

# MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING  
ADVENTURE

MOTOR  
FICTION

NO. 14  
MAY 29 1909

FIVE  
CENTS

MOTORMATT'S  
PROMISE

OR THE WRECK  
OF THE HAWK

By THE AUTHOR OF  
"MOTOR MATT"



*Slowly and carefully  
Motormatt went about his  
work watched breathlessly  
by Carl*

J. FREE & SMITH  
PUBLISHERS  
NEW YORK

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## MOTOR MATT'S PROMISE

or

The Wreck of the *Hawk*

By Stanley R Matthews

*Street & Smith*  
*Publishers — New York*

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# MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

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## Motor Matt's Promise

OR,

THE WRECK OF THE *HAWK*

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# CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

**Matt King**, concerning whom there has always been a mystery—a lad of splendid athletic abilities, and never-failing nerve, who has won for himself, among the boys of the Western town, the popular name of "Mile-a-minute Matt."

**Carl Pretzel**, a cheerful and rollicking German lad, who is led by a fortunate accident to hook up with Motor Matt in double harness.

**Dick Ferral**, a young sea dog from Canada, with all a sailor's superstitions, but in spite of all that a royal chum, ready to stand by the friend of his choice through thick and thin.

**Archibald Townsend**, a wealthy though eccentric gentleman, who owns a remarkable submarine boat on which our friends have seen various adventures in the past.

**Cassidy**, mate of the submarine *Grampus*.

**Whistler,**  
**Jurgens,** } a trio of rogues bent upon gaining possession of  
**Bangs,** } a prize.

**Joe Dashington**, Motor Matt's double, who proves how small a matter will sometimes turn a fellow from the wrong road into the right one.

**Shirley, of Scotland Yard**, who springs a surprise at the end of the story.

**Fetterman, assistant chief of police**, who helps the Scotland Yard man..

# CHAPTER I.

## ON THE LEVEE.

"Py shiminy grickets!"

"Well, strike me lucky!"

"Can I believe vat I see mit my eyes, Tick, or haf I got der plind shtaggers?"

"I'm guessing good and hard, Carl. It's main queer, and no mistake."

"Py all der rules oof der game dot feller iss Matt King, oddervise Modor Matt, oddervise Mile-a-minute Matt, King oof der Modor Poys und Gaptain oof der air ship *Hawk*, aber I bed you I nefer see him like dot pefore."

"It's Matt, all right, but sink me if I'm not taken all aback by the way he acts. What's come over the old ship to do like that?"

It was about half-past four in the afternoon, and Carl Pretzel and Dick Ferral were on their way along the water front of New Orleans. They had gone into town on an important errand and were now returning to Stuyvesant Dock, where their air ship was moored and where they had expected to find Motor Matt.

Just off the foot of Canal Street a steamer was loading for False River. Four-mule teams attached to heavy drays were backed up to the wharf and long lines of darkies were crossing the gang plank with bags on their shoulders and recrossing empty-handed for other burdens.

It was an attractive scene for the two boys and they halted for a few moments to watch; then, suddenly, a

big surprise was sprung on them. They saw Motor Matt, hands in his pockets, loafing along the levee—at least they thought it was Motor Matt, for the lad was of the same build, the same height and with a face exactly like the young motorist's. Carl and Dick knew Matt so well that they were positive they were not mistaken, but there was something about Matt they could not understand.

In the first place, Matt was slouching along. That wasn't like him, for as a rule he was as spry as a cricket in all his movements. Then, again, Matt was wearing a slouch hat, a dingy red sweater and frayed corduroy trousers—all as different as possible from the trim young motorist in his leather cap and jacket. But—and this was the most incomprehensible thing to Carl and Dick—Matt was smoking a cigarette. Now, Motor Matt was down on cigarettes good and hard, for he knew the havoc they made with a fellow's constitution, and that no one could keep in the pink of condition if he used them; and yet, there he was with one of the rice-paper things hanging between his lips.

Small wonder Carl and Dick were astounded. If a small-sized earthquake had happened along and shaken things up generally the two boys could not have been more astounded.

Although they were in plain view, yet Matt did not seem to notice them. For a while they stared—and then, abruptly, Dick had an idea.

"He's in disguise," averred Dick.

"For vy iss he dot?" inquired Carl.

"It must be he's watching somebody and don't want the fellow to know who he is."

"Vat a foolishness!" muttered Carl. "He can't make some disguises unless he geds anodder face. I would



know dot face oof his anyvere, no madder how he vas got oop, nor how many cigarettes he shmoked. Ach, du lieber! I am surprised ad him, und dot's all aboutd it."

"Well," continued Dick, "this letter of Townsend's is important and I've got to get it into his hands. If Matt is watching somebody, the thing is to hand him the letter without giving him away. Any one seeing us chinning with him would suspect right away that he was our chum, for all three of us are pretty well known up and down the river front."

"Dot's righdt," said Carl. "Ve don'd vant to tip off his game oof he iss blaying vone. How ve vas going to gif him der ledder, hey?"

"I guess I can do it, but it won't be any first-chop work. I'll give a whistle and make him look this way, then I'll flash the letter, lay it on this bale of cotton, and we'll back off and give him a wide berth."

"Meppy der feller Matt iss vatching vill see you do dot?"

"Mayhap, but we've got to run the risk. This letter of Townsend's, you know, is important and must be acted upon to-night. Now listen while I pipe up."

Ferral put his fingers to his lips and whistled shrilly. Several loungers looked toward the two boys, Matt himself shifting his eyes languidly in their direction. Ferral at once drew a letter from the breast of his shirt, held it in front of him, cautiously pointed to it as he looked at Matt and then laid it on the bale of cotton.

It was far from being cleverly done—the very nature of the case, with so many loungers about, put cleverness out of the question. All Dick hoped for, however, was that the man Matt was watching might not see the move.

The work of Carl and Dick was built entirely on

surmises. Unable to explain Matt's get-up and actions in any other way, they surmised that he must be watching some one; but the biggest surmise—and which, to the boys, seemed no surmise at all, but positive reality—was that the lad was Motor Matt.

Matt, hands still in his pockets and cigarette between his lips, shuffled toward the cotton bale.

"We've tipped him off," chuckled Dick, as he and Carl backed away. "He'll fall afoul of that letter, now, and it's up to us to give him a good offing. I hope the move wasn't seen by the swab he's got under his eye."

From a safe distance the two boys watched while Matt came close to the bale and leaned against it while he picked up the letter. He was amazingly open and aboveboard while he examined that letter. Carl and Dick thought he would sneak it off the cotton bale, tuck it in his pocket and lounge carelessly away. But they were mistaken. Matt held the letter up curiously and turned it around and around in his hand.

"Well, keelhaul me!" growled Dick. "He might just as well tell everybody what we've done as to examine the letter like that. There must be a screw loose in his head! Why, I never saw him act like that before. I can't smoke his roll any way you put it."

"I vas all mixed oop aboutd it meinseluf," said Carl, in a puzzled tone. "He iss acting so keveer as I can't tell. Oof he vas keeping drack oof somepody, vy don'd \_"

Just then something happened that caused Carl to catch his breath. A startled exclamation escaped Dick.

In a flash the cotton bale had leaped into flame!

Wild shouts came from everywhere on that part of the levee. Stevedores dropped their burdens, bystanders lost their passive demeanor and teamsters

jumped from their trucks. Buckets were secured and dipped in the river, and hustled toward the blazing bale with the water.

Meanwhile, Matt had slouched off to a good distance from the fire. While the boys drew nearer and watched excitedly, they saw an officer rush up to their chum, seize the cigarette from his lips and dash it on the planks and crush it under his foot.

"Can't you read, you idiot?" fumed the officer. "Look there!"

With his club he pointed to a sign which read, "No smoking." All over the levee there were signs to that effect. No matter which way a fellow turned the curt order, "No smoking," stared him in the face.

"Aw, forget it!" said Matt, with a curt disregard for legal authority that came to Dick and Carl like a slap in the face. "You're a copper, all right, but you can't get gay with me."

This insolence astounded the officer. Likewise it served to arouse his temper.

"I'll get gay with you, all right, my festive kiskedee," he snapped. "That cigarette of yours set fire to that bale, an' you'll just consider yourself pinched."

The officer's hand dropped on Matt's shoulder.

"You will pinch me, eh?" answered Matt. "Well, you've got another guess coming!"

With that his languid air vanished in a twinkling and he became imbued with the fiercest kind of energy. With a swift leap he wrenched himself free of the policeman's detaining hand. The policeman, with an angry shout, jumped at him, swinging his club. Matt's foot went out and the policeman was neatly tripped and measured his length on the planks.

This was energy of the kind Motor Matt could display, upon occasion, but he had never been known to direct it against an officer of the law. Nor was Motor Matt insolent—he had other ways for meeting injustice.

Astonishment at the swift progress of events and the unheard-of actions of their chum held Carl and Dick stunned in their tracks.

"He iss crazy!" averred Carl, with a gasp. "Modor Matt has gone off der chump! He iss pughouse, yah, so helup me!"

"He's all ahoos in his top hammer and no mistake!" agreed Dick. "But we've got to help him, Carl. We can't stand off and on while Matt's in trouble. Avast there!" he yelled, running toward the exciting scene.

"Hold back a minute, officer! Sheer off, and keep those men back!"

The policeman had scrambled to his feet, and stevedores and bystanders were all making a concerted rush in Matt's direction.

"Yah, yah," taunted Matt defiantly. "I'm ready for anything from a fight to a foot race."

He was lightning-like in his movements now. Pulling over a barrel that stood on end, he rolled it into the midst of his pursuers. Half a dozen of them went down in a tangled heap and so interfered with the others that pursuit was, for a moment, checked.

Matt made the most of this period of grace and ducked away toward Canal Street. There were two or three carriages at the edge of the wharf, and by the open door of one of them a man was standing.

"This way, King!" the man shouted, beckoning.

Carl and Dick saw the fugitive swerve in the

direction of the carriage. Another moment and he and the man were inside, the door slammed, and the darky on the box whipped away. In less time than it takes to tell it, the carriage was lost in a crowd of vehicles, while Dick and Carl were gasping on the levee, staring blankly into each other's eyes.

## CHAPTER II.

### MIXED IDENTITIES.

"You're all right, neighbor," panted the fugitive as he settled back in the carriage seat. "I was in a tight corner, but the copper hadn't any call to rough things up with me like he did. How did you happen to be handy by and willing to give me a lift?"

"I've been watching you for fifteen or twenty minutes," answered the man.

"Piping me off, eh? Why was that? What's your graft, anyhow? Put me wise and oblige."

"Oh, drop it!" said the other disgustedly. "You know me, all right enough. Look!"

The man wore a black beard. Lifting his hands as he spoke he plucked it away, revealing a smoothly shaven face.

"Recognize me now?" he queried, with a husky laugh.

"If I do I'm a geezer," answered the youth. "Why the bogus wind teasers? Gee, but this is a warm play."

"You make me tired!" scowled the man. "My name's Whistler, as you know well enough."

"Whistler, Whistler," murmured the fugitive. "On the level, Whistler, you've got past my guard. But what's the diff? You're one-two-seven with me for lifting me out of that bunch of trouble. But, tell me, whose game of muggins is this, and what's the stake? Anything higher than two-call-five and a quarter to see puts me out of the running. You've heard of the bank that broke the man at Monte Carlo? Well, listen—I'm It. Please

drop that dizzy front, old fel, and tell me why you're a counterfeit. Not being a has-wasser myself, I'm game for anything that promises kopecks, simoleons, or anything white or yellow with the eagle bird and E Pluribus Get-there on the side. Have one?"

With two yellow-stained fingers, the youth pulled a cigarette box from under his sweater and offered it to the man. The latter, apparently in a daze, shook his head negatively. With a grin, the fugitive lighted a cigarette and put away the box.

"Now, Whistler," he pattered, "cut away with the straight dope and tell me all about it."

Whistler narrowed his eyes and studied the fugitive's face for a minute.

"You've got more tricks in your basket, Matt King," said he, "than I've given you credit for, up to now."

"Thanks, Whistler," drawled the youth, "you'll never hear me putting up a roar when that sort of con talk is shoved at me. Yes, indeed, I've gathered much knowledge while knocking about our little planet. Experience came to me early and says, 'Joe, put your little hand in mine and let's go out and take a bird's-eye view of the Universe.' We went. Perhaps that's why, at the present speaking, I'm in N. O. all but broke. Being bashful and retiring, I don't like to feature myself; but you're keen, Whistler, and I couldn't dodge you."

The torrent of language flowed steadily, and as it flowed Whistler grew more and more surprised.

"Great jumping je-lucifer!" he muttered. "You've changed a whole lot in the last few days, King. I suppose that happened when you took to cigarettes?"

"Nay, not according to league rules." The lad allowed a mouthful of smoke to trickle out through his lips and

nose. "King, eh?" he went on. "How you do keep handing me the bokays. I was king of the track when I rode the ponies, king of the plungers when I played 'em, and king of the 'bos now they've broke me. Oh, yes, call me King by all means."

Whistler, still staring, sat back and mumbled to himself.

"What do you call yourself, *now*?" he asked.

"A mistake. I took the wrong turn at the forks of the road. Prosperityville lay on the other track and I'm just over the hill from the poorhouse. Also I call myself Dennis, and I spell it M-u-d. When I was christened they named me Joe, and the other part of it was Dashington. Generally they referred to me as Dash. That's about all I amount to, now; just a dash—a straight line that ought to stand for something, but don't."

"You're a pretty slick counterfeit yourself, King," laughed Whistler. "I never dreamed that Motor Matt could play himself up like this."

"My, my!" murmured Joe Dashington. "He thinks I'm stringing him! If I'd been careless with the truth he'd have believed me; but now that I'm giving it to him straight, he winks the other eye and drops a mitt on his left shoulder."

The carriage came to a stop. Joe Dashington started up and looked through the carriage window.

"Have the cops landed on me?" he inquired, "or have we reached the place we're going?"

"We've stopped where I wanted to, Motor Matt," returned Whistler. "Do you see this?"

He lifted a hand from his outside jacket pocket and showed a glimmering bit of steel.



"Not being blind," answered Dash calmly, "I'm wise to the pepper box. Ah, ha, the plot thickens! Why the gun?"

"I said I was watching you, there on the dock," answered Whistler sternly, "and I was doing it for a purpose. You were disguised, and I believed then and am of the opinion now that you were trying to find out something about me. I intended going to False River on that boat, but changed my plans when I saw you. You're going to get out here and accompany me into the house before which we have stopped; and you're going to remember, Motor Matt, that this pepper box is in my pocket all the time, and that I can use it there just as well as though I had it in sight."

"Yes, yes, this is a funny play, but I'm a passenger, Mr. Whistler, and you seem to hold all the trumps. I shall be glad to go into the house with you. Johnny Hardluck has been rubbing my fur the wrong way for days and days, and I'd get heart failure if he didn't keep it up."

Whistler opened the door with one hand, and he and the youth got out of the carriage, crossed the walk, climbed a flight of steps and vanished into the house. They were met in the hall by a man who showed a good deal of surprise.

"Great Scott, Whistler!" fretted the man. "I thought you were on your way to False River, by now."

"Changed my plan, Jurgens," replied Whistler. "Conduct us into the front room where the light is better. I've a surprise for you."

Jurgens gave a sharp look in the fugitive's direction, turned and led the way into an apartment where the late afternoon sun rendered objects clearer to the eye.

"What!" he cried, startled. "Matt King!" He whirled

angrily on Whistler. "What do you mean by bringing him here?"

"Don't go off the jump, Jurgens," answered Whistler, "until you learn more. Bangs went with me to the landing, and just as I was about to go on the boat I caught sight of King. I wondered why he was got up like that, and I believed that he was watching me. While I was wondering whether I should go on the boat, or not, this lad turned a little trouble on the levee. Those two chums of his, the sailor and the Dutchman, signaled and one of them laid a letter on a cotton bale. King went forward to get it and a spark from his cigarette fired the bale. A policeman started after him, and I motioned for him to come to the carriage. I saw, then, that he didn't know me. He accepted my invitation and I brought him away. Now we can make him tell us what his game is, and we can have a look at that letter."

Joe Dashington listened to all this with a surprised grin.

"I suppose I ought to have heart failure over this," he remarked, "but, somehow, it don't phase me. I can't be much worse off than I am, no matter what happens. When you gents find out you've made a sucker play, perhaps you'll tell me how I can turn enough of the ready for a board bill and a place to pound my ear."

"He's trying to tell me that his name's not King," scoffed Whistler.

Jurgens, deeply interested, laid his head on one side and studied the youth at some length.

"His face is King's, plain enough," said he finally, "but he's rigged out like a hoodlum and talks like a beachcomber. What's the answer?"

"I'm by," laughed Joe Dashington. "You fellows tell

me."

He lighted another cigarette.

"Pass over that letter," ordered Whistler.

Dashington, without a dissenting word, handed the letter to Whistler.

"I know as much about it as you do," said he. "If it's an invite to go out with a stocking full of sand, please count me in. Anything with money in it looks good to me."

The envelope bore the words, "For Motor Matt."

"He's King, easy enough," averred Jurgens, looking over Whistler's shoulder.

"That's a cinch," averred Whistler, opening the letter and removing the inclosed sheet.

Together the two men read the letter, managing to keep wary eyes on the youth as they did so.

"Dear Matt: I'm lying ill in bed, out on Prytania Street. Dick and Carl know the place. There's a bag of diamonds to be delivered to the daughter of the Man from Cape Town, over on St. Charles Avenue, and you're the only one I can trust to do the work. You will have to be careful about it, and I wish you would come here at midnight to-night and get the stones. I haven't told either Carl or Dick what I want you to do, and when you read this I think you had better keep it to yourself—even from them. I've a feeling in my bones that there's trouble ahead, and I want to get the responsibility of those diamonds off my shoulders as quickly as possible.

"Yours, Archibald Townsend."

Exultation flamed in the faces of Whistler and Jurgens.

"Luck!" cried Whistler. "This is our lucky day, Jurgens, and no mistake."

"Nothing ever dropped into our hands so easy before!" jubilated Jurgens. "All we've got to do is to think of some way to pull off the deal and—"

Feet clattered up the outside steps. Leaving Whistler to look after the youth, Jurgens darted into the hall.

"Hello, Bangs!" he exclaimed, a moment later. "What's the trouble?"

"I was down on the levee when Whistler took a fellow we both thought was Motor Matt into a carriage and rushed away with him," came the voice of Bangs, as Jurgens led him into the front room; "but when I—"

Bangs likewise wore a false beard. He was pulling it off as he came into the room, but suddenly he stopped and stared. His eyes were on Joe Dashington.

"Well?" demanded Jurgens curtly.

"That—that chap is a dead ringer for Motor Matt!" gasped Bangs, pointing to the youth.

"A dead ringer for him?" echoed Whistler. "Why, Bangs, he is Motor Matt."

"That's what I thought when you rushed away with him," continued Bangs, "but you hadn't been gone three minutes when Motor Matt showed up on the levee and the officer tried to arrest him."

Jurgens and Whistler seemed stupefied. They stared at each other, then at Bangs, and then at the grinning face of Dashington.

"If I could see as much as two bones in this, gents," remarked the youth, "I'd be tickled out of my kicks.

This Motor Matt must be a beaut if he looks like yours truly. What's in the letter? Can't we use it some way and get a strangle hold on a basket of rocks? I've got a horrible financial stringency staring me in the face, and I'm ripe for anything."

An idea, just then, laid hold of Jurgens.

"By George!" he exclaimed. "Fate must have framed up this whole play for our especial benefit. Get together, all of you, and listen to me! I've got a scheme, and it's a world beater."

## CHAPTER III.

### DOUBLE-TROUBLE.

Carl and Dick, on the levee, gazed dumfounded at the points in the press of vehicles where the carriage had disappeared, and then faced the other way and peered at the chagrined policeman, the blackened and smoking cotton bale, and the loungers who were crowding about the officer. The roustabouts had all gone back to their work.

"Pinch me, vonce!" begged Carl. "I bed you I vas ashleep, Tick."

"Blow me tight!" murmured Dick hazedly. "I feel as though I'd had a nightmare myself. I never thought it was in Matt to act like that, even if he *was* playing a part. I hate to think hard things about my old raggie, Motor Matt, but—"

"Don'd!" cut in Carl. "Vait und gif him a chance to oxblain. He vill come pack und tell us somet'ing—"

"Hello, there, you fellows! Where have you been?"

As this familiar voice rang out, Carl and Dick whirled in a panic. Motor Matt, in leather cap and jacket, trim and neat as ever, was hastening toward them across the levee.

Dick staggered and threw a hand to his head. Carl, likewise, was at a loss for words. Here was Motor Matt, running toward them across the levee, when, by rights, he should have been a good way off in a carriage, getting clear of a pot of trouble which he had set a-boiling.

The policeman, catching sight of Matt, rushed toward him, the crowd at his heels. That brought Carl

and Dick to a full realization of what was going on.

"We made a bobble!" cried Dick.

"Yah, so helup me!" agreed Carl; "der vorst popple vat iss. Und dot bolicemans iss some more."

The boys darted toward the officer and Matt.

"I've got you now, my lad," growled the officer, as the boys came up. "You can't fool me by getting into another outfit o' clothes. Your face is a dead giveaway."

Matt looked his surprise.

"You've made some mistake, officer," he answered. "What's wrong?"

"Oh, he don't know a thing!" cried one of the bystanders scoffingly.

"He's fergot all about burnin' that 'ar cotton bale," said another.

"A blame' quick change he made, anyhow," put in a third.

"I don't understand you," said Matt. "I just came from Stuyvesant Dock—"

"D'you mean to say you wasn't here a few minutes ago, shufflin' around, smokin' a cigarette—"

"I don't smoke cigarettes," broke in Matt, "and I wasn't here a few minutes ago. I've been with the air ship, over on the dock, for the last hour."

"Ye was right here fer an hour," declared one of the loungers. "I seen ye."

"I can easily disprove that," temporized Matt. "Go and talk with the watchman on the dock, officer. He will tell you that I have been with him for an hour."

The policeman, as well as the others, was in a

quandary. Matt's whole manner was different from that of the youth whose cigarette had set fire to the cotton bale. His talk was different, too, and there was nothing "chesty" or insolent about him.

"What's the trouble, parads?" asked Matt, appealing to Carl and Dick. "I'm all at sea over this. When I got to Stuyvesant Dock, an hour ago, the watchman there told me that you boys had gone off somewhere on a hurry-up call. I waited for you to come back, and then, when I saw the smoke of the burning cotton bale, I started for here."

"The trouble is deeper than I think any of us can fathom," muttered Dick. "Strike me lucky, mate, but there was a swab here who was the very picture of you—in the face, mind, for his get-up was altogether different. Carl and I was fooled, for we were dead sure the other swab was you. That other fellow was smoking a cigarette, and that's what set fire to the bale."

Dick faced the policeman.

"Hands off of him, officer," said he. "This isn't the chap you want. He's Motor Matt—everybody up and down the river front has heard of Motor Matt and his chums, and of the air ship."

"I'm dashed if I can savvy this," murmured the perplexed officer, "but I'm going to the Stuyvesant Dock with you and see if the watchman will set me right. He's a friend o' mine, the watchman is, and he'll give it to me straight."

When Matt, Carl, Dick, and the officer started for the Stuyvesant Dock, they left the crowd behind.

"I went over town, just at the beginning of the forenoon," said Matt, "and when I got back to the air ship the watchman said that a man had come there and asked for me. As I wasn't around, the watchman



told me you and Carl had answered the summons, Dick. Where did you go?"

"The man who came was Cassidy, Townsend's mate on the *Grampus*," answered Dick. "He said Townsend was out on Prytania Street, and he gave me the number of the house. Cassidy said the business was important, so Carl and I got on a street car and went to the place. Townsend is sick a-bed—"

"Sick?" queried Matt.

"Aye, and can't move. The trouble he had with Jurgens and Whistler was the cause of it, Townsend thinks. But we couldn't do the business for you—it's you, and no one else, that Townsend wants. He gave us a letter for you and wants you to call on him at midnight, to-night."

"What for?"

"He wouldn't tell us, but said he had explained that in the letter."

"Where's the letter?"

There was a silence while the little group tramped over the planks in the direction of Stuyvesant Dock.

"Oh, dowse me," muttered Dick. "I feel like thirty cents!"

"I feel lesser as dot," chimed in Carl.

"What happened to the letter?" queried Matt.

"You see, matey," explained Dick, very much crestfallen, "when Carl and I saw that other fellow on the levee, we were sure he was you."

"But he was dressed differently."

"Aye, aye, that's true enough, but we thought you were keeping tab on somebody and had put on those

clothes in order to do it."

Matt laughed.

"You fellows must be locoed!" he exclaimed. "What reason have I to get into the detective business?"

"Ve ditn't know dot," observed Carl, "but ve vas sure dot odder feller vas you. Anyway, Tick visted ad him, laidt der ledder on der cotton bale, und ven der feller came for it, den, py shinks, his sigaroot sed der pale afire. Aber he got der ledder, und some feller run away mit him in a puggy. Der boliceman hat tried to arresdt der feller, aber he slipped glear. Ach, himmelblitzen, vat a pad pitzness!"

"We didn't have a hap'orth o' sense," added Dick gloomily.

By then the little party was close to the air ship. The watchman was within hail, and a few words from him satisfied the policeman.

"Sorry I bothered you, Motor Matt," apologized the officer, "but you're a dead ringer for that other chap—which is more credit to him than it is to you. He's your double, all right, and I hope you get back your letter."

The policeman went one way, the watchman another, and Matt led his chums to one side, where they could have a little private talk by themselves.

His face was grave as he asked them to begin at the beginning and give him all the facts, once more.

The ground was thrashed over pretty thoroughly, Matt putting questions from time to time that brought out even the apparently insignificant details. When the explanations were done a silence fell over the chums. Dick was first to speak.

"Keelhaul me," he observed, in deep contrition, "neither Carl nor I seem able to do a thing right when

you're not around."

"I'm not finding any fault with you, pards," returned Matt. "Even the officer was fooled, so it is quite natural that you should have made the mistake. Give me that number on Prytania Street. I'd better hike right out there and have Townsend tell me what was in the letter."

"It would be a wrong move, mate."

"How so?"

"Townsend said the matter was of the utmost importance—"

"All the more reason why I should find out about it as soon as possible!"

"But he insisted that you wasn't to come to him until midnight, to-night."

"He don't know the letter has got into wrong hands."

"Sure he don't, but he's afraid the house where he is is being watched, and we were to tell you to come around the back way and knock at the rear door. I'm a Fiji if I know what's up, but Townsend was mighty particular that you shouldn't come until midnight."

Matt was thoughtful for a space.

"They say that every one has a double," he remarked, with a half laugh, "and it begins to look as though my double had shown up. This double-trouble was something I never expected to run into, but it's come and we'll have to see it through. Townsend didn't give you a hint as to what he wanted me for?"

"Never a hint," answered Dick. "He was mighty close about it."

"Well," decided Matt, "I'll be at that house in Prytania Street on the stroke of twelve, to-night. Let's

feel as easy as we can about that letter, and go and get some supper."

## CHAPTER IV.

### TRICKED!

"What time is it, Cassidy?"

"A little after eleven, cap'n."

"Nearly an hour, then, before Motor Matt gets here."

"You told him not to come afore midnight, cap'n. I didn't say anything ag'in it, although it struck me as how that wasn't a very good time."

"I know my business, perhaps, better than you do, Cassidy."

Townsend was a very sick man, and fretful. Apart from his illness he had other things to worry him.

"Aye, aye, cap'n," said Cassidy easily, "you know your own business best."

"Was there a man across the street spying on the house when you looked last?"

"I piped him off last when there was daylight enough to see. He was there, all right, just as he has been for the last two days."

"He must be there now, don't you think?"

"Either him or somebody else. One man couldn't stay on the job all the time, cap'n, you know. A feller has to sleep an' eat."

"By having Motor Matt come at night, and come the back way, the spy won't see him, will he?"

"I reckon not, cap'n. Even if Matt came the front way, any time after eight o'clock, I don't think the spy could tell him from Adam, across the street."

"My mind's made up. There's a load on me that I've got to get rid of before I can be well."

"That's what frets me, cap'n," returned Cassidy earnestly. "You're just sick enough to make a whole lot more of that 'load' than you ought to. Quit worryin' about it. That'll be better for the 'load' and for you, too."

"Does the landlady understand—"

"I've told her to expect a friend of your'n by the back door, an' Mrs. Thomas is sittin' up herself just to let the friend in. She won't trust it to the servant girl."

"I'll remember Mrs. Thomas for that! When I'm well again—"

A bell rang sharply in front of the house.

"What's that?" demanded Townsend, starting up in his bed.

"Don't get nervous, cap'n," answered Cassidy soothingly. "It's only the gate bell. Some other visitor, I reckon."

"I don't see why people have bells on their gates," worried Townsend. "I never saw it any other place."

A stir was heard in the regions below. Presently there came the mellow tinkle of the doorbell, and the sound of an opening door and voices. A little later a knock on Townsend's door carried Cassidy to the entrance to the room. Mrs. Thomas was in the hall.

"There must be some mistake," said the landlady in her soft Southern drawl. "Mr. Townsend's friend came to the front do', and I reckon he didn't know anything about coming to the kitchen."

"Well, have him come up, Mrs. Thomas," called Townsend. "I don't seem able to have anything as I

want it. Matt not only comes to the front door, but he comes nearly an hour ahead of time. I'll see him, though. He's a sharp boy, and if he's read my letter he'll know what I expect of him."

The landlady went away.

"I want to talk with Matt alone, Cassidy," continued Townsend.

"I know that, cap'n," replied the mate, "and just as soon as Matt gets in I'll slide out and leave you to yourselves."

Another rap fell on the door. Cassidy went to it and admitted Joe Dashington, still in his old slouch hat, sweater and corduroys.

"Great guns, Motor Matt!" exclaimed Cassidy, "I'd hardly have known you in that get-up."

"Matt!" exclaimed Townsend querulously, lifting himself on one elbow and staring at the caller. "Is that you, Matt?"

"I guess I do look a Reub, eh?" laughed Dashington. "Well, I thought I'd be foxy and get on a disguise. Hope you're feeling better, Mr. Townsend?"

"You can go now," said Townsend, falling back on his pillow.

The mate gave the caller a sharp sizing out of the clew of his eyes and then went out, closing the door softly behind him.

"Pull a chair up close to the bed, Matt," went on Townsend. "I guess I'm getting better—the doctor says so—but I'll know that as soon as these diamonds are off my hands. I'm worried to death about them, as some one has been watching this house for two days. Why didn't you come the back way, as I told Carl and Dick to tell you? And why didn't you wait until

midnight?"

"Well," answered Dashington, seating himself by the bed, "the cars don't run so I could get here at just midnight, old fel. I either had to come now, or get here at half-past twelve. Thought I'd take an earlier chance. As for coming the back way, I tried it; but there's no alley and there's a dog in the next yard. I think this rig I've put on'll fool anybody across the street, eh? And then the talk that goes with it is some fine, don't you think? I'm a regular lollypaloozer with the 'con' talk."

"You're about the most resourceful young fellow I've ever come across," said Townsend, "and I knew you'd see that everything was all right."

"Sure, old fel. I'm no hand to jolly, but I give you credit for being a pretty slick piece of goods yourself. But, say! Don't you think we'd better rush this business? Ef there's a man piping the house off, the quicker we finish and I duck, the better."

"Keen as ever, my boy!" exclaimed Townsend, in a tone of relief. "Reach your hand under my pillow and take out what you find there."

It was an eager hand that went under the pillow and drew out a canvas bag.

"Those are the diamonds, Matt," said Townsend. "I don't have to tell you anything about them. The address of the lady to whom they are to go is on the card pinned to the bag."

"Is she looking for me to come?" inquired Dashington. "This isn't exactly a fashionable hour for a call."

"We'll have to overlook that point, Matt. The lady will come to the door, and all you will have to say is that the package is a valuable one and comes from the Man from Cape Town. She will understand, although I



haven't been able to see her, or to send her word."

"Bank on me, old fel," answered Dashington, hardly able to conceal the exultation he felt.

"Get a receipt from the lady, Matt."

"Sure. I always get a receipt when I deliver a valuable package."

"And bring the receipt to me here, to-morrow."

"That's me. Anything else, Townsend?"

"Nothing, Matt, except to say that you're the only person I'd trust to deliver those diamonds. Why, I wouldn't even let Cassidy do the errand! I was to deliver the stones personally, but it would be some time before I could do that and I can't stand it any longer to have such valuable property around me."

"I'm next to how you feel, all right, and I don't blame you."

"Of course I could have sent Cassidy to the lady and have had her come here, but that fellow across the street might have seen her come, and if he's connected with the people I think, then it's a dangerous gang who are laying to get hold of those stones."

Dashington pushed the bag under his sweater and got up.

"How much do you think these diamonds are worth?" he asked.

"A fortune, a king's ransom!"

"Gee! There must be a double handful of the sparks in the bag. Well, old fel, I'll be going. Hope you'll get well in short order."

"I know I will, now," answered Townsend, with a deep sigh of satisfaction. "I'll see you to-morrow,

Matt?"

"Sure. Good night."

Dashington left the room and, as Cassidy came back, the front door was heard to open and close.

"I never thought Matt King could get himself up to look like that, cap'n," remarked the mate, as he took the chair by Townsend's bed.

"He's a clever boy," averred Townsend, "and as steady and reliable as a clock."

"He's about as different from what he usually is as any one could imagine," pursued Cassidy. "The way he acts and talks are both different. You're right, he's clever."

"I don't mind telling you now, Cassidy, something I've been keeping from you," said Townsend, after a brief pause. "You remember that iron chest that was hidden away in an island in the Bahamas, and how a fellow calling himself the Man from Cape Town gave me a chart and asked me to go after the chest, bring it to New Orleans and open it in the presence of a lady who lives in St. Charles Avenue?"

"I know that by heart, cap'n," answered Cassidy. "The lady who lives in St. Charles Avenue is the daughter of the Man from Cape Town, and you was to open the chest in her presence and divide the contents. Don't talk about it. It's late, and you're tired and ought to go to sleep."

"I'm not done, yet," demurred Townsend. "You know how Jurgens and Whistler stole my submarine, the *Grampus*, from Atlantic City, got the iron chest, and how Motor Matt and his friends, in their air ship, recaptured the submarine and found the iron chest aboard?"

"I was mixed up in that myself, so I don't reckon I'll ever forget it."

"And then, when we came on here in the submarine, you know how the chest was stolen by Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs; how Motor Matt recovered it; how Dick and Carl let it slip through their hands; how it was opened and found to contain the head of an African voodoo idol; how the head was smashed and found to be full of South African diamonds; how I did the worst thing I ever did in my life and let Whistler, Jurgens, and Bangs go clear when I could have had them sent to jail; and, lastly, you know how suddenly this illness came upon me and prevented me from taking the diamonds to the lady in St. Charles Avenue, as I had planned."<sup>[A]</sup>

"Yes, cap'n," said the mate, "I know all that."

"Well, here's something you don't know, Cassidy. I have had those diamonds with me, here under my pillow, all the time I've been sick."

"Great guns!"

"And," finished Townsend exultantly, "I have just given them to Motor Matt to deliver to the woman. When I am well, I will go to her and get my share of them, as well as the share that is coming to Motor Matt and his friends."

Cassidy was amazed. Before he could speak, however, another rap fell on the door—a nervous and excited summons, as could be told by the sound, alone.

"What now, I wonder?" fretted the sick man.

Cassidy opened the door and found Mrs. Thomas.

[A] See No. 13 of the Motor Stories, "Motor Matt's Queer Find; or, The Secret of the Iron Chest."

"Oh, Mr. Cassidy," cried the landlady, "some one has just come to the back door and he says he is Motor Matt—a nice-looking, well-dressed young fellow who —"

"What?" cried Townsend hoarsely, trying to get out of bed.

"Softly, cap'n, softly!" warned Cassidy, leaping to the bed and pushing Townsend back. "Mebby there's nothing wrong. Anyhow, your cue is to take it easy. Tell this other Motor Matt to come right up, Mrs. Thomas," he added.

## CHAPTER V.

### MOTOR MATT'S PROMISE.

Townsend had a bad two minutes waiting for Mrs. Thomas to get downstairs and for Matt to come up. Finally, when the young motorist entered the room, he was astounded by what he saw.

Cassidy was half holding, half supporting Townsend on the bed, and Townsend, his face like chalk and his eyes staring glassily, was gazing at the newcomer.

"What's the matter?" queried Matt. "What's wrong, Cassidy?"

Cassidy shook his head. Before he could answer, Townsend burst out:

"Were you here a few minutes ago, Matt? Did you have on other clothes, and did I give you the diamonds? For heaven's sake, tell me!"

"Easy, cap'n," warned Cassidy.

"No," replied Matt, instantly divining that something had happened to the diamonds. "I was told not to come until midnight, but I was anxious, and even now I am ahead of time. Why?"

He approached the bed hurriedly, but Townsend had sunk limply back, with a hollow groan.

"There was a fellow here who looked like you in the face, Matt, and who said he was you. Townsend gave him the bag of diamonds," said Cassidy.

Motor Matt reeled backward. He could think of but two men, at that moment, and they were Jurgens and Whistler. And he blamed himself. He should not have listened to Carl and Dick, but should have posted at

once to Prytania Street and told Townsend how the letter had been delivered to some one else through a mistake.

"Couldn't you tell that the fellow wasn't me, Cassidy?" Matt demanded. "You had a close look at him. He may have *looked* like me, but did he act, or talk, as I do? Great spark plugs! In a case like that you ought to have been more than sure."

"I didn't know the cap'n was going to hand the diamonds over," returned Cassidy. "The cap'n only just told me. I had my suspicions, but I couldn't just see how the fellow would be here, accordin' to instructions, if he wasn't you. And he sure looked like you, although his talk and his actions were a trifle off. Oh, thunder, what a go!"

"How was he dressed?" demanded Matt. "Quick—tell me as much as you can about him."

"Slouch hat, gray sweater, dark corduroy trousers; slangy, devil-may-care sort of chap. Not you, in that way, by a jugful."

"And he left here—"

"Twenty minutes ago."

Matt whirled and dashed from the room. At the foot of the stairs he found the excited landlady.

"Have you a telephone in the house?" he asked.

"This way," answered Mrs. Thomas, appreciating the fact that something important was urging Matt on and that it was a time for action and not words.

The telephone was in the rear hall and Matt had soon rung up the police department, given a description of the youth, and of Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs, and told as much of what had happened as it was necessary for the officers to know in order to make

a quick and effective search. In a few minutes he was back in Townsend's room.

"The police," said Matt, "will get right to work; and as soon as I am through talking here I will get to work myself. Don't be discouraged, Mr. Townsend. That young fellow may have got the diamonds, but he'll find it hard to get away with them."

"I don't know," murmured Townsend, tossing his hands, "but it seems to me as though everything connected with that Man from Cape Town and his iron chest is fated to make me trouble. Jurgens and Whistler must be back of this!"

"Undoubtedly."

"But how did they know I was going to send the diamonds to the woman in St. Charles Avenue tonight? Where did they get hold of a young fellow who looks so astonishingly like you to help them in their villainous schemes?"

"I can tell you something about that, in a minute. What did that fellow say when he came here?"

"He came in at the front gate, a little after eleven, and he said he had disguised himself so that he could escape the vigilance of possible spies. He also said that he had come early, as the cars did not run, at this time of night, so he could get here at sharp twelve. Oh, he had a clever story! I'll warrant you that Jurgens fixed that part of it for him."

"You wanted me to take the diamonds to the daughter of the Man from Cape Town?" asked Matt.

"Why, didn't you know that?" demanded Townsend. "Didn't you read my letter?"

"There's the point, Townsend. I did not see your letter. If I had known what you wanted me to do, I

should have come here early in the evening. But I didn't. All I knew was that the work was important."

"But the letter, Matt, the letter! I told everything in that. I did not care to trust the information with Carl or Dick, or even with Cassidy. This house has been watched for two days by some fellow who was skulking on the other side of the street. I was afraid—the whole thing had got on my nerves. The worst thing I ever did," Townsend added in bitter self-reproach, "was to let Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs go when I had them where the law could take care of them."

"This young fellow, who appears to be my double and who has turned up so unfortunately in New Orleans," said Matt, "looks so much like me that he deceived even Carl and Dick. While they were on the way back to the dock, with your letter, they saw the fellow, and gave the letter to him."

Townsend groaned despairingly.

"Never again," said he, "will I put such important matters in black and white. But I thought I could trust Carl and Dick to deliver the letter safely to you."

"You can hardly blame them for making the mistake, Townsend," went on Matt, "when even you and Cassidy were fooled."

"It's the most astonishing thing I ever heard of!" muttered Townsend. "How two young fellows could look so much alike, and how your double should happen around at just the right time to play havoc with my carefully worked-out plan. But it's fate. There's something about those diamonds that brings ill luck. It seems to have been destined, from the start, that they were never to be delivered to this New Orleans woman."

"No matter what happens, Townsend," said Matt,



"your conscience is clear. The iron chest has caused you expense, time and trouble, and you have tried faithfully to do what this mysterious Man from Cape Town asked of you. Don't take it so hard."

"I am culpable," declared Townsend, "in that I did not put Jurgens and Whistler where they could never trouble me again, that time I had it in my power. I am in duty bound to get back those stones. I can't let those scoundrels get away with them."

"Leave it to the police, cap'n," spoke up Cassidy. "You're a sick man, and that's all you can do. Leave it to the police, and the chances are that they will capture the gang, for the trail is hot; but, if they don't capture Jurgens, Whistler, and that young grafter and recover the diamonds, it's just as Matt says; you haven't any cause to feel cut up over it."

"But I *will* feel cut up over it," insisted Townsend, with all the distorted reasoning of a sick man. "Matt, I want you to promise me something. If you'll give the promise, I'll feel fairly contented and will abide the result with patience. Your promise, my boy, will help me to get well."

"What is it?" asked Matt.

"I don't remember that you ever failed in anything you have undertaken—and I've got the most of your history ever since you left Arizona. What I want you to promise is this, that you'll keep after Jurgens, Whistler and that double of yours *until you recover the diamonds.*"

"But—"

"The police won't be able to do it—I'm as sure of that as I am that I am lying here in this bed this minute. While everything connected with that iron chest and its contents seemed to condemn me to a run of hard

luck, it has always been you and your good fortune that stepped in, at the last minute, and saved the day. I am positive that you can save the day now. There is that Obeah woman, the voodoo priestess who aided you so strangely and so well the other time. Go to her. She is a friend of yours. Ask her to help you."

"I don't think—"

"You must promise me, Matt!" insisted Townsend vehemently. "I tell you I am to blame for the loss of the diamonds, for I should have had Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs sent to jail when it was in my power to do so. Will you promise?"

Cassidy gave Matt a significant look. It asked Matt, for the sake of Townsend's comfort and health, to agree to a task whose accomplishment would be difficult and perhaps impossible.

"Very well," said Matt, quietly stepping to the bedside and taking Townsend's hand in a firm pressure, "I promise."

"That you will keep after the thieves until you finally recover the diamonds?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall rest content," said Townsend. "Your good luck, I know, will go with you. Go and find the voodoo woman. Give me some medicine, Cassidy, for I'm about played out."

Townsend sank back on his pillow and closed his eyes.

Matt looked at him, at the haggard, careworn expression on his face, at the gray hair sweeping his temples, and, for the first time, realized what the difficulties and perils connected with that mysterious iron chest had meant to Archibald Townsend. As he

turned softly away and moved toward the door, his heart was steeled with resolution to do his utmost—*and to win!*

He nodded to Cassidy, softly opened the door, and left the room.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DASHINGTON DASHED.

Joe Dashington was in fine feather as he left the house with the bag of diamonds. A combination of circumstances had enabled him to make a rich haul, and to make it with an ease and celerity that surprised him.

He half expected that some one would overhaul him and stop him before he got out of the house, but in this he was happily disappointed. Reaching the sidewalk, he passed through the gate and was confronted by Whistler.

Dashington had been told, whether successful or not in getting the diamonds, to walk to the first cross street south, where he would find Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs waiting for him. But the three men feared Dashington might, if he managed to secure the diamonds, go north instead of south, with the intention of keeping the "sparks" for himself. For this reason, Whistler was sent to meet him as he came out of the yard.

"Did you get 'em?" whispered Whistler.

"Did I?" exulted Dashington; "well, did I not! Oh, it was a hot touch, but I got away with it with ground to spare. I'm the fly boy, Whistler, and none of your common dubs. But let's wobble right along. The sick Indian has got a hefty gazabu for a right bower, and if the right bower was played on us there'd be doings and we might get queered."

"Hand me the bag, Dash," said Whistler, as they hurried southward along the walk.

"Don't shove," answered Dashington. "It's tucked away in my kimono and I'm so busy with the getaway I don't want to cough up until we're with the rest of the push. Honest, though, I'm no understudy for a low card, am I?"

"You're the goods, Dash, and no mistake. Don't drop that bag out of your sweater while we're hurrying."

"Nay, Frances, I couldn't be so absent-minded. When I get my hooks onto a good thing I'm worse than the Terrible Turk with a strangle hold."

"What did Townsend say?"

"He wanted me to come in at the rear; said some one had been piping off the house from across the street. Who was that?"

Whistler chuckled.

"Sometimes Bangs," he answered, "and sometimes a fellow Bangs got to spell him."

"Then, Bangs and the other must have spelled it like a couple of farmers. Townsend was wise."

"Motor Matt hadn't been there?"

"Not so you could notice."

"That was the point that worried me. If he had had an idea what that letter contained, or that Jurgens and I were mixed up with it, he'd have been with Townsend hours ago, and the whole game would have been queered."

"And your Uncle Joe pinched. That gives me a good, swift notion that I've taken some chances and ought to have a pretty square look-in on the divvy. How much do I pull down?"

"You'll pull down a-plenty, Dash."

"Put it in cold figures. You see, I don't like these glittering generalities."

"We can't any of us tell how much we get till we see how much there is."

"It ought to be ten thou, at least. Townsend said there were enough sparks in the bag to make Tiffany's exhibit look like a piker. Ten thou will buy me an interest in a racing stable, and I'm dippy about the ponies. It's an even-money break that—"

"Stow it! Here we are at the car."

At that moment, Whistler and Dashington came out on the cross street. An automobile was drawn up at the curb, and two men could be seen, one on the front seat and one in the tonneau. The man behind proved to be Bangs, and the man at the wheel was Jurgens. Both were in their shirt sleeves, and Bangs' coat was lying over the side of the car.

"Oh, ho!" gurgled Dashington, "so it's a benzine buggy for ours, eh? It's a fancy pass and ought to snatch us away before the police get busy."

"How did you make out, Dashington?" asked Jurgens, in his anxiety getting up and leaning over the side of the car.

"Easy money," answered the youth. "I had my brace right with me, and the way I took that high jump calls for a hand."

"You got the diamonds?"

"Ain't I telling you?"

"Take them, Whistler. Then both of you pile in and we'll be going—and we'll have to go hard and fast, at that."

Dashington dug the bag out from under his sweater.

"You're all jerry to this," said he, as he reached out the bag to Whistler, "that I come in for a big bunch of the dazzlers, and that—"

"There's one of your dazzlers, my gay buck!"

Whistler, taking the bag in his left hand, struck out with his right. Dashington, the breath jolted out of him, staggered back.

"And there's another!"

Whistler struck again with all his savage strength. This time Dashington dropped silently to his knees and fell on his back, with his head over the curb.

"I reckon that will do him," laughed Jurgens. "Jump in, Whistler. We'll be out of town before he gets back his wits, and it's dollars to dimes he won't say a word to the police."

Whistler laughed grimly as he pulled the crank and then sprang into the automobile. In another moment the machine had chugged away.

Perhaps it was five minutes before Dashington groaned, opened his eyes and sat up. The stillness of the night was all around him.

"Blanked!" he muttered, lifting both hands to his aching head. "They knocked me a twister and got away on the high speed. Oh, what a frost! It's a hot night, but I'm a dub if I haven't got chilblains. Yes, little one, you played the game like a farmer—the genuine, blown-in-the-bottle Easy Mark. Dashed again. I ought to be used to the double-cross by now, it's been dumped onto me so many times. Ouch, my head! I'd like to pull off the block and play football with it—that's about all it's good for."

Dashington got up and leaned against a China ball tree.

"Feel like I'd been smoking some new brand of dope," he went on, waiting for the darkened landscape to stop whirling and stay where it belonged. "This game of graft don't pay," he went on moodily. "I'm always the monk that pulls the hot nuts out of the fire for some other strong-arm guy, and I'm getting weary on the job. What funny noises a fellow hears after a jolt like that!"

Still leaning against the tree, Dashington began rubbing his head.

"Why not cut out the crooked work and be decent?" he mumbled thoughtfully. "I've trotted heats with dips, second-story men, and sand-bag experts, and every last one of 'em has blanked me when it came to the showdown. Why not break away from the swift game and take a job at five per, with three honest square meals and a place to bunk? When you turn the X-rays on this grafting game, there's nothing in it."

He left the tree and stepped from the curb to pick up a dark object on the ground. He thought it was his hat, but it turned out to be a coat.

"Am I daffy," he murmured, "or is this the coat I saw swinging over the side of the chug-chug wagon? It's the sack that belongs to neighbor Bangs, and if there's a hundred or so in the pockets, I'm the boy to put it where it will do the most good."

Picking up his hat, which lay a little distance from where the coat had dropped, he hurried off toward the nearest street lamp. Then, with deft fingers, he began searching the coat pockets.

He found some cigars and a memorandum book; also a short-barreled, loaded revolver. But there was no money.

"That's the way luck handles me," he muttered



angrily, casting the coat aside. "Cigars never did agree with me, and I've got as much use for the gun as I have for the notebook. But, say! Maybe I can leave the pepper box with some gent at the sign of the three balls."

He dropped the revolver into his pocket; then, quite casually, he opened the memorandum book and began turning the leaves. The street light was wavering and none too good, but he drew closer to it and ran his eyes over the pages.

Then, suddenly, he chanced upon something that caused him to draw in a long breath.

"Oh, sister!" he exclaimed, drumming his knuckles delightedly against his forehead. "If here ain't a chance to even up with that sure-thing crowd, I'm a geezer. If I can't go with them and take my share of the loot, I can go against them and help separate them from the lot of it. 'Bayou Yamousa!' That ought to be easily found. Bayou Yamousa for mine, and I'm on the level from this on. That's straight, and no stringin'. Bangs will throw a fit when he finds out he's lost his coat, but it's a lead pipe he won't come back for it."

Then, as Dashington dropped the memorandum book into his pocket, he had another thought.

The police! For what he had done that night, even though he had failed to benefit by it, there was a chance of his getting caught and "doing time."

How long would it be before Motor Matt reached the house in Prytania Street? And how long after that before the law would be called in to do what it could toward overhauling the thieves and recovering the diamonds?

"If I stand to win in this little game of one call three," he muttered, "I've got to duck good and hard. If I'm

pinched now, it means an easy getaway for Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs. But I'm not going to be run in. I guess I'm keen enough to dodge the law while hunting for Bayou Yamousa and giving those pinheads a taste of their own dope. Me for the tall and uncut—and here goes."

Dashington took a swift look around. There were as yet no signs of threatening peril, but he knew danger was close on him for all that. The river lay at one end of the street, and as soon as he had got his bearings he made for it.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A HARD STARTER.

Hunting four thieves as shrewd as were Jurgens, Whistler, Bangs, and the young fellow who had helped them, looked like a tremendous order to Motor Matt. And recovering the diamonds made the prospect seem even more discouraging.

Matt, however, was on his mettle. He had given his promise, perhaps rashly, to Townsend, and Townsend, as well as every one else, knew that Motor Matt's word was as good as his bond.

*He had promised to recover the diamonds!*

Townsend's mention of the Obeah woman had had not a little to do with the promise.

The woman's name was Yamousa, and she lived in a hut near a bayou of the same name. Matt knew the place well, for he and his chums had stopped there, a few days before, had been of some service to Yamousa, and had been repaid by her in a way that had caused, and was still causing, them any amount of wonder.

The voodoo priestess apparently possessed powers of divination that were inexplicable. Her arts may have been wholly trickery, but, if so, a wonderful chain of coincidences had lent a cast of truth to her magic.

Matt had no belief in the supernatural, and his common sense was constantly struggling against the results of Yamousa's occult powers, as he and his friends had witnessed them. As a last resort, it might be possible to consult Yamousa with some show of success in this matter of the stolen gems.

This, at least, was what Matt had in mind when he

left Townsend. The authorities, knowing the ins and outs of the Crescent City so well, could do infinitely more in the town than could Matt and his friends.

Without loss of time, Matt returned to the small hotel near Stuyvesant Dock, where he, Dick, and Carl had taken up their quarters. Dick and Carl were in their room, dressed and waiting to hear what Matt had to say.

Quickly as he could, the young motorist set forth the amazing events of the night. The sailor and the Dutch boy were greatly wrought up.

"Carl and I are loaded to the marks with all the blame," scowled Dick.

"Ve made some popples," wailed Carl, "und dey vas vat dit der pitzness."

"What's the use of doubles, anyhow?" went on Dick.

"Vyefer do two people look so mooch alike in dis vorlt?" added Carl. "I vonder oof I haf a touple? Oof I haf, he must be a bicture, aber I hope he don'd shove into anyt'ing vat habbens mit me."

"You boys made only a natural mistake," said Matt. "That levee policeman was fooled, Cassidy was deceived, and so was Townsend. How can you blame yourselves when every one else took this double of mine just as you did?"

"You've got a way, mate," observed Dick gratefully, "of tacking about and trimming your sails to any breeze that blows in order to make things easier for your friends; but Carl and I know that we're responsible for the whole blessed business."

"Well, if you're bound to have it so, let it go at that. I've promised Townsend to hunt the thieves until I recover the diamonds. That means the work of our

lives, for it's a promise I intend to live up to."

"Py shinks," cried Carl, "you can gount on me to do all vat I can to helup."

"Aye, old ship," said Dick, "and me. Just show us where to begin and we'll tear into the work like a couple of navvies. It's the best we can do to square ourselves."

"Led us dry und be as jeerful as ve can," suggested Carl. "Dot iss pedder dan to be gloomed oop so mooch, hey?"

"You've raised the point that bothers me, Dick," said Matt, "and that is, where to begin. The police are already at work in New Orleans, but I haven't any idea that they'll be successful. We're dealing with clever men, and mustn't forget that for a minute. Ever since the diamonds were found, Jurgens and Whistler seem to have been watching Townsend. They had a spy across the street keeping an eye on the house where he is lying ill."

"Townsend missed it by not having that outfit jugged when he was able. If every man jack of them had been sent to the brig, we wouldn't be up against this proposition now."

"No use crying over spilt milk," returned Matt. "Townsend realizes that he failed to do what he should have done, and it's that that worries him now. We'll take things as we find them and forge ahead. There's one point we can look up, although it isn't very promising."

"Name it, mate."

"My double was taken from the levee in a carriage. It may have been one of Jurgens' gang who helped him out of his trouble."

"The fellow didn't look like any of the gang."

"There may be some new members we don't know anything about. If we can find the man who drove the carriage, we could discover where he took that young fellow."

"What good would that do? Jurgens and his outfit wouldn't come back to that place. I'll lay a sov the lot of them tripped anchor and bore away the minute the stones came into their hands."

"That's my idea, Dick. I told you the clue wasn't very promising, but it appears to be the only one we have. Townsend, however, suggested something which had also occurred to me."

"Vat it iss?" queried Carl. "I don'd vas mooch oof a handt to dig oop clues, aber I bed you I can tell a goot clue ven I come face to face mit it. Shpeak it oudt, Matt."

"Why not bear away in the air ship to Bayou Yamousa?"

Carl began to shiver.

"Nod dere! Ach, py shinks, don'd have somet'ing to do mit dot olt shpook laty again."

Carl's superstitious fears did not weigh very heavily with Matt and Dick. The latter slapped his hands.

"First chop!" he cried. "It's the last shot in the locker, and who knows but that it may be just the thing for us to do? I'm for beginning the trip to Bayou Yamousa now. It's a still night, mates, and we could get the *Hawk* off the dock without any trouble. She's ripe and ready for the flight of her life!"

"It's a still night, that's true, Dick," answered Matt, "but you forget that we have got to have daylight for finding the bayou. We can't locate it in the dark."

"But we're losing time," grumbled Dick, "and we haven't any to throw at the birds."

"The more haste, the less speed," counseled Matt. "Better to go slow and be sure of what we're doing, Dick, than to run wild and get tangled up in our bearings. We'd probably lose more time in the end if we did that."

"But Jurgens and his gang are getting farther and farther away all the time."

"They'll go into hiding somewhere, if I'm any prophet, until the affair blows over a little. If Yamousa can tell us where they are—"

"Don'd try dot," put in Carl earnestly. "She vill vork a hogus-pogus und meppy ged all oof us indo drouple."

"We're going to pay Yamousa a visit, Carl," said Matt firmly. "There's nothing else we can do. The police will be able to handle this end of the work much better than we could. Go to bed, both of you. I'm going over to police headquarters and tell the chief about the carriage that took the man and the young fellow away from the levee. As soon as I do that, I'll come back and pull covers myself. In the morning we'll have breakfast, and then we'll make a start for the bayou."

As usual, Matt's ideas prevailed. Dick and Carl went to bed, Matt had a talk with the city authorities and gave as much further information as he thought would help them, and then returned to the hotel and turned in.

By seven in the morning they were up and eating their breakfast. Breakfast over, Matt sent Carl to the post office for any mail that might be there—he was constantly receiving letters from various parts of the country relative to the *Hawk*—and he and Dick started for Stuyvesant Dock to make ready for the flight south

and east.

On the way to the dock, Matt bought a morning paper. There was a brief and garbled account of the robbery, but it had little interest for the boys, although they had bought the paper in order to see what it had to say about the diamonds.

But there was a paragraph of overwhelming interest to the lads tucked away in one corner of the first page. Matt's eye caught the paragraph casually, then he gasped and his consternation grew, as he read:

"NOTED VOODOO WOMAN DEAD.

"From Chef Menteur, in the Parish of Orleans, comes news of the death of a famous character in those parts known as Yamousa, priestess of the voodoos. Years ago she lived in New Orleans, numbering her followers by hundreds, but was driven away by the police and found refuge on Bayou Yamousa. Those with any faith in the black arts credited the aged negress with being an adept in her particular line, but others with more common sense and less superstition considered her a grafter of remarkable ability. Her death, it is supposed, was the result of natural causes."

Here was a blow, and no mistake. Matt, greatly dejected, read the paragraph to Dick.

"Keelhaul me!" exclaimed Dick. "We're up in the air now for fair. Your luck seems to have taken a turn for the worse, Matt. What are we going to do? The last prop has been knocked out from under us."

The boys reached the dock and seated themselves moodily on a cotton bale not far from the *Hawk*.

Matt had not the remotest idea what they were to do. Yamousa had been their last hope, and a strange fatality had suddenly snatched it away from them.



"The outlook is getting more and more dubious," said Matt. "Yamouza might not have been able to help us, but there was a chance that she could. Now the chance, slim enough at best, is gone. It's a lucky thing, though, that I bought the paper and found that notice. If I hadn't, we might have been wasting time, off in the southeast. If—"

"Ledders! ledders. Dree oof dem!"

Carl, at that moment, came ambling across the dock, dodging the boxes and bales and hurrying toward Matt and Dick. As he approached he held up the three letters he had secured at the post office.

They were all for Motor Matt, two of them having been forwarded from Atlantic City. One was from an amusement manager in Chicago, offering a fancy figure to the boys to take the *Hawk* to the great lakes for exhibition purposes; another was from an enthusiastic member of the Aëro Club of America asking the boys their price for the air ship; but the third letter—that was the one that caused them to sit up and take notice. It ran as follows:

"From what I've heard of you, you're a one-two-seven boy and all to the good. How'd you like to get your lunch hooks on that bag of sparks? You can pull it off, if you get busy, and the undersigned will help. All you need is nerve and ginger. I can furnish my share. You've got an air ship. Well, hit the clouds and fly to me. I'll put you wise. Meet me at Bayou Yamouza, wherever that is, and come in a hurry. I'm going there now and I've got the start of you by some hours. This is a hot starter, and no 'con.'

"A Dub Who Ought to Have Known Better."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A BULLET FROM BELOW.

The boys were stunned. Could it be possible that this was a "straight tip," and not a hoax?

The letter was written on a scrap of paper taken from a notebook; and the envelope in which it was inclosed had been used twice. The first time it had been addressed to "Hubert Bangs, General Delivery, New Orleans, La." The "Hubert Bangs" had been scratched off with a lead pencil and Motor Matt's name written in its place. The ragged end of the envelope had been folded over and secured with a pin.

"A drick!" muttered Carl. "Dot feller Pangs iss vone oof Jurgens' gang."

"Strike me lucky," put in Dick, "but that's the sizing I give it, Matt."

"You're wrong," averred Matt. "If a trick was intended, Bangs would never have used an old envelope bearing his name. Be sure of that. Even if a trick *was* intended, it would be a ruse to get us into the vicinity of the gang of thieves. The gang wouldn't do that, being too anxious, just now, to keep out of sight. But, supposing that was Jurgens' game, wouldn't it be a good thing for us to come close to the thieves? They have the diamonds, and they are what we want."

"Right-o!" exclaimed Dick. "Hoax or no, our move is to slant away for Bayou Yamousa, where we intended to go in the first place. We'll not find Yamousa there, but luck of another kind may be waiting for us."

"Vy von't ve findt Yamousa?" inquired Carl, his face brightening a little.

Dick showed him the paragraph in the paper and Carl spelled it out, his face continuing to clear as he read.

"I don'd vish der olt foodoo voman any hardt luck," breathed Carl, "aber I vas gladder she ain'd dere as dot she vas. It vill be pedder for us. Are ve going to hit der air route?"

"Just as quick as we can," answered Matt briskly, hurrying to the car.

There was no wind to speak of, but it required manœuvring to guide the *Hawk* out from under the high roof and to the edge of the dock. The boys, after stowing the mooring ropes by which they had hauled the air ship into the open, got aboard the car and Matt started the engine.

A moment later the propeller took the push, and the *Hawk* glided up her airy path until she swung high over the City of New Orleans. People below could be seen running about and looking and pointing upward.

"We're causing quite a stir, mates," remarked Dick. "We'd cause more of a stir, though, if those people down there knew what we had in our noodles."

Carl ran out the American flag to the rear end of the air ship, and waved his cap. A cheer arose, weirdly distinct and inspiring.

"I feel in my pones," said Carl, "dot somet'ing iss going to habben. It's der olt hunch come pack. I hafent felt dot for some leedle time. Aber I'd like to know," the Dutch boy added, as he floundered back to his post forward, "who it vas sent dot ledder."

"One of the gang may have weakened, or have been left out in the division of the booty," said Matt, laying his course calmly, and feeling very much at home and contented, now that he was running his beloved motor

again. "The house in Prytania Street, you know, was watched night and day. It was spied upon yesterday afternoon and night while Jurgens, Whistler, and Bangs must have been laying their plans. It's my idea that there is another member of the gang, and perhaps it is this fourth man who wrote the letter."

"One guess is as good as another, mate," replied Dick. "We'll know who the fellow is, maybe, when we get to the bayou."

"Und meppy nod," said Carl. "Meppy dose fellers haf a drap all sed for us, und dot ve vill trop into it und mix oop mit all kindts oof oxcidement."

"That's right, Carl," growled Dick. "You're the original wet blanket. Why don't you square away and look on the bright side? The job that's set for us is hard enough without any of your croaking."

"I don'd vas croaking!" protested Carl. "I look on der plack site, und den, ven der pright site shows oop ve like him pedder pecause ve don't oxbect it. I am jeerful all der dime. Ask Matt aboutt dot."

"Carl's intentions are good, Dick," said Matt. "You must give him credit for that. We both know the prospect ahead of us isn't any too pleasing. We're going it blind and trusting to luck. The more I think about that letter, however, the more confidence I have in the good intentions of the writer. Whistler, you know, used to work on a plantation near Bayou Yamousa. It's easy to suppose that he has a knowledge of the country in that section, and that knowledge will stand the gang in hand, now that they're looking for a place to lay low."

"That's a fact," agreed Dick. "We'll get alongside those duffing beach combers, and then it will be up to us to lay them aboard and grab the diamonds. We'll do it," he added stoutly. "Motor Matt's along, and Motor

Matt's luck is with us."

Light as the bird after which she was named, the *Hawk* skimmed through the sunlit air, five hundred feet above the "Father of Waters." Boats below, bound for New Orleans or outward to the Gulf, were passed, many a glass being trained on the air ship and its passengers.

Matt and his chums had gone over this route once before, and now, while they were taking the back track, they remembered the landmarks and guided the *Hawk* accordingly.

After two hours of sailing over the river, Dick sighted their turning point and gave the order for an easterly course. The *Hawk* swung around, answering the steering rudder easily. The motor worked perfectly, and the air ship swerved and shifted with the slightest touch on the guiding lever.

"And that swab who belongs to the Aëro Club wants to buy the *Hawk*!" scoffed Dick. "We'll never sell her, Matt. If it's money we want, we can make more with the air ship than we could in any other line of business. Besides, who'd change this air flying for anything else under heaven? I'd flog the cat all the days of my life if we were ever foolish enough to let go of this craft."

"I'll go on record in the same way, Dick," said Matt.

"Me, too," chanted Carl. "Vile ve haf der *Hawk* ve can be vay oop in G, all der time. Yah, you bed my life, I like dis pedder as anyt'ing."

That flight was the very poetry of the lads' air-ship experience. Fate was lowering over the *Hawk*—destruction was skulking just ahead in the heavy timber below—and Motor Matt and his chums were to look back on that flight to Bayou Yamousa as their last.

Mile after mile of tree tops sped rearward under the

car. The boys knew that they were drawing close to the bayou, and Carl and Dick were attending strictly to their work as lookouts.

"I t'ink I see der rifer vat der bayou iss on," announced Carl suddenly, pointing ahead and a little to the left. "Vat you t'ink, Tick? Vas I righdt?"

"Come down a little, Matt," called Dick; "I think I'm beginning to recognize this country, and that Carl has called the turn."

Matt tilted the rudder and the *Hawk* swooped downward. Before Matt brought the air ship to a level, they were less than twenty feet above the tops of the tallest trees.

"Two points to port, mate," shouted Dick. "There," he added, "hold her so. Very well done. We're coming to the bayou, cap'n and—"

Dick's words were bitten short by a sharp, incisive note from below. This was followed instantly by a smashing sound, a spiteful *slap*, and a wild hissing.

Cries of alarm came from Dick and Carl.

The motor stopped with an impotent gurgle, the propeller slowed down, and the *Hawk* began to pitch forward and backward and to swerve sideways dangerously.

"Some one shot at us!" yelled Dick excitedly. "The bullet came from among the trees, down there!"

"Py shinks," roared Carl, in a panic, "ve're done for. Ged her down on der groundt, Matt! Be as kevick as vat you can! Ach, himmeblitzen, I bed you ve vas all goners."

"Steady, pards!" came the calm, unruffled voice of Motor Matt. "Hang on! Don't jump or let yourselves be thrown out. There's plenty of gas in the bag yet and it

may be I can find a landing. Do you see an opening anywhere among the trees, Dick? Look sharp and speak quick!"

"I can't see the first sign of a clearing," Dick answered.

Just then the *Hawk* went into the wildest contortions. She seemed like a living thing, wounded to the death and plunging about in fierce agony.

First the car would be tilted until it was almost perpendicular in the air; then it would swerve to the same position, with the other end of the car downward; and, all the time it was leaping upward and downward in this hair-raising way, it was jerking violently right and left.

It was impossible for the boys to do anything more than to hang on for their lives. Occasionally they were swinging out of the car, above the tree tops, and again they would be hurled fiercely against the iron framework.

Matt, in this desperate plight, continued to keep his head. He knew that the bullet fired from below had struck and damaged the motor, and had then passed on through the gas bag.

The gas was pouring out, but Matt was hoping that enough buoyancy would remain to give them a safe landing on the surface, even if it must be a rough one.

In this he was disappointed. Suddenly there came a tearing sound from the bag, and all in the car knew that the bullet hole had widened into a rent under pressure of the gas.

Then, like so much lead, the doomed air ship swooped downward and crashed into the top of a tree.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE WRECK.

For a moment, after the crash, Motor Matt was stunned and bewildered. When he regained his senses completely and realized where he was, he found that he was wedged between the guard rail of the car and a branch of the tree. Turning his head, he looked downward through a clear depth of fifty feet. But for the guard rail, he would have dropped the entire distance and probably have lost his life.

"Carl!" he shouted, clinging to the limb.

"Here I vas, Matt!" came the stifled answer. "I vas hung oudt on a pranch like der veek's vash. Ach, du lieber, vat a luck! Der poor *Hawk*, she iss gone oop der shpout."

"Let's be thankful we didn't go up the spout along with her," replied Matt. "Where's Dick?"

"I don'd know vere he iss. Iss he on der groundt? Himmelblitzen! Oof anyt'ing has habbened mit Tick—"

"Dick?" shouted Matt. "I say, Dick!"

There was no answer, and a sickening sensation sped along the young motorist's nerves.

Turning again, he stared with frenzied eyes toward the ground near the tree. With an exclamation of thankfulness, he saw nothing there to justify his worst fears.

The tree was a live oak and thickly covered with Spanish moss. Dick could very easily be somewhere in the tree and yet out of sight. Certainly, although unconscious and not able to answer, he must have



been caught and held among the branches.

"Is your position a safe one, Carl?" queried Matt.

"Veil, oof I don't hang on mit bot' handts und my eye vinkers I will be on der groundt in some heaps."

"Hang on, then, and stay right where you are. I'm going to look for Dick."

One of the mooring ropes was close to Matt. Carefully he took his knife from his pocket and severed the rope; then, making one end fast to the tree limb, he clung to it while he got out from under the iron guard rail. Presently he was able to stand upright on the limb and peer about him through the trailing streamers of moss. He could not see Dick, but he did see something that impressed him powerfully. The *Hawk*, in one brief minute, had been relegated from the ranks of successful air ships into a mere mass of junk, wedged into the branches of the oak.

The gas bag was almost entirely deflated and looped itself over the bent and broken limbs. The silken envelope was hopelessly torn and much of it in rags.

The motor had been demolished, the end of the car containing it having come in smashing contact with a big limb. Besides that the ironwork was twisted and parts of it had snapped off.

There could be no repairing the air ship. She was as much a total loss as though she had gone to the bottom of the sea in fathomless waters.

Matt's heart felt a sudden wrench; but he thrust aside the feeling and continued his search for Dick. Carefully he made his way along the limb toward the silken envelope, pushing away the moss and peering anxiously as he went.

"Don'd you see noddng?" asked Carl.

"I can see that we'll never again do any sailing in the *Hawk*," answered Matt.

"Ach, dot makes me feel pad mit meinseluf!" wailed Carl. "But I vas glad I vas alive! It vas some tight skveaks, I bed you. Tick!" he yelled. "Vere you vas, Tick?"

Still there came no answer. Silence reigned everywhere in the thick timber and Carl's voice echoed weirdly among the trees.

"He must be hurt and unable to answer, Carl," said Matt.

"You vas looking, eh?"

"Yes."

"Vell, don'd fall off mit yourseluf, dot's all. I don'd vas goot for anyt'ing, my nerfs iss in sooch a frazzle. All I can do is to hang on und say my brayers forvarts, packvarts, und sitevays. Oof ve could only find Tick I vould veel pedder."

Matt finally reached the remains of the gas bag. Climbing upward, he pushed the outer folds aside and there, lodged in the fork of a limb, was Dick.

Dick lay across the fork, head and hands hanging downward. His cap was caught in some small branches below.

"Here he is, Carl!" shouted Matt.

"Yah," answered the Dutch boy, "now I see him since you haf pulled der pag away. He iss on der same limb as me. Do—do you t'ink he vas deadt, Matt?"

"He may be only stunned," replied Matt. "The thing to do is to get him out of there before he comes to and makes a move that will send him downward in a rush. See any rope near you, Carl?"

"Dere iss a coil oof it righdt py me. Vait und I will ged it."

Matt heard Carl moving about cautiously, and finally the end of a rope came toward him. Matt caught the rope, but came within an inch of falling as he did so.

"I've got it, Carl," said he. "You keep hold of the other end and come forward along the limb. It will take both of us to get Dick down safely."

Carl, on hands and knees, came slowly along the limb. While he was advancing, Matt reached up and tied the end of the rope securely about Ferral's body, under the arms. By that time, Carl was close to Ferral, standing on the limb and hanging to a branch.

"There's a good big crotch of the tree below me," called Matt, "and if you can lower Dick down, I'll drop lower where I can work better."

"I vill do der pest vat I can, Matt," answered Carl. "Tick has der rope aroundt him, und ve can keep him from falling. Go on mit yourseluf."

"You'd better tie your end of the rope around the limb," counseled Matt, "and I'll take a turn of it around this broken branch. That will give me a leverage when we come to lower Dick."

While Carl secured the end of the rope, Matt slid down into the large fork.

"All ready!" he called up. "Be careful now, Carl. The least slip will send both you and Dick downward."

"I do der pest vat I can," repeated Carl.

Bracing himself in the fork, Matt held to the rope with one hand and reached up the other as Dick came down to him.

The rope tightened around the stump of the branch,

and Matt let it slide through his hand.

Slowly and carefully Motor Matt went about his work, watched breathlessly by Carl.

The purchase Matt had on the rope was sufficient to enable him to hold Dick in the air while he guided his swaying body downward. As soon as Dick was below him, Matt was able to lay hold of the rope with both hands and let Dick drop at a swifter rate.

In a few minutes Dick was safely on the ground, an inanimate heap at the foot of the tree.

"Dot vas vell done!" declared Carl, heaving a long sigh of relief. "Now how ve going to ged down ourselufs, Matt?"

"Have you tied the rope securely, up there?"

"Yah, so."

"Then we'll have to slide down. You go first, Carl. As soon as you reach the ground, I'll follow you."

"I don'd vas mooch oof a sailor," said Carl, sitting down on the limb and laying hold of the rope, "und I can shlide down a lod easier as I couldt climb oop. Here I go!"

The first twenty feet of the rope was covered by Carl like chain lightning; after that, however, he got a better grip and went the rest of the way more slowly.

Matt lowered himself hand over hand, descending as easily as though he was going down a ladder. Carl was kneeling beside Dick when Matt's feet touched ground.

"His heart iss going like anyt'ing," observed Carl joyfully, "und I can't findt dot he has any proken pones."

"We'll carry him to the edge of the bayou and see if a little water won't help revive him," said Matt. "Poor old

Dick! He'll take the loss of the *Hawk* pretty hard, but we ought all of us to be thankful we got out of that scrape with our lives."

"It vas der closest call vat efer I hat, you bed you! Aber say, vonce!"

"Well?"

"Ve vas forgedding aboutt der feller vat fired dot pullet. Oof he vas anyvere aroundt, meppy he vill haf some more pullets for us."

The wreck, and the saving of Dick, had so taken up Matt's attention that he had not given any thought to the marksman who had caused the trouble.

As Carl spoke, both boys lifted themselves erect and peered about them. They could see no one.

"The scoundrel is leaving us alone," said Matt darkly. "He ought to be content with what he has done, I think," and he swept a rueful glance upward into the tree.

"Who he vas, do you t'ink?"

"Some hunter, perhaps; maybe it was a superstitious negro, who fired at us and then ran away."

"Und meppy," suggested Carl, in a tremor, "it vas some oof der Jurgens gang! Meppy dot iss der drap dey vas going to shpring."

"Maybe; but, even if what you say is correct, we've got to go right ahead and take care of Dick. Lay hold of him, Carl, and help me."

The two boys picked up their injured chum and carried him to the bank of the bayou; then, while Matt made a more extensive examination, in order to determine the seriousness of Dick's injury, Carl went after water.

There was a bad bruise on Dick's forehead, but it was no more than a bruise, although it must have been caused by a pretty hard blow.

"As he went over the limb, Carl," said Matt, "he must have struck his head against it. I don't think he is badly hurt, though."

Taking Carl's cap, which the Dutch boy had filled with water, Matt dashed the contents in Dick's face. While Carl was going back after more water, Dick suddenly opened his eyes and stared at Matt.

"How's everything, mate?" murmured Dick.

"We're alive, old chap," replied Matt, "and that ought to be enough, don't you think, considering what we've been through?"

"You and Carl are all right?"

"Yes."

"And I dodged Davy Jones, after shaking hands with him?"

"It looks that way."

"Then, strike me lucky! it's better than I had hoped for."

Just then Carl came running up the bank and grabbed Dick's hand.

"I hat radder be porn lucky as hantsome, any tay," he rejoiced, "hey, Tick?"

## CHAPTER X.

### THE UNEXPECTED.

Ferral staggered to his feet.

"It's a regular monkey's fist to me," said he, "how we ever got out of that mess. The last I remember I was slamming into the branches of a tree, then something hit me and the sunshine was turned off. It can't be, mates, that I dropped clear through that tree and hit the ground? I'm tough, but I think I'd show more marks than I do if that had happened."

Matt explained how Dick had been got down out of the wreck of the *Hawk*.

"You lads must have had a rummy old time of it, hauling me around that tree top," went on Dick. "And so the good old *Hawk* is done for! She carried us many a mile, mates, and we'll never see her like again unless—" He paused.

"Unless what?" queried Matt.

"Why, unless we can get her out of the tree and patch her up."

"Impossible, Dick. That would cost more than it would to build a new air ship. If we thought it worth while to do that, I have some new ideas I'd like to incorporate into the machine."

Dick's heaviness vanished a little.

"We've money enough in the bank, Matt," said he, "and if you say the word, we'll—"

"We'd better get out of the trouble this air ship has got us into, Dick," interrupted Matt, "before we think of building another."

"That's so. We look like a lot of ragamuffins. I'd like to clap eyes on that loafing longshore scuttler that brought us down! Can you make a guess as to who it was?"

"It might have been some superstitious negro hunter; or, as Carl suggested, Jurgens or one of his gang. If it was any of the latter, we have probably fallen into a snare. But if it was one of the robbers, why don't he show himself?"

"That may not be his game. What's our next move, Matt? We can't stand here boxing the compass when there's dirty weather ahead."

"I'm expecting the writer of that letter to put in an appearance. From what he wrote, I thought he would be here ahead of us."

"I tell you somet'ing!" exploded Carl. "He vas der feller mit der gun. He got us here und he bagged us, und now he don'd vant to come oudt vere ve can ged a look at him. I vould like to knock his plock off, yah, so helup me!"

"We might make a move in the direction of Yamousa's cabin," said Matt. "That would be a more comfortable place to wait than out here in the open."

"Don'd you nefer t'ink dot!" chattered Carl. "Der blace iss pad medicine. I bed you der olt foodoo's shpook haunts der capin."

"Avast, there, you flying Dutchman!" reproved Dick. "We don't believe in spooks. If you're afraid to go with us, Carl, you can heave to and drop your anchor right here."

"I go verefer you go, und dry und be as jeerful as bossiple, only I don'd like going to der shpook laty's house."



Matt and Dick set out around the edge of the bayou and were presently upon familiar ground. Dick indicated the spot where the *Hawk* had been moored, upon the occasion of their first visit to the place, and it was there that Matt called a halt while they made a survey of the hovel where the Obeah woman had lived.

It had been decorated with bones of various kinds, when the chums saw the place first, but now the bones had disappeared. The door was closed, but there was a bucket standing beside the doorstep.

"From the looks," said Matt, "I should say that there is some one in the hut."

"Den dose people must haf been pad off for some blace to go," spoke up Carl.

"Mayhap the Jurgens outfit are in there?" said Dick.

"Just what I was thinking," continued Matt.

"Den ve'd pedder look a leedle outd or ve vill be gedding into some hod vater."

"You and Carl slip into the edge of the timber, Dick," said Matt, "and I'll go on ahead and do some reconnoitring. If the gang is there I'll find it out, and then I'll come back and we'll decide what it is best for us to do."

"You're cutting out all the rough work for yourself," demurred Dick.

"I'm the one best able to stand it," was the answer. "You're far from being yourself, old chap, and Carl is too much afraid of spooks to accomplish anything."

"I do feel a bit groggy on my feet, and that's a fact," admitted Ferral, staggering to the edge of the brush and dropping wearily down. "That nick on the head took the starch all out of me, but I'll feel better after a while. Go ahead, Matt, but don't stir up any trouble."

We're not in shape to stand off that gang of pirates."

"I don't intend to let the scoundrels see me," Matt answered as he moved away.

Keeping to the edge of the timber, he was able to reach a point abreast of the hut without showing himself. From the place where he came to a halt he could look across a narrow stretch of clear ground and see a window in the rear wall of the hovel.

A look through the window would tell him all he wanted to know, and he dropped down on hands and knees and began crawling across the open space.

He appreciated to the full Dick's suggestion as to not stirring up trouble. Jurgens, according to Matt's surmise, probably had two men with him and the young fellow who had played the part of Matt in making the diamond haul. This made four against Matt and his two comrades—an overwhelming force, when it is remembered that undoubtedly the thieves were armed.

Matt gained the place under the window without making a noise; then, raising cautiously, he pressed his face to the glass.

To his disappointment, a piece of cloth had been placed over the window on the inside. A broken pane in the window, however, enabled him to listen for sounds which would let him know whether or not there was really any one in the hut.

There were no voices and no sound of any stir, but Matt's keen ear detected the slow, regular breathing of some one asleep. And there was only one sleeper—he was positive of that.

For a few moments he debated the question. Should he step boldly into the hut and find out who the person was, or would it be better to go back after Carl and

Dick so as to have a superior force in case of a clash?

Matt decided that the move was for him to make. Going back into the edge of the timber, he cut himself a stout bludgeon; thus armed, he stepped quietly around to the front of the hut and laid a hand on the door.

It was locked.

A little examination assured him that the bolt was not strong enough to resist a determined onslaught, and he boldly hurled himself against the door.

It went crashing inward, and Matt pitched forward across the floor and almost lost his footing.

A shout of consternation went up, and Matt saw a form spring erect and stand facing him.

It was the form of a youth about Matt's own age, wearing a dingy sweater and frayed corduroy trousers. At the first glance each recognized the other.

"King, or I'm a Reub!"

"Great spark plugs! The fellow that played that dodge on Townsend!"

Matt cleared the distance separating him from the youth at a leap; but the other had jumped backward, at the same time pulling a weapon from his pocket.

"Don't you go and make a sucker play, Motor Matt!" cried Dashington warningly.

"Put up that revolver!" ordered Matt, staring sternly at the youth and taking a fresh grip on the handle of the club.

"You've got a picture of me making a funny play like that—I don't think. Throw away your club and I'll throw away this pepper box. Gee, but wouldn't it uppercut you, the way we resemble each other? Say,

you ought to be delighted to see me instead of trying to make a pass at my block with that stick. I wasn't looking for you to drop in on me so soon."

"I doubt if you were expecting me to drop in on you at all," said Matt sarcastically. "Where are Jurgens, and Whistler, and Bangs?"

"Close by, cull. Don't make too much noise or they'll get next to you and me and blow in on us."

"Where are those diamonds?" asked Matt.

"Hand me an easy one."

"You ought to know. You're the one that stole them, and you stole them for Jurgens and his pals."

"Part of that's on the level. I did lift the bag of sparks, and it really seems as though I went to all that trouble for Jurgens and his pals. Anyhow, I didn't help myself so you could see it. Don't get to hearing funny noises under your bonnet, now, but drop the club and let's be sociable. If you— Wow, but you're chain lightning, and then some!"

Quick as a flash Matt had thrown the club. It struck the revolver in Dashington's hand and knocked it clear to the opposite side of the room.

Before Dashington could recover it, Matt was upon him and there was a short wrestling match, catch-as-catch-can. Being far and away Dashington's superior in science, Matt was only about two minutes in laying his antagonist on his back. When they fell, they knocked over a table, and the racket it made brought a stifled cry to Dashington's lips.

"They'll get wise to us! You're queering yourself, King. Let me up, quick! I can hear some one coming."

"You're my prisoner!" said Matt sharply.

"We'll both be prisoners of Jurgens and his gang if you don't take a tumble to the rights of this. Let me up, I tell you, or—"

Just then the hurrying steps outside reached the door.

"What's going on here, Matt?" came the excited voice of Dick Ferral, as he and Carl flung into the room.

"I've just captured that double of mine," answered Matt. "If we hang onto him possibly we can make him tell us something about Jurgens and the diamonds."

"Oh, sister!" mumbled Dashington, "wouldn't that give your thinker a twist? Pass it up, King. If you won't take your knees off my chest, then give me a chance to heave a little of the straight guff at you."

"Pick up that revolver, Dick," said Matt, nodding toward the weapon. "Keep it in your hands and don't let this fellow lose your eyes for a moment. He wants to talk, and we're going to let him, but if he tries to bolt, he's going to wish that he had thought twice before he tried it."

Dick hurried to the weapon and gathered it in, then Matt got up and let Dashington regain his feet.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A FRIEND FROM THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

"You blokes are wise guys—I don't think," grinned Dashington. "Motor Matt is cracked up to be such a phenom. that I had a warm guess he'd know who wrote that letter first crack out of the box."

"What letter are you talking about?" demanded Matt.

"The one you found in your mail this morning. My stationery wasn't the sort they use in polite correspondence, but I was in luck to have even that. An old letter of Bangs', Bangs' notebook and Bangs' pencil helped me out. I'll bet eight big iron louies you never once suspected me of dropping that letter in the mails; and yet, who else was there for you to suspect? Didn't think Jurgens would do it, did you? Or Whistler? Or Bangs? Get wise, Motor Matt, get wise. There's work ahead for the lot of us, and the longer we hang off about it, the harder it's likely to be."

Matt and his friends listened to this line of talk with a good deal of wonder, but they were not disposed, just then, to take Dashington's word for anything.

"You say you wrote that letter?" queried Matt, noting how the youth's talk harmonized with the letter's contents.

"Want me to make a song out of it and set it to music? You haul considerable freight, in a general way, but you haven't taken on much of a load this trip."

"You're the swab Carl and I gave the letter to on the levee, all right," spoke up Dick.

"Thanks for the word. Swab! That expresses it nicely.

Because of that letter, which I didn't want, I got rung into the biggest Jonah play that ever hip-locked with me. As a consequence my ticket is merely a souvenir. And now here comes Motor Matt and roughs things up in good old Texas style. That's dead tough luck and would bring tears to a pair of glass eyes."

"You stole the diamonds?"

"I played understudy to Motor Matt and lifted the sparks. I walked two long blocks with them concealed upon my person, then Whistler handed me a fistful of fives twice, right where they started the slumber song. Was I down? Yes, indeed, and for several minutes. When I rounded to and took a fresh grasp of the situation, Jurgens, Whistler and Bangs had chugged away in their auto and had forgotten to leave the dazzlers."

"Ah!" said Matt grimly. "You robbed Townsend and then Jurgens and his men robbed you."

"I hope I may drop if that wasn't the way of it. It was a lesson for me, I think; anyhow, it's a mortal cinch I got a horrible sorry on for what I'd done. 'They played me for a mark,' I says to myself, 'and got the sparklers; now I'll turn to and help Motor Matt get them back again.' That's why I wrote that letter, and I dropped it in a mail box just before I pushed off in a boat and floated down the river. Happened to meet a colored brother fishing; I told him I wanted to go to Bayou Yamousa, and the colored brother happened to know the way; also he happened to have a mule and a wagon, and he brought me here. I didn't think you'd be along before night, and I was just keeping myself as retired as possible while waiting for you to get here. This shanty looked good to me, and as I was some fagged on account of the night's labor, I locked the door, stretched myself out and have been pounding my ear ever since."

"How did you know Jurgens, Whistler and Bangs were coming to this place?" asked Matt.

His confidence in Dashington was increasing. This would not have been the case had Dashington tried to deny, or smooth over, the part he had played in the robbery. He was cheerfully admitting his guilt, and the cause he had for turning against Jurgens and his men seemed sufficiently adequate.

Dashington told how he had discovered the coat, and showed the memorandum book found in the pocket. The notation: "If our plant works, and we get separated after the diamonds are lifted, am to meet J. and W. at Bayou Yamousa," appealed particularly to Matt. It showed Dashington's reason for coming to Bayou Yamousa, and for asking Matt and his friends to join him there.

"Do you know positively," asked Matt, "that Jurgens is in this vicinity?"

"I've seen their camp," replied Dashington, "but I was foxy enough not to let them see me. I'm not altogether a flat, even if I did let Jurgens and Company touch me up and pull their chestnuts out of the blaze. I've about decided to cut out the crooked work entirely, and it's up to Motor Matt and his pals to give me a fresh chance. Of course you can pinch me, and land me in the pen, but that would hardly be square after I have helped you get back the diamonds."

"Who are you?" said Matt.

"Joe Dashington, with the accent on the 'dash.'"

"Where are you from?"

"Every place. I seem to have broken out in New Orleans just at the right time to mix things for everybody. Don't let it get past you that I didn't know what I was up against when Jurgens asked me to lift



the stones. I was on the make, and went into it with my eyes wide. I'm not turning on the gang entirely because I have a grouch, but because I've about concluded that bunko work is a losing game."

"You're right about that, Dashington," averred Matt. "Crooked business is bad business, and you show your good sense in wanting to cut loose from it. What do you expect of us?"

"I'm in wrong," replied Dashington, "but maybe I can get over that if you'll help. Suppose I join you and help you recover the diamonds. Will that pay for letting me start for unknown regions, and then doing the nice, genteel dip for the rest of the time I'm on earth?"

"I don't know why it won't," said Matt, in a kindly tone. "You look to me like a chap who could do big things if you went at it in the right way."

"Landed! Landed and strung! I'm hooked, King, and you might give me your hand. I've got the gaff from the strong-arm push for the last time. Just have your pal put that gun in his pocket and I'll feel easier."

"Put up the thing, Dick," said Matt. "Dash can be trusted. He's going to help us recover the diamonds, and in return for his service we're to let him go wherever he wants to."

"Aber vill he make goot mit vat he says?" chirped Carl.

"I'm Class A at making good," said Dashington, "when I tackle a job of my size. I can handle this one. But where's the balloonobile, the flying wonder that has shaken the Crescent City from centre to circumference, and clear across to Algiers? I haven't noticed it," and Dashington stepped to the door and made a hasty survey of the shore of the bayou.

"You're looking too low, mate," said Dick. "She bounced up on a live oak and you can't see her for moss."

Dashington whirled with a jump.

"Wrecked?"

"Demolished. She's sailed the skies for the last time, and it was a bullet brought her down."

"A bullet?"

"Yes," put in Matt. "It was fired from somewhere in the timber, put the motor out of business and made holes in the gas bag. We all of us had narrow escapes —"

"You look the part."

"Have you any idea who fired that shot?"

A worried expression came over Dashington's face.

"Who else but some of that sure-thing crowd?" he returned. "This boggles the situation. They know you're here, and when they find you weren't finished up out of hand they'll come looking for you. This sort of puts a crimp in our prospects, Motor Matt. Getting the sparks isn't going to be so easy. Jurgens and his crowd are over by the wagon road with an automobile, and if they think we're wise to them they may take the machine and hike."

"We've got to get back those diamonds," declared Matt.

"If we don't, I'd look pretty asking you to pull the pin on me, wouldn't I? Sure we've got to get 'em back, but —"

"Belay there, with your jaw tackle," came excitedly from Dick, in a half whisper.

He had been standing by the open door, and he suddenly drew back and hurried up to the other boys.

"Jurgens just showed up on the bank of the bayou," announced Dick, "and he looks as though he might be laying a course for the hut."

"We're double-crossed!" muttered Dashington. "The head knocker of the push will be next to us in half a minute, and that means a run to safety in the chug wagon with all hands and the sparks."

"No," said Matt, a thought darting through his mind. "There are enough of us here to capture Jurgens. He may find out about us, but he won't be able to get away with the information."

"Now you're making a noise like a winner," whispered Dashington exultantly. "That's the play. Around the door, lads, and grab him from all sides when he pushes in. Don't let him yell. If he manages to put up a roar, Whistler and Bangs will hear it and get curious. They've got rifles with them—and a bullet is a hard thing to dodge if it's sent right."

Jurgens was already close to the hut—so close that there was not the slightest doubt but that he was intending to investigate it. He was probably wondering what had become of the boys from the air ship, and was abroad with the intention of locating them, if possible.

Carl and Dick got behind the door, while Matt and Dashington pressed up close to the wall.

The footsteps came nearer and nearer, and then, just as Jurgens put his foot across the threshold, Matt and Dashington sprang for him.

Dashington threw his arms about the man's throat and hung to him like a leech, while Matt seized a hand he was pushing toward his hip. In the struggle that

followed, all three fell through the door and rolled off the step and onto the ground.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BAG OF DIAMONDS.

Jurgens divined instantly that he had got himself into a serious predicament; but his predicament was even greater than the four boys imagined during the first part of their struggle with him.

The scoundrel fought with the fury of a cornered panther, clawing, kicking and even trying to use his teeth. Dashington exerted himself entirely to prevent an outcry, and this left Matt to do most of the fighting until Carl and Dick hurled themselves through the door and lent their assistance.

With four against him, Jurgens had no hope; nevertheless, his desperation was so great that he vainly tried to continue his one-sided battle.

Carl found a piece of rope somewhere in the hut, and while he, and Matt, and Dashington held Jurgens, Dick put the lashings on his hands and feet and made them secure with hard and fast sailor's knots. A twisted handkerchief tied between Jurgens' jaws relieved Dashington of his part of the work, and the boys got up breathlessly and looked down at their prisoner.

"That's because you didn't play square with me, Jurgens," said Dashington, leering into the baleful eyes of the man at his feet. "I'll back you against all comers, bar none, for being the most treacherous crook in the business. But here's where you get it handed to you. You had it easy, last night, but here's where I give you the merry ha-ha."

Jurgens tried to talk, but succeeded only in emitting an incoherent gurgle behind the twisted handkerchief; then he strained desperately at his bonds, but Dick's

knots were never known to slip.

"Oh, cut it out!" said Dashington. "The ball and chain are as good as on you so far as your chances for getting away are concerned. What do you think of yourself, anyway? This is a regular calcimine finish, and you're going to do time enough to keep you out of mischief for quite a spell."

"Vat's dis?" asked Carl, stooping down by the edge of the step and lifting a small canvas bag.

Dashington stared, then jumped into the air and shook his hat.

"Oh, no, this isn't luck!" he remarked, smothering his hilarity with a tremendous effort. "Not at all! And yet it's as natural as can be. Of course he wouldn't trust the sparks with either Whistler or Bangs. He keeps them himself, and when he goes out hunting for Motor Matt he totes them along. The bag drops out as we roll off the step, and hides itself up close to the wall of the cabin. Carl finds it—and maybe we're not all to the good? Take it from me, we are."

"Are the diamonds in that bag, Dash?" demanded Matt, scarcely daring to credit his ears.

"Nowhere else, cull," exulted Dashington. "I couldn't forget that bag. It has played a big part in my life, even if it hasn't played a long one."

"Well, shiver me!" muttered Dick, dropping down on the step. "If that's not what you call winding this up in handsome style, you can call me a lubber. Motor Matt's luck—that's what did it."

"Hoop-a-la!" fluttered Carl, doing a two-step. "We're der fellers, und don'd you forged dot! Der tiamonts is pack, we haf der tiamonts pack, und eferyt'ing iss so lofely as I can't tell. Hoop-a-la!"

"Stow it, neighbor!" warned Dashington. "We've got our hooks on the sparks, but we're not liable to keep them if you make too much noise. Whistler and Bangs are somewhere in the timber, so don't advertise the fact that we're here and have the stones. Look into the bag, Matt. Make sure it's no counterfeit."

"That's right," said Dick, tempering his glad feelings until a further examination was made. "Open the pouch, Matt, and look into it. If the old hunks has fooled us with a bag of pebbles—"

"He hasn't," cut in Matt. "Look here!"

He pulled one hand from the bag and held up a diamond in the sun. There could be no doubt, after that.

"But are they *all* there?" demanded Dashington. "The bag hasn't shrunk any since I first set my gig lamps onto it, still a few of the stones might have been taken out. What do you think?"

Matt, Carl and Dick had all seen the diamonds just as they had come from the idol's head, and they were all firmly of the belief that the stones in the bag bulked as large as ever.

"This," said Matt, after he had retied the bag and put it away in the breast of his coat, "makes it necessary for us to clear out of here as soon as possible. The question is, how are we to do it?"

"The nearest burg is Chef Menteur," answered Dashington. "We could go that far on our kicks and catch a train into N. O."

"Und leaf dot Jurgens feller pehindt?" protested Carl.

"He'd be something of a load to carry," said Dick.

"One of us could go to the nearest plantation and get

a wagon," suggested Dashington.

"Und vile dot feller vas gone, Whistler und Pangs mightd show oop und blay hop mit der resdt oof us."

"There are four of us," said Matt, "and I think, if we had a long pole, we could hang Jurgens to it and carry him. He has been the ringleader in every plot that was directed against Townsend and the iron chest. It's right that he should pay the penalty of his misdeeds, even if Whistler and Bangs should never be caught. We let him go once, you remember, Dick, when he was in our hands, and now, just because of it, we lost the *Hawk*, and came within one of losing the diamonds."

"That's a good spiel Motor Matt is giving us," declared Dashington. "I'll go and look for a long pole, and while I'm about it, you fellows tie Jurgens' hands in front of him."

Dashington was probably ten minutes getting the pole. By the time he was back, Jurgens' hands had been released and rebound in front of him. The pole was slipped between his hands and feet, and Matt and Dick, at one end, and Carl and Dashington, at the other, lifted it to their shoulders.

Jurgens hung downward, the pole catching the ropes that bound him and holding him suspended. His position was far from comfortable, but the boys could not help that.

"I'm wise to the road we've got to take," said Dashington, "so this end of the pole had better travel ahead. We'll come out on the turnpike a half mile the other side of where I saw the automobile. It won't be many minutes before Bangs and Whistler will begin to wonder what became of Jurgens and the sparks, and they'll probably go out on a hunt. Luck seems to be on our side, so I'm hoping they sidestep us."



The ends of the pole were shifted so that Carl and Dashington could travel ahead. Dashington had his bearings, and he led off as briskly as he could, considering that the thick timber and the long pole made it necessary to pick their way with some care.

"You can see, fellows," philosophized Matt, from the rear, "what greed will do for a man. Jurgens wouldn't trust the diamonds with Whistler and Bangs. He had to take them with him. If he hadn't had them, the bag of loot wouldn't be in our hands now."

"Jurgens is a four-ply wonder," said Dashington. "He was greedy with me, and that's how I came to scratch my entry in his free-for-all grafting game, I hope they give him ninety-nine years at hard labor."

What Jurgens' thoughts were as he was pitched and swayed along and listened to this talk, did not appear. He was probably meditating on the changeable nature of human affairs, and thinking of the many times he had had the treasure of the Man from Cape Town in his hands and had failed, in the final pinch, to get away with it.

As they got farther and farther into the timber, Matt counseled silence. They were drawing close to the road and their voices might carry to the ears of Whistler or Bangs, if they happened to be abroad.

After that the journey was continued in silence, the lads pausing, now and then, to change the pole from one shoulder to the other.

Everything was going swimmingly, and Matt was looking ahead to an easy jaunt along the road into Chef Menteur, and then a comfortable ride on the railroad back to New Orleans, when Carl and Dashington suddenly laid back on the pole and whirled around to get the front end farther back into the timber.

Matt and Dick were naturally surprised at this quick move. They were on the point of speaking when Dashington laid a warning finger on his lips and motioned for the pole and its burden to be let down.

"What's up?" whispered Matt, when Carl and Dashington had pressed close.

"The benzine cart is right ahead of us!" answered Dashington.

"Oof ve hat gone anodder foot," added Carl, "ve would haf come oudt righdt on Whistler und Pangs."

"They're sitting in the front seats with a couple of rifles over their knees," finished Dashington. "Go take a look, Matt."

Matt crept forward to a place from which he could get a good view of the wagon road. The automobile was pulled out on the roadside, and brush had been cut and piled over the bonnet in order to screen the car from travelers along the highway.

Whistler and Bangs did not appear, as yet, to be very much worried over the prolonged absence of Jurgens. They were lounging in the car, their feet on the dashboard and pipes between their lips. Bangs was in his shirt sleeves, and across the lap of each lay a rifle.

As Motor Matt surveyed the situation, he felt a pang to think that those two rascals would escape the penalty of their evil actions. This thought led to another which caused the young motorist's pulses to leap with an inspiration.

Turning in his tracks, he made his way silently back to his waiting companions.

"I've got a scheme, pards," he whispered. "How'd you like to ride back to New Orleans in Jurgens' automobile?"

"Who can run the thing, Matt?" asked Dashington.

"I can," was the answer. "I used to be in the business."

"How'll ve get der pupple?" inquired Carl.

"Here's the scheme," said Matt, and drew the other three close while he talked.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A DARING PLOT.

"In order to get to New Orleans," said Matt, in a low tone, "we'll have to head west along the road. Now, if we work the scheme, my part in it is settled, as I am the only one who can run the car. I shall have to stay close here, and you three can settle it among yourselves as to what parts you will take in pushing the deal through. Two of you will carry Jurgens half a mile westward, and wait at the edge of the road, ready to lift Jurgens into the car and to hop aboard when it comes along. One of you, I am not particular which, will go about a stone's throw farther into the timber and wait about half an hour in order that the two who are to tote Jurgens get to their proper place at the roadside. Then, the one who is in the timber will set up a hoarse yell for Whistler and Bangs, and will fire off one of the revolvers. Do you catch my drift?"

"It vas too many for me," said Carl.

"I can't rise to it, either," added Dick.

"See if I've guessed it right," spoke up Dashington. "The fellow that does the shooting and yelling in the timber will try to make Whistler and Bangs think he is Jurgens. The guess is that Whistler and Bangs will leave the auto and rush off to help Jurgens. Then what, Motor Matt?"

"Then I run to the car and start it down the road."

"Und vat pecomes mit der feller in der timber?" asked Carl.

"He runs for the road as soon as he hears Whistler and Bangs pounding through the brush," explained

Matt. "He will angle off toward the turnpike and reach it way this side of where the other two are with Jurgens. I'll take the first fellow in, then we'll slam the machine through and pick up the other two of you and Jurgens. After that we ought to have clear sailing right into New Orleans. And, furthermore, at the first town west we can have officers come back and hunt for the two thieves we leave behind. By making a move like that, we'll not only give ourselves a lift into the city, but, better still, we'll take from Whistler and Bangs their only means of escape out of the country."

"That's the dope!" chuckled Dashington. "Anything that puts Whistler and Bangs on the slide makes a hit with me. It's a cinch this gang won't forget in a hurry what they did to Joe Dashington, nor what Dash did to even the score. I've got my place picked out."

"Vich iss it?" asked Carl.

"I'm the fellow to go in the woods, shake loads out of the pepper box and put up a roar."

"That means, Carl," said Matt, "that you and Dick will have to look after Jurgens. We'll give you half an hour to get where you're going. At the end of that time Dash will begin his racket. Then it's up to me to start the machine."

"You've picked out the hot end of it for yourself, Motor Matt," remarked Dashington. "From your talk one would think it the easiest piece of work on the job, but I'm jerry that it's some different. There's a lot of brush piled in front of the car, and on top of it. You won't have much time to get it out of the way."

"I don't expect to carry it off by the armful," said Matt, "but to start the car and drive through it and over it."

"Then it's a guess, and only a guess," pursued

Dashington, "that both Whistler and Bangs will rush into the timber to give Jurgens a helping hand. Suppose only one of them goes? You'll be in a fine row of stumps trying to steal the machine with a man looking at you over the sights of a rifle!"

"That's the chance I take," said Matt coolly. "We're all taking chances, for that matter, and you're taking as many as any one else, Dash."

"Well," returned Dashington, "I'm satisfied if the rest of you are. Ring the gong, Motor Matt, and we'll take our corners."

"You and Carl had better move, Dick," said Matt, nodding toward Jurgens and the pole. "Pick up your man and start. Do you feel equal to it?" he added, turning an anxious look on the sailor.

"Equal to anything, mate," answered Dick, "now that we've got the diamonds. Only don't lose the stones, that's all. Grab your end of the pole, Carl," he added.

Carl was as happy a Dutchman as one could have found in seven states. He was morbidly fond of excitement, and he liked always to be "in the midst of alarms"—providing there was nothing supernatural about the alarms. His face fairly shone as he picked up his end of the pole and staggered away with it.

It was only a moment before Carl, Dick and their swinging burden was out of sight; and less than a minute more until a wild, hair-raising yell for help came from the direction taken by the two boys.

Matt and Dashington gave a jump of consternation. They realized at once what must have happened. Undoubtedly Jurgens had got rid of his gag, unknown to Dick or Carl, and had given vent to the yell.

Answering cries came almost instantly from the direction of the automobile.

There was not much time for Matt and Dashington to think what should be done, but their wits were keen and they thought along the same line.

"I'll draw them off, Matt," muttered Dashington, and sped into the wood.

There was no time for Matt to reply, for the crashing of brush proved that one or both of the men who had been in the car were close upon him.

Flinging himself to one side, Matt crouched on his knees behind a tree. Whistler and Bangs rushed into sight.

"Where'n thunder did that yell come from?" cried Whistler.

"Off to the left, there," answered Bangs, indicating the direction taken by Carl and Dick.

For an instant Matt's hopes went down, and he had a mental picture of Jurgens being rescued, and Carl and Dick having trouble with those long rifles.

Just at that moment, however, Dashington was heard from.

"This way, Whistler! Bangs! Quick! The diamonds! The diamonds!"

The voice was hoarse and a close imitation of Jurgens'. And then that mention of the diamonds was a masterstroke.

"Somebody's taking the diamonds!" yelled Whistler, bounding straight ahead.

"Confound Jurgens for carryin' 'em!" fumed Bangs, hurling himself after Whistler.

Matt's time to get active had now arrived. With an exultant heart he jumped to his feet and raced for the automobile.

He had to kick aside some of the brush to get at the crank, and the engine was slow in turning over; but, finally, he had the motor popping and settling down into a steady hum.

Into the car he leaped, there was a moment's work with the handle bars, a twist at the steering wheel and the car leaped toward the road, scattering the brush right and left.

Once on the highway and headed westward, fresh difficulties confronted Matt. His carefully laid plan had been only partly carried out, owing to the untimely yell from Jurgens.

Carl and Dick had had no time to get very far down the road, and Dashington would be put to it to double back and get around Whistler and Bangs.

Matt slowed the car and snailed along on the low speed, looking anxiously the while into the timber that edged the road.

He saw nothing of Dashington, who would presumably be the first one he picked up, and off somewhere in the dusky confines of the wood he heard the snarling report of a rifle.

His heart almost stood still at that.

At whom had the shot been fired? And had it reached its mark?

Matt thought of Dashington. In spite of Dashington's rapid past, there was something about the young fellow that was attractive, and Matt was beginning to like him.

It would have been a sad commentary on the course of events if Dashington was to be shot down just on the threshold of a better career.

In order to signal to his friends the location of the



car, Matt honked loud and long.

Again came a rifle shot, this time much closer, and Matt heard the whistle of the ball through the air.

That meant, if it meant anything, that Dashington was coming toward the road, and that Whistler and Bangs were following him and shooting as they came. Matt dared not stop the car, for there would be no time to crank up and he did not dare trust the engine to take the spark, even after a short stop.

Presently, to Matt's anxious ears came a crashing of bushes and a sound of hard breathing. The noise came from a little way ahead, and he drove the car forward at a faster speed.

He could hear voices now, coming out of the recesses of the timber—the voices of Whistler and Bangs lifted excitedly.

"There he goes, Whistler!"

"Nail him, then, Bangs! He's got the loot and is trying to make a getaway with it."

*Bang!*

Another bullet rattled through the trees and clipped the air over Matt's head.

Just at that moment, Dashington, apparently unhurt but nearly spent, staggered into sight.

"Bilked!" he gasped; "I bilked 'em for fair."

"Into the tonneau, quick!" shouted Matt.

Dashington staggered to the running board and fell sprawling into the rear of the car.

"They're stealing the car!" howled the voice of Bangs, who was now close enough to the road to see what was going on.

"Stop 'em!" roared the panting voice of Whistler. "If they get away with the car we're done for!"

Away jumped the car on the high speed, throwing dust and gravel from the rear tires in a shower.

*Bang! bang!* came the harsh notes of the rifles, but the screen of dust and the excitement of the moment were not conducive to accurate shooting.

The car raced off, made a turn in the road, and Whistler and Bangs were left behind.

"Keep an eye out for Dick and Carl, Dash!" shouted Matt. "They ought to be somewhere around here."

At just that moment, Carl showed himself in the road, jumping up and down and waving his hat.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### ON THE ROAD.

Carl and Dick had Jurgens close to the roadside, and not much time was lost loading the prisoner into the tonneau. Carl crawled into the rear seat with Jurgens and Dashington, and Dick got up in front with Matt.

"What was the shooting about?" asked Dick, smothering his excitement.

"Whistler and Bangs were taking pot shots at Dash," explained Matt. "Jurgens sprung our scheme on us before we were ready for it."

The car was rushing off down the road again, Matt looking back toward the turn for some sign of Whistler and Bangs. The machine had taken another turn before the baffled robbers had shown themselves.

"Py shinks!" boomed Carl, who had heard Matt's remark, "I t'ought I should drow fits righdt on der shpot ven don Jugens feller tuned oop. Ve ditn't know anyt'ing aboutt it, Matt, aber he hat chewed der handtkerchief in doo. Tick und me heardt der shooding, und ve vas schared shtiff. Ve t'ink, meppy, dot you or Tashington vas hurt."

"It was a close call for Dashington," said Matt. "If it hadn't been for his quickness and cleverness you two with Jurgens would have had Whistler and Bangs down on you like a thousand of brick. They were headed that way when Dash drew them off. But it's all over now. We're out of it, and we've got Jurgens' car, and Whistler and Bangs will have to hoof it. We'll send officers back from the next town."

"That will be Micheaud," put in Dashington.

"I vonder oof dere iss a blace to eat in der town?" quavered Carl. "I haf been lifing on oxcidement all tay, und now ven der oxcidement iss gone I feel der need oof somet'ing else."

"Trust Carl to think of his chuck," laughed Dick. "What I want in the next town is a hat. After that I can get along until we reach where we're going."

Another handkerchief had been twisted between Jurgens' jaws in lieu of the one he had gnawed in two.

"There's no need of the gag now, pards," said Matt, "and you'll make Jurgens more comfortable by taking it off."

Jurgens' first words, the moment the gag was removed, were directed at Dashington.

"Confound you!" he hissed, "you're at the bottom of all this."

"Thanks," grinned Dashington, "that's partly the way of it."

"How did Motor Matt know where we had gone?"

"I put him next, Jurgens."

"How did you know?"

"Why, as for that, when you put me down and out, there in New Orleans, Bangs' coat dropped from the car. When I corralled my wits I found it. There was a notebook in the pocket and that gave me a line on your rendezvous."

"Bangs!" snapped Jurgens. "We ought never to have hooked up with him. He's a sot and a bungler."

"You're a bungler yourself, Jurgens. If you had treated me square, instead of trying to hog the whole bag of tricks, I might have kept right on with you and turned into a promising crook. On the whole, it's a fine

thing for me you let Whistler give me that bump. I was at the turning point, and that rap on the block gave me a shove in the right direction."

"You'll do time for stealing those diamonds if my evidence counts for anything!" snapped Jurgens.

"But it won't. You're fooling yourself with a pipe dream when you let your little two-by-four run in that groove. Who was it shot at the air ship? Talk a while about something sensible."

"Bangs, again!" snorted Jurgens. "He was moseying along by the bayou and saw the air ship overhead. He blazed away, making a good shot. That was all right, but where Bangs was wrong was in hustling off to tell Whistler and me and not waiting to find out what damage he had done. As soon as I got Bangs' story, I made for the bayou. I saw the air ship, all right, smashed to smithereens in the top of a live oak, but King, Ferral and the Dutchman had vanished."

"Den you vent to hunt for us," bubbled Carl, "and got yourself in some drouples."

"You mean," laughed Dashington, with a taunt in his voice, "that he came to the hut to give us back the diamonds. It was a raw play, and that was what it amounted to."

Jurgens, in futile rage, ground his teeth.

"This will be the last of the diamonds," called Matt, from forward, "so far as you are concerned, Jurgens."

"I hope it will be the last of Townsend too," scowled Jurgens. "That fellow has dogged me from pillar to post ever since I left Atlantic City."

Matt and his chums enjoyed that remark.

"You dit all der dogging," said Carl.

"And you young whelps helped Townsend," snarled Jurgens. "Well, we've made it expensive for you. That air ship has made its last trip."

Dick Ferral sobered immediately. Recent exciting events had kept his mind off the untimely fate of the *Hawk*, but now the loss of the air ship recurred to him with added significance.

"I was in love with that craft," said he. "She saved our lives more than once, and she helped us turn a good many tricks for law and order. Not only that, but she has made for us five or six times the amount of money she cost us. Poor little ship! I suppose she'll hang in that oak tree till the crack o' doom."

"Forget about it, old chap," said Matt. "Her last cruise was the best of all, for she helped me redeem my promise to Archibald Townsend. There's the town ahead," he added, "and we'll stop there for supper and to send some one back along the road to capture Whistler and Bangs."

"They'll keep clear of any one you send," growled Jurgens, "I'll guarantee that."

"Whose automobile is this, Jurgens?" queried Dick.

"It belongs to a firm in New Orleans," he replied, with a leer. "We rented it and were going to forget to take it back."

"Why didn't you leave town when Townsend let you go, that other time?" Matt went on, hoping for an answer to a question that had long bothered him.

"Because we believed Townsend had got the loot that was in the iron chest," said Jurgens, "and we had as much right to it as he had."

"And you watched Townsend, after that?"

"Every minute, night and day."

Just here Matt swerved from the street of the town and came to a halt in front of a public house.

"We'll go in and eat, Motor Matt," said Dashington, with a significant look at the young motorist, "and Carl and Dick can stay here and keep watch over the machine and Jurgens. We can send them a hand-out."

Matt, seeing that there was some object back of Dashington's suggestion, acquiesced. They got down from the car and went into the tavern, took a seat in the dining room and sent out a hot meal to those in the car.

Matt and Dashington were alone in the dining room and, after the waiter had served them and gone away, they were able to talk privately.

"I had something up my sleeve, cull," said Dashington, "when I asked you to come in here with me. Here's where I have to quit you."

"Why can't you go on to New Orleans, Dash?" asked Matt. "I know Townsend. He's a good fellow, and he'll be so glad to get the diamonds back that I know he will not make you any trouble."

"You might be able to swing Townsend, all right," returned Dashington, "but the chap that has it in for me, old fel, is Jurgens. You've heard how he feels. He'd split on me, as sure as fate, and ring me in on the deal. No, I've got to duck, and right from this town. I've done what I could to square myself, and I'm going to put as much country between me and New Orleans as I can. It will be best, all around. You and I look too much alike to be in the same section of the country."

"You're going to stay straight, are you?" asked Matt, quietly.

"As long as I'm on the turf!" declared Dashington. "There's my hand on it."

Matt grasped cordially the hand Dashington offered him.

"Between two fellows who look so much alike as do you and I, Dash," said Matt, "there ought to be a bond of friendship. As long as you're straight, if you ever need help and I'm within hailing distance, let me know."

Dashington was silent for a space.

"That's mighty good of you," said he finally and in a low tone. "You've been a good friend to me, and the police probably won't thank you for letting me get away; but I appreciate what you've done. Don't let that get past your guard for a minute."

"Haven't you any relatives?"

"I don't want to talk along that line," said Dashington. "If I have, they'll never hear of me until I prove myself a credit to the family."

"Where are you going, from here?"

"I'll take a side-door Pullman out of the country. Haven't a guess where I'll land, but I know it will be a good way off."

"Have you any money?"

Dashington laughed.

"Money? What's that? I haven't a sou markee in my jeans, Matt, and it's that that made me desperate and ready to fall in with Jurgens and his bunch. The lack of a little money puts many a chap to the bad."

Matt drew a roll of bills from his pocket, counted off several and laid them down beside Dashington's plate.

"There's fifty," said he.

"What's it for?" asked Dashington.



"For you."

"I don't want to take your money, Matt. I hope I'm not an object of charity."

"Well, I should hope not. I'm not giving it to you, you understand. It's only a loan, and you can pay it back next week, next year, or any old time when you get around to it."

"Thank you," said Dashington.

When Matt got up from the table, he left Dashington still sitting in his chair. And that was the last he saw of him.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A NEW MAN TAKES A HAND.

It was midnight when the automobile and its passengers from Bayou Yamousa rolled into New Orleans. Matt's first call was at police headquarters. Here Jurgens was left, and a bit of a surprise was sprung.

The assistant chief, Fetterman by name, was on duty, and the arrival of Jurgens created a mild sensation. Detectives were even then prowling about the city looking for Lattimer Jurgens, Whistler, Bangs, and a young man, name unknown, wearing a slouch hat, sweater and frayed corduroy trousers. The detectives had not met with the slightest success, and the bringing in of Jurgens, by Motor Matt and his chums, naturally created a mild degree of excitement.

The surprise was in the nature of a question by Fetterman.

"Where are you going, King, from here?"

Matt gave him the number of the house in Prytania Street where Townsend had taken up his quarters.

"Ah," said Fetterman, with a peculiar glance, "that's the place where the diamonds were stolen. A new man is taking a hand in the game. I'll get him at once and bring him to the place in Prytania Street, but I'd like to have you and your friends stay there until we arrive. What this man has to say will be of interest to all of you."

"Who is he?" inquired Matt, curiously.

"I have promised to let him do his own talking," was the vague response.

Vastly puzzled, Matt went out to the car, told his chums what Fetterman had said, and all three of them wondered and guessed clear to Prytania Street and the house of Mrs. Thomas.

This time Matt entered by the front way. There was a light in Townsend's room. The shade was drawn, but a glow could be seen through it.

Matt was announced by a sleepy domestic, and he and his chums were shown up the stairs to the sick chamber. Cassidy was on duty as usual, and Townsend was wide awake and sitting up in his bed.

"What luck?" he asked, quaveringly.

"The very best, Mr. Townsend," answered Matt, cheerily, and drew the bag from his coat and laid it in Townsend's hands.

"Are—are these the diamonds?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And where is Jurgens, Whistler, Bangs and the others who helped them commit the robbery?"

"They have all escaped—with the exception of Jurgens and the young fellow, Dashington, who impersonated me. Jurgens is in jail, and I allowed Dashington to go."

"You allowed him to go?" asked Townsend, nonplused.

"Yes," answered Matt, "for the reason that, if he had not helped us I never could have kept my promise to you."

"Nothing much matters," said Townsend, with a long sigh of content, "now that I have the diamonds back. I don't care who helped you, or how it happened, Motor Matt always accomplishes the thing he sets out to do. I

have been better ever since you left here, last night. Now I shall get well, and get well quick. Give me your hand, my boy! And the rest of you—come here and let me thank you."

After Carl and Dick had crowded up to the bed and shaken hands with Townsend, the latter would have returned the bag to Matt and had him take the stones at once to the address on St. Charles Avenue; but, even as the request was being made, there was another ring at the gate bell, and then at the door, and the servant came up to announce "two men from headquarters."

"Two men from headquarters," muttered Townsend, bewildered. "Who can they be and what do they want?"

"I don't know what they want," said Matt, "but one of them is the assistant chief, Mr. Fetterman."

"Something else is going wrong," fretted Townsend, "and I know it. These diamonds seem to carry a curse with them."

"D'you feel strong enough, cap'n, to have more visitors?" asked Cassidy.

"I should be badly worried if I couldn't hear, without delay, what Fetterman and this other man have to tell me."

The assistant chief came in accompanied by a blond, stoutly built person whom he introduced as Mr. Shirley, of Scotland Yard.

Mr. Shirley was genial and made friends for himself right away.

"You're a sick man, I'm told, Mr. Townsend," said he, "and I'm going to begin at once what I have to say and come to an end as briefly as possible. I had best begin in South Africa where—"

"South Africa?" echoed Townsend.

Shirley nodded.

"A man named Hobart, an American," he went on, "worked in the Bloemfontein diamond mine. He was a clever scoundrel and accomplished what many another man had tried in vain to do, and that was to steal diamonds out of the workings. How he got them to the place where he lived is a mystery that has not yet been solved, for Hobart kept his plan strictly to himself and did not even let his confederate in the enterprise know how the thieving was done.

"In the house where Hobart had his rooms the diamonds were carefully secreted in the head of a particularly vicious-looking idol. Hobart used to show the idol to his friends, taking it from an iron chest where it was carefully packed in sawdust, and to which, after a few moments of exhibiting, he was always careful to return it.

"Hobart declared that the head was a fragment of the malefic Obboney, a deity of the Koromantyn, or Gold Coast, negroes. This was entirely fiction, for, it afterward developed, he had had the head carved by a man in the Portuguese settlements, and then steeped in a deadly liquor which caused it to give off a poisonous effluvia. This was intended as a protection for the stolen diamonds.

"In due course, Hobart and his confederate, Sharpe, an Australian, quit the diamond mines and prepared to leave for the States with their booty. They sailed for England, and from there took a West Indian trader for the Bahamas. When near the Bahamas, Sharpe demanded a division of the treasure. Hobart put him off with some excuse, and then, that night, mysteriously vanished with a whale boat and his iron chest, leaving Sharpe behind.

"Sharpe never found out where his treacherous

comrade had gone, nor what he had done with the iron chest. Moved by a spirit of vengeance, he sailed for England and told the entire story of the theft of the diamonds to the head of the syndicate that had charge of the diamond mines. The case was placed in my hands, and I traced Hobart to Philadelphia and found that he had lived there in poverty and had finally died and been buried in the Potters Field.

"I also learned that Hobart had had a friend, a wealthy inventor named Townsend. Having reached the end of my quest, so far as Hobart was concerned, I turned my attention to finding Townsend, in the hope that he could tell me something about the iron chest.

"But Townsend seemed every whit as hard to locate as Hobart had been. He had invented a submarine and was trying it out somewhere on a long-distance cruise. I bided my time and, at last, saw an account in a daily paper of the theft of a submarine belonging to one Captain Nemo, Jr., from the Inlet at Atlantic City, and of the pursuit of the submarine by a flying machine.

"I was a little mixed by the name of Captain Nemo, Jr., but I started out to follow the flying machine. This was comparatively easy, for wherever the machine was seen it was reported to the daily press, and all I had to do was to read the newspapers. Well, to be brief, I finally reached New Orleans last night. My coming was most opportune—a stroke of luck that does not come a detective's way more than once in a lifetime.

"A big diamond robbery had occurred here. The victim was one Archibald Townsend, and there were strong rumors flying about of a head carved from wood, of an iron chest, and of the thieves mixed up in the robbery having given their nefarious attentions to Mr. Townsend before. I talked with the authorities, and they told me that they were on the trail of the robbers and were doing their utmost to apprehend

them. So, I had perforce to continue my waiting game, although more than certain that I was finally on the right track.

"Imagine my surprise and satisfaction when Mr. Fetterman, here, came to my hotel, a few minutes ago, with the information that the ringleader of the thieving gang had been captured, and that the diamonds had been recovered. We came on here at once, I to explain my mission to Mr. Townsend, and Mr. Fetterman to vouch for my story."

Shirley, of Scotland Yard, sank back in his chair, his mild blue eyes roving whimsically about over the astounded faces of his listeners.

"Merciful powers!" gasped Townsend. "Can it be possible that I have been so terribly deceived in that fellow who called himself the Man from Cape Town? I was positive of his honesty, although I had not the remotest idea, at the time, of what the treasure consisted. I first met the Man from Cape Town in Philadelphia, and befriended him. He seemed grateful, and, just before he died, called me to his bedside and gave me a chart of an island in the Bahamas. The island was said to have a cave, and an iron chest was said to be in the cave. I looked upon the whole story as a fairy tale, but, as I wanted to test my submarine with a long sea cruise, promised the man I would go and look for his iron chest.

"The chest, when found, was to be brought to New Orleans and opened in the presence of a lady living in St. Charles Avenue, who, Hobart told me, was his daughter. The treasure was to be equally divided between the lady and myself.

"That iron chest seemed to draw upon me all manner of unfortunate adventures, and I regretted continually that I had ever had anything to do with it. But I had

given my promise to this Man from Cape Town, and felt myself bound to carry it out to the letter. I have held strictly to that policy, and Motor Matt and his friends have stood loyally by through everything that has happened."

Shirley turned an approving glance on Motor Matt.

"I hear nothing but most excellent reports of Motor Matt," said he, "and I should like to hear from him, in detail, all that has happened while he and his friends were working to recover the diamonds for the last time."

"It will be worth listening to, I can promise you that," said Cassidy. "Whenever he does a thing, he has a way o' his own of getting at it."

All eyes were turned on Matt. He saw that he was in for it, and began at the beginning and went through with every detail of the adventures recently encountered by him and his friends.

Every one followed him closely, particularly Shirley.

"From all this it appears," said the Scotland Yard man, as soon as Matt had finished, "that in getting back these diamonds for the South African syndicate, you have lost a ten-thousand-dollar air ship—"

"It didn't cost us that," interposed Matt.

"And have endangered your life and the lives of your friends," continued the detective, without seeming to notice the interruption. "I shall include that in my report when I return the diamonds. Meanwhile, until Mr. Townsend is satisfied that I have secured stolen property, the diamonds will remain in the custody of the New Orleans police department."

Shirley reached for his hat and got up.

"I fear I have tired you, Mr. Townsend," said he,



regretfully, "but it was necessary for me to see you at once and explain the mistake which, under the circumstances, it was a perfectly natural one to make. You have experienced much trouble and worry, and this can never be made up to you. As for the diamonds —"

"Take them," cried Townsend, stretching out the bag to Fetterman; "I am delighted to get rid of them and have them off my mind. And I am doubly glad that, being stolen property, a wrong is to be righted and the stones returned to their rightful owners. I don't wish to have anything done for me, Mr. Shirley. I have sufficient of this world's goods, and you have already done me the greatest favor possible by taking the diamonds off my hands. But Motor Matt and his friends, they—"

"I give you my word that they shall be looked after," finished Shirley.

Thereupon he shook hands all around, wished everybody luck and departed with Fetterman.

The fateful treasure, of course, went with them.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

If there was ever a happy man, Townsend was the one. So far from grieving him, the loss of the diamonds appeared to have done him a world of good.

"Py shinks," cried Carl, "dot vas der piggest surprize vat efer anypody heardt aboutt! Der Man from Cape Town vas a t'ief, schust like Jurgens, und ve haf peen fighding, und vorrying, und making some fools oof ourselufs over a lod of shtolen tiamonts. Und now, ven ve lose our air ship in gedding dem pack, in valks a English feller und takes der tiamonts away. He gedts eferyt'ing und ve ged nodding—but bromises."

"Promises are pretty good things, sometimes," said Townsend, "when they are made by the right sort of fellow. But you and your friends will not be anything out, Motor Matt. This Shirley means to do what is right, and you will be well repaid for the loss of the *Hawk* and for your time and trouble."

"The loss of the *Hawk* is the worst of it," mourned Dick. "That strikes me harder than anything else."

"She was a wonderful air ship," said Townsend, "and I don't blame you for feeling cut up over her loss. But Motor Matt can build another."

"I think I will leave the air-ship business for a while," said Matt, "and get into something else. I suppose," he went on, shifting the subject, "that the English detective will see that Jurgens gets the full extent of the law?"

"There's no doubt," averred Townsend, "but that Jurgens will pay dearly for his last attempt to get away with those fated diamonds."

"And if Whistler and Bangs are captured, they'll share the same fate. Officers are looking for them now."

"I don't think the officers will catch them, Matt," said Townsend.

"The trail is hot and Whistler and Bangs will have to travel on foot."

"Even at that, Whistler knows that part of the country too well. Jurgens, I am sure, is the only member of the gang who will ever be brought to book. But I am satisfied. He is the most culpable, and Whistler and Bangs were only tools."

"What do you think about the way I let Dashington go, Mr. Townsend?" asked Matt, anxiously.

"Whatever you do, my lad, is all right so far as I am concerned. On the face of it, it would look as though you had done wrong; but you were placed in a position where you could learn what Dashington really was. If, armed with that knowledge, you thought it right to set him free, I don't see why any one should find fault with your judgment."

Matt was glad to have this approval. He felt in his own heart he had done right, but he wanted to know how others felt about it.

"You'd better take a little rest now, cap'n," said Cassidy. "You've been under a good deal of a strain to-night, and the doctor said you—"

"The strain, as you call it, Cassidy," interrupted Townsend, with a laugh, "has done me good. Don't go, Matt," he added, seeing that Matt and his friends were reaching for their hats, "I'm not quite through with you yet."

"I'll drop in and see you to-morrow," said Matt. "I guess you've talked enough for to-night."

"I'm so pleased over getting rid of those diamonds that I feel as though I could talk all night. You say that you think, now that the *Hawk* has been destroyed, you'll get into some other line of business."

"Yes; something connected with gasoline motors, of course. I couldn't break away from the motors, you know."

"Why not go in for submarines?"

"I had thought of that, but couldn't see any place where there was an opening."

Dick and Carl looked disturbed.

"I can offer you an opening."

"Iss dere some obenings for more as one, Misder Downsents?" inquired Carl.

"I'm a little bit interested in that point myself," added Dick. "I don't like to see this combination of King, Ferral & Pretzel broken up."

"It needn't be broken up," said Townsend, "for I am sure I can take care of all three of you."

"Just what kind of an opening is it, Mr. Townsend?" asked Matt.

"I will tell you about that later. You remember, I think, that I asked you to come to New Orleans to help me in some work that had nothing to do with the iron chest or the treasure of the Man from Cape Town?"

"I remember that, yes, sir," said Matt.

"We haven't got down to that business yet, and, as I told Carl, some time ago, it's thrilling, exciting and a bit dangerous."

"Und, as I toldt you, Misder Downsents," put in Carl, "dot's der fery t'ing vat ve like. Life vouldt be some treary blaces mitoudt oxcidement to lifen t'ings oop."

"Before we had a chance to get at this other work of mine," continued Townsend, "something connected with that iron chest would bob up and the other business had to be sidetracked. Now, however, I think we can get at it without anything to interfere. But the matter will have to hold over until I am better than I am now. Perhaps it will be a week before I will be able to discuss the affair with you. Meanwhile, may I ask you to remain in New Orleans, at my expense, for that length of time?"

"Certainly, Mr. Townsend, if it will oblige you we will stay here for a week," answered Matt.

"I'm obliged to you—to all of you. Now, I know, you're fagged out and in need of rest, so I won't keep you any longer. I suppose you will take that automobile to the police department and leave it with them to be turned over to the firm to whom it belongs?"

"We'll do that," said Matt, "before we go to our hotel."

"It would be wise, I think, to get it off your mind as soon as possible. And I have your promise to stay in town for a week?"

"Yes."

"Then I know you'll stay, for"—and here Townsend gave a confident smile—"I know that Motor Matt's word is as good as his bond."

He shook hands with the motor boys, and they went out of the house, got into the automobile and headed the machine back toward town.

THE END.

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The next number (15) will contain:

# Motor Matt's Submarine

OR,

## THE STRANGE CRUIS OF THE *GRAMPUS*

A Startling Report—Mixed Messages—Hurry-up Orders—  
Accident or Design—Sixty Shows His Hand—An Unexpected  
Rescue—A Fruitless Search—The Overturned Boat—Adrift in  
the Storm—The Derelict—The Schooner—A Stunning Surprise  
—Closing In—The "Grampus" Gets a Clue—An Ultimatum  
—"Off with the Old, and On with the New."

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# THE MASKED LIGHT

## CONCLUSION.

It was the enemy! we were completely trapped. The tables were turned upon us; yet, even as the fight was lost, we won it. Shots crossed and recrossed about me. One flash on my left showed me a man's face and the glitter of a bayonet as he thrust at me. I struck it on one side with the muzzle of my gun, firing point-blank into him as I parried it. As he dropped back another leaped up, stamping on him to gain me. He fired from the hip, and the powder singed my hair. I clubbed my musket and struck down at him, slipped on the boulder, and down we crashed, clenched together, he, underneath, falling on his head twelve feet below. His arms relaxed and I rolled clear. By sheer instinct alone I kept flat, for men were now leaping down, while the shrill whistle of a leaden hailstorm passed over me.

For a moment I thought it was the end of us all; but out of the din I recognized a voice on our right calling shrilly: Chloe's voice. Our friends were reënforcing us from the ford. The attackers, caught on the flank, broke and fled. I rose up at last. The foot of the lighthouse just loomed faintly visible, and I saw the last of the enemy rush over the dark heap and gain the shelter of the building.

That dark heap was now linked to our position by a chain of dead and wounded men; their retreat had cost them more than the attack.

We had not escaped scatheless. Seven men killed outright, and nine wounded. Before we had time to move a single man to a more comfortable position, we were driven to the shelter of our rocks by a withering fire which broke out from every window and loophole

of the chapel. We clung to the lee of the rocks. The air was dusty with chips and splinters of stone.

As I at last recovered my wits, I found that some one else was sheltering under the same rock. It was Chloe, all breathless, disheveled, and wringing wet.

"Take mine, capitan," she cried, on seeing me without a rifle. And she passed me a handful of cartridges from the bosom of her dress. I loaded in haste, but Henrico began to roar above the din that not a shot was to be fired. It was growing lighter every moment, and as yet the enemy could only aim by the line of the dead and wounded. But, for all that, the bombardment went on unceasingly.

Chloe, her breath recovered, was, despite her crouching position, tidying herself to something more woman-like. I asked her for the news. "Oh," she cried, "they found us, tumbled on us, but they paid!—one, two, three, four, five!" checking them off on her fingers. "Then we heard you. The sergeant knew you had been surprised—by the sound he knew. So, back came ten of us. He was just dying."

"Ah," I said.

"Yes," continued she, braiding her hair. "We all die; but I put my crucifix round his neck. He said we were to come to you. So we left him."

Suddenly she paused and listened eagerly, as if to catch some other sound in the rattle of the firing.

"Listen also, capitan," she said, and pulled me close to her side where we could get a sight of the sea between two huge rocks. Faintly, we heard the unmistakable moan of a steamship's siren. It was the troop ship! she was calling like some blind, lost thing for guidance.

It was now between light and dark, yet to a ship in

the open a shore light would show boldly out at sea. The same thought moved both Chloe and myself. She rose to her feet to peer over the shelter, but something moved in me hotly, and I pulled her down on the instant and looked over myself.

Every window of the lighthouse vomited smoke and flashes. Above, the lantern still cast level rays on the screen. But no sooner had my eye fallen on the latter, than I cried out in dismay. A man was crawling hand over hand on the wire and cutting down the sheet. Already a third was hanging loose, and a section of light streamed seaward.

Involuntarily I called out to Chloe and pointed out the sight. Quick as light she whipped up the rifle, but, as she pulled the trigger, I knocked up the muzzle. And I could have done no other thing even if it had lost all. It was a magnificent thing to see a man do; he was a dead man as soon as sighted, so near he hung to us. Chloe slipped in another cartridge. In a second we were struggling for possession of the weapon. At the first grip I cleverly thrust her back on the rock with the barrel across her chest; only for a moment, for, with a swift, sinuous movement, she flung me sideways, and down we went, I underneath. She hissed like a wild cat, her short upper lip held clear of her white teeth, and her eyes a depth of black and fire. I believe in her mad rage she would have worsted me, but, as we grappled, the walls of the creek fairly shivered under the boom of a startling concussion. A heavy gun had been fired to seaward. The war ship had caught the trooper! Another and another explosion followed, and, at the sound, the rifle fire dropped. A shout of triumph rang in the rocks and about us.

We dropped the gun and peered over our rock, and saw a white flag limply hanging from the lighthouse. The man on the wire was crawling painfully back to the

other side. I could not help but start up and give him a cheer with the whole of my breath.

Chloe looked in my face, her black eyes big with wonder, a child again.

"That's because he is as brave a man as ever carried a gun," said I.

"Do the Americans always cheer an enemy?" asked she.

"If he's brave."

With that she leaped on to the rock, and, throwing back her head, sent a shrill "huzza!" to the distant man, who had now gained the firm ground. He turned and saw us, waved his hand and fled.

All our men were streaming after Henrico toward the lighthouse, where the enemy sullenly filed out and flung down their rifles. Seventeen I counted, all that remained of the strong command.

Presently the doctors arrived from the cruiser, and began their grim trade on a flat rock. But the most evil sight was to see the lighthouse, forgotten by all, unblinkingly staring into the face of the now open day.

But the night's work had not been wasted by us, for by sunset we were honored guests on the cruiser, with a passage home before us.

Chloe had brought off in her uncle's boat the odds and ends from our lodgings. The anchor cable was rattling on the deck, and at that we shook hands with her, and said good-by. She stood and looked at us, and we noticed she had put on her gala dress. Still she remained, till Gilbert suddenly cried: "Goodness, we've forgotten. But we'll send you our debt as soon as we get home to New York—never you fear, Chloe."

"No! never," she cried, "not that; no money owing."

She turned, her red lips open and eyes brimming; she stooped, kissed Gilbert in her arms! swung round, kissed me full and fair, and was gone with a flutter of skirt and clicking of shoe heels on the brass ledges of the stair.

The last we saw of San José was a lonely boat and a woman waving and waving till she faded in the dusk and distance.

**THE END.**

## SPANISH CEDAR LOGS.

In the early days of cigar box manufacture in California, they were made almost exclusively of Spanish cedar. But that wood has become very scarce and high priced of late years, and other woods are taking its place to a certain extent.

And one of those woods is California redwood. In California at present the cigar box makers use about one-fourth redwood; the balance is composed of Spanish cedar and what is known to the trade as "imitation" lumber, which is nothing more than the common poplar and basswood of New England, sawed up, planed, and then stained in imitation of Spanish cedar, or veneered with Spanish cedar, because Spanish cedar is par excellence the real stuff for cigar boxes.

The gilt edge cigars all have to be packed in Spanish cedar, else there is a kick from the opulent and fastidious smoker, who claims that the natural aroma of the wood imparts an improved flavor to the cigars.

This may be a superstition, but as the well-to-do lovers of the weed are perfectly willing to pay for it the trade are only too anxious to flatter their customers' tastes.

It is a luxury and one that is growing more and more expensive; for in the early days of cigar box making Spanish cedar could be bought at \$55 a thousand feet; now it costs \$95 a thousand feet.

Now some one asks where and how is Spanish cedar obtained? Right here on the Pacific coast; but not in California, however, replete as her resources are. You have to go away south along the Mexican and Central American coasts for this special kind of lumber. And

California has driven a trade in Spanish cedar ever since cigar box making had its inception on the Pacific coast; in fact, there is hardly a product of any part of the known world that does not come to the port by the Golden Gate.

The ever restless coasting schooners are the craft that bring our Spanish cedar logs up out of the tropics, and it is a peculiar trade—not only the maritime part of the traffic, but that part which is performed on land; for that part is done along the primitive ways of the easy going Mexican and Central American.

It is to be presumed that away back in the early days of maritime traffic on the lower coast there were supplies of Spanish cedar logs that could be obtained at the regular ports of entry; but evidently such a supply, if it ever existed, finally became exhausted, and as nobody down in those regions had the enterprise to build railroads from their seaports into the lumber regions of the interior, the stock of cedar had to be picked up all along the coast, wherever the wood could be found. That made the transfer of the logs from the shore to the vessel's side a very laborious undertaking and one no white man would ever have thought of resorting to.

But first in order comes the cutting of the cedar timber and the transportation of the logs to the shore. This, too, was done by the simple-minded Mexicans and Central Americans. Of course, at first these people cut the timber nearest the seashore, and then kept working back into the country, a process that involved more and more labor, because the distance of transportation was all the time increasing.

The cedar trees were chopped down and then cut up into logs varying in length from six to twelve feet, according to the size of the trees. These logs were then hewn square, ranging in size from nine inches to two

feet.

This was done in order that they might be packed closely when on board of the California schooners. Then along came a swarthy Castilian, a pair of oxen attached to one of those funny wooden two-wheeled carts, with axle bare.

Upon this cart, called a carita, were loaded a number of logs, the number, of course, depending upon the size, and were lashed on, with one end dragging upon the ground behind. In this way the logs were hauled to the sea coast and deposited just above high tide line. After a while Spanish cedar began to grow scarce along the ocean belt, and then the Mexicans went up the rivers and creeks and cut cedar timber along the banks. The logs were rolled into the streams and driven down to the sea, either loose or in rafts, and were loaded thence upon the California schooners.

Now, there was a certain season when the loading of cedar logs down along the southern coast upon the schooners from the north was practicable, and that was in what California calls the winter season, when in southern waters the weather is the calmest of any season during the year. For there were no deep water harbors or extensive ocean piers whereat to find dockage for the schooners, and the loading had to be done offshore at any point where there might be a quantity of logs awaiting shipment. So the California sailing masters used to go cruising down the southern coast, keeping a sharp lookout for signals from ashore indicating the presence of a cargo. At a given signal they would tack to larboard and pull in as close to the beach as the soundings would permit. Sometimes they would have to anchor as much as two miles offshore.

When all was ready for loading two of the Mexicans on shore would seize a log, watch for the next incoming comber, and just as it was about to break on



the beach they would start, rush through it with their log in hand, and would then find themselves in comparatively smooth water.

As soon as deep water was reached the two men would start to paddle the log out to the waiting vessel. There was a man on each side of the log, and each man had one arm flung over the log, while the other was left free to do the paddling. Arriving at the vessel's side the log would be caught by the crew of the craft and pulled on board. The two swimmers would then turn about and swim back to the shore for another log. By this slow and laborious process the vessel was finally loaded, the logs paid for, and the prow turned northward.

For this kind of labor the Mexicans were paid \$1 a day each in Mexican money, worth only about fifty cents in United States currency. But the Mexicans appeared to be quite well satisfied with their wages, and could save something out of their pay for a rainy day; because living was cheap in that kindly climate—a bunch of bananas and some cakes sufficing for food, with mescal to drink, and anyone could sleep out of doors under a palm tree with perfect comfort.

The traffic in Spanish cedar logs has fallen off a good deal of late years in consequence of their growing scarcity, and California cigar box makers have been obliged to send to eastern seaports for a part of their supply, the lumber finding its way into those ports from Cuba and Gulf of Mexico ports.

# COOKING THE VENISON STEAK.

There are various ways of cooking venison steak, but the recipe given by Game Warden Walter Neal is still pronounced the best by Maine woodsmen. It is that followed by Hannibal Hamlin and other famous hunters and diners.

"Get a buck deer that is fat and not over five years of age," says Mr. Neal. "One that weighs one hundred pounds is better than no deer, though the best should weigh nearly two hundred pounds. Before the body is cold, if possible, slash off some thick slices of steak. Have them nearly two inches thick and big enough to cover the bottom of an old-style spider if possible.

"Now get a thick and heavy cast-iron spider red-hot above the coals. Be sure and do this, because the hotter the spider is the better. And when the spider is glowing and sparkling with heat, slap in a slice of steak. Do not use any butter or any form of fat, but let the raw meat fall direct upon the hot iron, and then let it sizzle and smell and smoke for about a minute.

"Now flop it over on the other side, and repeat until the camp is so full of choking smoke and the smell of burning meat that you must carry the heated spider outdoors to get your breath.

"Tip the burnt and smoking steak on to a big plate, slash it deeply all over the surface with a sharp knife and throw on butter until the meat is afloat. Then salt and pepper to taste, after which nobody needs any directions as to what to do next.

"Venison cooked in this way and eaten with strong coffee and hot cream of tartar biscuit forms the best

meat that it is possible to serve to kings and queens or jacks. And I know exactly what I am talking about."

The market men and hotel cooks of eastern Maine make a sharp distinction between the flesh of the deer that is raised in Maine and that which is captured by the hunters in the Southern States, calling the home product venison and all other kinds deer meat, or if the animals are very small and without fat, they modify the term and scornfully call it deer veal.

The newest Bangor plan of cooking venison is to cut moderately thick slices from the round of a buck and grill the flesh over a white-hot fire of anthracite, letting the greedy flames lick and bathe the curling meat and crisp its edges until it is hot clear through and cooked on the outside, though still somewhat rare in the interior.

The person who is said to have introduced this manner of cooking from Canada is Edward Stetson, president of the First National Bank of Bangor, who spends much time every year in his camp back from North Twin Dam on the west branch of Penobscot River. So particular is Mr. Stetson concerning how the venison of his shooting must be prepared for his guests in camp that before the beginning of open season every year he sends up the necessary anthracite by rail, his servants carrying it in baskets from the station far back into the wilderness, where it is used solely for broiling venison.

The men of unclassified employment who pass from May to October in raising hay, oats and potatoes to sell to the near-by lumber camps and who swing axes in the deep woods from October to May declare that the best venison is from the carcass of a buck shot in November and frozen and hung up under cover until midwinter.

## BABY OSTRICHES.

Three cunning little gray-and-white ostriches were ushered into the world at the Florida Ostrich Farm and Zoo recently, a remarkably good result from a setting of fifteen eggs. Everybody, from Manager Fraser down to the most subordinate attaché of the resort, was gloriously happy over the event.

The life, habits, and characteristics of the ostriches are really interesting. Starting with the mating of the grown birds, which are allowed to select their mates, the male bird prepares the nest, a hollow in the sand, generally in a secluded spot in his pen, about one and a half feet deep and twelve feet in circumference. The hen lays about twelve to eighteen eggs, one every other day. The eggs are from fifteen to eighteen inches in circumference, and, weigh about three to four and a half pounds each, the shell being from one-sixteenth to one-eighth of an inch thick, sufficiently strong to withstand a decided blow. After laying her nest of eggs the birds begin setting, the hen in the daytime and the male ostrich covering the eggs at nighttime. They remain on the nests constantly from forty-two to forty-five days, never leaving it, except for food twice a day. Even then the male bird covers the nest frequently while his mate seeks her food.

The chick when ready to hatch will usually break or pip the shell itself; but at times the hen ostrich will assist by breaking it with her breast bone, by pressing upon it, helping the chick out by lifting it out with her beak, and shaking the shell from its body.

The first growth of ostrich chicks is remarkably fast, as from ten days of age up to six months old they grow at the rate of a foot a month. After six months they grow more slowly.

At first both sexes are similar in color and appearance, and are almost undistinguishable until about fifteen or eighteen months old. That which has been a mixture of drab, white, and brown on the male, begins to darken, and finally at about four years old becomes a decided black. The feathers on the female remain drab during her entire life. Baby ostriches do not eat for three days after hatching. The third day they begin to stand up and take notice like a child, and after being taught to eat by having bits of their food placed in their bills, they very quickly discover the use of their bills, and pick up their own food.

The chicks must be carefully fed and have fine especially prepared food, including plenty of fine grit and fresh, clean water. Their first crop of feathers matures at eight months.

## **MINK FARM IN OREGON.**

Tom Staten has established a farm for the raising of mink at Rattlesnake Point, on the upper Klamath Lake. About a hundred of the animals are housed in cages or cabinets, and seem to do well and thrive in captivity, as they are all fat and sleek looking.

The animals are so tame that they will take food from the hand, although one has to be careful in handling them, as the mink is treacherous and has very sharp teeth. As mink in this county increase about five fold Mr. Staten expects to have something over five hundred in his cages next year. The value of their fur alone will aggregate about \$3,000, but live female minks sell for a much higher figure than their hide alone is worth.



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