The schooner was tossing about now more than ever, because of there being no jib to steady her.

I looked overboard, and I saw Victor. He was down in the water right under the bow of the boat, clinging to the bobstay. I just reached down, caught him by the scruff of the neck, and yanked him aboard. A stream of blood was running down his face. A splinter from the traveller had struck him. We were glad to have him safe aboard again, but we didn't have time to tell him so. There was too much to be done. The reason for his escape from death was simple. He had been flung overboard in the direction that the boat was going, and she had drifted right on to him. He was all right again, however, as soon as he got his head tied up, and had had a drink of hot coffee. Then he fought along with the rest of us.

We tried to rig up a sort of traveller for the jib with blocks and lashings, but it was no use. It was blowing too hard. And all the while the schooner was floundering and shipping seas. Then, as nothing could be done with the jib, Jack and I crawled out on each side of the bowsprit and tied it down. How we stuck on the foot-ropes I don't know. It was the ugliest job men ever tackled. You had to stick for all you were worth, or you were gone. The bowsprit would bury itself right down in the water—rise—and bury itself again. As I was cautiously and slowly tying a knot I would suddenly find my head a foot under water. I would gulp, and stick like iron, and slowly I would find myself lifted up again. It was one hand for yourself and the other for the boat. But at last we had it finished, and we got inboard.

The next thing to do was to raise the foresail, reef it as close down as we could, and raise the peak of it a little. Our idea was to try and make it take the place of the jib by giving more sheet to

it than we gave to the mainsail. In the end we were successful; but we had a fearful job reefing it, for our hands were numbed with cold. Frank, the cook, was standing next to me helping to reef, and I saw him tie a grannie knot. A grannie knot slips when a strain comes upon it, and knots that slip on a boat may mean death.

I swore hard at Frank as I undid and retied the knot myself. He shuddered, and said, "Don't swear at a time like this. We may never touch land again." Frank evidently thought it was more dangerous to swear than to tie an unsafe knot.

There was nothing to do after this but to run before the gale and hope for the best. I pulled off my big sea boots so as to have whatever chance there was of swimming when the time came. I might as well have kept them on though, for all the chance I would have had, for the shore was fifteen or twenty miles away. Besides, even if a man could keep his head in the big seas he would be frozen

up in no time. But in a tight time one instinctively does all one can. The long, soaked boots made my feet cold anyway. The captain's brother began to cry, but one couldn't blame him, for he was little more than a boy.

But I must say the captain was game. He stuck to the wheel for hour after hour, his face set and calm. He was a man from the eastern part of Maryland.

The night was upon us now, and the moon came out clear and bright. But the gale broke on as hard as ever. Still, being able to see the lie of the bay shore was a good thing.

It was this that saved us in the end, for the captain saw, away off, an inlet that he knew. We had run farther from Black Walnut Harbour than we thought. The beach of this inlet was sloping and of sand. The thing was to get into it and run the schooner ashore.

We got into the inlet all right, and before we knew where we were we were

Fighting a Nor'-wester 75

safe and sound on the sand. The slope was so gradual that we could hardly feel ourselves beaching. And the gale roared and roared. But we were snug and out of danger.

We stayed there two days. And when the nor'-wester had worn itself out, and everything was calm and quiet again, we pulled ourselves off the beach at high tide. We had weathered the nor'-wester. Then we went back to Black Walnut Harbour and picked up our anchors.

* * * * *

At last I grew tired of dredging. I was as hard up as when I began. Labour had brought me nothing but hardship and degradation. I had worked the blood and muscle out of my body to create wealth for others. I had lived in the midst of absolute filth—in a place not fit to kennel a dog in. If I hadn't been a dangerous, fighting brute of a man I would have been struck and ill-used into the bargain. Aye, I had worked my life out to create wealth for others, and for my reward I had neither a place to sleep

in nor a bite to eat. What was the use of working at all, I thought? I got neither reward nor respect.

So I faced about and became a tramp.

VI.—ON TRAMP

To be penniless and on tramp is a curious experience. You care for no one, and no one cares for you. Things about you seem vague and elusive. You are in a mental chaos. You are a link severed from the human chain. And you wander hardly knowing or caring where you wander.

As you shuffle along people glance at you as they pass. Scorn is in their eyes, for you are a man without a home—a man without friends. You are dispirited, dirty, and without self-respect. The aphorism that the world owes every man a living does not apply to you.

You haven't spirit enough to steal; you haven't continuity of mind enough to plan a course of action. Your thoughts waver. You will forget where and how you began to think. Projects will come up before

you, and they will fade before you grasp them. If you had force enough in you you would hate everything and everybody. You would feel hard, sharp resentment. You would like to do murder, to rob, to destroy. You would like to hold the world in the hollow of your hand so that you might crush it.

But you are impotent—your pulse is down—you shuffle along.

Who you are or what you were matters not. You may be a man with a past, you may be a man with a future. You may be one who has belonged to the topmost class; you may be a labourer, or a man from out the filth of the slums, or a dispirited low-down thief.

And you beg for bread. You knock at the doors of houses and ask for something to eat, or you ask alms of stray, passing men. It may have been that at one time in your life you would have thought it impossible for you to beg. You would have shuddered at the bare idea. How shameful! You would have thought that death would be preferable. If a man had

said that you would come to this you would have struck him in the face. Perhaps when you did think of able-bodied men begging you thought of them as wretches hardly worth the powder and ball it would take to kill them.

You feel sad.

Still there are times when a fine moment comes to you. It may be that you will feel the curious sense of power that belongs to utter loneliness. It may be that you will feel the sense of freedom that comes from a total lack of responsibility. No one is dependent upon you. No one is waiting for you. If people have a contempt for you, at least they let you alone. And this is something.

You are thrown in upon yourself. For the first time in your life, perhaps, you really begin to know who and what you are. You are interested in the strange unfoldings of yourself. You have dreams and fancies and curious longings. A world opens to you within yourself. And you walk on and on, bearing with you a wonderful dream world.

What matters to you the contempt of people who move in grooves, who themselves fear the opinions of others? After all, they will die, even as you will die.

Yes, they will die in a day. They will come to dust. For you the sun shines as it shines for them. For you the water flows as it flows for them. In common with them you have the air to breathe. In common with them you can see the strange pictures in the clouds. In common with them you can move and think and see and hear.

In moments when these thoughts are with you, you move along with a brisk step—you ask for bread without shame.

VII.—BILLY

BILLY and I were partners. We tramped along looking for work together; we slept in the same haystack together; we whacked up what little money we got for doing odd jobs. When things were absolutely tight, we shared the food that we begged from the farmhouses we passed on the road. Who Billy really was I never had the least idea. Where he is now I have no idea. He came suddenly into my life, and went out of it in a like way. He told me his name was Billy, and that was the end and beginning of anything tangible he had to say about himself. True, he spoke now and then of his life in the past, but only in a vague, distant sort of way—as if he were speaking more to himself than to me.

We were just two outcasts who met by

chance, and who stayed by each other while circumstances permitted.

I saw him first as I was going along the road to Baltimore. He was sitting under a hedge on the roadside when I noticed him—a tired, sad-looking, bearded man of about forty-five. His clothes were old and worn, and covered with dust. On the face of it, he was a tramp like myself. His eyes were large and blue, and in them was a curious look of mingled pathos and resentment—the look that marks the man whose life has been a failure from the world's standpoint.

“Hello, partner!” I said, as I stopped and looked at him. “Where are you bound for?”

“Baltimore,” he answered. There was a pleasant ring in his voice.

“I’m going that way, too,” I said.

We talked for a little while, and then we started on our way together.

It was a beautiful afternoon in September. The leaves of the trees were already beginning to turn to the rich varied colours of the fall, or American

autumn. Though I had no idea where I would sleep that night, I felt to the full the joy of life. There was something so vital and clear and sustaining in the air. Off from the road were glades and forests toned with curious and exquisite colours. The clear cries of birds filled the air. I felt glad as I stepped out freely along the road. It was worth while being a nameless and homeless tramp for the sake of living and moving through a scene like this.

As we walked along Billy and I talked together. He interested me very much—not so much because of what he had to say, but because of himself. The man had individuality.

After a little while I found out what he was. This was as far as I ever got, for I never found out who he was. Likely enough he wished to forget it himself, and I had no curiosity on that score. I knew as much about him in the first half hour as I ever knew.

He was an English gentleman who had drifted away from his bearings, and come

down in the world—just a piece of human wreckage. He did not, of course, say that he was a gentleman, but I saw it almost at a glance. There was no mistaking it. About him was that fine, curious, half-insolent air — that air that is called “manner.” Hardship and the humiliation of having to beg for his bread had not robbed him of this.

We tramped on and on for hours—past cornfields and peach orchards and forests. Now and then we saw in the distances stretches of the shining, silver waters of a bay. It was the Chesapeake Bay. The memory of that strange afternoon will always be with me. We talked of many things, the drift of which has since passed from me.

At last, when the sun began to sink, we came to a halt, and began to discuss as to where we should pass the night. Off over near a big farmhouse we sighted a haystack, and we determined to wait till it grew darker, and then to go and climb up into it. We lay down near the hedge, and when it was dark we crossed

the field cautiously to the haystack. We were afraid of dogs hearing us and setting up a -barking. We got there all right, and we climbed up into the fresh, clean hay. We had found a most delightful bed—a fragrant, refreshing bed, after the tramp of the day.

The cool, clear stars were shining above us.

When morning came we got down out of the haystack without being seen, and made a détour so as to approach the farmhouse from the front. Our idea was to ask the people there for breakfast. After we had done a little work they gave us breakfast. Then we started out again on the main road. We could have got work on the farm, but that hardly suited us, as our object was to get to Baltimore. Besides, the charm of tramping the road was upon us. Moving along through the changing open country was a much more alluring prospect than sticking at hard steady work.

At the time I met Billy I was all but an illiterate man—being hardly able to

read and write. But still I had had a wide experience of actual living, and knew something about men. Thus I was able to appreciate Billy at his full worth, though I am afraid my appreciation was of but little help to him. Of the two I alone was the gainer. I could give him nothing, whilst he gave me a great deal. It is a curious thing to meet with and be indebted to a man whose name even you don't know. But such was the case.

It was Billy who first gave me the idea of trying to educate myself. He did not do so knowingly, however. It was rather that I was struck with the great difference that lay between us. He had style; he knew things; he could express himself easily and surely. Though he was but a tramp like myself, still he had an advantage over me. True, this advantage had not been able to stop him from coming down in the world. But I felt it to be an advantage, nevertheless, and I longed to possess it, for it seemed to me that if I had it I would have a chance to raise myself.

It was a curious look that Billy gave me when I spoke of this to him. But he volunteered to help me.

I chanced to have in my pocket a little ten-cent dictionary. How or where I got it, I forget now. It was dog-eared and grimy, but it answered the purpose.

My first task was to learn to pronounce the big words in it properly. Billy would tell me the right pronunciation, and I would repeat and repeat it after him till at last I got it.

And so it went as we slowly tramped on our way to Baltimore. Billy took the greatest pains to teach me as much as possible. When I made a slip in speaking he would tell me of it and explain to me why it was a slip.

He went into the history of the world and of the nations of the world. He told me of the mysterious origins and vagaries of religion. He told me how the geologists had wrested from the earth and rocks their dim secrets.

These days were for me wonderful days.

We worked now and then at cutting corn or picking peaches. We wanted to have a little money by us when we got to Baltimore. The farmer would let us sleep at night in the barn. Sleeping on a warm night in a great, roomy barn is delightful. In the air is the cool fresh smell of the earth and its produce. How fine and refreshing is the smell of the earth! Why do people live in towns?

At daybreak the farmer would come and call us; and we would get up, lave our faces and hands in water, and go out into the field or orchard. After working an hour or so, we would come back hungry to breakfast; and then we would work on to dinner-time, and then on up to sunset. After sunset we would have supper and go back to the barn.

I liked the odd days we worked in the peach orchards best. The orchards were filled with an exquisite aroma. And the trees, with their green leaves and delicately-coloured, full fruit, looked so beautiful with the sun shining

through them. The farmer would allow us to take as much of the fruit as we wanted for ourselves.

At other times we would stop on our way to bathe in a stream. Then we would wash our clothes, spread them out in the sun, and lie down and wait for them to dry.

At last we were in Baltimore, a big town of busy streets and wharves, where lay ships of all descriptions. It was so different from the peaceful country, with its calm, glorious health. Here was nothing but rush and hurry, and unrest and foul air. Even the waters of the bay looked soiled and black from the wharves. I was sorry to be in the town. I thought of the pure air, and the clean, gliding stream-waters. The forest and wide fresh fields came up before me.

We had got into Baltimore the night before. We had been tramping all day and we were very tired, and all the money we had between us was a dollar and seventy-five cents. Billy

knew of a cheap lodging-house near the Lightstreet Wharf, and we went there. The keeper of it was a man named Murray, who gave Billy a cordial welcome. Billy had stayed in the lodging-house on and off for a long time.

Here one could get a bed for ten cents, and a meal for fifteen cents. In the house were two great rooms, or dormitories, which held fifty beds each. They were small, narrow beds—standing in two long rows—with a space of about a foot and a half between them. Every man slept with his clothes under his pillow. If this precaution were not taken one was apt to wake up and find either his money—if he had any—or part of his clothes gone.

Billy and I were lucky enough to pick up some work on the wharf, for which we were paid at the rate of twenty cents an hour. The work was rather hard—unloading freight from a ship—but it was more interesting than labouring work usually is.

During all this time Billy kept on

teaching me whenever he got a chance. I got some books, amongst which was a translation of Goethe's masterpiece, *Faust*. At once I learned off by heart the wonderful verses in the beginning of the poem, where the arch-angels address themselves to God. The sublimeness of the thoughts and words carried into my mind a great light. I felt myself awakening and growing. I began to see something beautiful even in the squalor around me.

Soon I had committed to memory nearly the whole of the great poem. I would repeat parts of it aloud to Billy, and he would explain to me the meaning of certain passages.

* * * * *

One night in the lodging-house I took Billy's part in a quarrel. A big, muscular fellow from New York was going to strike him. I interfered. This man had been talking disparagingly of England, and Billy had resented it, for, like all Englishman, he was proud of his country. I was not

much interested in the matter of hearing England abused—being of Irish blood myself—but I wasn't going to see Billy knocked about. His quarrel was my quarrel—in fact, more than my quarrel. I would have laid down my life for Billy, the Englishman. Besides, I saw that he would have no earthly chance in a fight with the big muscular American. Billy was not strong, and he was rather slow in his movements, not suitable at all for quick, rough fighting.

“Look here,” I said to the American, “you mustn't hit Billy. He's my partner.”

“Won't I, by God!” he exclaimed.

“No, you won't,” I said again, quietly. “You can't pick on him. I'm more your size. I'll fight you.”

Billy did not like me to interfere. “I'll fight my own battles,” he said. But I took no notice. “Come on,” I said to the American. “Strip off, and let's see what you can do.”

I pulled off my coat and shirt, and stood naked to the waist. Then I

tightened my belt. All the time I kept my eye peeled. I was on the lookout for a quick rush.

The American also got ready. The other men stood off around us, making a ring.

We were just about to get to work when Murray, the boss, came up into the big room. This stopped the thing at once. Murray was afraid of the police. And to tell the truth, I was rather glad of the interruption, as I had strong doubts as to whether or not I could polish off the big American.

* * * * *

Dear old Billy! "English Billy," as they used to call him. Years afterwards I was again in Baltimore, under totally different circumstances. I called at the common lodging-house to try and get some tidings of him. I was no longer a tramp. The world had grown easier for me. I had changed.

Murray was still at the old lodging-house. He was older and greyer. He wondered who it was who was asking

him about this English Billy who used to come and get a bed at his lodging-house. I could see that he had not the slightest idea as to who I was.

He could tell me nothing. Billy had gone away years ago.

VIII.—SHOVELLING

OF all the kinds of labouring work I have ever tackled, shovelling is the most trying and monotonous. It is work of the sheer, unadulterated order. If dignity goes with it—as it is alleged to go with all labouring work—I can only hazard the opinion that this dignity is of the most diaphanous and hard-to-be-perceived kind. It certainly escaped my power of observation.

Fellows have asserted to me that the navy was really fond of his shovelling. “Give him his pipe and his glass of beer in the evening, and he goes back to his work in the morning with joy.” This assertion has been made to me with varying degrees of emphasis, but truth compels me to add that the fellow who so asserted was not a navy—never had been a navy, and never was likely to be a

navvy. He was some leisured theoriser. Some wordful person. And it has always struck me that the ground upon which he based his assertion was about as solid and as easy to be seen as the alleged dignity which forms a halo around the art of shovelling and other kindred arts. Indeed, the only thing solid the assertion was based upon was the solidness of ignorance.

I have been a navvy, and have necessarily mixed with navvies a great deal, and I must bear witness to the fact that I have never heard one of them speak of his work in other than tones of disgust. Their eyes have been as blind as my own in the matter of seeing where the dignity came in.

My first essay at shovelling was in Columbus, Ohio. I had got a job of sniping on the railroad track. Sniping is nearly analogous to plate-laying in England. The difference is that the work is harder, and the hours longer, and the men are more bullied by the bosses. I fear me that the proud British

workman gets a surprise of the most unpleasant calibre when he tackles a job in America. He has to do twice the work for much about the same money—that is, when everything is considered.

But to my maiden experience in the art of shovelling.

Myself and an old Irishman were given a job together to load up cinders on to flat cars. We worked side by side, and the amount we shovelled, as compared with each other, could, of course, be told by the size of our respective heaps. The old Irishman was of the genuine type of labour-slave. His father and grandfather had most likely been labourers before him. It was in his blood. He was like a poor, used-up old horse at its last gasp, but still able to draw.

He was filled with a spirit of emulation, was the old Irishman, as he worked alongside of me. Here was I, a strong young man, whilst he was a man who was nearly at his end! I could see that he was thinking this as he bent himself to his work. He was ould, but he would

show the boss how well he could shovel! So he went at it as hard as he could.

There was no such spirit impelling me. I worked with calmness and ease, and rested now and then. The result was that after some hours there was a tremendous difference between our respective piles. To use a comparison, the old Irishman's pile looked like one of the Himalayan Mountains, while mine had the appearance of a hill of very modest height.

The boss came round, looked at the piles, and exploded with wrath. He, too, was an Irishman. "Look here," he shouted. "Look at this poor ould man—ould enough to be your grandfather! Look at his pile, and look at your pile! Yez ought to be ashamed of yourself to let an ould man bate ye!"

But I did not feel the sting of shame, and I let my lack of feeling be known to the boss. We had a sharp argument. During it, the old man shovelled harder than ever. A pleased look had come into his face. It was his moment of triumph.

The fact of his out-shovelling a strong young man and the boss noticing it was balm of Gilead to him.

The next time I had a go at shovelling I was in Cincinnati. A sewer was being dug in one of the main streets, and I was put on with some other men at seven in the morning. The night before I had wandered around the city, because I had no money to get a bed. I was hardly in a condition to begin work. Still, there was no alternative. It was either work or starve. Indeed, it was work and starve, too, for when twelve o'clock came—lunch time—I could get no lunch. I could not get a sub from the boss as a navvy could in England. It must always be remembered that the conditions surrounding labouring work in the States are much more pitiless than they are in England.

So there was nothing for it but to work all day without anything to eat. When we stopped at six in the evening I was hopeless as to being able to continue at the work, but, as good fortune

would have it, I was lucky enough to be taken by one of the timberers to his boarding-house. But for that I would have lost the work, and in addition to it my day's pay, for the contractor only paid once a month, and I could not have waited round for the sake of a dollar and a half. I have often known men in America to have to give up work because they could neither get food nor shelter.

The shovelling in this sewer was very hard work indeed. A system of "running" was in vogue there. There was a man in each gang of shovellers who was secretly paid a quarter of a dollar a day more than the rest. He would work, of course, as hard as he could, and anyone in the gang who could not or would not keep up with him was at once discharged. Added to this, the sun was burning the life out of one. I have seen poor, half-starved men have to give up work in less than an hour because the pace was so killing. This sort of murder-work gives the answer to the question as to why there are so many tramps in the

United States. I was glad when the end of the month came, and I was able to draw what money was coming to me and to go on my way.

Perhaps the hardest shovelling of all is the shovelling of sand. I had an experience of this in British Columbia. I worked there or four days unloading sand-scows in the harbour of Vancouver. The pay was thirty cents an hour—a rate of three dollars a day. After the first day's work I was so tired that I felt as if I could lie down and die. I had a strained, sore feeling all over my body. I was hardly able to eat my supper.

Right here I would like to explode the fallacy to the effect that extreme intellectual labour is more severe than extreme manual labour. I have tried both, and I must say that my verdict is, Give me intellectual labour every time. It is cleaner in the first place; in the second place there are no degrading conditions surrounding it; and, in the third place, it is certainly less monotonous. Again, the world attaches real dignity to in-

tellectual labour, while the dignity that is attached to manual labour smacks too much of the legendary and mythical. The people who prate of the superior exhaustive quality of brain labour are invariably people who have not tried both. They give forth their judgment with all the confidence of ignorance. To be just, however, I must admit that it is a politic thing to let the navy know all about the hardships of intellectual labour.

But let us go back to the art of shovelling sand. The reason that sand is so much harder work to shovel than gravel or cinders, or coal or clay, is because every time you sink your shovel into the sand you get exactly the same amount and weight upon it, and the efforts you have to make in pitching it off are absolutely uniform. Making the same effort of strength through several hours at a stretch is most tiring. The muscles get no chance to rest or recover. In the shovelling of clay or coal, or anything that breaks up unevenly, the

efforts made in pitching vary with the different weights and sizes that get upon the shovel. Slight though this difference may be, it still is enough to cause a continuous relaxing and tightening of the muscles. Thus the muscles get some chance to rest and recover through the variation of the efforts made. And at the end of the day a man is nothing near so tired as he would be after a day's work at shovelling sand.

In Vancouver I got a job with a road-making gang. I, with others, worked up the soil so that the stones could be laid. The soil was clay, and we shovelled it into the carts, which were drawn off by mules and dumped somewhere outside the town. We were paid at the rate of two dollars and a half a day. After working the first half day, I hit upon a scheme for making the shovelling easier. The clay was apt to stick, and one had to jerk the shovel hard in the pitching to get it off. This didn't suit me a little bit. My sole aim when I was navvying was to work as easily as I

possibly could without getting the sack. Thus when I pitched, I did not give the shovel the necessary jerk. The result was that it was always half-filled with clay. I only threw, therefore, half a shovelful into the cart at every pitch. I had, of course, a full shovel's weight to swing each time, but I saved the extra jerk. My method was decidedly immoral, as far as regard for the interest of the contractor was concerned, but it certainly possessed the tangible merit of being easier for myself. Shovelling hardly develops a feeling for ethics.

After a time, a man who works at shovelling will begin to find himself getting muscle-bound. I mean that he will find himself getting slow and stiff and clumsy in his movements. The reason for this is because a particular set of muscles are developed out of all proportion to the rest. The man who has become muscle-bound will find, if he ever gets into a fight, that he can give but a bad account of himself. He will be slow and awkward, and always

in the way of the other man's blows. He may be much stronger than his opponent, but he will be unable to strike a blow that is anywhere near in proportion to his strength. It grieves me to have to say that my once-upon-a-time comrade, the navy, is the easiest man going to beat in a fight. All you have to do is to keep out from him. And when you are prodding him for the good of his health, see that he doesn't get hold of you.

IX.—AT SHAFT 19

IT was late in the afternoon when I got a job at Shaft 19. The foreman, Tom Connelly, told me to come on with the night shift at seven o'clock, so I went over to the shanty to wait for supper, look round generally, and see which bunk I would have to sleep in. The bunks were arranged in the sleeping shanty in something after the same way that bunks are arranged in the fo'castle of a ship. In each were two blankets and a mattress.

I was glad when six o'clock came—supper-time—for I had not yet broken my fast that day, and I had walked up from New York into the bargain—a distance of about eighteen miles.

A Chinaman stood outside the door of the shanty where the meals were served. He was pounding on a gong.

Men rushed from every direction—from the mouth of the shaft, where a load of grimed navvies were pouring forth from the up-cage, from the sleeping-shanty, from all places around. They seemed to spring up out of the ground. The idea was to get to the first laying of the table. Missing it would mean that you would have to wait. I didn't miss it.

What a mob of us there was in the shanty! Eating and drinking and shouting and laughing and talking. They were a grimy mob, to be sure, but not a dirty mob. There is a difference between grime and dirt. The white races of the earth were nearly all represented. You heard English, French, German, and Russian spoken and shouted all at once. And other languages, too. It was a jolly, noisy crowd. Nothing of the down-trodden atmosphere about them. They had the magnetism that comes from actual contact with the earth.

The supper was good and wholesome, and there was plenty of it—cold, sliced meat, steaming hot coffee and tea, good

bread and butter, potatoes, sliced tomatoes that were delicious, and fragrant, sweet corn. I fell to like a wolf. After all, there is a lot in life when you can eat well and heartily. How the knives and forks and plates clashed and rattled! "Hey! John, bring us some more meat here!" a fellow would shout to the silent, busy, rushing Chinaman. You heard orders to this effect in badly-twisted languages of all kinds. I enjoyed that meal. After it I felt that I could tackle a mountain.

At seven o'clock I stood with a crowd of men in the cage. We were ready to go down the shaft. There were two cages. One went up as the other went down. The corners of them fitted into slides that were fastened along the straight, steep sides of the shaft. They were pulled up and let down by a powerful engine that stood off about thirty yards away. If the wire broke to which the cage was suspended, a powerful spring suddenly pushed out two immense steel claws or catches, which fastened on to the

big wooden beams lining the shaft. Thus the cage was held, and the men were saved from being dashed to death at the bottom. They could wait calmly till help came. So said the man who invented the spring and catches.

Suddenly we sank down into the thick black gloom of the shaft. Some of the crowd had candles, and little kettle-shaped tin oil lamps fastened in the front of their hats. These hats were shaped like sailors' sou'-westers, so as to keep the water which dripped from the roof of the tunnel from going down their necks. Candles and little lamps were lighted now as we were sinking down the shaft. I caught a blurred glimpse of a straight, threatening black wall, lined with huge timbers. I felt a sinking sensation in the pit of the stomach, and a whizzing in the head. The pace at which we were sinking was terrific. And it seemed as if we were never going to get to the bottom.

We stopped suddenly, after what seemed to me to be an eternity, though the shaft was but eight hundred feet deep.

Out of the cage we got, and we were now standing beneath the roof of the tunnel which ran north and south into the earth. One could hear in places the steady drip, drip of water. There were twenty-eight tunnels extending from Croton to New York. The human gnomes would burrow, burrow, north and south, north and south, till all the tunnels met and formed one great tunnel twenty-eight miles long. Through this tunnel water was to come from Croton for the people of New York to drink. It was a tremendous job, and thousands of men were at work. The contractors boarded them at the rate of four dollars a week, and a dollar and a half a day was the lowest wages paid.

As we stood in the tunnel we heard a clank! clank! It sounded weirdly and curiously through the stillness and darkness. It was a mule drawing a car along the line of short-gauge rails which ran along the floor of the tunnel from the north and south headings to the bottom of the shaft. The headings were the extreme points north and south to which

the drillers had pierced through the rock.

Now we were up in the north heading. We belonged to the north heading gang. We had tramped slowly along the tunnel about five hundred yards, and got our picks and shovels and drills and machines from a car on the way. Other men were following us from the next down-cage. Our light came from candles and lamps and torches ranged along the wall near us. A fitful, uncertain light, but enough for us to see to do the work. I was in the pick-and-shovel gang at the bottom of the bench—a huge mass of rock shaped like a step, on the top of which was the narrow heading where the machine men and their helpers were now getting into position their machines and drills.

At the foot of the bench was a great mass of broken rock, shattered out from the bench and heading by the dynamite-blast of the last shift. This we had to load into the car, which was drawn, when full, by the mule to the cage at the bottom of the shaft. Then it would be hoisted

up and dumped out on the ground on top. While the mule was away we were loading up another car, which we had pushed up ourselves from a little siding. The big pieces of rock we lifted into the car with our hands. We used our shovels for the small and crumbled pieces.

Up above us in the heading the machine drills were whirring, crunching and eating into the rock. Holes were being drilled at an angle from either side of the heading, so that the dynamite would blow out triangular sections of the rock. Holes were being drilled down perpendicularly into the bench. In awkward parts of the heading, or bench, where a machine drill could not be got to work, men were hand-drilling. Now and then I would look up and see flashing the bright, smooth faces of the seven-pound sledges as they were swung round and round by strong-armed, grimy men. Clang! clang! clang! The sledges were striking the heads of the steel hand-drills as they were being turned and held into the rock by peering, crouching men. Whirrrr — whirrrr —

whirrrr were going the machine-drills, driven by compressed air. It was a chaos of whirring and crunching and ringing of driven steel and hissing of the escaping exhaust of air and crushing of rocks into the car, and shouts of "Look out there!" as a fellow would pinch down with a lever a big piece of rock from the top of the bench. We would jump out of the way as the great, jagged rock crashed past us. Water was dripping, dripping down upon us from the roof. We had to look out for the roof, for now and then in the tunnels pieces fell from above and men were killed. But we didn't think of that much. We just worked and worked along.

There was a curious overpowering smell of earth penetrating everything. We were gnomes buried deep, deep down, fighting and crushing our way through the dark hidden rock. Fighting our way with steel and air and hammers and bursting frightful dynamite, and the power of blood and bone and muscle. We were gnomes gathered here from all parts of

the earth. We were working down in darkness and shadows and fitful glarings of light. We were as blind men fighting. We could see nothing but blackness, and solid, iron rock—rock old with the age of thousands upon thousands of centuries. We were slowly fighting in blackness. But for all that we were going in a line that was straight absolutely. And at the same time there were twenty - eight tunnels going as we were going—fifty-six headings in all. Fifty-six gangs of gnomes who in time would meet. And all were going in a straight line absolutely—guided by the sure, piercing eye of Science.

Hour after hour passed in the north heading of Shaft 19. The work was more interesting than navying work usually, so one hardly noticed the time going. The noise and the curious picturesqueness of the surroundings gave one a stimulus. You could carry on a shouting conversation with the fellow working alongside you. Even if you didn't know his language, at least you

could manage to exchange some ideas with him, for the navvies had a tunnel slang as sailors have a ship slang. Shaft 19 was not the first shaft at which I had worked, so I knew the ropes.

Twelve o'clock was upon us before we knew where we were, and we stopped to get something to eat. A cold luncheon was brought down for us in big baskets to the bottom of the shaft. We left the heading in a body, and walked down the tunnel, and sat on and around the down-cage to eat our grub. We washed it down with cold tea or water. Some of the fellows produced bottles of beer which they had stowed away in safe places. This meal was a quiet one. None of us had much to say. The spell of midnight, darkness, and gloom was falling upon us. The sudden silence after the noise and movement affected us. You would hardly believe that we were part of the same crowd who had had supper together at seven o'clock in the evening. If men spoke at all, they spoke in low, subdued tones. And the drip! drip! of the water

from the roof gave a weirdness to the overhanging silence.

It was one o'clock in the morning now, and we were back again in the heading. The work was going on as before, but there was a difference in the men. They were becoming so silent. And as one o'clock merged into two o'clock, and two o'clock into three o'clock, they were silent as ghosts. Men moved round like phantoms. They were swinging hammers and lifting rocks and using picks and shovels. But it was as if the life of the men had gone into the tools and rocks—as if they were but attendant ghosts.

At half-past five we had cleared up all the loose rocks. We were getting ready to blast. The drillers were sponging out the holes they had drilled through the long night. And then two wooden boxes, about a foot and a half square each, were carefully carried up into the heading. If a box fell from the arms of the man who was carrying it, it might mean sudden and frightful death for every man of us, for

each box was filled with dynamite. It was in the shape of big cartridges from ten to twelve inches long. Dynamite is an ugly thing to handle. One can never tell what amount of shock will set it off.

We loaded up the picks and shovels and drills and machines into two cars which we pushed down the tunnel far enough to be away from the actual destroying effect of the blast. Then we got some distance behind them, and waited. By this time the holes in the bench and heading were primed and filled, and the heading boss was standing near us ready to touch off the dynamite with an electric battery.

He touched it off.

I had been down in tunnels before when the dynamite had been set off by the connecting battery, and therefore knew what was coming. The best way to stand the tremendous, horrible shock was to let yourself go limp. If you braced yourself hard it was all the worse for you. The shock was all-seizing. Even your power of will could make no

headway against it. In fact, it would be better if you did not know it was coming at all. Imagine it! You were two hundred yards away from a terrific explosion that rushed along a space twenty by twenty feet, in a direct line. Its power was confined and kept intact just as is the exploding powder in the bore of a cannon. In fact, it was as if you were standing inside a gigantic cannon. You felt the shock of death without being dashed to death. Your body, your blood, your brain, your will were struck violently and horribly.

After the blast we got into the cage and went up into the clear morning air. It was summer-time, and the sun was up. It was fine to see and feel it after being down in the darkness for eleven hours. We washed ourselves and then went over to the shanty to get breakfast. And after that we turned in.

X.—IN PRISON

I

NEW ORLEANS is a picturesque town built upon a swamp. It lies in the form of a crescent round a bend of the Mississippi, the waters of which are eighteen inches higher than the level of the town. A levee has been built to protect it, but the inhabitants say that, some time or another, the town will be swept away by the over-rushing of the great river. Thus there is a shadow for ever hanging over New Orleans. But the town is gay and bright and full of life. It is a French town, that has become Americanised. Here gambling goes on—day in day out, night in night out, year in year out. Wheels whirr, balls roll, cards shuffle on for ever.

The gambling-houses are on Royal

Street. They are fitted up in luxurious fashion. They may be blamable institutions, but at least they are democratic. All may enter, it matters not how shabby the attire, or how disreputable and low down the appearance. If a man has no money to get himself a place to sleep at night, he may go in and sit down. He is welcome to share the light and warmth. The tramp may jostle elbows with the rich, well-groomed blood, and there is no one to censure or to eject. A man need not be ashamed of meanness of dress, for no one notices or criticises. The lust after gold is a passion that brings men to a common level.

How quaint and beautiful is the French Market! Here may be got the most delicious coffee in the world. Its effect upon one is like that of some rare old wine. It warms and soothes from crown to toe. An old negro, white-capped and white-aproned, may serve it to you across a stall. Around in the market is the hurry and bustle of buying and selling. But there is in the hurry and bustle a

suggestion of languor. It is not the hurry and bustle of the North. People pass, chattering the Creole patois; negroes cry out the merits of their wares in shrill, wheezy voices; flower-girls arrange and tie up bunches of flowers; horses and carts back and start again; drivers shower promiscuous benedictions; baskets are everywhere.

If you are hard up and hungry in this town, and you possess a dime, you may go to a saloon on the corner of Royal Street and get a sumptuous free lunch—as much as ever you can eat of the best food. A chef will serve you with a cut from the joint, and a dish of delicious soup if you get there between certain hours. I have gone into this saloon suffering from a twenty-four hours' fast, and I have come out into the street again full and satisfied, and at peace with the world in general.

Canal Street at night presents one of the most beautiful city sights of the world. It is very wide, and is lit up by electric lights, which shine from the tops

of columns. These columns stand in the centre of the street, extending along for miles. The effect of the lights piercing in a straight line through the distance is fine.

On the levee at night the negro roustabouts collect together and sing quaint, strange part-songs. Often they have fine voices, and the harmonic effects they get are peculiar and beautiful. They are a happy-go-lucky lot of fellows, who work like dogs during the day—for roustabouting on a Mississippi steamboat is the hardest work imaginable — and forget about it at night over their songs.

New Orleans! A strange town. Its air is bright and clear, and its sunshine full and golden. And beautiful orange trees are in the gardens. But in the air there lurks disease, dread and foul. In the clearness hangs death. Overhanging is the eternal threat of the river. But still is the town bright and gay—for it lies under the shadow of destruction.

* * * * *

In this town I spent a month in prison.

I was standing on the levee talking with two other sailors, when a policeman came along. He at once began to question us as to who we were, and what we were going to do, and how much money we had. I explained to him that we were on the look-out for a job of unloading freight from a ship, and that we had been working together lately on John Diamond's plantation. "No matter," he said. "How much money have you?" I had two dollars, and the other fellows had none. "If you can't show me that you have ten dollars apiece, I will arrest the three of you," concluded the policeman. I pointed out to him the injustice of the whole thing, and asked him if that were the way they did things in the "Land of the Free." But he was obdurate. When I found out that he was really going to do what he said, I had a notion to knock him down and get away. But there were other policemen in sight, and it would only have ended in our being shot. We submitted to the arrest.

We were taken, and that night we were shut up with some others in the calaboose on the levee. There were about twenty of us in all—negroes and white men. The fact of being arrested did not seem to weigh much on any of us. We were comforted by the curious philosophy that goes with poverty and misfortune. None of us had had the requisite ten dollars necessary to ensure us our liberty. So we made the best of it. I sent out for some beer with the two dollars I had—we were allowed this privilege if we paid for it—and we made merry. It is easy and natural to make merry with people who are in the same boat as yourself. We told stories, compared notes, and sang songs. One negro had a most beautiful voice. It was a voice of sweet, mournful timbre. Through it ran the sadness of the life of the slave. The man who sang had not been a slave, but he was born with the sense of the degradation of being flogged, and bought and sold. He sang “Carry me back to Ole Virginny”—the song of the slave who had been sold

away from the place where he was born. This negro sang more than anyone else. His voice seemed to chime in with the spirit of the situation. After all, we were nothing but white and black slaves together.

And so the night wore away.

It was not till a long time after that I learned the real reason of our arrest. It seems that an election was going on, and the party in power took the precaution of arresting all the strangers they could lay their hands on. They were afraid the other side would bribe them to vote. Such a simple thing as the stranger being an alien could be easily got over by supplying him with a name and an address. The buying and selling of votes is one of the staple industries of the United States. Why the party in power did not bribe the strangers themselves was rather a puzzle. It may have been that it was cheaper to clap them into gaol, for they would not only have to give them no money, but they could even make a profit on them while in prison

by charging up their maintenance to the State.

When we were brought up before the Justice the next morning, I spoke out stiff and strong. For the first time in my life I was proud to own that I was an Englishman. I said I was glad that Fate had so willed it that I had been born in the north of England. I had inherited a prejudice against everything English with my Irish blood. But now my prejudice had received a shock. After everything was said and done, England was absolutely the freest country in the world. She practised the principles of freedom, while America only boasted in a blatant way about them.

I talked like this to the Justice, but I am afraid that I only produced a bad impression upon him. Americans don't like their country or their institutions to be criticised.

We were sent to prison for a month.

II

IN prison, a man who is given to the habit of thinking passes through many mental stages. Shut off from the world outside, the whole of his mind as it were passes in review before him. He sees into its most obscure fold and depth. His imagination becomes freer—more powerful. The small, harsh world into which he has been thrown has no power to cramp it. He passes through a curious, ripening experience. The reason, or crime, for which he is made to suffer can have no effect upon him in the way of making him downcast, for it will require but a slight effort of his intellect to show him that he is being made a scapegoat—that he is being made to suffer because he has been bold enough to realise in action an idea he shares in common with other men. The partition that separates the criminal from what is called the honest man is made of the thinnest tissue paper imaginable.

III

I HAD committed no crime, but I realised that I was none the better for that. Better men than I had committed crime. In fact, I regretted bitterly that I had not done something. It was so stupid to be thrown into prison for nothing. The law punishes, but it certainly has no contempt for the desperate law-breaker. Indeed, it shows practically that it has a respect for him. But for the failures and hard-ups and unfortunates the law has not only punishment, but contempt.

There were about as many negroes as whites in this prison. The whites were herded together in two great cells. Where the negroes were put I don't know. In the daytime we shared in common the freedom of the big yard. The negroes and whites usually kept themselves apart, however. The race distinction was perhaps more sharply drawn here than in the world outside. There was a white captain of the yard

and a black captain of the yard—prisoners in favour with the chief warder, who were told off to keep order amongst the men of their respective races. These captains carried heavy clubs, and they had the power to knock down any man who was disorderly or insubordinate. There was no work for the prisoners to do beyond the cleaning out of the cells. This was unfortunate, for it made the time hang wearily on one's hands. We could talk with each other, however.

We wore the clothes in which we were sentenced. For food we were given a small loaf of bread each day, and a pint of alleged coffee in the morning and evening. The bread was nothing near enough to satisfy us. Everyone of us suffered from hunger. I was hungry during the whole month I was there. I used to wake up at night dreaming that I was eating plentifully. When we were eating the bread we would carefully watch for and pick up and eat the crumbs that fell. It is astonishing how delicious dry bread can taste when a man is really hungry.

To amuse themselves the warders would sometimes pitch loaves of bread to the prisoners. The sight was most sickening. Hungry white men and black men would sprawl and tumble in a heap together, fighting like wolves for the bread. The warders would stand off enjoying it. Now a nigger would clutch a loaf from a white man. Now the white man would tear it from him again. And as they fought they would send out sharp, clear, wolf-like cries.

There were about fifty men in the cell in which I was, and we governed ourselves—while in there—by a code of laws. These laws had been made by prisoners, and had been handed from one set to another for years. They were based on the same principles as the laws governing a country or any society—modified, of course, by the surroundings. We had a president, a judge, a sheriff, and other officers. If a man showed a particular aptitude for the exercise of any function, he was remembered for it, and when he came back again to the prison he was

elected to the office, if it were at all possible. The warders never interfered with the laws of the prisoners.

One of the laws of the cell was that no man should steal another's bread. The punishment for this crime was a severe flogging with a belt, "padding," as it was called. Whilst I was there, a man did steal another man's bread. He was found out and tried for the offence. The judge of the cell appointed me as counsel for the defence. The trial was rather long, and was as serious as a trial could be. The issue at stake was a grave one, and was treated in the same spirit that a grave issue would be in a recognised court of law.

The chief warden stood at the door of the cell, listening to the trial.

I cross-examined the witnesses for the prosecution. I must say that the judge allowed me rather a free hand. And in the end I won my case. My speech for the defence was applauded, and the man was let go.

IV

How clear and beautiful was the sky above us in the great yard where we spent the day! We would walk or lounge about, or sit down and tell each other our histories with the frankness of men under a common ban. There was one man in particular, who had spent a good deal of time in prisons. He was a burglar—a most intelligent-looking man, with blue eyes and an indomitable expression of face. He talked of burglary as a man would talk of any other profession. He knew every twist and turn of it—when to break into a house—the kind of house to break into, and so on. I could not help thinking that his was a profession which called into play a tremendous amount of daring and natural talent. The burglar had been ignominiously gathered in with the rest of us, because he, too, could not show ten dollars.

Also there was a young English fellow from Birmingham. He was little more

than a boy. He had a fine, open face, with blue eyes, a trifle hard. This young fellow had been a highway robber, and I seemed to take his fancy. He thought that we would do well if we took the road together. It took two, he explained, to hold up a man properly—one to cover him with the pistol, while the other saw that he turned out all his wealth. I must confess that the idea had for me a great charm. And at the worst I would have the consolation of knowing that I had got into gaol for doing something. Besides, one could live well, and there was the excitement of never knowing what would turn up next.

Though there was hardly any discipline, still the breaking of the few prison-rules that did exist was punished terribly. Men were bound up and tortured in a contrivance called the stocks. The stocks was really a rack. A man was tied up, laid upon it, and tortured by means of stretching and twisting the joints of his legs. The place where this racking was done was in a small shanty—

painted black—which stood off over in the corner of the yard. I never saw a man racked, but I have seen a man hustled into the shanty; and afterwards I have heard him groaning and screaming. The screaming of a man in agony is a thing that can never be forgotten.

The effect upon us as we listened to it in the yard was awful. We stood in groups, cowed and disheartened, for no one knew whose turn would come next. The cries of the tortured man seemed to get into the blood, and affect the beating of the heart. The cowed negroes and whites would look at each other fearfully. In these horrible moments even the sense of distinction of race was lost. We were fellow-prisoners before we were negroes or whites.

After being tortured the man would be taken to the hospital.

I came near being racked myself through having a quarrel with a negro. We had some dispute, and the negro called me “a white son of a ——.” Coming from the mouth of a black man, this

insult was the most odious imaginable. According to the feeling of white men in the Southern States I would have been justified in shooting him dead, if possible.

I stepped back, and then jumped at the negro, striking him twice in the face. He went down. Then I stood over him, ready to knock him down when he got up again. But here I made a mistake, for the negro, instead of getting up simply turned his body round and got upon his hands and knees. I had no idea what he was up to, and as I was backing away from him he suddenly flung his arms round my ankles, raised himself, and flung me clean over his head. Before I could realise it I was lying on my back, with the negro's weight upon me. Both my shoulders were touching flat on the ground, and try as I might I was unable to move. I was completely at my opponent's mercy. I had fallen a victim to a trick commonly practised by the roustabouts.

I looked up at the negro and waited. His fist was raised, but he didn't strike.

As I was wondering what would be the reason of this, he got up from me suddenly and helped me to my feet. The black man was magnanimous. He spared me.

The whole thing was over in a few seconds. For some reason or another the black captain of the yard—who was standing near—ignored the fight.

Just as the crowd that had collected around us was dispersing, the chief warder came running up. His eyes blazed as he laid his hand heavily on my shoulder. I was in for it, I thought. "Who struck first?" he demanded. The man who struck first would be the man to be racked!

"I did," I said.

I felt my time had come. I would be tortured. And fear came over me as I looked into the warder's face. "It's a damned good job you're a white man," he said, as he turned away. This was the end of the incident. My colour had saved me.

On Sundays we attended Divine Ser-

vice. We all looked forward to this, for it was a pleasure and a relief to feel that one was a man once more, if only for an hour. We knelt before the altar on the same terms as other men. And indeed the founder of our religion was One who was hard up and despised. His image was there before us, showing Him as He suffered an awful and ignominious death. He would have understood us absolutely. The Man whose name would live while the world lasted had been a tramp and a criminal.

Strange thoughts used to come into my mind as I listened to the rich, full tones of the organ playing in the little prison church. I wondered what I should do when I got out into the world again. Would it be better for me to work like a dog and a slave, or would it be better for me to go and rob and live easy, and take my chance? Or would some curious stroke of luck happen to me that would lift me out of my present groove? Honesty and labouring with the hands only brought degradation and contempt.

The society in which we lived was based upon the principle of theft. Not such theft as the burglar's theft, but mean, cowardly, safe theft. Christ would sooner have taken the hand of the burglar than the hand of the business man. The meanest and worst criminals got off scot-free. It was said that vengeance overtook them. But it was only said. As a rule the criminals who were put in prison were those whose crimes savoured somewhat of nobility. To conquer the world, cunning, fraud, and underhand violence had to be used. What was the use of blinking the fact? I thought. Ministers of religion were traitors who warped the teachings of Christ so that themselves and the State might profit.

Or could it be, I thought again, that to follow out the teaching of the Galilean was impossible? Could it be that cowardly theft and meanness, and lying, and underhand violence was the right thing after all? Was even the very essence of Religion but a subtle hypocrisy?



ONE day a murder was committed by one of the warders. I saw it done with my own eyes. Nothing was ever said about it. The body was trundled away, and no questions asked.

A prisoner was suffering from pellagra. He ought to have been sent at once to the hospital, but this warder thought it would be fun to give him a cold bath. He was taken into the bath-house, stripped, and a stream of Mississippi water was played upon him from the hose. To fully understand what effect this water would have if used even upon a strong man, I need only state that the water of the river was not far from freezing point, while the temperature of the air was about eighty degrees. The water must have been at least forty degrees colder than the surrounding air. Besides, the man was already in a weak, exhausted condition.

The warder played the hose upon him as he crouched and shivered in the bath,

and he was dead in less than a minute. I saw the whole thing, for I was in the bath-house at the time, cleaning up the floor. I knew the man was dead by the huddled-up way in which he was lying. The warder was still playing the hose upon him. "Let up," I said. "He's dead."

The warder stopped the hose and came over to the side of the bath. "Are you sure?" he asked me. "Isn't he shamming?"

I reached, and turned the dead man over on his side, and placed my hand over his heart. It was still. The man had gone.

"Dead as a stone," I said to the warder.

"Lift him out, then," he ordered.

I got into the bath and lifted out the body.

And this was the end of him. The warder's "Lift him out, then," was his burial service. Nothing more was said either about him or over him. A cart was brought, and I lifted the murdered man in, and he was trundled away, I

don't know where, just as if he were a dog.

* * * * *

Curiously enough, when the end of the month drew near, I did not feel as much elation as I thought I should feel at the prospect of getting my liberty again. I suppose in time one would get used to almost any set of surroundings. The thing that I thought of most was the chance I would have of getting a full meal again. To be hungry straight on end for a whole month is terrible. But where would I get the meal from when I did get out. I had no money, and there was no one to whom I could go in New Orleans. Still, I would be glad to have my liberty. But I had grown to like some of my fellow-prisoners. Going out would mean parting from them. I felt that I would drift away from the two men who would be let out with me on the same day. Companionship means a lot to a man who drifts about the world alone.

So when the morning came for my

release I felt rather sad. And somehow I felt afraid to face things again. The month's forced inaction had lessened my power of initiative. The surroundings and the bad food had taken the spirit out of me.

The young Birmingham fellow had gone out a couple of days before. He said he would be on hand to meet me when I came out. But I felt that this was rather a forlorn hope. Besides, it struck me that I had better face circumstances alone. And who could tell what might turn up? I might on the corner of a street find a purse! Then I would go and buy myself a good breakfast—a first-class breakfast—and after I would get myself some clothes. The ones I had on were common and shabby-looking. It would be a fine thing to walk around, clean, and feeling like a man once more.

My spirits began to rise.

I shook hands with my mates in the cell when the warder came to unlock the door. He called out my name with some others, and we followed him out into

the yard and into the office of the prison. Here, after some formality, we were let out through the great gate.

As I crossed the street a woman who was passing by looked at me curiously, and, I thought, pityingly. A feeling of shame came over me, and I hurried away as fast as I could.

XI.—NO MONEY!

I WAS puzzled as to what to do. The country was flooded, and there seemed to be no chance for me to go in the direction I wished to go. Water, water was everywhere—the yellow water of the Mississippi. The big river had made a twelve-hundred-yard crevasse in the levee below New Orleans. It was swallowing up the country from three directions—the south, the east, the west. The only way of escape was by a narrow strip of hill-land which ran to the north up into Texas.

I wanted to go east, to New Orleans. But between me and the town was a two-hundred-mile sheet of water. The water was so high that steamboats were plying over the country between Bayou Sale and New Orleans. Bayou Sale was the place where I was at. The fact

of the steamboats running to where I wanted to go did not help me, however. And there was a good and sufficient reason. I had no money to pay my fare.

I cursed my luck for being in Louisiana during the flood season. If things had been all right I could have tramped it. But to swim it was a large order. So I began to think.

Passing me were niggers and their families carrying what they could of their belongings up the narrow strip of hill-land. They were homeless. They had been flooded out. Those who had the money to pay their way were going to New Orleans on the steamboats. But the great majority of them were going up north—the way I didn't want to go.

Suddenly the way out of the difficulty flashed upon me. What a fool I had been! Why, it was as easy as rolling off a log.

A steamboat was to go to New Orleans in half an hour. She was moored to a

tree which stood on the top of a slight rise in the ground. The nigger roustabouts were getting freight aboard her, and the big white mate was blaspheming horribly at them—as was the custom.

I swaggered on to the steamboat with an air of lordly ease. You'd have thought I owned it. I nodded to the swearing, raucous-voiced mate. My plan was a simple one. The collector would not come round for fares till the boat had been out at least an hour. Then I would tell him calmly that I had no money. They couldn't put me off into the water—they couldn't turn back—and they couldn't eat me. The only danger was that they might have me arrested when we got to New Orleans. This would mean a month's imprisonment at least. But I had long ago realised that one must take some risks to get through life.

So I waited.

As the boat steamed along, one could see the awful desolation caused by the flood. The country had been covered

as with a great winding sheet. The sugar crop, houses, property, and everything else had been ruined. The bodies of horses and cows and sheep were floating about. They had either been left behind in the hurry, or had become unmanageable when the owners tried to drive them up on to the high land. Occasionally a wooden house was to be seen floating on its side. We passed by immersed towns and villages. All that was to be seen of them were the tops of the highest houses and the spires of their churches. It was a scene of ruin and desolation.

I was awakened from my reverie by the collector of fares. He was standing in front of me, waiting. The moment was at hand. The crisis had come. Now I must play my part.

I looked straight into his eyes, and smiled easily. "I have no money," I said in a calm, matter-of-fact way. I might have been speaking about the flood or the weather. I made the remark in a casual fashion.

He smiled also. He thought I was

joking, and Americans have always time for the appreciation of a joke. "Of course," he said. "That's all right, I guess. Come on. Shell out!" He had evidently seen my lordly swagger as I came on to the boat, and, putting two and two together, had come at once to the conclusion that when a man of that style and ease said he was hard up he was surely not in earnest.

But I gave him a second smile, and repeated my assertion. And then the smile died from his face. He grasped the situation, and became indignant.

"What in hell do you mean by coming aboard the boat, then?" he asked.

"My dear man," I replied, still smiling, "my reason for coming aboard the boat must be plain to you. As you will probably have noticed, the country is flooded. And I can't very well swim to New Orleans. I couldn't stop where I was, either. So I did the only thing left for me to do—I came on board."

"You take it damned easy."

“Of course. You don’t want me to weep about it, do you?”

“Do you know that we can put you in gaol for this?”

“Of course I know it. But I have weighed all that. Besides, one doesn’t know what’s going to happen. And, anyway, I’m not in gaol yet.”

He laughed a little. “You’re a beauty,” he remarked. “Ho!” he shouted to the blaspheming, raucous-voiced mate. “This fellow’s had the gall to come aboard without the money to pay his fare.”

The mate came forward and eyed me from head to foot. I eyed him too. He was a big, powerful fellow, with a brutal, hard face.

He let forth a torrent of blasphemy, winding up with “I’ve a good mind to knock hell out of you.”

I had taken the man’s measure; in fact, I had taken the measure of the whole situation. My only chance was in playing a stiff, cool, unafraid game. There was a risk of my getting used up, and getting into gaol into the bargain.

I decided instantly as to the handling of the mate.

"Look here," said I, going up close to him, and looking him straight and hard in the eyes. "Don't talk of knocking hell out of me. I'd like to see you or any other man on the boat try it on. If I've broken the law, I'll take the consequences when I get to New Orleans. I had to do what I did, and there's an end of it."

He glared at me, and moved slightly. But I kept my eye hard on his. Then his face softened a little. "Well, damn me, partner, but you've got grit, anyhow. Perhaps we won't go hard on you. Do you mind working your passage?" he concluded suddenly.

"Not a bit," I replied.

"All right. Come down into the stokehole and pass coal, and when we get to New Orleans you can help to unload freight."

He brought me down into the stokehole, and left me with the firemen—who, by the way, behaved very decently

to me. They were white men. A deck-hand had brought down news of how I had tackled the collector and the mate. As everyone was afraid of the mate, my stock went up.

They gave me a stiff pull of whisky—of which I was in need—and they gave me some grub. They wouldn't let me shovel any coal for them. I just lay and chatted till the journey's end.

When we got there I helped to unload the freight, as agreed. And when this was done, and I was going down the gang-plank, the mate called me back.

“Here's a quarter,” he said. “Get a drink.” And, taking the quarter with thanks, I went ashore, and faced up Royal Street. I was in New Orleans.

XII.—THROUGH THE ROCKIES

I HAD been sailing on Lake Ontario, and was loafing around Toronto, when suddenly an idea struck me to go out to the Rockies. Going was the easiest thing in the world. All one had to do was to pay the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company a dollar. For this they carried you to Fort Donald, in British Columbia—a place three thousand miles west of Toronto. Fort Donald was on the east side of the great mountain chain.

Carrying a man three thousand miles for a dollar seems to be a charitable sort of deed for a railway company to indulge in. But it wasn't so charitable, after all, when you came to look into it. They simply wanted to ship labourers into the Rockies so as to use them for the building of snow sheds. A snow shed is a great wooden platform built along the

Through the Rockies 153

mountain side for the purpose of keeping the snow from sliding down on to the railway track.

It took us five days to get to our destination, and five days' continuous railway travelling is no joke. The steady, swift rumble of the train, going hour after hour, day after day, night after night, got upon the nerves. I longed for the rolling of a sailing vessel, or even for the awkward pitching of a steamer in heavy weather. It seemed as if the smooth, grinding whirr of the wheels beneath us would go on for ever. Even when the train stopped at a station one could still feel this whirr. The brain had adopted the sensation permanently.

The country we passed through was wild and fine, and, above all, gave one an impression of vastness. A country of mountains and great rivers and lakes.

We stopped at a little town on the edge of Lake Superior. Here we got out of the train. I, with some others, climbed down the rocks to take a drink from the lake. The water was the clearest water

I had ever seen, and, although the sun shone out strongly, it was cold and fresh. Indeed, there was something death-like in its coldness. It stretched out wide and far like a great sea. Off out in it I could see the glint of deep, black blue, which tells of immense depth. It was a lake I would scarcely have liked to sail upon. A beautiful, forbidding vast lake, with chill, cold, deep waters. I had heard it said that whenever a sailor fell overboard from a steamer in Lake Superior no effort was made to stop and rescue him, for the life was chilled out of the man long before a boat could be lowered. The waters were so cold.

And then the train went on and on till it entered the stretching, immense, prairie.

I had never seen the prairie before. It seemed to me almost more wide and lone than the ocean itself. Looking out upon it brought upon one a sense of awe and stillness. A limitless grass-covered plain, stretching from horizon

Through the Rockies 155

to horizon, and seeming to begin and end in eternity.

At last we came to the foot-hills of the Rockies. We were nearing Fort Donald. And the foot-hills changed to great, rugged mountains.

Here we were at Fort Donald at last, and around us, rising higher and higher, were the Rockies!

There was nothing for us to do now but to go to work building the snow-sheds. If a man wouldn't work he wouldn't get anything to eat, and therein lay the true inwardness of the company's reason for carrying men three thousand miles for a dollar. When they were in Fort Donald the men had to work at the snow sheds whether they liked or not.

We were a mixed-up crowd, hailing from all parts of the world. And we got on well together, mainly because it was almost impossible for us to get whisky. Whisky is a bad thing. It makes a man forget that the other fellow is a man too. I've seen tough things done through drinking whisky.

A dollar and a half a day was our pay, and pay-day came once a month. They charged us three dollars and a half a week for board. The board was good—plenty of meat and bread and coffee and vegetables. The meals were served up in a sort of here-grab-this-when-I-throw-it-at-you way, but mountain air and hard work make a man able to forego silver and fine napery.

The work was rough, and we were kept at it ten hours a day. Some of us blasted out rock from the mountain side, while others were felling and sawing up big trees. Others again were now and then sent out to hunt for fresh meat. The mountains were full of big game.

We were called up at six in the morning, and by seven we had had breakfast and were just commencing work. At twelve we stopped an hour for dinner, and after that we kept on till six o'clock in the evening. By this time supper was ready, and after supper we would go over to the big wooden shanty, where we slept. There we smoked and told

all sorts of yarns till it was time to turn in.

Every man of us had a bunk to himself. This was furnished with a mattress, a hard pillow, and two blankets.

The crowd was interesting. The men had not only come from every place, but they had come from every class. Here was the man who had about him that curious air of self poise, the heritage of high birth and social advantage. And here was the poor, uncouth clod, born with the marks of labour slavery upon him. And here was the man who had left his country for his country's good. Taken as a whole, however, they impressed me as a crowd of good, hard men—a crowd that a strong man might lead to the freeing of a country, or to the crushing of a country.

I remember one fellow—he was an Englishman—who had a beautiful tenor voice. I shall never forget the first time I heard him sing. It was in the evening, when we were near to the end of our day's work. He and I had been working side by side in the pickaxe gang. Suddenly

he began to sing, and I was thrilled as I had never been thrilled before, or, indeed, since, though I have heard the finest Italian singers in the world. All of us stopped working at once. He was singing an old English song—a beautiful song, that will live while the white race lives. I can't describe the effect it had upon us out there—out there in the clear air of the wild, lone mountains.

I asked the Englishman a lot of questions after that, but he would tell me nothing. I have thought of him many times since. Who was he? What was he? and why was he there? Poor boy! Years have gone by since I heard his song in the Rockies.

I threw up work after two months' time, and found myself thirty dollars ahead. I wanted to get to the Pacific Coast. I had it in my mind to ship somewhere from Vancouver. But it was five hundred miles away, nearly a month's tramp.

For thirty dollars I could buy food at the Company's stores along the way. Thus the main difficulty of the journey was re-

Through the Rockies 159

moved. I was all right as long as I had money—that is, as far as getting away from the work was concerned.

One had to sleep out every night, to be sure, and to take chances on being done up either by the Indians or wild animals. But a hardy man will take big chances when he wants to be on the move. And, besides, I couldn't miss the Pacific Coast by any manner of means, for the Company's rails were laid two hundred miles of the way, and the right of way, where the rails had yet to be laid, would guide me right up the coast.

So I started one morning. I remember the morning well. It was clear and bright and beautiful—in the middle of June. I was so glad to get away from the monotonous labour, even though I was going to I knew not what. Hard labour is all very well to talk about, or to preach about, but doing it is quite a different thing.

My outfit consisted of a pair of blankets, which were strapped across my back, a pannikin, some biscuits and bacon, and

some coffee and sugar. And I was well heeled as far as weapons were concerned. I carried a forty-four calibred revolver and a broad sheath knife, and I had fifty cartridges in my ammunition belt. To my mind a revolver and a knife are the handiest weapons going—that is, if you've got to look out for a surprise, or a brush at close quarters. I wouldn't give the tenth part of a rap for a rifle. It is awkward to handle in a quick rush, and you are apt to get done up before you know where you are. No, give me a revolver or, better still, a good knife.

I suppose I ought to say something about the magnificent scenery of the Rockies, but, to tell the truth, at that time the scenery impressed me but little. It was great and wild and finely coloured. But I had had enough mountain scenery to last me a lifetime. I had been working hard in the middle of it for two months. The poetry had been knocked out of me.

Fine scenery doesn't impress a man much when he's hungry, or when he's

Through the Rockies 161

alone and tired and wondering if he'll get out of it alive. The lonesomeness of it all is what strikes him in a time like this. It is so terrible. It is hard to feel that you are absolutely and utterly alone—that you might fall down and die, and there would be no one round to hold a cup of water to your lips.

These frightful, lonely mountains made me think. I was face to face with things—face to face with myself. I used to listen to the tramp, tramp of my feet, and wonder where I was going, and why I was going. I knew I was going to the Pacific Coast—but what then? I had been going ever since I was a lad. And I was so tired of it all. What had I done that I should be a pariah and a labourer and a vagrant? It seemed to me that the main reason was because I belonged to the low, labouring class—the slave class. I had been thrown out into the world without education or any other advantage, and I had become a labourer on land and sea—a human buffet for the world's blows.

These and other thoughts used to come to me in the long, strange days—the days I was tramping through the mountains. And I felt so lonely, too. I began to despair. And one day I grew sick of the whole business, and I unslung my revolver and determined to take a rest for good and all. I had seen men shot through the brain, and I knew exactly what the effect was like. One jumped violently, and then one sank down like a rag, and over the face came a peaceful look. A distorted face is more apt to come from a jagged knife wound that lets the life out slowly.

I mapped it out, all out, in my mind, and I put the muzzle of the revolver under my right ear so as to get the base of the brain.

But just as I put my finger on the trigger I began to think in a way I had never thought before. My whole life, and everything I had done in it, suddenly came up before my mind. Everything was so clear and vivid. I seemed to see things from many sides at once.

Through the Rockies 163

This is the way that men think when they are drowning, I thought. And I brought down the muzzle of the revolver. But I intended to kill myself nevertheless. However, I'd try and analyse my feelings first. And I sat down on a log and wondered. Why shouldn't I kill myself? What was there before me but misery and hard knocks? People said that everyone in the world got at some time or another a square chance. Honestly, I felt that I had never had such a chance. I had been born in the mire, and I had stayed in the mire.

No, it had not been my own fault, I felt. I had been moulded and crushed to a certain shape by circumstances. I was no more to blame for being what I was than the Indian was to blame for being what he was, despite what any well-fed liar from the pulpit had to say about it.

And I stood up again and cursed the earth and everything in it. And I felt that the time would come when men of my breed—men from the gutter—would get even with it.

I put the muzzle of the revolver against my head for the second time, and then—well, something came over me. I couldn't tell what it was—I couldn't tell even to this day. It wasn't fear; it wasn't remorse. I just wanted to live—just wanted to live for no particular reason.

I suppose it was the lonesomeness of the whole thing that got me into this frame of mind. I saw faces, to be sure, at the company's stations, but it was only for a few moments—just long enough for me to buy what food I wanted.

Somehow, I think it would have been better for me if I had seen no one at all through the whole tramp. Then I might have got more used to being utterly alone.

I was never bothered at all by the Indians, though I saw them, too, occasionally; but they either paid no attention to me or they greeted me in a friendly way. I have been bothered by Indians at other times, though. As a rule Indians are all right if we white men will let them alone. They are not blessed with civilisa-

tion—but they never allow any of their tribe to starve as long as they have food to give them. They are much more Christian in this respect than we are. And still we send missionaries out to them.

One day, about noon-time, I heard a sound that froze me to the marrow with fear. It was a rattlesnake that had come out on to the middle of the track to sun itself. The bright steel of the rails had attracted it. Sbrrr! Sbrrr! Its rattle was going at a furious rate. The sound of my footsteps had disturbed it.

I had never seen a rattlesnake before, and after I had got over my first impulse of fear I began to study it. I knew it was a rattler because it tallied with the descriptions I had heard of it. Besides, it is well known that they are the only snakes in the North-west that will dispute the path with you. The other snakes glide away at the sound of a footstep.

Its head was raised about four inches from the ground, and was swaying to and fro. Its mouth was wide open, and out

of it the fangs were shooting. It wasn't coiled up, as you see snakes coiled up in pictures. Its colour was a sort of dirty dark grey. It must have been about five feet long.

The look in its eyes was enough to make a man turn sick and die.

I fired a shot at it, and though I broke the ground within an inch of it it never moved a peg out of the way. It still kept swaying its head and rattling. This touched me a little. The snake was game—and I like to come across anything that's game. You are not often allowed the privilege.

I was going to fire at it a second time, but I thought I'd let it alone. After all it was in its own country, and would harm no one if not bothered. I was an intruder there anyway. So I got off the track and walked half round it. I had to keep a close eye on it, however, for it wheeled slowly round with me, watching me.

When night came on, my plan was to collect a big pile of dried branches and

Through the Rockies 167

make a fire. Then I'd cook myself some grub, and after I had eaten I'd have a smoke. After my smoke I would spread a blanket on the ground, and lay my knife and revolver near where my head was going to rest, so that I could grab them at once if need be. I covered myself up with the other blankets just as I lay down, and then I would drop off to sleep before you could say Jack Robinson.

I didn't dream at all. I was too tired with the tramping and the monotony.

Sleeping out in the open air is the finest thing a man can do. You become as strong and as hard as an animal. People live too much in houses.

Just as dawn was breaking, I would waken up. Then I would cook my breakfast over the remains of the fire, eat, pack my blankets and get on the move.

After many days tramping I came to a little settlement on the north fork of the Fraser River. It was called Yale.

Though I didn't go much on scenery just then, I must say the look of the mountains here impressed me. It seemed to me as if I were in the biggest church one could think of—a church without a roof. The mountains were the biggest I had ever seen, and they stood up almost as straight as pillars. The tops of them were covered with snow, and half way down one of them was a glacier that had taken a thousand years to form.

Down in the valley the river tore along horribly. It was one of the ugliest and wickedest-looking pieces of water I had ever seen. If you fell in here you had no more chance of swimming than you would have in the Maelstrom. You were lost. It was more awful-looking than the mid-ocean in a hurricane, because beneath it all one could feel there was treachery.

Here I had a go at salmon fishing. I saw a Siwash Indian on the top of a rock hauling up salmon out of the rapids. His way of doing it was simple. He just thrust an immense landing net down

Through the Rockies 169

into the water, and a salmon would run into it. The water was packed with the fish. They were working their way up stream.

Three guy-ropes were fastened to the frame of the net to keep it steady in the rushing water. The ropes were hitched to a tree that stood off over on the bank.

Big salmon they were, too—some of them thirty-five and forty pounders. When one of them got into the net the Indian knew about it. It looked as if the guy-ropes were going to snap.

When the Indian hauled up the struggling, fighting salmon on to the top of the rock he brained it by giving it a light tap on the head with a small club.

I asked the Indian to let me have a try at it, and he did. The first salmon I hauled up nearly cost me my life, for it almost knocked me into the rapids, and once in the rapids I would have been smashed into smithereens on the rocks.

This salmon was a big fellow, and I was foolish enough to pick him up in my arms, just to see how strong an upstream salmon really was. I want no more of it. I thought I was grappling with a mountain lion. A man was nothing to it. I didn't know where I was. I only knew that I was getting a hard flinging about somewhere or another. I held on though, till the Indian got in one of his light taps on the head of the salmon. This soothed him.

I hauled up about twenty fish, and I must say it was great sport, and dangerous sport, too, for if you got knocked off the rocks it was all up with you.

At this part of my journey I had got a long way past the point where the company's rails were laid. I was in the right of way, or cutting, where the line had yet to come. My journey was nearly over. I had crossed the summit of the big mountain chain. From then on it was a gradual slope to the coast. The mountains got smaller. The lonesome feeling left me.

Through the Rockies 171

And one morning as I rounded the turn of a gorge I saw off in the distance a great shining stretch of water. It was the Pacific.

XIII.—MAXWELL

I

KAMLOOPS was a rough town. The men that drift here and there and everywhere had made it for the time their abiding place—for in the mountains beyond it was to be found gold. Few found it, though ; and as I was not one of that few, I had to go to work on the railroad which was being built away out through the mountains. I was in the gang that laid the steel.

The work was lively. Four of us had to pick up and carry thirty-foot steel rails in a hot sun. Three dollars and a half a day was the rate at which we were paid. We got our wages on the fifteenth of every month, and when the money came we took a day or so off to spend it. We painted Kamloops red while it lasted, and hard things used to happen. I re-

member when the Marshal and his deputies got fresh, and arrested Bruce for just nothing at all. He was a nice fellow—a University man—but I suppose he had cut up rough at home in England, and had had to get out. I felt sorry to have to see him go along with the Marshal and his men, but they had got the drop on us, and in that country it was shoot if you moved. The crowd had been a trifle noisy in Kelly's saloon—that was all. But that night six or seven of us heeled ourselves, and made for the calaboose. With an axe I smashed in the door, and we got Bruce out. The Marshal and his gang interfered, to be sure. But that's neither here nor there.

We lived in batches of six or seven in small rough log-houses, which we called "shacks," and which we built ourselves. One of us would stay at home and cook the grub while the rest were working on the track. At this we took turn about.

One night, as we were smoking our pipes round the fire, two men came up to the door of our shack. They were in

soldier's uniform, and they frankly told us that they had deserted from Indian Creek, a post two hundred miles away. Their object, they said, was to get to the United States, where they would be safe. We sympathised with them, and did our level best to make them comfortable. One gave his name as Cox, the other as Maxwell.

They said they belonged to Toronto, Canada, where they had enlisted. They had deserted from the post because the discipline was hard. Maxwell could not have been more than twenty years old. He was tall, well formed, and had a fine, frank face. Altogether, he was a young fellow whose appearance one would be apt to like. He was home-sick, spoke of his mother and his wish to see her, but that it would be impossible now that he was a deserter. He would have to try his luck in the States. I felt sorry for him.

Cox might have been twenty-five years old. He was of middle height and of a wiry build. He had keen black eyes, and a foxy expression of face.

Their next point was Yale, a place thirty

miles away, They hoped to reach it by the following night.

After smoking and chatting awhile, all hands, including the deserters, turned in. We were tired.

Morning came, and with it a complication. Jimmy Murphy strongly objected to our guests leaving. And as he had twenty dollars planted away since last month's pay-day, he proposed a holiday. Rails would be laid after we were dead, he said.

Our guests, not being able to withstand his logic, stayed, and we had a roaring time. On in the afternoon we got a boat, and rowed out into Kamloops Lake. Full of whisky and the devil, I jumped on the gunwale of the boat, and overturned it. Luckily, all hands could swim. As for myself, filled with a crazy notion, I faced for the centre of the lake, which at this point was a good deal over a mile wide. I felt the sudden sense of great power that often comes to the drunken. I would have hurled myself into a Niagara, or into a hell.

I was swimming to certain death, for close to the lake's centre was a powerful current, which would have carried me down into the rapids, where I would have been torn to pieces on sharp, jutting rocks. But I had not gone very far before I was clutched by the collar, and dragged round. It was Maxwell, who had swum after me. He saw the danger my mad spell was bringing me to. He brought me to reason, and I turned, and swam back with him. To him I owe my life.

The next day came, and we went back to work. The soldiers left us to go on to Yale.

II

Two months after this I was singing in the Globe Hotel in Vancouver. The hotel in the evening was turned into a concert hall, and I was engaged as a baritone. I had a fair voice, and I knew something of music. I sang on the stage

in the same rough sailor rig I had worn when working on the railroad. Singing was easier than laying rails.

I got on well with the audience. They were indeed a mixed-up, cosmopolitan crowd — hailing from everywhere. But the tie of the vagabond bound them all together. And they were good fellows, who would share up with the stranger.

After singing I got big applause. I sang again. Then I went in amongst the audience and sat down with some fellows I knew to take a drink. I was hardly seated before I was touched on the shoulder. I turned round. It was Cox. He had got rid of his uniform.

“By God, Reddy!” he exclaimed. “You’ve got a great voice.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” I said. “Sit down and have a drink. Where’s your pardner, Maxwell?”

His face changed colour.

“Maxwell,” he repeated after me, as he looked at me curiously. “Haven’t you heard?”

“Heard what?”

“Why—he’s condemned to be hung.”

“Hung—hung!” I said, slowly. “What for?” and I looked straight at him.

“Why—he and two other fellows were tried and condemned to death in New Westminster for knocking a man cold and taking away his money in Yale.”

“Oh, yes!” interrupted one of the men sitting at the table. “You mean the young, good-looking fellow who deserted from Indian Creek. He’s going to be hung with the other two—I can’t remember their names—next week. Why Reddy”—to me—“you must have been asleep not to have heard about it.”

“Yes,” put in another, “and I think the trial was a damned fraud, anyway. The old circumstantial evidence gag, you know. The men were in the neighbourhood at the time of the murder, and a numbskull of a doctor said that their clothes were spattered with human blood. I guess they’re done for, anyway. I’ll bet my head to a cent, though, that the Indians killed the man.”

I sat there, not knowing what to say.

I was bewildered. My head was turning. Why I was so affected was rather a mystery to me, for often in my various knockings round in tough, out-of-the-way places I had seen men fight and kill each other for nothing at all. I had become hardened to scenes of violence. But for this young fellow who had got into trouble I felt a liking from the first I saw of him. I had often thought of him. There was something fine in his face. Besides, he had saved my life.

I said to Cox :

“The boy has come across a tough streak of luck. Where did you leave him?”

“Oh, about two or three days after we were with you in the shack,” he answered. “We got to Yale on the night of the day we started from you fellows. We had hard work to make it, though. Thirty miles isn’t easy. The next day after we got there Maxwell got on a tear, and the day after that, as he wouldn’t leave Yale, I left him there. You know I was scared. I didn’t know what minute the troopers from Indian Creek would be on our necks.

The next time I saw him was when they were trying him for murder in New Westminster."

"It's a wonder they didn't pull you, too," remarked someone.

"Well, I guess they would have," said Cox, "only that I wasn't round Yale when the thing happened. But, say, boys, I'm going. So long, Reddy. See you again, some time."

He rose and walked to the door. I followed him, and, laying my hand upon his shoulder, said :

"Say, Cox, can't you tell me anything more about Maxwell? What you've told me about him has upset me—knocked me out. Where are you going? And when shall I see you again?"

"Well, I'm goin' to get out of here at four o'clock in the morning on a schooner to Tacoma. You see, I've got to get into the States, for I'm liable to be pulled here any minute for desertion. I'm sorry I mentioned Indian Creek over at table yonder. You can't tell who's round. Besides, to tell you the God's truth, I'm

dead skeary about this business of Maxwell's. I wasn't round at the time, I know, but then nobody knows what's going to happen."

"Well, then," said I, "if that's the case, you'd better get right out. It's none of my business where you were. But I'm sorry about Maxwell. Do you think he was in it?"

"I don't; I'm certain he wasn't. He's a good fellow, and, anyway, the killing was too mean a business for a soldier to be mixed up in. Why the man was found with his head battered in, and his body all smashed up. The doctor said it was the work of a club, and that was about the only true thing he did say."

I looked at him.

"I wonder if anything could be done for Maxwell?" I asked.

"I don't know."

"When was the murder committed?"

"The papers say on June the 10th, about midday,"

"I think I'll try and see Maxwell," I said.

“Well, you’ll find him in the penitentiary at New Westminster. I don’t think, though, that they’ll let you in to see him. But, so long, Reddy, I’ve got to go,” and he disappeared.

All night long I couldn’t sleep.

I kept seeing Maxwell’s face. I could see its softened expression as he talked of his home away off in Canada, where his mother sorrowed for him. Again I could see its determined look as he pulled me around in my mad swim in Kamloops Lake. The boy was surely no coward, and this murder was low and cowardly. He had nothing to do with it—not he! And if he had—well, I couldn’t bear to think of that.

No, it must have been the work of someone else. He was around when they were going to make an arrest, and so he had got into the scrape. The trouble was this; the limbs of the law wanted to show how clever they were in ferreting out murder on the frontier. I had known policemen, marshals, and others like them, to put up a job on an innocent man,

and have him hung solely for the purpose of showing that they were smart.

On the morning of the next day I made full inquiries. To my surprise, the first thing I found out was that Cox had made a mistake as to the date. The murder had been committed, not on June the 10th, but on June the 11th.

And the names of the men who were convicted along with Maxwell were Derosé and Connors. The only evidence that the law had against them was the fact of a marshal swearing to the seeing of them in Yale on the day of the murder. Added to this was the doctor's unsupported assertion that their clothes were stained with human blood.

All the while I was thinking of the whole business, the date which Cox had given me of the day of the murder kept continually coming to me. The 10th of June, the 10th of June, seemed to ring in my ears. It was the wrong date, and why it should come to me so persistently was puzzling. Something curious was working in my mind. I stopped

thinking of the murder, and tried to analyse it.

Suddenly a light broke in on me. Where was I on the 10th of June? This question seemed all at once to be put to me by something outside myself. "Where were you? Where were you? Where were you?" it said.

As if to answer it, a series of mind-pictures flashed before me. They were intensely vivid, and presented the happenings of that day at Kamloops Lake.

I had it! I saw it all! On the 10th of June Maxwell was with us at the shack. It was the day when I jumped on the gunwale of the boat and overturned it. On the midday of the 11th, the time of the murder, it was impossible for him to have been in Yale. He and Cox must have been only six or eight miles from Kamloops, for, as I now remembered, they had not left us till nine o'clock that morning, and by no chance could they have reached Yale before late that night. The Canadian Pacific right of way was ugly travelling, and, as no rails had at

that time been laid past Kamloops, they must have had to walk every step of the way.

My heart gave a leap. Here was a clear case of alibi. I could save the boy. Jimmy Murphy was in town, and he could back up my testimony. So I determined to go and see the Governor of the penitentiary in New Westminster, and lay the case before him.

But was I sure of all this? Yes! I remembered distinctly that four days after Cox and Maxwell had left us we were paid off, and our pay-day was on the fifteenth of every month. After that Murphy and I had tramped it to Vancouver.

I soon found Murphy, and I told him all about it, and of my intention to go and see the Governor of the penitentiary. Murphy remembered the date of Maxwell's stay with us as exactly as I did, and he said that he would help me all he could. By this time some wind of my intention had got round amongst the boys, and there was quite an excitement.

I started for New Westminster.

New Westminster was just twelve miles from Vancouver, and the road to it lay through a thick, dark forest. In three hours I was there.

After a lot of difficulty I was granted an interview with the Governor. He had been a colonel in the British Army, and was a man with cold blue eyes and a strong face. He listened to what I had to say, and after some thought, granted me permission to see Maxwell.

I was to see him that night in the presence of two gaolers, and to talk to him as to his whereabouts at the time of the murder. If he supported what I had said, without receiving any cue, the Governor would see about taking further steps.

When night came I was brought to the door of his cell. I felt nervous and curious as the door opened. I entered.

There was Maxwell. He was heavily manacled, but stood up in a bold, erect way. The manacles, which he grasped firmly with his left hand, so that he could

move easily, had a blue glister. They looked new.

He looked better — handsomer than when I had seen him last. But his eyes were shining strangely.

“Who is this?” he asked, pointing to me.

“It’s a friend of yours, who has come to see if he can do you any good, said one of the gaolers.

“Maxwell,” I said, stepping forward, and holding out my hand.

As I spoke he recognised me.

“Oh, it’s you—Reddy,” taking my hand. “I’m glad to see you.”

I said nothing, but I looked into his eyes.

The gaoler then hinted to him in a cautious way the reason of my visit, and said it might benefit him to answer my questions.

‘Certainly,’ he said. “I can’t be any worse off than I am. What do you want to ask me, Reddy?”

I looked at him again. “You remember Kamloops?” I said.

"Yes! I swam after you in the lake
He smiled slightly. "Where's Murphy
and the other boys?"

"Oh, Murphy's in Vancouver, and I
don't know where the rest drifted to," said
I. And we talked on in this strain for
a little while.

"Maxwell, I'd like to speak to you
about your whereabouts on the 11th of
June," I said.

The gaolers looked keenly at us both.
They were looking to see that I didn't
give Maxwell any sign as to the way he
should answer my question.

Maxwell suddenly sat down on his
bed. He covered his face with his
hands. The manacles gave a clank.
"The dates! The dates!" he muttered,
in an unsteady way, "They run before
me."

He looked up again. His face was
convulsing with mania. I understood
now the meaning of the look that I had
noticed in his eyes when I entered the
cell. He was mad, and his madness
hinged on the idea of this date—the date

that had occurred to me so suddenly and strangely when I was thinking of him the day before in Vancouver. My question had set him off. He rose up and shouted out :—

“On the 11th of June, at the time of the murder, I was in Yale. But I am innocent. Who are you who asks me questions? Damn you all! Get out of here!” And he sprang at one of the gaolers and knocked him down.

He was got under, after a hard and dangerous scuffle.

The next day I went to the Governor again, and asserted that Maxwell's saying that he was in Yale at the time of the murder was due to the giving way of his mind through the strain put upon him, and that I and others could prove that his being there was an impossibility.

“The man admits that he was there at the time,” the Governor said, coldly, “and that is the end of it.”

This was all the satisfaction I could get. I went back to Vancouver and told Murphy. We were all broke up over it

knowing as we did that he must be innocent.

Afterwards we learned that Maxwell's sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, because of insanity. I left Vancouver soon after, and since then I have drifted about and seen and known many strange things.

But I have often wondered and thought about Maxwell.

XIV.—SIMILAKAMEEN

I

I LEFT Yokohama one April on the barque *Seraph*. She was 1700 tons burthen, and was bound for Vancouver with a cargo of tea. I was one of the crew, which, all told, counted ten hands. We had quite a slow and uninteresting time of it, as she was a typical lime-juicer, and I need hardly say that we were elated when, after a trip of seventy-five days, we rounded Cape Flattery and entered the Straits of Juan de Fuca.

Perhaps I ought to explain that a lime-juicer is a deep-water or long-voyage ship, where you get nothing but your pound and your pint, and where you get lime-juice for the good of your health. The lime-juice is alleged to be a preventative against scurvy, and I must say that the taste of

it is ugly enough to prevent anything. The captains and mates of this class of vessel are invariably crusted cranks who have forgotten all about everything but sheets and ropes and sails and the tricks of wind and water and weather. The salt has entered their souls.

However, we were in the Straits, and a pilot boarded us and brought us carefully up the Gulf of Georgia and into the harbour of Vancouver. Here we were turned loose upon the unsuspecting town.

In a day the wealth I had amassed at lime-juicing had withered, so I had to turn to and get some kind of a job. There was a great deal of building going on in the town, and I got work at carrying the hod.

There is a great deal of knack in carrying the hod. You have at once to be a powerful man, and a man gifted with a nice sense of balance. Really it is the most artistic form of labouring work I have ever had the good fortune to indulge in. If you don't step just so upon the ladder or scaffolding, or lean forward just

so, you and the hod will fall overboard. But I am not going to say anything against hod-carrying. All that I will say is that it is work of an extremely interesting nature.

It was while I was carrying the hod that I heard of Similakameen. Miners came along with Arabian Nights' stories of how gold could be picked up there by the handful. And the thirst for wealth came upon me so strongly that carrying the hod began to lose for me its fascination. The delights that attended the slow climbing of a steep ladder with a heavy load upon my shoulder began to pall. I thought I might as well go off and make a fortune with the rest of them.

But a difficulty presented itself. I had not enough money to buy myself an outfit, for the time-check which the boss considerately presented to me for my prowess at carrying the hod only amounted to ten dollars, and, to make things more interesting still, I found that I could only get seven dollars for the check when I came to cash it at a store.

An outfit, at the most meagre reckoning, meant the possession of a pair of blankets, a pickaxe and shovel, a fine wire sieve, a good knife, and a revolver or a Winchester rifle. Added to this, there was the getting of bacon and flour and whisky, and the fare to Fort Hope. No, seven dollars wouldn't even gaze upon it.

My visions of quick, easy wealth were becoming beautifully dim, and I was fluctuating on the ragged edge of despair, when who should come along but my shipmate, Bob—one of the lads who had come over with me from Yokohama on the *Seraph*. We talked matters over, and I found that he, too, had developed an intense thirst for the wealth to be gained in Similakameen. This was good, but, what was much better and still more to the point, was the fact that the night before he had made a big winning in a saloon at draw-poker. He was able to get an outfit and to spare, and he generously proposed that we should become partners. He would get me my outfit, he said. Thus was the difficulty surmounted.

Similakameen, where the wealth was patiently waiting for us, was a mining camp, situated right in the heart of the Selkirk Mountains. It was four hundred miles away from Vancouver.

Our first point to make was Fort Hope. With this end in view we walked over to New Westminster, where we were to take a steamer up the Fraser River.

We had to wait a few hours for the steamer, and we put in the time by telling each other all we would do when we got back with our load of gold dust. "Nuggets as well," Bob would reiterate to me. "Pure nuggets. They're up there as big as your fist. It won't be all dust we'll have to carry." Then we would go off into a long discussion as to which was the easier to carry, nuggets or dust.

At last we were aboard the steamer and on our way to Fort Hope. We had found out that we were not going to have Similakameen all to ourselves. There were others, as the saying goes. The steamer was simply crowded with men of all kinds—rough and smooth and otherwise. I

heard a great deal of talk, and got a vast number of tips about gold and its getting.

Everybody seemed to be giving everybody else valuable points. I heard many and wonderful schemes put forward for the turning of streams from their courses so as to get at the gold-laden sand which lay over the bed rock. There was gold in the bed of every stream and river in the world, one man averred. In fact, this man—who was a little wild in the eyes—put forward a scheme for the turning off of the Fraser River—a river of tremendous volume and quick flow, and three miles wide in places. His eyes grew a little wilder when I volunteered the opinion that at least his scheme had the merit of being big.

Fort Hope was something over two hundred miles from Vancouver, and here it was that our journey began in earnest. We got off the steamer, and after going three or four miles we were confronted with a tote-trail, which seemed to run sheer up over the tops of the mountains. A tote-trail is made by Indians as they

tote, or carry, provisions and merchandise along and over places that are inaccessible for pack-horses and mules.

However, the whole crowd of us began to string up the trail. We were only one hundred and eighty miles from Similakameen; but this hundred and eighty miles wanted a lot of doing, for, besides ourselves, we had our blankets and weapons and bacon and flour to carry—and one or two other things, including ammunition and whisky. In a big, broken-up mountain-country whisky is invaluable. Indeed, a gold-hunter would as soon think of forgetting his flour bag as his big leathern whisky flask.

We could make no more than twelve miles a day at the outside, for the trail was something woeful. Sometimes I would sit down and wonder where I was at. Gold was all very well, I used to think, as I wiped my brow, but this trail was going it a bit too stiff. Even the sanguine Bob had to admit that we were earning the “nuggets.”

When night was coming on we used

to look round and collect wood to make a fire. Then we would fry some bacon, and make flapjacks with flour and water. When supper was over we would light our pipes, and smoke and talk. Our last preparation for the night was to put a rope in the form of a circle around the place where we were going to sleep. Our reason for doing this was that if snakes crawled towards us during the night they would stop with their heads at the rope—go around the circle—and then go away again. Snakes will do this. I don't know the reason why. It may be that they fear if they pass over the rope they will get into a trap.

When we got the rope fixed, we would wrap ourselves up in our blankets, and lie down, turning our feet Indian-fashion to the fire. We were so tired that we would fall asleep the instant we stretched ourselves out. At the break of dawn we would get up, make our breakfast, load ourselves up with our blankets and things, and go on our way.

After the first day or so along the trail

we stopped talking about what we would do when we got the gold.

Besides being hard, the trail was often most dangerous. It was trying to the nerves to have to crawl slowly with our loads—on a narrow ledge—along the face of a precipice that sheered down thousands of feet. And usually there was a strong, high wind blowing. Often I shuddered, and wondered what would happen next.

The wind would almost seem to claw at us—as if it wanted to drag us down to an awful death.

Miles out down the great mountains we could always see the glint of some torrent—a sharp, sinister, white line. Again we would see in the far distance small specks moving along the trail. They were men like ourselves, going on to Similakameen for gold. They were before us and behind us. All moving slowly on. On in quest of gold.

We were in the wild, hard country of the Chilkats—the Indians who always kill. Many of us would leave our bones here. A few of us would come back

laden with gold. And we were all going slowly on.

It surely was not altogether the idea of eventually getting gold that bound us to this terrible trail. With it was blended the instinct that prompts white men to voluntarily put themselves in the way of hardships and difficulties so that they may surmount them.

After all, it was a fine thing to fight along mile after mile through the clouds. It was a fine thing to feel that one was doing something that was hard and worthy of achievement. It was something to climb across an almost inaccessible mountain chain to this Similakameen, even if in the end we did not get the gold! If we died—well, other men had died before us! Other men's bones had lain whitening. We were not the first men who had gone off and grappled danger in search of treasure. If Fate willed it that we were not to come back, what of it? It was as good to die one way as another.

How glorious and terrible were the

mountains! And how silent. The distant roar of the torrents seemed but to make more clear this strange, universal silence. We passed through gloomy, terrifying, vast canyons. We saw glaciers hundreds of years old giving forth the rays of the sun in a shimmering blaze of wonderful colours.

North of us lay the great Klondike region. And north of this again lay the immense trackless region of the Midnight Sun.

II

AT last we had got to our journey's end. We were in Similakameen. The first thing we did was to stake out our claim. There was not much difficulty about this, as the limbs of the law, who sweat miners, and make it awkward for them, had not as yet got up into the mountains. The camp had not become important enough, and, besides, the journey was an ugly one. Some of the men with whom we had started in the steamer had got in before

us. Others were still straggling behind in the distance.

We rested for a day or so, as we were used up through the hardships we had endured along the trail. It had taken us sixteen days to come the hundred and eighty miles.

The camp lay around the banks of a creek, and the mining done was of the most primitive kind—placer mining. Getting machinery up to a place like this for the purpose of crushing ore was of course quite out of the question. It was bad enough to get flour up, for every ounce of it had to be carried on the backs of Indians. The loads were fastened on to their backs with broad bands which were arranged so as to pass around their foreheads. This way of arranging the load brought into play the powerful muscles of the neck, and was a great help to the Indian in the carrying of his load up steep and awkward places. It was simply a utilising of the force a man exerts when he throws his head forward in the effort of climbing.

A thing that struck us hard when we

first got into camp was the fact that flour was a dollar and a half a pound. Bacon was something fabulous, and not to be thought of for a moment. And, as we had already made a heavy inroad into our stock of provisions, we began to get nervous. Bob, however, had some money left, and he bought twenty pounds of flour at the store. We would have to take our chances of eking it out by hunting and fishing.

When I made inquiries from the other miners concerning the big finds, I found that imagination had helped out the stories I had heard in Vancouver. True, one or two men had struck big paying pans, but there were lots of fellows who had struck nothing. Many had left the place, and when I asked why we had not met them I was told that they had gone off for the Fraser River along another trail. Miners have a feeling against going back on the same trail. If possible, they will find another.

Going to work was quite simple. All we had to do was to build a rough wooden

cradle, and fasten across the top of it the sieve we had brought with us from Vancouver. Beneath this we had fixed a piece of blanket to catch a certain heavy, black, slimy sand as it oozed through the sieve. The gold dust was in this sand.

When we were ready, I dug up a shovelful of sand and gravel from the side of the creek, and pitched it into the sieve on the top of the cradle. Bob immediately reached down his scoop into the stream, lifted the water, and poured it slowly over the sand and gravel, rocking the cradle gently as he did so. When the fine, heavy sand had sifted through, he detached the sieve, and threw away the gravel and coarse sand. Then I threw in another shovelful or so, and exactly the same operation was gone through again.

This was placer mining.

We were at it the whole of the day. Sometimes Bob would take the shovel and I the rocker for a change. Men were scattered along the banks of the creek, working as we were working, for nearly a mile.

When night was coming on we stopped, lifted off the sieve, took the blanket gently out of the cradle, and brought it over to the shack we had built for ourselves. Here we dried it thoroughly at the fire outside the front of the door. When dry, we shook the sand out of it carefully, and afterwards ran quicksilver through it to attract the gold. When we melted off the quicksilver the next day, there before our eyes was the precious dust. It did us good to see it. True, there were none of Bob's "nuggets" in it, but still it was gold. We could easily get the little heap on to the point of a knife—a little, dull, heavy, yellow heap. Through it ran a few little pieces about the size of a pin-head. "Your nuggets," I said to Bob. He laughed as he carefully put the dust away into a little gold-bag. Then, with a will, we went to work again, cradling and washing the sand.

For the first few days we did very well, and once Bob actually did find a little nugget that weighed something over half an ounce. He was wild with excitement over it, and so, indeed, was I. We looked

at it eagerly, and passed it one to the other several times, and tried hard to persuade ourselves that it was heavier than it really was. We could tell that it was pure gold right through—that there was no hard, structural alloy running through it—for it was soft enough to give a little when we squeezed it between the thumb and fingers.

This placer mining was the most exciting work I had ever done. After all, we could never tell what we were going to find. Whenever I sank my shovel into the sand there was no knowing whether or not I might heave a nugget the size of my fist into the sieve. Other men had done so, and why not I? It was delightful to feel that perhaps I was lifting up on my shovel a piece of gold the size of many Spanish doubloons. Whilst I was digging I was always thinking of gold doubloons. The treasure I had read of in the stories of the old pirates and the treasure I was seeking after here in the mountains ran together in my mind. The work was a bit hard and steady, but I never minded that. It appealed to the profound love of

chance that I shared in common with other men.

There was no fear now of our running out of provisions, at any rate for a time. At the store the gold dust was taken just as money would be taken. And we were able to indulge in the extreme luxury of bacon. They had finely adjusted scales to weigh the dust, and it was a sight to watch the miners looking over and under and around these scales to see if the balance was absolutely true. Fellows spoke of ounces and half-ounces and quarter-ounces of gold as they would of so many pounds or dollars.

At night poker was played a great deal in the store, and when we got enough dust ahead Bob went and took a hand in the game. His usual good luck was with him. This poker-playing helped out our digging immensely. I must say that Bob was the luckiest man at cards I have ever known.

Curiously enough, there was never a row over the game. In fact, there was never a row in the whole camp while we were there. The reason for this was simple.

A row would mean business, for every man was armed for all he was worth. Someone would surely have been killed. So the result was peace and amity amongst a crowd who were in the main hard men. And right here I must say that a mining camp in any part of the world is as a rule peaceful before the limbs of the law come into it to extort blackmail from the miners for themselves and their Governments. It is the police who invariably provoke the rows. Any man who has been in gold rushes will attest to this.

Now and then a couple of miners would start away from camp to go over the trail off to Vancouver or Port Moody. They had made their pile. On such an occasion we would get together to see them off, and give them a parting cheer for luck. But oftener men were going away who had struck next to nothing, and who were leaving because they had had enough of it. In these cases we would club together to get them some bacon and flour and ammunition if they were short. The primal conditions under which we lived

made us realise that it was our duty to relieve when possible the necessities of others. And it was not done with the air of bestowing a favour. It was done simply and as a matter of course.

Sometimes Bob and I would take a day off and scour around for game. It was as well not to be buying too much grub at the store. Though it was a big game country, it was awkward to stalk the game, so we had to confine our attention to birds. One of the men in the next claim to us lent Bob a shot-gun with the understanding that we were to whack up our kill with them. We provided the ammunition, which ran frightfully high at the store. Quails were what we used to get mostly, and we got a good few of them, owing mainly, I suppose, to the fact of the gun being of a large bore, and to the spreading of the shot in the air.

Our claim gave forth a small, steady yield. Bob's "nuggets" never arrived. The worth of the pans through the whole of the day averaged about sixty dollars. Out of this, of course, a good deal had to

go for provisions. The men who kept the store were the fellows who really got the bulk of the gold. They took no risks, but simply charged famine prices for everything. To bring things to Similkameen was, to be sure, most expensive, but, like all middlemen, they took a double and treble advantage of it. They neither got the gold nor did they tote the provisions. They just sat tight, and skimmed the fat from the pot.

However, Bob still kept up his form at poker, and this stood us in good stead. Winning gold in the store from the other miners was not perhaps so romantic as getting it out of the earth in nuggets—but still it served.

After awhile our claim began to thin out, and we went further up the creek, and staked out another. Here our luck was something about the same as it was in the first claim—just a small, steady yield. Still, there was no use in repining, for there were lots of fellows who struck hardly anything at all.

We worked on for about six or seven

weeks, and then we began to think of making tracks for the Fraser River. It was the end of August, and it was just as well to be getting back while the good weather lasted.

And one morning we counted things up, and found that we would have four thousand dollars' worth of dust clear after getting a stock of grub and ammunition—two thousand dollars apiece. What with Bob's skill at poker and our joint toil we had not done so badly after all.

And the next day we packed up and started from Similakameen.

XV.—THE CHILKATS

BOB and I were in a hopeful mood as we went back along the trail. True, we had not made our fortune, but we had managed to get to Similakameen all right, and to come away with something into the bargain. Our work, of course, was still cut out for us, but we had made the main point, which really was to go and see what the place looked like. The possibility of getting a fortune had only an incidental bearing on the project. At least, that was the way it appeared to us now as we talked the matter over. Bob laughed over his "nuggets," and said that we had enough to carry over the trail as it was.

The trail we were taking was one that skirted to the north. We had been told

by Siwashes who toted provisions into camp that it was easier than the one we had come by. We found this to be a fact. The only drawback was that it would run us on to the north fork of the Fraser River instead of running us out at Fort Hope. This would mean perhaps delay in getting a boat down the river. However we chanced it. One cannot have everything. Besides, the trail was new to us.

After we had been out three or four days we came across two men who were returning after prospecting to the north. They told us of having struck a place rich in pay dirt, but that it was impossible to work it because the water was too far away. This is one of the difficulties in gold-hunting. Besides finding the gold in paying quantities one must also find the water to wash it out.

These men, who were Canadians, also told us a piece of news they had heard that made us feel anxious. It was to the effect that the Chilkats were "out." This meant that our bones would stand a good

chance of lying in the mountains if they came upon us, for the Chilkats were hard, savage, fighting Indians. They were a different race altogether from the Siwashes, who were, generally speaking, inoffensive, and amenable to the missionaries. A Chilkat was as ugly and as dangerous on the warpath as a Sioux Indian. However, to do them justice, they never went out without being given a good reason for it in some way or another by white men. But this thought was rather cold comfort just then.

The Canadians and ourselves decided to keep together on the trail. Four would have a better chance of standing off a rush than two.

We kept the sharpest look-out just as we were going in or going out of a canyon. Then was the greatest danger of falling into an ambush, for the Chilkats were in the habit of posting themselves amongst the big rocks that lay around the mouth. Here they would lie in wait for days for white men to come along. They could not only hear men coming along the trail, when they were miles and miles away,

but they could tell how many were coming. It was said they did this by going up into a certain part of the canyon and listening. Sound acts in a strange way in the mountains, and the Indians knew the mountains and their ways absolutely.

Going through these gloomy canyons filled us with dread. They looked so dark and evil, and tremendous. And so still. It was when we were in the middle of one that our nerves were strung to the hardest tension. Death seemed to be hanging about us—to be ahead of us—to be behind us. The vengeance of the Indians seemed to be lurking in the immense, sinister shadows thrown down upon us from the vast, black walls of the canyon. It is terrible to live momentarily in expectation of violent death.

At night when we lay down we did not build a fire. It was not a safe thing to do, for a fire is seen a long way through the mountains. We used to go off three or four hundred yards from the trail. Each of us took a turn at standing watch whilst

the rest slept in their blankets. But at night—as long as we had no fire—we were fairly safe. The danger was in the daytime.

But in time men will get used to anything, and at last we got used to the idea of being rushed at any moment. We began to be ourselves—to laugh and joke and talk. Perhaps the Chilkats were not “out” at all! It might have been but a false report. And our spirits rose as we tramped along. Men can't stay at a tension for ever. If the Chilkats wanted us they would come for us!

However, we kept up the same sharp, constant watch.

We were getting well over the trail. In five or six days more we would be at the north fork of the Fraser. Here we would be all right. We could get to Fort Hope without any trouble, for, as luck would have it, the Canadians knew a half-breed who had a boat big enough to take us all down the river. From there Bob and I could go over to Vancouver or Port

Moody, and have a little time with the gold we had brought from Similakameen. I suggested to Bob that perhaps we might as well pay for a passage to Europe before we had the "time," so as to see what going as a passenger was like. But Bob didn't see it. And one of the Canadians said he wouldn't live in Europe if he were given a town in it for nothing. The North-west was good enough for him! He had lived in it for twenty years! He was very sore on civilisation, was this Canadian. He said that in it men were most cruel to one another. They were worse than the Chilkats, who were, maybe, trailing us now to kill us!

I was in the thick of a strong argument with him as to this assertion when Bob, who was going on in front, made a sign to us. We knew at once what was up. The Chilkats were coming down upon us! We were in for it. As there were only four of us, they would be sure to try and rush us. "Down!" shouted Bob, throwing himself flat. We dropped, too, barely in time to miss a volley that seemed to come

from everywhere. It was hardly the place where we would have expected the Chilkats, for we were nowhere near a canyon.

We stayed down flat for a few seconds—it is hard to hit a man when he is lying prone on the ground—and then all at once there broke out a most horrible whooping and screeching. Still, we could see no one as yet. The screeching was enough to upset one, but by this time we had got a hold upon ourselves. We would work for all we were able. The bad part of it was, however, that we were not under cover, and it would not have paid to try and get to it. Where the Chilkats were it was hard to tell. Indians can hide behind nothing. The noise seemed to be going on all around us. “I don’t think there’s so many of ’em after all,” said the Canadian with whom I had been having the argument.

Suddenly an Indian seemed to spring up out of the ground. He was hardly over twenty feet from us, and was rushing full at us with a yell, when the Canadian raised

himself easily and dropped him with his Winchester. The ball had gone through his body, and he fell over on his face. The knife he had brandished shot out of his hand towards us, and Bob grabbed it. "Up! Up!" I shouted—and we were up to meet the rush, back to back. They came for us, yelling—wild, savage-faced men, clad in skins and leggings. They had dropped their guns, and were on us with their knives. It was then that I found out that there is no weapon like a revolver of big calibre for close, sharp work.

* * * * *

The whole thing was over. The Canadian was right. There were not so many Indians, after all—no more than a dozen, but they made noise enough for a hundred. Poor old Canadian! He was gone. A big Indian had knifed the life out of him. It was a slashing up-stroke. The Canadian would have been all right, but somehow the barrel of his Winchester got in his way when the Indian was close up to him, and, as he was trying to turn,

the knife went into him. This Indian gave more trouble than all the rest put together. After finishing the Canadian, he gave Bob a jab in the shoulder, and would have finished him, too, only that I got in on him in time with the revolver. When he was out of the way the fight slackened, and finally what was left of the Chilkats drew off.

I took Bob's coat off, and, getting out my needle and thread, I stitched up the slash in his shoulder as well as I could. He was nearly done up through loss of blood. The Canadian's partner was crying over him. They had been together ten years, and it took him hard to see him dead. He was lying close to the big Chilkat, and the worst of it was we had to leave him as he lay. We could not dig a grave for him, for there was nothing but rock all around us. And, again, it would not do for us to wait about too much, for the Chilkats might come back again.

Again we were on the trail. This time we had to go very slowly on account of

Bob. I was beginning to be afraid about him. He seemed to get weaker all the time. A wounded man needs rest above everything else, and we were not able to take it. We had to walk him slowly between us.

The Chilkats did not bother us again.

When we were two days' journey from the north fork of the river we fell in with an English hunting party who were very kind to us, and who helped us out. They gave me some quinine for Bob and some linen to make a proper bandage for his wound. Only for meeting them I'm afraid he would have gone under.

Finally we got to the north fork. We stayed here for a day or so with the half-breed whom the Canadian knew. Then he took the three of us down the river to Fort Hope. The voyage in the boat did us good.

I was glad when the whole thing was over and I had got Bob safe to Vancouver. There he had to go on the sick list for a

time. When he was right again we went over to Victoria to take our ease and to put the boys on the best way of going to Similakameen.

XVI.—FROM VICTORIA TO NANAIMO

IN the old days people took life very easily at Victoria, in Vancouver Island. They opened their shops late in the morning, and closed them up early in the afternoon. Over their dinners they lingered long. They smoked to soothe themselves, and talked calmly about nothing in particular. If there were not enough holidays in the year they made more, so as to supply properly their strong demand for rest. Food was very cheap and easy to get, and white labour commanded a high price. The Siwash Indian sold the game he had killed to the white man for next to nothing. It cost almost less for a deer bought from him than it would to buy enough powder and shot to kill it. Salmon was still cheaper and easier to get. This

state of affairs was, to be sure, favourable to the inhabitants, for their command of that good and sufficient amount of leisure which poets and philosophers say is so necessary for man's best development.

Bob and I got to Victoria when the old days had slipped as it were into the new days—a trick they have. The former restful state of affairs had passed away. The hurry-up spirit of the near-by United States had crept, or rather rushed, into the town. Everybody was hustling. Men were more plentiful, and labour was cheaper. The shops opened early and closed late. The people were forgetting to linger, and they had stopped studding the year with holidays. The men who had a yearning for leisure were gradually being forced to leave town and go up into the northern part of the island. There they could live with the Siwashes and do nothing but fish a little, hunt a little, and laze and smoke to their heart's content. This Victoria was the finest town in all British Columbia. About thirteen thousand people lived in it. The hurry-up

and rush-around spirit had resulted in the giving to it of straight, paved highways and drives. The better the roads the swifter the rush, evidently became the motto of the people, who had arrived at the conclusion that it was necessary for the well-being and happiness to try their level best to get twenty-five hours' time out of the twenty-four.

The Chinese were well represented here. They had on the face of it arrived at the conclusion that there were flowerier places even than the Flowery Land, and that this was one of them. They washed clothes, cooked, did light labouring work, and, above all, looked unpicturesque. They were an unstartling and uninteresting lot. They embodied prosaicism. The Victorians were always grumbling about them. They said that when they came to a country they carried hard times with them on their backs. The assertion was quite true, mainly because the white capitalist used them as a means to grind down and starve to death his white brother. In the long-winded, bitter dis-

cussions I heard about them no one ever brought out this point. Neither did anyone mention the fact that gold-greedy white men smuggled them across frontiers and through harbours in defiance of their own laws and exclusion acts.

Just before the close of the restful epoch, Victoria, I heard, was a rather trying place to live in. The old-timers said it was the rendezvous of outlaws, off-colour adventurers, and other kindred gentry who had departed in haste from different parts of the world for the good of their health. An old white-whiskered Victorian, who did me the honour of taking a drink with me, told me that the gold-find in Similakameen attracted them, and that Victoria was their stopping-off place. I was not aware that Similakameen had been known so long, but I listened with the respect that is due to the aged, and when I thought that the time was ripe I asked him to have another drink. He took the drink, and then went on to tell me that these fellows were always raising rows and ructions, maiming and

killing each other, and breaking the peace generally. They had little time for work, and plenty of time for fighting. As soon as they made a stake at the placer mines, he said, they would come in and spend it, and call the town to witness that they were spending it. At this I suggested to the old-timer that they must have been a desirable acquisition to the regular population in the sense of affording an element of excitement to off-set and balance the easiness and sleepiness of the town. The old man paused, and thought a little. But I can't say he rose to my suggestion. Instead, he asserted that it would have been all right and proper if these fellows had only fought with and exterminated one another, but now and then they had the nerve to turn their attentions to the old-time inhabitants. The result was that they were suppressed vigorously. They found to their cost that the old-timers knew a thing or two more about fighting than they did.

At this the aged, white-whiskered man finished his drink.

Not long after this Bob and I found ourselves strapped. Making valiant efforts to relieve the Saharan thirst of bar-room crowds soon eased us of what we had brought from Similakameen. Fellows would listen admiringly to our recitals of our adventures along the trail, and then calmly borrow from us.

So we left for Vancouver.

Here I went to the Globe Hotel and made a borrow from Ben Woods, the proprietor. Then it was that Bob conceived the brilliant idea of going over to Nanaimo, a town in the northern part of Vancouver Island. The brilliancy of the idea lay in the fact that we had never been there.

Before we thought of starting, however, we took the precaution of spending the money I had borrowed. Then we worked our passage across the straits on a big freight sloop.

It was beginning to snow when we got to Nanaimo, and things began to look rather bad for us. The town had a mouldered and worn appearance, due, I suppose, to the incessant rains. On the

coast in British Columbia it rains steadily for at least five months in the year.

It was a dull wooden grey town; and it was snowing in it; and night was coming on and Bob and I had no money. We walked dolefully along the main street trying to think as to ways and means. A knotty problem was before us. Where should we get something to eat, and where should we sleep that night? We had our blankets with us, but going outside the town to sleep out was not to be thought of. It was snowing.

We had got to the end of the street, and were standing for a moment. Over across the way was a saloon with windows well lit up, and looking altogether cheerful—an oasis in the midst of darkness and snow and damp. How we would have liked to have gone in! But, alas! we hadn't the price. I could not help but think of the money we had flung around so freely when we were telling the fellows in Victoria all about things. The thought was a useless one—though it did bear most exasperatingly upon the point. I

turned it over in my mind, or, rather, it turned itself over in my mind. If—but the if was a big one.

Men were going into the saloon, for it was Saturday night, and they were coming to invest part of their wages in a little jollity and sociability. Round about Nanaimo were coal mines, and these were the miners. I could tell that they were coal-miners by the set and walk of them, for I belonged to the North of England, where one is in the habit of seeing them about.

Bob and I still gazed yearningly at the saloon. Neither of us said a word.

All at once an idea broke in on me. It was a simple idea, but the more I examined it the more luminous it got. I turned and said a few words to Bob, and he grinned with approval.

We walked across the road and into the saloon.

A lot of men were drinking at the bar. Yes, they were all coal-miners, and the most of them were men from the north of England. There was no mistaking

their strong, hard-looking frames and intelligent faces.

"Mates," said I, in a loud voice, "me and my mate here have just come over from Vancouver. Before that we were in Similakameen, but luck was against us, and we had it rough coming over the trail. If you don't mind, I'd like to sing you a song or two. If anyone likes to give a trifle after, we should be thankful. My mate here will go round. I come from the north of England."

I had struck the right note.

"Wheer abouts does tha' come from?" said one man, in a broad Lancashire accent. "Monchester," I said, with a smile. "Eh, lad," he said, as he grasped my hand, "tha' knows Bowton. Ah come from theer. Thee and thy mate come and have a sup wi' me." He ordered drinks for us.

We were all right. We had got to the oasis.

It turned out that there were several Lancashire men in the crowd. It did me good to hear the good old broad burr

again. A man who belonged to Heywood—"Yowwood," he called it—treated us next. He had been away from Lancashire for twenty years, but his accent was as rich as if he had only left it the day before. We were getting on swimmingly. It turned out that the landlord also was a Lancashire man. To use a placherism, we had struck big paying pans.

After this I sang.

My first song was "Tom Bowling." Many of them had often heard it sung in the Old Country. They applauded when I had finished. "Hey, lad, that's good!" said the man from "Bowton," and the drinks were again in evidence. Then the landlord asked us if we were hungry, and when we said we were, he brought us back into the parlour, and gave us a big supper. He was a jolly-looking, hearty man, was the landlord—a typical, red-faced, old English tavern landlord. He looked as if he might have been suddenly dropped into this far-away place from "Owdham" or "Bowton."

After supper I was in great form, and

sang several more songs in the bar-room. Then Bob went round with the hat. He collected over fifteen dollars. We were all right. And that night we went over and slept at the house of the man from "Bowton."

XVII.—WITH THE INDIANS

THE man from "Bowton" said that he would get us a job in the coal mines. But that hardly suited us. Toil in the open air was bad enough, but toil down in the darkness of the mine was something to get away from altogether. So I explained to our friend that we were sailors, and therefore accustomed to good, strong, fresh air. Besides, Bob's lungs were in a delicate condition, I added. Bob's looks hardly bore out my statement, and I was afraid the man from "Bowton" would comment upon the fact. However, to our relief, he let the subject of work drop.

Whilst we were in Nanaimo we came within an ace of being Shanghaied. Being Shanghaied means being taken aboard a vessel against your will—when she is on

the point of sailing—and being forced to do a sailor's work upon her, Men are usually Shanghaied when they are drunk, or when they are drugged, as the case may be. The thing often happens in a wharf grogery. A man is hustled out when he is half unconscious, put aboard a boat, and taken over to the vessel which is lying outside ready to make sail. This way of getting a ship its complement of hands is practised more on the Pacific Coast than anywhere else. The custom originated in Shanghai.

When the game was tried upon Bob and myself we were neither drunk nor drugged. It was the day but one after my singing for the Lancashire men in the saloon, and we were holding on as tight as we could to the money Bob had collected, for we wanted it to buy flour and bacon to take with us to Departure Bay.

The game was played in a simple and original way. A man—who looked like a stevedore—stopped us on the main

street, and asked us if we wanted a job unloading a ship at forty cents an hour. We said we did, and he told us to come along with him. He went down to the edge of the wharf, where he got into a yawl, bidding us do the same. Then he pulled straight out into the bay. I thought it rather curious that the ship we were going to work on was not tied up to the wharf, but for the moment I said nothing.

He went on pulling out farther and farther. Finally, I thought that the time was ripe for Bob and myself to get a little light on the subject. I asked the man where the ship was. He shipped an oar, and pointed to a vessel that lay off half a mile away. "Out there," he said. I looked at her. She was a big, full-rigged ship. The man bent himself to his oars again—pulling strong. I thought a little, and then I dropped to the whole scheme. He was out to Shanghai us! Once aboard the full-rigger we would have a job to get ashore again!

"Belay," I said to him. "Turn back."

He stopped pulling, and said: "It's all right. Don't you want the job?" I laughed, and Bob laughed. "No," I replied, "we don't want the job just yet." But the man was a bit obstinate. He told us that it was all right, and that he would have to pull us there anyhow. At this I stood up in the boat, and asked him if he could swim. He knew what I meant, and he turned back at once.

When we got on the wharf again I turned round and struck him in the face.

Departure Bay was only six miles away from Nanaimo, and we walked up there after we had bought some provisions at a store. Our plan was to find a deserted shack on the edge of the forest and ensconce ourselves there for the winter. We would have an easy time of it there along with the Siwash Indians who lived round about. Bob and I had heard such a lot about them and the calm life that they led that we thought it would be as well if we took it on for a time. White

men in Victoria had told us that there were lots of shacks lying around that fellows had deserted after the life had palled upon them.

It turned out as we had been told. We did find a suitable shack. And also we found quite a number of white men who were living with the Indians. Many of them had taken squaws for their wives. They were most hospitable, and lent us the pots and pans we needed. One old man had lived there for twenty years. He gave the life big praise. He said he wouldn't live in civilisation now for anything. There was nothing for it but to work all your days like a dog, and die in the end like a cur! His talk put me in mind of the talk of the poor old Canadian who was knifed by the big Chilkat.

These Siwash Indians were in no way like the Chilkats, who were big, strapping, straight fellows, with savage eyes. The Siwashes were small, stockily-built men, with flat, mild faces. They liked white men, and tolerated the missionaries who

gave them religion mixed with presents. Some of them were the quaintest-looking little men I had ever set eyes upon. With their tall, conical hats made out of bark, they looked exactly like large gnomes. One could imagine them stepping up from out of the earth.

Their language sounded most strange. It was an odd, moist language that seemed to be without consonants. It was hard for a white man to get the hang of it. When talking to a Siwash one had usually to fall back upon Chenook. Chenook was a polyglot language invented by the traders so that they might the more easily do the different tribes of Indians out of all they had. This language only contained about three hundred words, and was easy to learn.

Soon after we got fixed up comfortably in our shack, all of us white men were invited by the Siwashes to assist in a most curious ceremony—that is, it was most curious from the standpoint of practical, civilised ethics.

A potlatch was given. A potlatch was

a big feast, and it was got up in the following manner:—A Siwash would save up all he could for years. Sometimes, indeed, he would be saving up all his life. He would deny himself everything so as to be able to gather together wealth of all kinds — rifles, blankets, fishing-nets, knives, ammunition, money, and everything. When he had become rich he would give a feast. To this feast everyone would be invited; it mattered not whether they were of the tribe or not, it mattered not whether they were strangers, friends, or enemies. Even race did not matter. The stray, passing white man—of the race who had crushed them and robbed them of their country—was invited to the potlatch as warmly as if he were of the tribe. And the feast went on. Presents were given to everyone. Everyone ate and drank and made merry till the last of the wealth was gone.

This was a potlatch.

The Indian who gave it had, as reward, the knowledge that he was honoured by his tribe as a good and generous man.

To give a big potlatch was the great ambition of the Indian's life, just as it is the great ambition of the white man's life to amass gold for himself, even though he knows he must get it out of blood and sin and misery.

The religion of the Indian taught him to amass wealth so that he might give it to others.

At this potlatch a feeling of disgust and shame came over me when I thought of the men of my own race who had the presumption to try and thrust their religion on a race who possessed a religion of their own that could impel them to such noble and fine acts. By the fruit shall one know the tree. By the acts shall one know of the worth of religions.

The potlatch was given in a great tent far away in the forest, and Bob and I got for presents blankets, ammunition, and some things of which we were in need for our shack. The feast lasted four days. We had the finest time men could have — singing and dancing and eating and drinking. We felt so much at home.

This Indian hospitality was so sincere. You were not asked because they knew you, or because you might be interesting. You were asked because you were a human being.

There was an old Indian with whom I got on particularly well. We both tried to tell each other all we knew. He was a nice old fellow, with an intelligent face and kindly eyes.

When the potlatch was over we white men went back to our shacks on the edge of the forest, and the old fellow, who had lived out of civilisation for twenty years, and who had had experience of many potlatches, told me that Bob and I ought to settle down with the Indians and live our lives out with them. Lots of white men had married squaws, he argued—he had married one in fact!—and they turned out to be the best wives going. And the life was easy, too! You did what you liked, and you were responsible to no one but yourself. In the summer time you could get all the salmon you wanted, and you could salt enough down for the winter.

Flour and tobacco were easy to get, and the forest was full of game. And so the old man ran on. The only drawback was the missionaries. They were a lot of loafing hypocrites, who corrupted the Indians, and who tried to spring a religion upon them that was not so good as their own!

This was a strong opinion for the old man to give vent to concerning the missionaries. But I must say that experience has shown me that the opinion was based upon a correct deduction from facts.

One would think that to conquer and subjugate a race was bad enough, without afterwards sending out men to insult this race by telling them that their religion was a false one. Besides, even when looked at from the low standpoint of expediency, it is impolitic to allow the religion of a race that is called "savage" to be interfered with. Men will forgive you for beating them in war, but they will not forgive you for interfering with their inherited ideas of what is sacred and holy.

Missionaries often undo the doings of armies and great generals.

The old man who lived with the Siwashes was right in what he said.

XVIII.—A NEW PHASE

IN 'Frisco I went on the stage. I had become tired of the sea and the mountains and the Indians, and I thought I would like to try for awhile the tinsel and glitter and ease of the stage. The idea first formed itself in my mind in Nanaimo, where I returned after living with the Siwash Indians several months at Departure Bay. Bob stayed with them. I never saw him again.

In Nanaimo I had been singing in the saloons, and several people had said to me, "Why don't you go down to 'Frisco and go on the stage?"

And at last I found myself at the foot of Market Street in 'Frisco, wondering. I had just deserted the vessel upon which I had shipped from Nanaimo. I was in

'Frisco! But how was I to get on the stage? That was the rub. I possessed a hardened constitution, a belt and a sheath knife, a used-up merchant sailor's suit which I had on me, and coin of the realm to the amount of four dollars and a half. This was the extent of my capital through and through. And I was brown and hard-looking and weather beaten—as tough a looking specimen of the genus homo as one could lay eyes on.

I had been told in Nanaimo to go to the Tivoli Opera House on Eddy Street, and I went there. It was eleven in the morning, and I saw the spruce-looking singers going in for rehearsal. I watched them from across the road. My courage had deserted me, and I was afraid to go in and ask to be taken as a singer. The hurry and bustle of the town after the quietude of life in the solitude of the mountains, and with the Indians in the forest, confused me. Civilisation was beginning to get on my nerves.

However, I plucked up—went in—and saw the conductor, Billy Furst. He looked

at me in an astonished way—I looked so rough, and so unlike a vocalist. He asked me who and what I was, and where I came from. I told him that I had been living with Indians in Vancouver Island, and that I had come down to San Francisco to go on the operatic stage. I was tired of sailing, I said. He laughed, but tried my voice. The trial satisfied him, and then he asked me if I could read music. I could. Then he engaged me for the chorus.

When I was a boy in the North of England I used to spend my sixpences in going to the gallery of the theatre when an opera was on. I was very fond of music. I had heard the great tenor, Joseph Maas, sing in the different operas. The love of music stimulated me to try and pick up a knowledge of it. I managed to learn to read a little by myself. In my knockings around afterwards I studied it up whenever I could. I used to buy vocal scores, and practise reading at sight. Thus I managed to learn to read even difficult music. I remember when I worked

at Shaft 19 going to New York one pay day and buying a score of Verdi's "Aida," and studying it hour after hour when I had done work. This ability to read music was the only thing literate I had about me. It now served me in good stead, for, in place of having to tackle a lime-juicer—that was going a long way off to some vague, distant place—I was able to tackle the tinsel and glitter and ease of the stage at the munificent salary of eight dollars a week. Billy Furst told me that was all they paid raw chorus singers who knew nothing in particular about the stage.

I won't go into all that passed that memorable morning between the conductor and myself and the singers who stood round wonder-struck, gazing on me as if I were some wild animal. But I must say that when I was on the stage that night — the opera being given was "Orpheus and Eurydice"—the strangest feeling came over me that I ever had in my life.

The transition was so abrupt. It was

coming right from the midst of life with the Indians in Nanaimo to the midst of a comic opera company — that gaudy, brilliant flower of civilisation. To say that I was bewildered would be to put it in the mildest way possible. I was stunned—knocked out. Imagine it! Here was soft, grand music, and brilliant light and colour, and captivating, lovely white women, who would every now and then come up to me and ask me how I liked living with the Indians, and what sort of a life it was. My story had circulated round, and I was hard-looking and tough-looking enough to look my story.

I was not playing as yet, to be sure. I was just standing in the wings, wearing my weather-beaten merchant sailor clothes. Furst thought that it was as well for me to come and see what the stage was like as soon as possible.

After all, getting taken on here was the purest kind of luck. The odds were a thousand to one against me. It just chanced that the conductor took an interest in me. At the time they didn't

really want singers. If I had not caught on as I did I would have had to ship out of 'Frisco.

As I was a sailor I was sent up into the flies to help the fly-man with the ropes attached to the drops and borders and curtains. This was at the conductor's suggestion. He told the management that I could put the time in like this while I was waiting for the next opera to be put on. I don't think I was of much use to the fly-man, but I suppose that this was an excuse put forward by Furst so that I could draw my salary. It was a saving management.

I found that I could live well in 'Frisco on eight dollars a week. Food was cheap there. For a quarter one could get a good course dinner and a small bottle of wine, and not be charged anything extra for coffee. A good breakfast could be got for fifteen cents, and a room for two dollars a week. The mildness of the climate made it possible to live on almost one meal a day. After roughing it like I had been the change was delightful.

The first opera that was put on was "Erminie," a beautiful, bright opera. I enjoyed the rehearsals very much. At first I was an object of curiosity to the other chorus singers, but after a while they got used to me.

When the night came I was as nervous as if I were going to play a big part. As I stood on the stage the lights and the watching faces behind them produced a curious, chilling effect on me. I had, of course, sung before an audience before, but then I was near to them, was of them. Here the people were so far away and so still and quiet and critical. There seemed to be an air of passive hostility about them. And I felt as if somehow I was more looked at than anyone else.

But the nervous feeling soon wore off. The magic and vitality of the music and the scene and the glowing lights got into my blood. The strange charm of the stage thrilled me. That wonderful, subtle, alluring charm! It seemed to me as if I had never really lived before.

That first night on the stage! It marked a new phase in my life.

My comrades in the chorus were made up chiefly of Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians. They were an odd lot of men—unlike any I had ever come into contact with before. They were, on the whole, cultivated and intelligent men.

In one way they were all alike. All of them thought they had wonderful voices and just and true methods of producing tone. They did not think much of the principals as singers. One or other of them was always saying how well they could play the principal part if they only got a chance at it. If they only got a chance at it! Poor chorus singers! This attitude of mind of theirs was so human and pathetic. One of the hard things in life is to feel that you have never had a chance to play a principal part.

I did not stay long at the Tivoli. But it was mainly through my own fault. I was always quarrelling with the Germans. The life I had led had made me over-ready to fight. Billy Furst, who was

favourably disposed towards me, interceded several times with the management on my behalf.* But at last I kicked up too big a row.

I got discharged.

After this, life became rather hard for me. I had not been able to save a great deal out of my eight dollars a week. I could have gone back to follow the sea again any time I wished, but I had had enough of it.

This was about the time I met Ward. We were somewhat in the same fix, and we thought we might as well join forces. It would be cheaper for us to live together.

We occupied the same small room. All the details of how we managed to live would be hard to tell, for the effort we had to make on each particular day was so strenuous that it blotted out completely nearly everything that had happened on the preceding day. It was each day for itself, and be thankful that yesterday had passed, and to-morrow had not yet come.

Our great aim in life was to get some-

thing to eat, and by hook or crook find the two dollars a week for our room.

On one occasion the landlady told us that we should have to get out on the next day. She was suave, but firm. She wanted the lucre. Besides, we were a week behind already, and she hazarded the opinion that we would soon be another week behind, and then where would she come in? All this and other things she told us in a suave but firm tone. Steel in velvet is a bad thing to face.

Something had to be done, and done quickly. But how was I to define that something? The only thing that was clear in my mind was that whatever the something was, I would have to be the one to do it, for Ward was not to be depended upon. He was a nice fellow, but he lacked initiative and vigour of action. In tight places he always looked to me.

That night fortune favoured the brave. I borrowed a quarter, and with it I won ten dollars. It happened like this:—

The baritone of the Tivoli Opera House was shaking dice at a bar in Market Street with two of his friends. They all knew me, and when I sauntered in they asked me as a matter of course to have a drink. I assented. As I was taking the drink I stood watching them, wishing the while that I could take part in the game. Finally I plucked up and tried to borrow a quarter from one of them. "Just for a shake," I put it. But he didn't see it. He said it was unlucky to lend money to a man and then gamble with him for it. The baritone, however, was not superstitious. He lent me a quarter, and said he would win it back off me just for fun. But before he knew where he was I had won ten dollars off him. Poor baritone! He tried to double or quit, but I won every throw. I had the luck of the man who is in his last ditch. The baritone had been paid his salary that night at the Tivoli, but I'd have won it all and everything else in sight. He stopped, however, and as no one else would play with me I came away jubilant, blessing the man who

had invented dice. Ward and I were saved. How astonished he was when I woke him up, as he lay in the bed in our little room, and rattled the big silver dollars under his nose!

There were days when Ward and I abstained from food altogether. We were unable even to raise the modest ten cents that would procure us two drinks, and a go at the free-lunch counter. The merits and demerits of the free-lunches of the neighbouring, and even the distant, saloons were well known to us. One was good for its soup at one o'clock. At another the corned beef was fine. And at the saloon on O'Farrell Street you could eat all you were able without the bartender looking at you in a pained and pointed way. The food was plentiful, but somewhat coarse of quality at some places, while at others it was choice but slight.

Of course, the climate of California is delightful. The air is clear and bright and full of life. But Ward and I couldn't eat the climate in our trying, hungry hours.

One evening we were holding one of our consultations. We were standing on the corner of Eddy and Market Streets. Our theme was how and where we should eat, for we hadn't eaten anything since the morning of the day before. Our luck seemed to have gone from us altogether.

Different plans were brought up by us in turn, but none of them seemed to be worth putting into execution. There was too much of the forlorn hope about them. They had nearly all been tried before, and there is such a thing as driving the willing horse to death. Trees won't bear fruit for ever.

At last I had an idea! Forlorn—but still an idea. Ward was to go one way, I was to go another way, and we were to meet in an hour's time at the corner where we were standing then. If either of us had raised anything by that time we were to go over and have a feast at the Palace Restaurant, a place where you could get one helping of meat, a big cup of coffee, and all the bread and butter you could eat for fifteen cents. A meal like

this, where you could sit down and take it comfortably, was much more satisfying than a raid on the best free lunch counter in 'Frisco.

We parted. What Ward was going to do in the allotted time, I forget. My plan, however, was to go and try and find Napoleoni Galliani—a fine, big Italian—and borrow a dollar from him. I used to stand next to him when I sang first bass in the Tivoli chorus. But that was before I got the sack.

In about an hour's time I was back at the corner, waiting for Ward to come up. Soon, I saw him approaching. As he got near I could see by his face that he had failed. He had been unsuccessful.

I walked quickly up to him, and smiled in a large and joyous sort of way. "Come on!" I exclaimed, cheerily, as I took his arm. "It's all right. Let's go over to the Palace and eat!"

Ward's face brightened up wonderfully. He was another man. His step became springy and elastic as he walked across Market Street.

Soon we were in the Palace, seated and enjoying a good meal. We had helpings of meat and fish and everything in sight. Ward was a most valiant and capable trencherman, but on this occasion he simply surpassed himself. He was a tall, lanky man, with a great natural aptitude for the putting away of food.

At last the feast was over, and I topped it off by ordering two good cigars. We would light them at the desk as we were going out. As we stood up to go the waiter handed me the bill. I took the bill, which was a heavy one for the place, and examined it leisurely to see if all the items were correct.

And then we walked easily up to the desk where the bills had to be presented and paid. Here I nodded to Ward and said, "Go on. I'll settle the bill."

Ward walked out into the street, and then I lit my cigar at the little gas-jet which burned at the desk. I did it very deliberately. Then I turned slowly to the cashier, and handed him the bill. He was a German, with fair hair and

soft blue eyes. I remember his eyes well, because I looked so steadily and squarely into them.

“Put that on the shelf right behind you till I come in to-morrow,” I said in an even voice, pointing to the bill. I kept upon him a firm and fixed stare.

The German looked at the bill, paused, but said nothing. Then an angry look came into his face. He realised that I had come into the restaurant, and had run up a big bill without having the money to pay for it. This was a dangerous thing to do in 'Frisco. A man ran a chance of being half-killed by the waiters and bouncers.

I thought he was going to shout for help, but always I kept my eye on his eye, and the angry look gradually left his face. He never uttered a word. The whole thing didn't take over a few seconds. It was all over before the next customer had come up to the desk.

“Put that on the shelf behind you,” I repeated, slowly. “There, on the shelf.” He turned, and did as I bid him. His

eye met mine again. Then I took another light for my cigar, and walked out very calmly and easily.

I saw Ward. He had been looking through the window, taking the whole thing in. A look of horror was in his face. If he had known the true state of affairs he would never have been able to eat a mouthful. "You had no money!" he gasped.

"No," I said.

XIX.—EARNING THIRTY DOLLARS

ANOTHER time I was going down Market Street wondering what would turn up next, when suddenly I caught sight of Count Straps ambling towards me from across the road. He knew me when I was singing at the Tivoli. The Count was a rather mild-looking young man, who wore long hair and a cowboy hat. Why he was called Count Straps was one of the mysteries of California. Report had it that he had run through three hundred thousand dollars in two years.

“Hello!” he exclaimed, as he shook hands with me. “Glad to see you. How are you getting on? Come and have a drink.”

Not wishing to hurt his feelings, I con-

sented, and we turned into the nearest saloon. Here a magnificent free lunch struck my gaze. I was glad that I had been considerate enough to accept the Count's offer as I walked over and annexed three sandwiches.

"Two lagers!" called out the Count, in a bold tone to the bartender. I turned and looked at him. The impressiveness of his tone almost made me think he had no money to pay for the order. I had seen the game worked before.

But happily I was deceived. The Count had not yet got down to bed rock.

"I want you to come aboard my yacht," he said, as I finished my lager, quickly. "I am taking some friends for a month's cruise down the coast—to Santa Barbara and back again. You've been a sailor?" He paused a little to see what effect his words had upon me. "And you can look out for things generally," he concluded, as he turned and signalled to the bartender to let us have another drink.

I reflected rapidly as I walked over to the lunch counter and annexed more

sandwiches. A month's cruise would do me no harm! "Done!" I exclaimed. "Done! But is there anything in it, Count? I'm broke, and I need a suit of clothes."

"You do," he assented, looking me up and down. "But no worse than I do myself." It was a fact. "But," he added, sagely, "when a man has no money he should dress well. I suppose I shall soon have to turn into a dude myself."

"Oh!" I put in, "if things are tight, Count, we'll call the money end of it off. I'll go with you anyhow. I think a month away from 'Frisco would do both myself and the town good."

"No, we won't call it off," he said. "You can have thirty dollars at the end of the trip. You don't need the money now. If you had it you'd only spend it. Thirty dollars at the end of the trip. Will that do?"

It would do.

So it was settled that I should turn up at the wharf on the next day. And the Count lending me a dollar, we parted.

Earning Thirty Dollars 265

I was sorry I was not able to share the dollar with Ward, but he had left 'Frisco to go to work on a ranch.

The getting together of my belongings was a job that would not take up very much of my time. All that I had was a couple of shirts and some socks. This did not bother me much, for it is not cold off the coast of California. If it came on to rain I would borrow oilskins from the Count or one of his friends. Thus I was easy in my mind as far as an outfit was concerned. The only thing necessary for me to do was to create a bit of an imposing effect as I appeared on the wharf. With this end in view, I got my landlady to lend me an old worn portmanteau which had lain for a long time in her lumber-room. This I polished up.

I was hailed with a shout from the Count when I appeared the next morning. At once he introduced me to his friends, who were standing with him on the wharf. I glanced down sideways at the portmanteau which was swinging in my hand, to see if it looked all right.

It had a polished, full-looking appearance. I had helped out the shirts and socks with some books and old papers.

I ran my eye over his yacht. It was a beautiful little sloop-rigged boat of about fifteen tons. She looked well and fit, and steered with a tiller. She'll do, I thought to myself, but I wonder how he has grubbed her. The truth was, this accessory to the trip rather interested me, for things of late had not been going satisfactorily with me in the eating line. I had been subsisting mainly on hopes and free lunches.

In this particular I found that the Count had excelled himself—in fact, too much excelled himself, for he had got enough wines and spirits aboard to stock a canteen. It was all very well to be jovial, I told him, but too much joviality would get us on the rocks. Cruising along a coast always wants careful watching. And, being in effect the captain of the yacht, I prevailed upon him to stow away nearly all the drinkables in the hold.

Soon I found that I was not only captain, but I was the crew as well; for the Count's friends knew nothing about the ways of a boat, while he himself only knew enough to take risks. How we got safely out of harbour and through the Golden Gates will always remain a puzzle to me.

We were nearly run down four or five times. On one occasion we were within an ace of it. The Count had taken it upon himself to steer while I tended jib. He tried to cut across the bows of a big steamer which was coming head on to us. He would have made it all right, though it was risky, but he let the yacht get up into the wind, and she jibed before we knew where we were. The main boom, as it swept round, nearly knocked two of his friends overboard.

The steamer managed to stop as we were right under her bows with our mainsail shaking and flopping. The mate leaned over the rail, and cursed and damned the Count with fluency and vigour. I came in for my share, too.

But the Count got the lion's share of the benediction because he was at the tiller.

After this I took the tiller myself. The Count's dignity was injured a little by the variety and vigour of the insults and epithets the mate had hurled at him. He didn't seem to realise that we were precious lucky to get off with only a left-handed benediction. If the steamer had struck us, he would certainly have lost his yacht, and some of us perhaps our lives. When I put this to him with emphasis, he became himself again, did the Count!

At last we were through the Golden Gates, and out into the free water. Then I began to think a little about the situation. Before that I had had no time to think about anything but trying to save the yacht, and ourselves. I had passed through a succession of bad quarter-hours.

I was in a situation at once ludicrous and dangerous. Here was I with five fellows in a boat, four of whom knew nothing about sailing, and the fifth less than nothing. And, as far as I was con-

cerned, I myself didn't know too much about the handling of a boat with a fore and aft rig. Besides, I had hardly any knowledge of the coast.

I would have to do absolutely all the work! None of them could be trusted to take a watch, for none of them could steer. And the adventures the yacht had gone through in getting out of harbour proved the Count to be a reed of the most broken kind. He was a nice fellow, but a reed! He had entered upon this pleasure-trip depending on me to pull it through safely. It would be no pleasure-trip for me. I would have hard work and anxiety all the time. There was humour, to be sure, in the situation; but the humour was discounted by the danger.

I began to wish I had stayed in San Francisco.

We ran along till it began to get dark—I at the tiller all the time. The Count's four friends were in the cabin. They were sick, I am thankful to say. As for the Count himself, he was on deck, very much to the fore, and telling me all sorts of

things about nothing in particular. At last I said, "That's all right." I hadn't been listening to what he had been saying. "Tell me," I asked, suddenly, as I gave the tiller a shove, "do you know of a place where we could run in for the night? If I'm to be the captain and crew all rolled up into one, I might as well have a little sleep."

To my utter amazement, the Count did know of a little bay where we could run in and shelter. I had asked him the question more to shut him up than anything else, for I was irritated right through. His being of any use at a pinch gave me a decided shock. "Where?" I asked, incredulously. "Off over behind that point," he replied, indicating the direction. "It's a little bay with a sandy, shelving bottom. I've been there before, when Cregan was running the yacht for me. We ought to make it in half an hour with this breeze."

I said nothing, but headed for the direction he gave me. His remembering it seemed too good to be true. I deter-

mined if it turned out all right to have a better opinion of him in future.

It did turn out all right, for sure enough I ran the yacht into as fine a little anchorage as one could wish for. What the name of the place was, the Count was unable to tell me. But that mattered little. The fact of his piloting me to it at all helped me to forget his curious method of steering us through the harbour in the morning.

The Count let down the jib and dropped the anchor as I ran her up close to the shore. Then we took in the mainsail. Soon after this, the others got over their sea sickness, and we all had a jolly supper together in the cabin. The drinkables were brought into requisition. As captain, the Count deferred to me as to whether or not drink should be allowed. But I thought that I might as well relax discipline, on the grounds that we were at anchor, and that there was no one to discipline but myself. Also, that as pilot, the Count was really in charge of the ship.

We made a night of it.

The next day things went on more smoothly, but I had to do all the steering just the same. The Count tended the jib, and told me various stories. He had been a good deal around, and had had the excitement of getting through a fortune in a hurry. His friends stayed drinking below in the cabin most of the time. When night came we dropped anchor again in another little bay. The Count was at least a good pilot.

And we made another night of it.

In time we worked our way down to Drake's Bay. Here we stayed two or three days. It was a most beautiful bay—this bay where the English rover had cast his anchor in the long ago. We got into it in the morning. The sky was gloriously blue, and the sun was shining as it shines only in California—with a soft, golden brilliance. I was glad that my wanderings had led me to such a country. After all there was something to be said in favour of knocking about the world. The old proverb had it that a rolling stone gathered no moss. But surely,

at least, in the rolling the stone became bright!

We enjoyed ourselves while we were here—loafing and lazing around on shore in the sun in the daytime, and sleeping aboard the yacht at night. The Count and his friends were most jovial and companionable. We got all the drinkables out of the hold, and stowed them in the cabin. The Count joked me, saying what would they do if the crew mutinied. I replied that if the crew mutinied, the captain would come to the front most effectually.

A few hours before our time for sailing out of the bay the Count made a proposal. There were some cattle scattered over the hills, and as we were short of fresh meat he said it would be a good idea to scout around and shoot a calf. I agreed with him that it was an excellent idea—provided no one caught us carrying it out. Living in civilisation began to chasten me. There was a flavour of piracy about the suggestion reminiscent of the old buccaneers who had made this

part of the Californian coast one of their stamping grounds. But after a little persuasion I began to see the romance of the idea. When you are amid the ruins of Rome you are naturally apt to feel somewhat Roman! We started out on the scout.

But no calves were to be found. There were nothing but big cows and bulls or bullocks. The calves must have known of our evil intent, and made themselves scarce. There was no use in killing anything that would be too heavy to get aboard. Besides, the mind of the Count ran on veal. We had to give up the idea.

At last we were riding safe at anchor before Santa Barbara. We had got through the first part of the trip. We stayed here some time, as I thought the captain and crew needed a rest. Having to steer continuously through whole days in succession was rather wearying.

It would be too long a story to tell about the second half of the trip. Enough to say that I more than earned the money I was to get from Count Straps. As

before, I had to do all the steering. And only that we were usually able to put in somewhere at night I could never have pulled through. As it was, we almost went ashore on the Seal Rocks just outside the harbour of San Francisco. I had made the mistake of trying to get in in the night-time. The Count was in the cabin drinking with his friends. They wanted me to drink, too, but I felt that I needed all my wits about me to keep a lookout and to manage the tiller. I had to leave it, and run forward to tend the jib whenever I put the boat about. I got the Count up to pilot me, but he saw too many lights at once.

When I heard the roar of the breakers I thought we were done for. Drunken shouting and singing from the cabin below mingled with the ugly, deadly roar of the surf. I was just beginning to see the black heads of the rocks in the moonlight.

But I managed to sheer away, and, after an anxious time, I had her through the Golden Gates.

When I got to the wharf, by good luck

a loafer was hanging around. He grabbed the line I threw him, and hitched it round a spile. And I fervently thanked the Lord, as I hauled in the yacht and made her fast. The trip was over!

The next day I walked up Market Street with my thirty dollars safe in my pocket. The Count had been as good as his word. And I went into the first tailor's shop I came to to buy myself a hand-me-down suit of clothes.

XX.—LOUNGING THROUGH SUNSHINE

I HAD twenty dollars left after buying the suit of clothes, and I thought I might as well take a little relaxation after captaining the Count's yacht. I would like to have a look around California—to lounge through sunshine.

For the sunshine of California is past the sunshine of any other part of the planet. I am sure that every globe-trotter and loungeur will agree with me in saying that a difference in latitude makes a corresponding difference in the quality of the sun's rays. I mean quality as distinct from intensity. Sol has varied moods. In Calcutta he is piercingly aggressive; in London he makes you sad because of the doleful way in which he veils his face in fog; in Greenland he is

pale and ethereal, and seems as if he were not for this world.

But in California he makes up for his delinquencies. He is in his best mood. He behaves himself. His rays are at once as brilliant as they are in Calcutta, and as mild and genial in their effect as they are in England. He shines with unsultry brilliance.

Climate is the most vital topic in California. It is the first, second, and third thing that is talked about. People who have hardly been in the country a month become confirmed climate-ex-pounders. It is impossible to escape from their lucid and exhaustive way of putting it. If you wish to become unpopular and despised, all you have to do is to barely hint that the climate is not quite absolute perfection.

However, there is one thing that the Californian—or, rather, the San Franciscan—refrains from praising to the skies, and that is part of the climate, too. This thing is sand. If you are foolish enough to walk along Market Street in the after

Lounging through Sunshine 279

noon when the kona—or trade wind—is blowing from the Pacific Ocean, you will speedily become acquainted with this sand. The kona gathers it up from the neighbouring hills. It is an affectionate and pleased-to-meet-you kind of sand, and gets into your eyes, mouth, nostrils, ears, pockets, under your vest, and everywhere it can. After it has dallied with you for a quarter of an hour, you begin to feel sorry for ever having come to 'Frisco, and to wonder feebly at the Californian's climate-praising faculty. When next you hear him losing himself in a panegyric concerning the gilded climate, you will, if you are unwise, hazard a sarcastic remark about the benefits of this sand. For answer the panegyrist will look at you in reproachful silence.

The Chinese have a great hold in San Francisco. You have but to turn up Clay Street from Kearney Street, walk a block or two, and, lo! you are in a Chinese city. You are in the midst of the filth, squalor, and morbidness of the Mongol. Aye, the Chinese have come

here to stay. Here are their joss-houses, their theatres, their uncanny-looking shops, and themselves, smoking opium mixed with tobacco from queer-looking pipes. Even the very streets are as narrow and uneven as they are in the lower quarters of a town in far-away China. Little Chinese children, who look like quaint, animated wax dolls, move around gravely. Their playing with one another, if such their solemn movements can be called, has all the gravity of some religious ceremony.

If you want to see California at its best, however, you must not stop in San Francisco. As I said before, the sand is too familiar and affectionate for one's comfort. No, you must go south. Here you will find California living up to its reputation. You will find the climate as glorious and as beautiful as they say it is—which is saying a great deal. Take Santa Barbara, for example. It lies under the shadow of a great mountain. Stretching out before it is the laze and heave of the great Pacific Ocean. The

Lounging through Sunshine 281

scenery around this part of California is the most wonderful and beautiful in the world. It realises the ideal of the greatest descriptive writers. Byron himself has not imagined a land-picture more magnificent. There is a Jesuit mission-house here, two hundred years old, a relic of the Spaniards. As you approach from the seaward great, high, snow-topped mountains rise and rise before you. You sail on and on till at last a little town seems to come up out of the waters. A town framed in the soft clear fire of a sun of gold. It is Santa Barbara.

Forty miles inland you come upon Los Angeles. Before it is a desert of sand. It is a strange-looking town—a town that is at once old and young. In a way, it is a hard-looking town, possessing not a tithe of the beauty of Santa Barbara. I can't for the life of me see why the Spaniards named it after the angels. They must have been possessed of great vigour of imagination, for through the best part of the year its heat is not calculated to make one think of Heaven. I believe

there is a fiction abroad to the effect that Los Angeles has everything to be desired in the way of climate. I am sorry to have to be heretic enough to deny this. The name of the town, I suppose, sounds well to the far outsider. He doesn't know, of course, that one of the interesting things about the climate of California is the fact that it changes tremendously within the radius of a few miles. There is a big difference between the coast and fifty miles inland.

Yes, I wonder why the Spaniards named this town after the angels. It could hardly be that the heat of it made them think of the fallen angels when they were christening it, for the Spaniards were conquerors of the devoutest calibre. They slew and prayed and prayed and slew, and often, I presume, they indulged in both these pastimes at one and the same time. Again, it might have been that a sense of the humorous was upon them when they were performing the town's baptismal rite. But this is hardly

Lounging through Sunshine 283

probable, for they were civilisers, and, as everyone knows, civilisers are an earnest, stern, unhumorous lot. A joke must have a steel point to it before they can appreciate it. No, it could neither have been humour nor irreverence that prompted the Spaniards as to the naming of this place. The reason is a deep, artesian mystery, and life is too abrupt to try and probe to the bottom of it.

This town is the home of the tamale. For the benefit of those who have never known the joy of eating a tamale on the street at midnight, I must try and describe what it is made of, what it is like, and its effect generally. In the first place, it is very warm to the hands, and looks like an overgrown bunged-up banana. It is made up of chicken, corn meal, strong spices, and other things known and unknown. These are all boiled and mashed up together, and laid out on big corn leaves, which are rolled into the shape of the aforesaid banana, and tied up at both ends. Then a man stands on the corner

late at night to sell them to the rounders. He keeps them steaming in a big tin boiler, just as they do Indian corn in New York. You give him a dime, and he hands you out a tamale on a fork. You grab the tamale off the fork; you strip off its leaves, and commence to enjoy yourself, thinking the while that there is some good after all in the skill and intelligence of man. The effect of the tamale on one is great. It warms you up from top to toe like good old wine, feeds you, and makes you feel that things are going well generally. You become optimistic, forget your radical, destructive ideas, and begin to think kindly even of old time, moss-covered institutions. I have seen and eaten tamales in New York, but they are no more to be compared with the Los Angeles — or angel — tamales than—well, words fail to tell the difference.

In this town you get good wine at a low price. Of course, the wine hasn't got the ancient and hoary pedigree of a wine of Southern France, but then I need hardly

Lounging through Sunshine 285

point out that bad, faked-up wine with an alleged ancient pedigree of the hoary order, and that also possesses the additional merit of being tremendously expensive, is hardly the most desirable thing in the world to stack up against.

After awhile here one gets into the knack of using up a great deal of time in the doing of nothing. The very air seems to whisper softly: "Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow." I can well understand how the older inhabitants have attained to such a degree of skill in the subtle art of killing time. "Hurry up," is a phrase which has lost its meaning for them. They are the masters of time instead of being its slaves. This is all wrong, from a New York or London standpoint. But then it is comfortable—and comfort isn't such a bad thing after all.

It is easy to know people who have just got in from the Eastern States by the way they bustle round trying to do four things at once. But in time they

become wise, and calm down. The climate soothes them.

The people plant orange trees in their gardens, and the effect of the bright green leaves and full golden fruit is most beautiful.

The country round about is most favourable to the cultivation of oranges. You may drive along by orange groves for miles and miles. There are no fences to guard them. Think of it! All you have to do is to stop your horse, get out, and help yourself. The proprietors don't mind—the fruit is so plentiful. During the picking season the tramps come down from San Francisco to help to gather in the crop. Their pay is a dollar a day and their board. For once they forswear their allegiance to the god of Rest, and indulge in a little toil. But the toil is light, and they go about it gently.

Tough-looking specimens of the genus homo are these tramps. But they are all healthy and vigorous of look, and their faces are thoughtful of expression. Like

Lounging through Sunshine 287

the Hindu philosophers, they are much given to introspection. They have the leisure to discover themselves to themselves. The climate is also favourable to their intellectual development. They come here from the East, where in the winter things in general are cold and unrefreshing, and immediately they fall in love with the country. They are enthralled. They bless God for having made such a beautiful, easy-to-loaf-in land, and they become sincere and ardent patriots who are willing to stay with that land till death.

I would like to say a word as to the tramp in America.

He is a man who has come to the conclusion that hard, sustained labouring work is bad for his general health. A little of it now and then is all right; but to keep at it for a month or a year is not to be thought of.

Reasoning thus, he becomes a tramp. He goes from place to place, from spot to spot. Gradually he develops his gift for thinking. He becomes a full-

fledged philosopher upon the subject of work.

Don't run away with the idea that our tramp walks very much. Don't imagine that hour after hour he is climbing up hill and down dale. No, he is too clever for that. And besides, America is a big, wide country. It abounds in immense prairies and chains of lofty mountains. Walking it would smack of the nature of toil.

No, our tramp rides. He presses the railway companies into his service. He takes advantage of the resources of civilisation. At bottom he is really the most civilised of persons. Don't forget this. He is a voluptuary without income.

Also he has a certain sense of honesty. He is too honest to rob any poor man out of a day's work. He would rather perish.

He is not particular as to his accommodation when he is taking a ride on a train. He doesn't want something for nothing, and that something of the very

Lounging through Sunshine 289

best, as people usually do. He is that *rara avis*—an uncritical deadhead. He doesn't cry out for a stall. No; a gallery seat will do.

He will take his ride on the cow-catcher of the engine, or on the front of the blind-baggage, or, if needs must, in under the engine on the trucks. Or he will ride in a box-car or on the bumpers. He is not particular. And when the brakesman tells him to get off he does—when the train stops. But he gets on again when the train starts.

In common with all men who have nothing whatever to do with the governing of the State, he takes an intense interest in politics. He picks up old, thrown-away papers, reads them, and discusses what they say and what they don't say with his fellow tramps. He is interested in the workings of the tariff, in the Chinese question, in the negro question. He would like to see America prosperous and respected by foreign countries. He thinks the Government ought to build more ships and increase

the strength of the Army. He is not, however, very strong on the rights of the working man. The working man is always striking or growling about the rights of labour. This doesn't appeal to the tramp, for deep continuous thought has shown him that in the nature of things labour can have no rights. Either a man must work and shut up about it, or he must avoid working altogether.

The people who win the tramp's admiration are the Senators and Congressmen, who talk a lot about nothing, live well, and, at the same time, do nothing. He also thinks approvingly of the Commissioners who go abroad to settle things. He feels there is a strong tie between these people and himself. They do the same thing he does, only very much better. They excel in the fine art of sitting down to settle things. And, what is more to the point, they make it pay.

Occasionally the tramp becomes weak enough to do some work. But this weakness doesn't last long. He soon resumes

Lounging through Sunshine 291

his wonted vigour. The work, however, is usually of a light and pleasant nature. Peach-picking is what he favours most. This work is easy and healthy and shady, and the peaches are delicious of aroma and taste. The season lasts six weeks. He gets something a day and his board, with the privilege of sleeping in the barn in the hay.

The tramp's real means of livelihood is begging. He can tell at a glance a house where he will get a "hand-out." A "hand-out" is a parcel of food, which derives its name from being handed out through a half-opened door.

Yes, the tramp develops into a skilful and expert beggar. Some people may think that there is no art in begging, but if they do they are much mistaken. It takes a clever man to know what stranger to ask for money. As he goes along the street he must be able to single out at a glance the giving type of man; for, as the tramp will inform you, there are really in existence men who like to give money to anyone who asks for it. They are rare,

but they do exist. The thing is to be able to single out this man, and then to know if he has money in his pocket, and if he be in the right mood. To do this requires genius.

But let us go back to the land of sunshine:—

San Diego lies to the south of Los Angeles, and is quite close to the frontier line between Mexico and the United States—some six or eight miles from it. Here the climate is perfection. The temperature is pretty nearly the same all the year round—between seventy-five and eighty degrees Fahrenheit. It is a fine place for invalids, who travel to it from all parts of the world. Its air is at once bracing and soft. Behind it, in the distance, stand great mountains. Before it stretches the ocean. On Coronado Beach—a little way from the town—stands the Coronado Hotel. It is an immense hotel, and well appointed. Only the wealthiest of travellers may put up there. I only gazed at it.

The older part of this town which was

Lounging through Sunshine 293

built by the Mexicans, is very picturesque. The houses are of adobe, and often are quaintly beautiful. Here live the Mexican part of the population. They have coppery-coloured, swarthy faces, and black eyes. They have a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood in their veins. The women often are beautiful, but they age early. They are old at twenty-five. When a Mexican woman is beautiful, she is beautiful indeed—magnetic, flashing of eye, and finely formed.

I remember the morning I first lounged into Santa Cruz. This is another little gem of a town on the southern coast. It is so cool and green and beautiful. From here I went to see the Big Trees. They were six miles away. The way to them was over a stage road built along the side of a great gorge which cuts through the mountains. The scenery here is wild and grand. And gloriously coloured.

The magnificence of the trees is hardly to be described. They are stupendous—immense of girth, and running up straight

for hundreds of feet. One of them has a great hole cut through the base of its trunk through which the stage-coach passes. This will give some idea of their vastness. They are all nearly of the same size. The effect is awesome. You feel so puny standing by the side of a tremendous silent Titan that has lived through the centuries.

There is a little town not very far from here called San Bueneventura. It also is built right on the edge of the ocean. At this point the waves thunder in with great force, because of a reef that lies some distance out. You can hear the roar of these waves miles away. In the town, where all is calm and clear and bright, this roaring, as of a constant, wild storm, has an odd effect. There is nothing like it along the whole coast of California. The Mexicans have a superstition concerning it. They say that God has caused the waves to thunder there in wrath because of the desecration of their land by the Gringos, or Americanos.

Two hundred years ago the Jesuits built

Lounging through Sunshine 295

in this town a church, which is there still. It is long and low, and dark-looking, and is surmounted by a great wooden cross. In it the Jesuits converted and baptized the Indians after the Spaniards had crushed them into subjection. When the soldiers had subjected the body, the priests thought it well to subject the soul. The roof of the church is low and heavily rafted. The rude wooden benches whereon the Indians sat are still there. Before the small, simple altar a light burns. It is the sanctuary light. It has been burning there all through these two hundred years. Not once has it been out. It is a flame small and blue and steady. Typical of the indomitableness, and slow, never-dying persistence of the Jesuit. Before the altar the Virgin stands. In her arms she holds the Babe.

San Luis Obispo is about twenty miles inland from San Bueneventura. I think this is the most Mexican in appearance of all the towns in Southern California. Some of the larger houses have curious inner courtyards, roofed over with glass.

In them the Mexicans used to sit and chat and smoke cigarettos. The idea of building these glass-roofed courtyards was borrowed in the long ago from the Aztecs, themselves a mighty and powerful race whom Cortes conquered. The ease with which the Spaniards conquered the Aztecs was due to the fact that they believed the white men to be the sons of their god, Quetzalcoatl. Quetzalcoatl was really a man who dwelt with the Aztecs, probably as far back as the birth of Christ. He taught them useful arts, and when he left them he promised to come back again with a numerous progeny. The remembrance of this promise was kept alive by tradition, just as the Jews keep alive their belief in the coming of a Messiah. Quetzalcoatl was a white man—probably from Europe. So goes the old legend. When the Spaniards came the Aztecs thought that their god had kept his promise, and they welcomed them. It was only when the white men had committed unheard-of atrocities and treacheries that the Aztecs thought of trying to repel

Lounging through Sunshine 297

them. But even then the Aztecs were demoralised. They thought they were fighting against the sons of their god.

XXI.—OPERATIC FORAGERS

THERE was a certain comic opera company that used to go on tour through California and Oregon, and round the Pacific Slope generally. The manager of this company was one of the nicest men I have ever met. True, he was a little shy about the paying of salaries, but for all that his heart was in the right place. A manager can't pay out what doesn't come in. And I must say that when he was telling one on salary day of the wonderful things that would happen the week after—in the way of finance—he did it in a most pleasing and artistic way.

Everyone liked him. And I have heard people say that they would almost as soon work for him without salary as

for some managers with salary. I can't say that my devotion to him was as pronounced as this, but still it was pronounced.

It was when his company had got into a hole that he showed forth in his best form. Say if he were unable to pay their hotel bills, or unable to raise the fare to go to the next stand. Then his genius would bud and blossom forth. He would win over the hotel-keeper to let the trunks go, or he would deftly borrow five hundred or a thousand dollars from an almost complete stranger.

He was a man with the true impresario's gift.

After I had got back to 'Frisco from having an easy lounge through California, I was engaged by this genial manager to sing first bass in his chorus and to play small parts when called upon. The salary was fifteen dollars a week. I had heard, of course, that the ghost was decrepit, and not often able to walk, but this weighed little with me when once I came under the spell of the manager's magnetism. He described

the beauties of the country through which his company was to tour in a fine guide-book manner, and he let me have five dollars in advance.

We opened in Los Angeles. Here we played for a month in the Pavilion. I believe the first opera that was put on was "Der Fledermaus." After that followed "Boccacio" and "The Beggar Student" and several other comic operas. We finished with "The Pirates of Penzance."

In Los Angeles the ghost walked—we were paid our wages. And when the month was over the landlord of the hotel where the bulk of us were staying gave a champagne supper to the whole of the company. I will never forget that supper. I was sitting next to the prima donna, and I was astounded to hear her tell the waiter that she wanted beer instead of champagne. I thought that she must be a very democratic prima donna indeed, but I afterwards found out that the worst beer is better than the best Californian champagne.

After we left Los Angeles we left home, for in no other town did we even make our expenses. The manager was put to the necessity of showing forth in his best form the whole time. He was doing nothing but borrowing money and soothing the wrath of hotel-keepers. How he kept it up was a mystery.

At last, however, it struck him that the company needed a rest, and he managed to get us to Santa Barbara, where he closed the season. His plan, he explained, was to have the men of the company camp out in the mountains till he could raise enough money to open up the season again.

So we went out and camped in the Santa Ynez Mountains.

One morning, in the mountains, after a scant breakfast, we sat around, discussing and wondering what we would have to do next. Our position was serious. We had run out of food. True, we had rifles and ammunition, and there was plenty of game around us, but we had only one decent shot in the crowd,

and he had had bad luck. The rest could hardly have hit a barn a hundred yards off. We were a sad lot generally.

The ladies of the company were staying at a cheap hotel in Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara lay forty miles to the west, right on the coast. The way to it lay across a trail over parts of which a mule could not travel. Thus we had come away with comparatively little food. Alas, we had depended on our skill as hunters.

We were bad fishermen also. The trout in the neighbouring stream would simply have nothing to say to us. So here we were in the midst of plenty with no hands to grasp it.

As we were arguing, a luminous idea suddenly broke in upon me. "Why not kill a pig?" I suggested. The suggestion was received with horror, for the pig I referred to was one of a drove of pigs that belonged to a rancher who allowed them to run in the mountains. No! Such a thing could not be thought of! It would

be nothing short of robbery! Daylight robbery!

But I pointed out that we might perpetrate the deed at night or at dusk, thereby running less risk of having any of the rancher's men see us. If we were caught doing it, of course it would be rather bad. We might get shot, or at least arrested and taken to prison to Santa Barbara. To be shot would be our most likely fate, though; for the men around a ranch in California were apt to be both good marksmen and believers in quick justice. The thing for us to do was to commit the deed expeditiously at dusk. I laid emphasis upon this point.

After a little while I could see by their faces that my suggestion had germinated, and, in fact, was budding forth vigorously in their minds. The seed had fallen on good ground. They were short of food, and they were bad hunters; and one could go right up and interview a pig without the introduction of a couple of hours' stalking. The only difficulty was the barrier raised up in their minds by

the sensitiveness of their ethics. But this was soon surmounted by their need. Hunger and ethics soon part company.

When dusk came Charlie Johnson and I sallied forth. All day long we had been thinking of roast pig, and now was coming the beginning of the end. Our plan was to get as close to a pig as possible, shoot it, prepare it quickly, and bury the offal so as to leave no trace. I had a spade, and Charlie had a rifle. If a ranchman heard the shot, we based our chances of safety upon the probability of his thinking that we were hunting.

The principal tenor of the company, who, needless to say, was stout, had given us a caution as to the size of the pig we were to select. A smallish one, he said, not more than a hundred and fifty pounds in weight. I didn't exactly see at the time his reason for being so particular, but afterwards it dawned upon me.

Soon Charlie and I sighted what we took to be a suitable pig, quite after the stout tenor's fancy. It was standing near five or six others, and Charlie knelt

down when near enough, took aim, and blazed away. It dropped with a bullet behind its ear. I rushed forward, and grabbed it by one of its forelegs as it lay struggling furiously. It was horribly strong, and it knocked me about a good deal, but Charlie soon finished it with his knife. It was then we saw that we had killed a bigger pig than we intended. The dusk had fallen upon us too rapidly.

After we had prepared it and buried the evidences of our deed, we tied its legs together, and cut down the limb of a small tree. This we passed through the legs. Then we lifted up the carcass and carried it. Charlie went first, with one end of the tree limb on his right shoulder, while I had the other end of it on my left shoulder. But the pig was so heavy that we could go no more than a few yards before we had to put it down. Plainly, we had made a bad mistake as to the size.

By this time night was upon us, and we were getting nervous. There was a chance any minute of our being fired

upon or challenged by someone. And our camp was nearly a mile away. The moon was also coming up clear and strong. Hardly the best thing for us! We would never be able to get to camp with our load. What were we to do?

Suddenly I said to Charlie:

“Look here, old man! We are two numbskulls! Here are we taking all the risk in this business while the other fellows are luxuriously waiting in camp to begin the feast when we arrive. They take no risk, but they will eat as much of it as we shall. Perhaps more.”

Charlie mopped his forehead. “You’re right,” he said. “What should we do?”

“Do? Why, let us leave the pig here, go back to camp, and make all hands help to carry it in turn. If they eat, they must share the risk.”

So back to camp we went. We stated the case to them as they stood around the fire. There were a great many blank looks. Nobody seemed to like the idea. The feast was all right, but the getting of it bothered them. The stout tenor was

especially indignant. His idea had been for us to kill a small pig, so that we might carry it to camp ourselves. If we were shot, it wouldn't have been his funeral. He had foreseen what would happen if we killed a big one.

At last the logic of hunger proved to them that the right thing to do was to come and take their chance. So we all left camp in a body. The stout tenor wanted to stay behind, but I said a few forcible things to him.

In about an hour's time we were back with the pig. No accident had occurred. No prying ranchman had been around. Everything had been serene. As serene as the moon!

Soon a delicious odour was arising. And then we had a feast!

XXII.—HOW I “RAN PROPS”

WHILST I was in 'Frisco I had the honour of suping with Sarah Bernhardt. She played a season at the Baldwin Theatre, and I, along with others, got the princely allowance of fifty cents. a night for supporting her in “Theodora.” We played slaves and nobles and gladiators and circus-riders and other things Roman. I remember on one occasion having the felicity of standing quite near to the divine Sarah in the right second entrance. I was dressed up as a slave, and was getting ready to follow some Roman nobles who were marching on to the stage as if they owned it. I looked quite critically at the great actress to see if she were as thin as report said. She was not. I suppose she had picked up somewhat.

How I "Ran Props" 309

This was after I had got to 'Frisco from touring through California with the opera company. I had no money, for the genial manager had told me in his most tactful manner that he would pay me what he owed me when things looked up a little. Thus I had to take on suping.

Soon after this I got an engagement to sing ballads in the Eureka Music Hall on Kearney Street. They were rather generous to me here in the way of advertisement, for on one side of the programme I was announced as the "Celebrated Tenor," while on the other side I was announced as the "Celebrated Baritone." Here I sang for a month.

When I left I was at once engaged by a third-rate actor to play heavy business for him—villains, and such like. This actor wanted to star through the country, for he had come to the conclusion that he was great. This is a conclusion that all actors arrive at.

He was rather a character, this actor. He had the keenest sense of self-value I have ever met in anyone. As he deftly

and pointedly put it: "If I only get a chance I'll paralyse the earth."

With sorrow I am compelled to state that I did not suit the actor's requirements. I looked the part of a villain, he averred, and I read my lines like one, but—well, it was my walk he objected to. Alas, I still had the walk of a sailor. The roll of the ship had not yet got out of my gait. And a stage villain had, above all, to have a steady and commanding walk. I lost the engagement.

However, I was luckier with Jim Wessels, the melodramatic actor. Whenever Jim spoke the scenes trembled. He was what was known as the scene-chewing type of actor. He went in for producing unsubtle, broad effects.

He gave me a part in "The Danites," not because I could act, but because I had a good loud voice. The man who had been playing the part was most artistic in his make-up and conception of the character, but his voice could hardly be heard past the footlights. At a pinch I could be heard outside the theatre, and though

How I "Ran Props" 311

I was atrociously bad as an actor I was given the part to play.

The next thing I did was to sing chorus in the Grand Opera House on Mission Street. Campanini came to San Francisco to put on a series of grand operas. He had with him Scalchi, Repetto, Baldini, Antonio Galassi, and other artistes, including Gore, the conductor from La Scala.

We—the chorus singers—had to rehearse for a month before the operas were actually put on, and this was a trying time for us, for we were nearly all hard up. We were paid nothing for the rehearsals.

The first opera, "Rigoletto," was a fiasco as far as the chorus was concerned. In the opening chorus Gore did not give us the sign to attack, and the result was that not one of us opened our mouths to sing. We looked like dummies—neither useful nor ornamental. When the curtain went down on the first act Galassi turned round to us fiercely and shouted, "What for you no cantante?" As his eye seemed to meet mine, I shouted back at him, "Why didn't Gore give us the cue?" Galassi was a

towering big man, and he looked as if he were going to come for me.

It turned out afterwards that Gore forgot himself, and thought he was conducting at La Scala. We were told that there a conductor never gives the sign to the chorus to attack. They are supposed to know when to come in themselves. This plan, of course, is all right when the chorus has had a sufficient number of rehearsals.

All I got out of this engagement was fifteen dollars.

About this time the climate of California lost for me its rare and subtle beauty. I longed to go Eastward. But how? I was thirty-six hundred miles away from New York. And big obstacles met me at every point, for very few companies that left 'Frisco for New York ever wanted people. It looked as though it were my fate to become a permanent Californian, when an engagement was offered me. It was to sing in a quartette at the Alcazar Theatre, where Ned Harrigan, a famous exponent of character-comedy, had just arrived from New York to put on his own

pieces. He wanted singers, and I was engaged.

During his stay in the town, which lasted eight weeks, he took a liking to me, and his manager intimated to me that I could go with the company, if I wished, as Harrigan was going to play his way across the Continent to New York. A thrill of delight suffused me. But, alas! there was a codicil, so to speak, to the contract. It was this: I had to "run props." At that time I had only a vague notion of what running props meant, but an instinct told me that it was something with very little of a soft snap in it. My ardour was dampened considerably, but I had had a surfeit of the gilded climate, and therefore decided to accept this iron-clad engagement.

Oh, if I had only known then what I knew afterwards, I would have stayed in California till the golden sun had covered me with gilt before I would have taken such an engagement. It was only by a miracle that I ever got to New York. A hundred times I was on the point of leav-

ing, owing to the nature of my work. It was, indeed, an unthankful, an ungrateful, and a tough task. I became everyone's bitter foe. Fellows who hobnobbed with me, and who drank my beer in 'Frisco, now looked upon me as their natural enemy.

The company consisted of twenty-six people, and in addition to my duties as a property-man, I had to look after all the baggage and scenery, for we carried no carpenters. We would get into a town, say, at ten o'clock in the morning. The stage-manager—who, by the way, was a very good fellow named Charles—and I would go together and get a stiff drink to prepare us for the day's ordeal, while the star would immediately hie him to the hotel to sleep. The rest of the company would either follow his example, or stand around on the principal street mashing the girls. Of course, as Charles and I were but human, we naturally envied the easy time they had compared to ours, and, as they invariably grumbled at us in the night time when we were running the scenes

How I "Ran Props" 315

and properties of the performance, we anathematised them roundly over our fraternal drinks. After we had quenched our thirst and eased our feelings, we would go to the theatre, or rather hall, where I would interview the property-man, while the indomitable Charles interviewed the proprietor or carpenter, or whatever he was, about the scenes we had to use that night. After Charles had seen that sapient individual, he would mark off the dressing-rooms.

The party whom I interviewed was usually a man or boy who worked at some other business, and who got off on that particular day to help me to get the properties. It is needless to say that his lack of knowledge concerning things theatrical would fill libraries. He would try to make up for this lack by boundless enthusiasm for the stage. I would give him a list of the indispensable properties, but, alas! not more than half of them showed up when the shades of night fell, and I alone had to bear the brunt of the star's fury when he found them missing.

After Charles and I had got through our interviewing we would go out and get a little more courage, and await developments. They would come in the shape of the gentry we had just interviewed. They expected us to treat them. I need hardly say that the management never allowed us treating expenses.

In time night would come, and then would come our sorrows. The first grumble would be about dressing-rooms, and I don't wonder at it, for the noble knights of the sock and buskin had had such an easy time during the day that dressing in those stuffy little rooms injured their feelings. Where they made the mistake—to my mind—was in imagining that Charles and I were magicians who could, by some occult power, transform the little holes into large, commodious, airy spaces, where they could keep up in a fitting manner the atmosphere of luxurious ease in which they had revelled during the day. However, I must say that we would meet their disapproval with a vast amount of stoicism. In fact, we would make little

forcible remarks to them that were calculated to heighten it.

Then the star would begin, but, to tell the honest truth, his starship was less of a grumbler than any of them, for he only grumbled from an artistic standpoint. He would stand in the entrance during a performance and upbraid me in scathing terms for my dilatory and stupid ways. He would analyse and expound the value of properties to actors and the acting art. He would say that I killed his piece; in fact, he would show up my shortcomings in a vivid and powerful manner. He played the part of an old, rum-soaked bum—his own creation—and he played it well. It was wonderful to see the way in which he would arise from his bumliness and denounce me the moment he left the stage for not having his hand-props in the right place.

One night, in St Paul, Minnesota, the star discharged me for missing "crashes," and telling him to retire to the "Cimmerian depths of Hades." I didn't classicise the phrase, but gave it out to him in strong

Saxon. I was beginning to be tired of the whole business. A man can't hold hot iron for ever. But the manager interposed and it ended in my being forgiven after the show.

But all things have an end, and after many trials, tribulations, and, I might add, vituperations, I arrived in New York. My ideal was realised. I had got to the cold, muggy East.

XXIII.—THE BOWERY

THE Bowery is the main artery of the east side of New York. Along it move the people who dwell in poverty. It is the promenade of the doomed—the breathing spot for those that live in the gloom. The atmosphere seems charged with something that no one shall define. The people possess a grim sense of humour, but it is the humour of recklessness—that terrible humour that has moved the Paris gamin to make history. There is a difference, subtle, but distinct, between the crowd that moves along the Bowery and the crowds that move along like places in Old World great cities. The difference lies in the fact that here you will find a suggestion of blending, of fraternisation of race. You will find cosmopolitanism.

There is a feverish activity everywhere.

You are behind the scenes in the theatre of New World civilisation. Refuse barrels stand on corners. Here the street is torn up for repairs. The elevated trains rush and puff; horses stumble and clatter; carts crunch and rumble along. The shriek of the locomotive and the jangle of horse-car bells mingle. Drivers swear.

Here the policeman stalks along swinging his club. He is monarch of all he surveys—the rajah of the street. He has been known to club people into insensibility and afterwards arrest them for obstructing his club. He possesses the contempt for the liberty of the pedestrian that belongs peculiarly to the American policeman. As a rule he is an offensive blackguard and bully who is skilled in the fine art of levying blackmail. But he is human after all. He has been known to give hard-up men money wherewith to get food and shelter. He is the ornament of the Bowery. His buttons shine beautifully. His club, though hard, is nicely polished.

A black-eyed, sinewy Italian presides

over a fruit-stand. The land of the glorious sun and the sparkling waters he has left for ever behind. He is seeking his fortune in the Cosmopolis. Sliced pine-apples, oranges, pears and fruits of all kinds cover his stall. His shirt is open because of the heat, and he is dreaming, dozing, as the life whirls by. A tender expression is softening the lines of his bronzed face. Memories, perhaps, of the long ago are awakening within him. Let us draw near! Ah, he is humming softly an aria from "Il Trovatore!" He is in the Scala of Milan—listening, perhaps, to Pifferini or Campanini—Pifferini, who on some nights sang like an angel, who on other nights could not sing at all.

Here is a picture that is beautiful. Johnnie is making love to Mamie in a doorway. Johnnie drives an express waggon for ten dollars a week, and Mamie—well, Mamie works in a cigar factory. Neither of them has ever lived outside the East Side of New York. This may be seen at a glance. The girl's eyes are cast shyly down, while Johnnie presses

close up to her, and tells her, perhaps, that he can marry her next fall, because he expects a rise in his salary. They are drinking the first delicious draughts of love. Heedless are they of the people in the passing crowd who stare at them.

There saunters the working man, who labours many hours a day so that he may eat bread. He wears a starched shirt and a neat suit of clothes, but you can tell what he is at a glance. The weary look in the face and the droop of the shoulders speak it more plainly than words.

Look at the Irishwoman with the basket. She is walking along the Bowery to the store where she gets her provisions for her family. She has a handkerchief tied around her head, and a look of shrewd bargaining is in her face. She might have dropped here from Galway. Shrewd bargaining and close figuring are the only methods by which she can make ends meet. When one has four or five little children at home, and a husband who earns but a dollar and a quarter a day, it is necessary to look closely after the pennies. Again, Pat

receives no wages from the contractor when he has to stop work on account of the rain. And if he doesn't work harder than the Italian alongside of him, he is apt to be fired from his job. Also, he needs ten cents for his growler of beer every night.

Up comes the ward politician. He is jolly looking of face and big and tight of girth. His smile is knowing and satisfied, for he revels in the fat of the land. A diamond flashes from his shirt front, his pockets are filled with money, and his taste in dress is loud. His heelers get in his way to catch his smiles. This is the man who will tell you that money talks. He knows as much about our present social system as Herbert Spencer and all the thinkers and writers upon sociology put together. He gets the above system down fine and stands upon it for his own benefit. His method has the merit of being simple. So simple that it needn't be discussed. Still, in a way, he is a good fellow—that is, if things go his way. He possesses magnetism enough to become either a successful bunco-steerer,

or an after-dinner orator who is eloquent in the interests of trusts. Politics, however, pay him better. His especial virtue is that he always buys the drinks. In fact, this is the chief secret of his simple method of running the affairs of this great city.

Fakers stand on the corners of the streets. They are selling laces, handkerchiefs, cheap jewellery, the useful, though modest, suspender, and other things too numerous to mention. They thrust the articles towards you as you pass. Wondrous bargains may be procured for a nothing. So says the faker. And the faker—where does he hail from? He hails from all spots. In fact, he is like the passing crowd. His home is wherever he hangs his hat. He may be a wily Greek who has descended in a direct line from the divinely subtle Socrates; he may be a Jew who is a descendant of a black sheep of one of the Lost Tribes of Israel; or he may be a ward politician whose magnetism has gone back on him, and who is certainly descended from an Irish king.

Here are the dime museums, where you can see everything from a mammoth to a protoplasm on payment of ten cents. And the gaudy, brilliant fronts of the cheap theatres. In them you may sit and gaze while the blood-and-thunder drama unrolls itself.

So life goes on in the Bowery.

* * * * *

At night I used to wander along the Bowery and think over things. I had a small room in the top of an old house that lay in a street just off it. This house had been built in colonial times, and about it was an odd, desolate air.

I had left the stage long ago. I recognised that I had no talent in that direction.

I used to cook for myself in the garret where I lived. Whenever I managed to get a little money I would lay in a stock of provisions at the delicatessen shop across the road.

I was getting tired of America. Its air of blatant, sham democracy disgusted me. When labouring men were struggling

for the right to live they were shot and crushed down by the military with more mercilessness and for less provocation than they would be under the most despotic and ruthless Government in Europe. If any American takes exception to this statement I can only ask him if he has forgotten the affair at Homestead, and the hideous travesty of justice concerning the alleged Anarchists in Chicago, and other like instances. I have known people to get a year's imprisonment in New York for saying things that they might say with impunity in Hyde Park in London. In fact, the English policeman would not allow them to be interrupted while they were giving forth their ideas. I am not saying that England is a perfect place to live in. That, of course, would be nonsense. But I do say, from personal and absolute knowledge, that England is a freer and more democratic country than is America.

I was beginning to long to go back again to England. After all, it was the place I had come from. And, above all, I

longed to go to London. I wanted to try my luck there. The idea of being in the world's great town fascinated me.

I could easily have managed to go to England as a sailor, but somehow I did not care for the idea. So I managed to get myself a steerage ticket.

* * * * *

I was sorry afterwards that I had not gone as a sailor, for we had heavy weather crossing the Atlantic, and necessarily the steerage passengers were kept below. Thus the air of the steerage became bad because of the impossibility of opening up hatchways and port-holes.

I found there were other sailors beside myself in the steerage. They were the crews of three sailing ships. They had been paid off in New York, and their idea was to go to Liverpool so that they could ship to Australia. They were a jolly lot of lads, and I was glad to be with them. They brought me into touch with the old times. One of them especially was a most interesting character. He had followed the sea for twenty years, and

knew of hardly anything save ports and the ways of ships and grog-shops. His name was Myles Hand, and he hailed from Liverpool. He was the ideal English sailor, the type that Marryat immortalized. He was well able to sing and dance, and in person he was well built of frame, good looking of face, and had blue, well-opened eyes. The eyes of sailors are always well opened. The looking out and the continual watching causes this.

When we were near the end of the voyage I got up a concert, and put Myles' name first on the programme. The writing of this programme was a great bother to me, because of the rolling of the ship. When it was finished Myles got some mustard from the steward and plastered it up. Then he stood off, and looked at his own name admiringly. I had put him down for a baritone solo.

At last we were running up the Mersey, and Liverpool was coming up in the distance. After years had passed I was seeing it again. I was glad to see it,

even though I was poor as when I left it. I had gathered nothing but experience.

And the next day I started for London.

XXIV.—NO PLACE TO SLEEP

THE hour of midnight tolls out and London becomes strange and quiet. It becomes at once alive and dead. The people leave its streets. And soon there is nothing left but shadows. Gigantic, weird shadows. Nameless shadows of the past and present. Monstrous, changing, weaving.

In the waters of the old river are reflections of a strange and glorious beauty mingling with shadows foul, black, and unspeakable. Terrifying shadows. Forbidding, louring; and waving and moving into frightful shapes.

London of the shadow. Formless, distorted London. Silence, blackness and dim light unite. Everything is vague, uncertain, and elusive. Here is mystery.

No Place to Sleep 331

Here is darkness and sadness and the unknown.

London in shadow.

And you walk on—on—your footsteps sounding lone and strange. It is as if you were in some vast, deserted city—some mighty, ghost-haunted labyrinth.

Boom!

The great bell breaks forth, marking the hour of one. Mighty is the tone, full of menace and sullen power. It voices the genius of the great English nation—that dominant genius that has crushed and colonised, that has spread itself wherever wind blows or water dashes.

Sweeping goes the tone of the great bell over hovel and palace—over the black sullen waters—over destitution and magnificence and misery.

It startles the poor miserables who tonight have no place to sleep. Those who are adrift. They sit up on the benches where they have been lying. They shudder. The great brazen tone is full of menace for them.

They are poor human shadows. **They**

come from out of the great black, sinister shadow of the town. They are ghosts of wrecked lives. There is no one to help them. There is no one to give them shelter. There is no one to give them warmth or food or love. They are lost. They are but shadows.

Why have they to starve and shiver in the midst of plenty? Over yonder is a palace wherein a thousand such as these might be housed. Over yonder is a church—mark you! a church!—wherein shelter might be had. What would Christ say to this?

But Christ is dead.

And you think that if Christ lived now in this Christian civilisation He would mayhap be lying yonder—starved and hungry and cold. Yonder under the shadow of the Sphinx.

Two! The bell has broken forth. And you turn up from the river and walk towards the Strand.

How quiet it is, this Strand. In the daytime it is filled with an ever-flowing tide of humans. They rush and hurry

along, and lounge and idle along. Horses, vans, and cabs and carts clatter, crunch, and rumble along. There is hurry and bustle and excitement.

But now is the Strand dead. It is under the dominion of the shadows. No one is to be seen. Nothing is to be heard but your own footfalls.

You go back to the river. The dark, strange old river. How black are the shadows. And you stop and think. Soon it will be light. Soon it will be day. But meanwhile are shadows. Shadows. Working in the loom of fate Monstrous, changing, weaving.

* * * * *

To be in a great town at night and to have no place to sleep is hard. You look around. On all sides are houses where people are resting comfortably in bed. But there is no bed for you. So you wander through the streets aimlessly. How cold everything is! How cold is human nature. Here is luxury and comfort on all sides. Food in plenty is here, but you may not touch it. Warmth is

here. Rest is here. But you must go on. Ever on. Like one who is doomed or damned.

You are an outcast, because you are guilty of that crime of crimes—poverty. And you begin to think and to wish many strange things. Aye, you think, it matters not if you be the dullest clod. For suffering and loneliness breed thought.

Perhaps you will sit down on a bench, but you may not sit for long. The policeman will come and order you to move on. Move on! Where?

Perhaps you will summon up courage enough to ask a passer-by for alms. It is better for you not to do so, however, for the chance of your getting anything is small. And you may be given in charge.

So you move on.

And your life will arise before you. You will think of the good times you have had. You will think of your future, but you will not think of your future long—for the present is too real and pressing.

Of course it is all your own fault. It always is one's own fault when luck goes against one. It is always one's own fault for being struck down. You should have been strong enough to stand up.

You should have done such and such a thing at such and such a time. You had no right to back that fellow's bill; or you had no right to leave that job because the foreman bullied you; or you—but you stop. What is the use of thinking in this strain? It doesn't help you one bit. You are here in the dark streets, and no one cares whether you live or die.

The bells ring out the hours. Time has for you a significance it never had before. It will be all right in a hundred years from now, you think. You will be dead then, and will not care. You will have plenty of rest. You will be allowed to sleep. You will be as fine a man then as a king. You will really count for as much.

A hundred years from now. But what a long time till then!

And it may be that you will wander by the palace where lives the Queen. How fine and grand is this palace! how spacious must be the rooms! Herein a thousand like you might sleep. Can it be, you will think, that there is a difference in human blood after all? Philosophers say that there is not, but surely there must be. Philosophers don't know everything. Their logic is all very well when you have wine, a good cigar, and a bright fire before which to thrust your feet. But it counts for nothing when you are hungry, when you have no place to sleep.

And it may be that the face of a woman will arise before you—a woman who loved you in the old days. What would she say if she saw you in this plight? Why, her dear heart would break. She would take you to her arms, unkempt and begrimed though you are. She would kiss you, and cheer you up, and make you feel a man again. Dear, sweet love of the fine old days!

But she is dead.

And so you go on and on, and listen to the bells as they strike the hours. They are the only friends you have, cold though their voices are, for they do not blame you for being unfortunate—as man blames you. No, they pay no heed. You are the same to them as any other man. They are impartial. And of all things misfortune loves impartiality. It is a finer thing than sympathy.

Dear old bells! I love them, for it has been my lot to wander at dead of night through a great city because I had no money to pay for a bed. And I assert that no man knows what it is without he has experienced it. I have heard sympathetic, well-off people talk feelingly of the hardships of the poor. I have heard them in drawing-rooms.

Yes, these people talk, but they don't know what they are talking about. And they are not really sympathetic with the poor. They only think they are. No one has any real sympathy with the poor but the poor. There is something in class after all. If you are a tramp and a gaol-

bird, it is better for you to chum in with tramps and gaol-birds. They won't patronise you and hurt your feelings. Yes—class is the thing. Keep to your class.

Sometimes it is said that low-down, unfortunate people don't realize to the full the degradation of their lives.

This is a lie. These poor people do realize their degradation. They realize that they are dogs and slaves, but their way of saying that they know they are dogs and slaves is not what is called an elegant way. It is not a drawing-room way. It is the way that smacks of the slum, and the foul alley, and the gaol, and the gutter. And, after all, one way of saying the same thing is much the same as another way. There isn't as big a difference between illiterate and literate people as is generally supposed. Illiterate people are on the whole more intelligent than literate people—because they are brought more in touch with the iron facts of life.

Yes, the poor homeless man who walks the streets at night is forced to think, even

if he be ever such a clod. And he is forced to think hard. And he knows more about what walking the streets means than even the most sympathetic upholder of charitable organisations.

A word as to charitable organisations.

They are no good. At least, I, who have had need of them, have found them to be no good. And the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Yes, I assert that they are no good. This statement is sweeping—but listen to a cold fact. If you are hungry and homeless, and apply to one of them for relief from misery they will do nothing for you. I know what I am talking about, for I have applied to them.

Of course, there is an excellent reason for their not helping the destitute, just as there is an excellent reason for everything.

The destitute man may not have a satisfactory pedigree; he may be a criminal; he may be undeserving; he may be just a hair's-breadth beyond their alleged scope of action. Again, he may not possess a spotless reputation. To get help from a

charitable organisation you must possess a spotless reputation. You must be good and worthy, and able to stand searching cross-examination.

And, above all, you must be able to fast and do without sleep for a month after your application.

Still, it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. The charity organisations provide fat salaries for the officials who run them.

If you are ever destitute, steer clear of them; for if they do take you in and give you a piece of bread, they will take more than the worth of it out of you. It is much better for you to go out on the Embankment.

They talk of the cloven hoof of wickedness, but I tell you it is as nothing compared with the iron heel of organised charity.

No, if a man ever asks you for fourpence for his night's lodging, give it to him if you can. Even though you feel almost sure that he'll go and get a drink with it. Supposing he does. What then? Doesn't the poor chap need a drink to cheer him up a little? See, he is dirty

and hungry and half-starved and badly clothed. He is worse off than a homeless dog. No one has any use for him. But remember that he has feelings, that he has a heart, that he has red blood just like you have. He may have been a man who once held a good position. Or he may have—but never mind what he was. It is what he is. He is a man who needs help. Christ would have helped him and asked no questions. Do thou likewise.

People often say than any man can get work if he wishes to work. This is false. The army of unemployed increases day by day. I am not going to argue as to why this is. I only state a fact.

No, give the poor fellow fourpence, and give him the price of a drink if you can spare it. And you will be doing an act of which Christ would have approved.

The hardest time of all for a homeless man, who is tramping the dark streets, is at about half-past two in the morning. Then everything is dead quiet. The city sleeps. Its great rumble has gone down altogether. The tramp of the policeman,

as he goes from house to house trying the doors, seems to make the loneliness all the more lonely. The poor outcast must keep out of the policeman's way, for the policeman is his enemy.

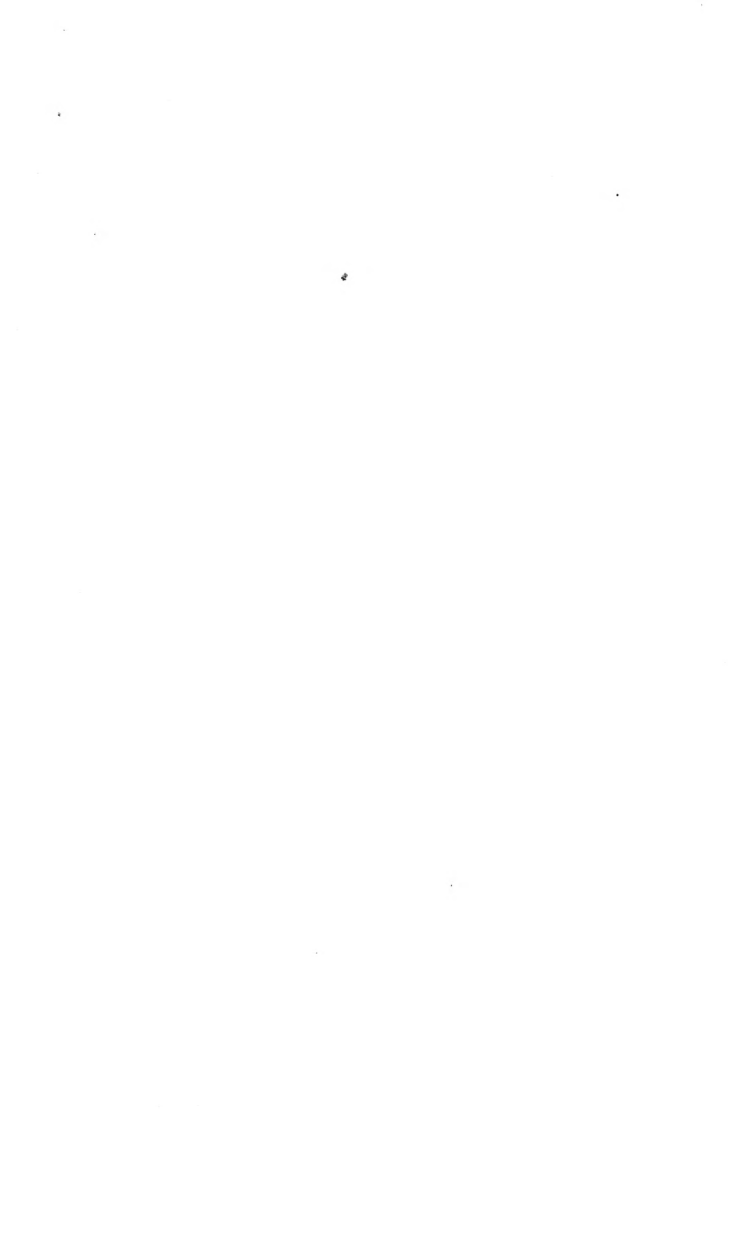
The policeman is the embodiment of the humanity of our civilisation.

Aye, this is indeed a hard time for the outcast. His vitality is at its lowest ebb. He would give his soul to lie down and sleep, even on the pavement. But he may not do so. He must move on.

He must move on.

* * * * *

And at last dawn breaks.



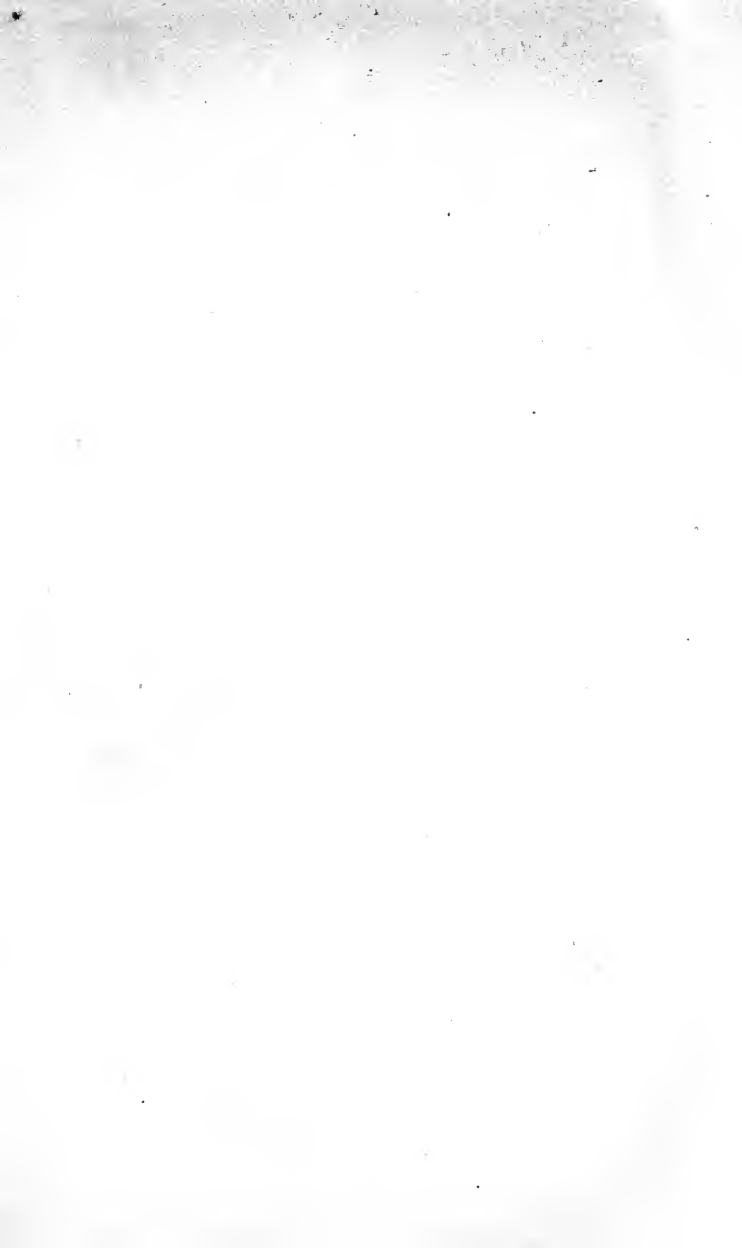


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