

MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING
ADVENTURE

MOTOR
FICTION

NO. 31
SEPT. 25, 1909

FIVE
CENTS

**MOTOR MATT'S
MARINER**

**OR FILLING THE
BILL FOR BUNCE**

By
THE AUTHOR
OF MOTOR MATT



The jolt was terrific. Motor Matt was thrown roughly against the front seat and Bunce went into the air as though shot from a gun.

STREET & SMITH
PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK

MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING
ADVENTURE

MOTOR
FICTION

No. 31
SEPT. 25, 1909.

FIVE
CENTS

MOTOR MATT'S MARINER

or

Filling The Bill For Bunce

By Stanley R Matthews

Street & Smith
Publishers — New York

© 1909 (unrenewed) and re-published in 2016.

MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

*Issued Weekly. By subscription \$2.50 per year. Copyright, 1909,
by Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.*

No. 31. NEW YORK, Sept, 25, 1909. **Price Five Cents.**

Motor Matt's Mariner

OR,

FILLING THE BILL FOR BUNCE

CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER I. "BUDDHA'S EYE."</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>CHAPTER II. THE GREEN PATCH.</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>CHAPTER III. MOTOR MATT—TRUSTEE.</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>CHAPTER IV. BUNCE HAS A PLAN.</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>CHAPTER V. BUNCE SPEAKS A GOOD WORD FOR HIMSELF.</u>	<u>35</u>
<u>CHAPTER VI. THE HOMEMADE SPEEDER.</u>	<u>42</u>
<u>CHAPTER VII. TRAPPED.</u>	<u>49</u>
<u>CHAPTER VIII. THE CUT-OUT UNDER THE LEDGE.</u>	<u>56</u>
<u>CHAPTER IX. BETWEEN THE EYES.</u>	<u>63</u>
<u>CHAPTER X. THE MAN FROM THE "IRIS."</u>	<u>70</u>
<u>CHAPTER XI. ABOARD THE STEAM YACHT.</u>	<u>76</u>
<u>CHAPTER XII. GRATTAN'S TRIUMPH,</u>	<u>83</u>
<u>CHAPTER XIII. FROM THE OPEN PORT!</u>	<u>89</u>
<u>CHAPTER XIV. LANDED—AND STUNG.</u>	<u>96</u>
<u>CHAPTER XV. A CRAFTY ORIENTAL.</u>	<u>103</u>
<u>CHAPTER XVI. THE MANDARIN WINS.</u>	<u>109</u>
<u>JERRY STEBBINS' HOSS TRADE.</u>	<u>119</u>
<u>THE PHANTOM ENGINEER.</u>	<u>128</u>

CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

Matt King, otherwise Motor Matt.

Joe McGlory, a young cowboy who proves himself a lad of worth and character, and whose eccentricities are all on the humorous side. A good chum to tie to—a point Motor Matt is quick to perceive.

Tsan Ti, Mandarin of the Red Button, who proves adept in the ways of Oriental craft, and shows how easy it is for a person to shift his dangers and responsibilities to other shoulders—if only he goes about it in the right way.

Philo Grattan, a talented person who devotes himself to "tricks that are dark and ways that are vain," and whose superb assurance leads him to flaunt his most memorable crime in the face of the authorities through the medium of moving pictures. A man fitted by nature for a worthier part than he plays, and whose keen mind is not able to save him from deception.

Bunce, the mariner, and a pal of Grattan.

Pardo, who charts a power-boat and uses it in forwarding a plot of Grattan's.

Bronson, a railroad superintendent, who appears briefly but creditably.

CHAPTER I.

“BUDDHA’S EYE.”

"It's three long and weary hours, pard, before the boat for New York ties up at the landing. You don't want to cool your heels in the hotel, do you, while we're waiting? How about doing something to fill in the time?"

It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and Motor Matt and his cowboy chum, Joe McGlory, were sitting on the porch of their hotel in Catskill-on-the-Hudson. The hotel was on an elevation, and the boys could look out over the river and see the lights of steamers, tugs, motor boats, and other craft gliding up and down in a glittering maze.

Matt had been looking down at the river lights, and dreaming. He aroused himself with a start at the sound of his chum's voice.

"What would you suggest, Joe?" he asked.

"Let's take in the moving-picture shows. Say, they're the greatest thing for a nickel that I ever saw. Some yap gets into trouble, and then ladies and gents, and workmen, and clerks, and nurses with baby cabs take after the poor duffer, and there's a high old time for all hands. I'm plumb hungry for excitement, Matt. This town has become mighty tame since we parted company with Tsan Ti."

"If you think the moving-picture shows will furnish what you need in the excitement line, Joe, we'll go out and take them in."

Matt got up with a laugh, and he and McGlory left the hotel, and laid a course for the main street of the

town. At the first nickel theatre they came to, they gave up a dime, and moved into the darkened room. An illustrated song was in the lantern, and a young man with a husky voice was singing something about a "stingy moon."

The motor boys stumbled around in the dark, and McGlory tried to slip into a seat that was already occupied. A stifled scream made him aware of his mistake, and he tumbled all over himself to get somewhere else.

"Speak to me about that!" he whispered to Matt, with a choppy chuckle. "That's the trouble with these moving-picture honkatonks when you come in after the lights are out. Oh, bother that stingy moon! I wish the chap with the raw voice would cut it out, and let the rest of the show get to climbing over the screen."

"Don't be so impatient, old chap," returned Matt. "You've got to have something happening to you about once every fifteen minutes, or you get so nervous you can't sit still. In that respect, you're a lot like Dick Ferral, a sailor chum I cruised with a while ago. Now —"

"Sh-h-h!" interrupted the cowboy. "The piano has had enough of the moon, and now here comes the first moving picture."

White letters quivered on the screen. "Buddha's Eye" was the title of the series of pictures about to be shown. McGlory gulped excitedly, and Matt stared. The motor boys had just finished a wild entanglement with a great ruby called the "Eye of Buddha," and this, the first picture in the first theatre that claimed them, reminded them, with something like a shock, of recent experiences.

"Sufferin' sparks!" muttered McGlory. "What's the difference between 'Buddha's Eye' and the 'Eye of

Buddha, ' Matt?"

"No difference, Joe," answered Matt. "This is just a coincidence, that's all."

The interior of a Buddhist temple was thrown on the screen. The views were colored, and priests in gray and yellow robes could be seen moving back and forth and prostrating themselves before a huge gilt idol. The idol was of a "sitting Buddha" and must have measured full twenty feet from the temple floor to the top of the head.

With a flash, the interior of the temple gave way to an enlarged view of the idol's head. The head had but one eye, placed in the centre of the forehead—a huge ruby, which glowed like a splash of warm blood.

"The Honam joss house, in the suburbs of Canton!" whispered McGlory excitedly. "If it ain't, I'm a Piute!"

Motor Matt kept silence, wondering.

The boys were next afforded a view of two men, plotting aboard a sampan near the island of Honam. One was tall and had a dark face and sinister eyes. He wore a solar hat with a pugree. The other had on sailor clothes, had a fringe of mutton-chop whiskers about his jaws and a green patch over his right eye. McGlory grabbed Matt's arm in a convulsive grip.

"What do you think of that?" demanded the cowboy, in a husky whisper. "The tinhorn in the sun hat is Grattan, and the webfoot is Bunce. Am I in a trance, or what?"

"Watch!" returned Matt, fully as mystified as was his chum.

The next picture was labeled, "The Egyptian Balls—view of excavations at Karnak, on the Upper Nile."

Ponderous ruins were brought into view, showing

Egyptian fellahs digging in a subterranean chamber. An urn was lifted up and uncovered. From this urn the wondering workmen removed a number of crystalline spheres. One of the spheres dropped from an awkward hand, crashed to fragments on the floor of the chamber, and instantly all the workmen staggered, flung their hands to their faces, and fell sprawling, lying on the stones prone and silent.

Two men stole in upon them, covered with flowing Arab robes, and their faces masked in white. Swiftly they gathered up some of the balls, and the camera followed them as they left the chamber and stood under the broken columns of the ancient temple of Karnak. The robes were flung away, and the masks removed. Grattan and Bunce, the sampan plotters, stood revealed.

"I've got the blind staggers, I reckon!" mumbled McGlory, rubbing his eyes. "It was in Egypt Grattan got his dope balls—the glass spheres filled with the knock-out fumes. This—this—sufferin' brain twisters! It's more'n I can savvy."

After Grattan and Bunce had gone through a pantomime expressive of their wild delight on securing the balls, the films entered into another series, entitled, "The Theft of the Great Ruby from the Honam Joss House, near Canton, China."

The walls outside the temple were shown, and an avenue bordered with banyan trees, with rooks flapping among the branches. Grattan and Bunce were seen making their way along the avenue, entering the temple court, and coming into the chamber which had been flashed on the screen at the beginning.

Here was the huge idol again, and the yellow-robed priests moving about. For a space, Grattan and Bunce stood and gazed; then, suddenly, Grattan pulled a

hand from his coat, held one of the glass balls over his head for a space, then sent it crashing among the priests. The priests started up in amazement, recovered their wits, and rushed toward the foreign devils. But the priests were suddenly stricken before Grattan and Bunce could be roughly dealt with.

White masks had been pushed over the faces of the two plotters, and the pair watched while the priests, overcome by the paralyzing, sense-destroying fumes from the broken balls, reeled to the temple floor, and lay there in inert heaps. The masks protected Grattan and Bunce from the baneful influence of the balls.

As soon as the priests were stretched silent upon the floor, Grattan unwound a ladder of silk from about his waist. One end of the ladder was weighted with a bit of lead, and this end was thrown over the idol's head. Thereupon, Grattan mounted the ladder, and dug out the ruby with a knife. Upon descending, he and Bunce went through another pantomime, suggesting their joy over the success of their shameless work, and then passed quickly from the court, stuffing their white masks into their pockets as they went.

The next scene was in the room of a house in the foreign quarter, on the sea wall, called Shameen. Grattan was secreting the ruby in the head of a buckthorn cane. Barely was the secreting done, when a fat mandarin burst in on them with a number of armed coolies at his heels.

The mandarin seemed to be accusing Grattan. Grattan could be seen to shake his head protestingly. Then Grattan and Bunce were searched thoroughly, and the room ransacked. In the utmost chagrin, the mandarin and his coolies left, without having been able to discover anything. A few minutes later, the thieves took their triumphant departure, Grattan exultantly waving the buckthorn stick.

Scarcely breathing, and with staring eyes, the motor boys continued to watch the pictures as they raced over the white screen. What wonder work was this? From Grattan's own lips Matt had heard of the robbery at the Honam joss house, in which Grattan had played such an important part. So far, the pictures had shown it substantially as the details had come from Grattan; there were a few minor differences, but they were insignificant.

From this point, however, Grattan's story and the story as told by the pictures were at variance.

The thieves got into a couple of sedan chairs, each chair carried by four coolies. Apparently, Grattan and Bunce were on their way to the river to embark for other shores. When near the landing, one of the poles supporting the chair in which Grattan was riding broke. The chair fell, the bamboo door burst open, and Grattan tumbled out. One of the coolies picked up the buckthorn cane, and another the sun hat with the pugree. Grattan, in anger, knocked down the coolie who had picked up his hat. The other, coming to his countryman's aid, struck at Grattan with the head of the cane. Grattan dropped to his knees. The cane passed over his head, and the force the coolie had put into the blow carried the stick out of his hand, and sent it smashing against the side of a "go-down."

The head of the cane was broken, and the great ruby rolled over the earth out of the débris, and lay gleaming in the sun under the eyes of the astounded coolies. Then, with the inexplicable timeliness so prevalent in motion pictures, the fat mandarin and his coolies came upon the scene, the mandarin gathering in "Buddha's Eye" with extravagant expressions of joy, and Grattan and Bunce writhing desperately in the hands of the chair men and the mandarin's guard.

That was all. The scenes to follow were of a

humorous order, and probably had to do with some unfortunate getting into trouble and leading a varied assortment of people a gay chase, but McGlory had lost interest in the show. So had Matt.

As by a common impulse, the boys got up and groped their bewildered way out of the room and into the street. They were dazed, thunderstruck, and hardly knew what to think.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEN PATCH.

Distracted by their mental speculations, the motor boys presently found themselves back on the porch of their hotel, occupying the same chairs they had left a little while before. Once more Matt was looking down on the river lights, coming and going across the broad stream like so many fireflies.

"Am I locoed, I wonder?" inquired McGlory, as though speaking to himself. "Did I see that moving picture, with Grattan and Bunce in it and stealing the 'Eye of Buddha,' or didn't I?"

"You saw the picture, Joe," returned Matt, "and so did I."

"I reckon I did; and jumpin' tarantulas, how it got on my nerves! But how does it happen that the picture is being shown like it is? Grattan told you, Matt, just how the ruby was stolen from the Honam joss house by himself and Bunce; he told you how he went to Egypt after the glass balls that were more than two thousand years old, and had been dug up at Karnak. He didn't get the balls from Karnak just exactly in the way the picture shows it, but he did steal the ruby in exactly the same fashion those films brought the tinhorn trick under our eyes. Not only that, but Grattan hid the ruby in the head of his cane. Right up to that point the whole game is a dead ringer for the yarn Grattan batted up to you. The rest of the pictures are pure fake. It was you who helped recover 'Buddha's Eye,' and it happened right here in the Catskill Mountains, near the village of Purling, and not in China. But it was the smashing of the head of the cane that revealed the ruby."^[A]

"We know," said Matt, his mind recovering from the shock occasioned by the strange series of pictures so suddenly sprung upon him and McGlory, "we know, pard, that Grattan was in the motion-picture business at the time he conceived the idea of stealing the ruby. He was traveling all over the world with his camera apparatus. Probably his line of work has something to do with his putting the robbery into the form we have just seen it."

"But why should Grattan want to publish his criminal work all over the country in moving pictures? And he put himself into the pictures, too—and that old sea dog, Bunce."

"That part of it is too many for me, Joe," answered Matt. "However, I can't see as the moving pictures of the robbery cut much figure now. The mandarin, Tsan Ti, has recovered the ruby, and is on his way to San Francisco to take ship for China. Grattan and Bunce made their escape, and are probably getting out of the country, or into parts unknown, as rapidly as they can. So far as we are concerned, the incident is closed. But it was certainly a startler to come face to face with a set of pictures like those—and so unexpectedly."

"First nickelodeon we struck, and the first picture shoved through the lantern," muttered the cowboy.

"Are you positive, Joe," went on Matt, "that the two thieves who figured in the picture were really Grattan and Bunce?"

"It's a cinch!" declared McGlory. "There can't be any mistake. I never saw a clearer set of pictures, and I'd know Grattan and Bunce anywhere—could pick 'em out of a thousand."

[A] The thrilling adventures of the motor boys in recovering the Eye of Buddha were set forth in No. 30, Motor Stories.

"That's the way it looked to me, and yet there's one point I can't understand. It's a point that doesn't agree with your assertion that Bunce was really in the picture."

"What point is that?"

"Why, it has to do with the green patch Bunce wears over his eye."

"The patch was in the picture, all right."

"Sure it was! But which of Bunce's eyes did it cover?"

"The right eye!"

"Exactly! The green patch was over Bunce's right eye, in the picture of the robbery, which we just saw; but when we had our several encounters with Bunce, a few days ago, the patch was over the mariner's left eye."

McGlory straightened up in his chair and stared at his chum through the electric light that shone over them from the porch ceiling.

"Glory to glory and all hands round!" he exclaimed. "You're right, pard. When we were trotting that heat with Bunce, here in the Catskills, it was his left eye that was gone. Now, in the picture, it's his right eye. How do you explain that?"

"The explanation seems easy enough," answered Matt. "Bunce must have two good eyes, and he simply covers up one for the purpose of disguise. Either that, or else some one represented him when the moving pictures were taken, and got the patch over the wrong eye."

"What good is a green patch as a disguise, anyway?" demanded McGlory.

"Give it up. The difference in the position of the

patch merely led me to infer that Bunce might not have really been in that moving picture. And if Bunce wasn't in it, then it's possible that Grattan wasn't in it, either. Two men might have been made up to represent the two thieves. I can't think it possible that Grattan and Bunce, as you said a moment ago, should want to publish their crime throughout the country by means of these moving pictures. The films are rented everywhere, and travel from place to place."

McGlory heaved a long breath.

"Well, anyhow, I don't want to bother myself any more with the Eye of Buddha," said he. "It's a hoodoo, and I never went through such a lot of close shaves, or such a series of rapid-fire events, as when we were helping Tsan Ti, the mandarin, recover the ruby. Let's forget about it. We can't understand how those pictures came to be shown, and we're completely at sea regarding the green patch. But it's nothing to us, any more. We're for New York by the night boat, and then it'll be 'Up the river or down the bay, over to Coney or Rockaway' for the motor boys. Sufferin' cat naps! A spell of pleasure in the metro-polus is all that brought me East with you, anyhow. It's us for the big town, and with you along to see that no one sells me a gold brick, I reckon I'll be able to pan out a good time."

The prospect of a week or two in New York, with a little rest and a little motoring, was also appealing powerfully to Matt. He had not been in the big town for some time, and he longed to renew his acquaintance with its many "sights" and experiences.

"We'll be there in the morning, Joe," Matt answered. "As you say, we need not bother our heads any longer about the Eye of Buddha, or Grattan, or Bunce, or Tsan Ti. We'll take our toll of enjoyment out of Manhattan Isle, and we'll forget there ever was such a thing as the big ruby."

"You don't intend to think of business at all while you're there, eh?"

"No. We'll just knock around for a couple of weeks and enjoy ourselves. Of course we'll be more or less among the motors—I couldn't be happy myself if we weren't—and then, when we've had enough of that, I want to take a run up to my old home in the Berkshire Hills."

Great Barrington had been very much in Motor Matt's mind for several weeks. He felt a desire to go back to the old place, and revisit the scenes of his earlier life. There was a mystery concerning his parents which had never been solved. He did not have any idea that a return to Great Barrington would settle that problem, but, nevertheless, it had something to do with luring him in the direction of the Berkshires.

"Speak to me about that!" murmured McGlory. "You've always been a good deal of a riddle to me, pard. You've never let out much about your early life, and I come from a country where it's a signal for fireworks if you press a man too closely about his past, so I've just taken you as I picked you up in 'Frisco, and let it go at that. But there are a few things I'd like to know, just the same."

"I'll tell you about them sometime, Joe," Matt answered. "Just now, though, I'm not in the mood. When we're ready to start for the Berkshires—"

He paused. The night clerk of the hotel had come out on the porch and was standing at his elbow, a small package in his hand.

"Motor Matt," said he, in a voice of concern, "here's something that came for you by express, about five-thirty in the afternoon. It's been lying in the safe ever since. The day clerk couldn't find you, when the package came, so he receipted for it. He didn't tell me

anything about it, when I went on duty, and he just happened to remember and to telephone down from his room. I'm sorry about the delay."

"We're taking the ten-o'clock boat for New York," spoke up McGlory. "It would have been a nice layout if we'd got away and left that package behind."

"I'm mighty sorry, but it's not my fault."

"Well," answered Matt, taking the package, "no great harm has been done. It's an hour and a half, yet, before the New York boat gets here, and I have the package."

The clerk went back into the hotel and Matt examined the package under the light.

"What do you reckon it is, pard?" queried McGlory curiously.

"You can give as good a guess as I can, Joe," Matt answered. "I'm not expecting anybody to send me anything. It's addressed plainly enough to Motor Matt, Catskill, New York, in care of this hotel."

"And covered with red sealing wax," added McGlory. "Rip off the cover and let's see what's on the inside. Sufferin' tenterhooks! Haven't you got any curiosity?"

Matt cut the cord that bound the package and took off the wrapper. A small wooden box was disclosed, bound with another cord.

The box was opened, and seemed to be filled with cotton wadding. Resting the box on his knees, Matt proceeded to remove the wadding. Then he fell back in his chair with an astounded exclamation.

A round object, glimmering in the rays of the electric light like a splash of blood against the cotton, lay under the amazed eyes of the motor boys.

"Buddha's Eye!" whispered McGlory.

Around the end of the veranda, in the wavering shadows, a face had pushed itself above the veranda railing—a face topped with a sailor cap and fringed with "mutton-chop" whiskers—a face with a green patch over one eye.

CHAPTER III.

MOTOR MATT—TRUSTEE.

Matt and McGlory had seen the Eye of Buddha, and they were not slow in recognizing it. But the bewildering events of the evening were crowned by this arrival of the ruby, by express, consigned to Motor Matt. By all the laws of reasoning and logic, the gem, worth a king's ransom, should at that moment have been in the possession of Tsan Ti, en route to the Flowery Kingdom.

"Oh, tell—me—about this!" stuttered McGlory.

Matt picked the ruby up in his fingers and held it in the palm of his hand. Apparently he was loath to credit the evidence of his senses. From every angle he surveyed the glittering gem.

"Wouldn't this rattle you?" he murmured, peering at his chum.

"Rattle me!" exploded McGlory. "Why, pard, it leaves me high and dry—stranded—gasping like a fish. Tsan Ti must be locoed! At last accounts, he was in a flutter to get that ruby back to the Honam joss house and replace it in the idol's head, where it belongs. What came over the mandarin to box it up and ship it to you? I'm fair dazed, and no mistake. This cuts the ground right out from under me."

Matt, with a hasty look around, dropped the ruby into his pocket; then he pulled out some more of the wadding and discovered, in the bottom of the box, a folded sheet of white paper.

"Here's a letter," said he. "This will explain why the ruby was sent to me, I guess."

"What good's an explanation?" grunted the cowboy. "I wouldn't be tangled up with that thing for a mint of money. Sufferin' centipedes! It's a regular hoodoo, and hands a fellow a hard-luck knock every time he turns around. What's in the letter, anyway? If it's from Tsan Ti, I'll bet his paper talk is heavy with big words and all kinds of Class A 'con' lingo. Read it, do. I can't tell how nervous you make me hanging fire."

"It's from Tsan Ti, all right," said Matt, "and is dated New York."

"New York! Why, he was hitting nothing but high places in the direction of 'Frisco, when he left here. How, in the name of all his ten thousand demons of misfortune, does he happen to be in New York?"

"Listen," answered Matt, and began to read.

"Esteemed and illustrious youth, whose never-to-be-forgotten services to me shine like letters of gold on a tablet of silver: Behold —"

"Oh, the gush!" growled McGlory.

"Behold," continued Matt, "I send you the Eye of Buddha, the priceless jewel which belongs in the temple of Hai-chwang-sze, in my beloved Canton. You ask, of your perplexity, why is the jewel sent to you? and I reply, for the security's sake. Upon my trail comes Grattan, of the evil heart, weaving his plans for recovering the costly gem. I fear to keep it about me, and so I send to you asking that you remain with it in the Catskill Mountains until such time as I may come to you and receive it from your hands. This will be when the scoundrel Grattan is safely beheaded, or in prison, and clear of my way for all time. I turn to you of my perfect trust,

and I adjure you, by the five hundred gods, not to let the ruby get for one moment out of your possession. Leave it nowhere, keep it by you always, either sleeping or walking, and deliver it to no one except to me, who, at the right time, will come and request it of you in my own person. Will it be an insult to offer you one thousand silver dollars and expense money for consummating this task? I commend you to the good graces of the supernal ones whose years are ten thousand times ten thousand!

"Tsan Ti, of the Red Button."

The reading finished, McGlory eased himself of a sputtering groan.

"Loaded up!" he exclaimed. "You and I, pard, just at the time we thought we were rid of Tsan Ti and Buddha's Eye for good, find the thing shouldered onto us again, and trouble staring us in the face! Why didn't the mandarin deposit the ruby in some bank, or safe-deposit vault? Better still, if Grattan was on his trail, why didn't he have the express company take it to San Francisco for him instead of sending it to you, at Catskill? He knows less, that Tsan Ti, than any other heathen on top of earth. In order to keep himself out of trouble he hands us the Eye of Buddha, and switches the responsibility to us. Wouldn't that rattle your spurs?"

McGlory was profoundly disgusted.

"I reckon," he went on, "that this sidetracks us, eh? The big town is cut out of our reckoning until the mandarin shows up and claims the ruby. He may do that to-morrow, or next week, or next month—and, meanwhile, here we are, kicking our heels in this humdrum, back-number, two-by-twice town on the

Hudson! Say, pard, I'd like to fight—and I'd just as soon take a fall out of that pesky mandarin as any one else."

"He offers us a thousand dollars and expenses," said Matt. "Tsan Ti wants to do the right thing, Joe."

"A million dollars and expenses won't pay us for hanging onto that ruby. It's a hoodoo, and you know that as well as I do, pard. We can expect things to happen right from this minute. Say, put it somewhere where it'll be safe! Put it in the hotel safe, or in a bank, or any place. Pass the risk along."

"Tsan Ti expressly stipulates that I am to keep the ruby about me," demurred Matt.

"What of that?" snorted McGlory. "Are you working for Tsan Ti? Are you bound to do what he tells you to? What business is it of his if we choose to show a little sense and get some one else to take charge of the ruby? The mandarin's an old mutton-head! If he wasn't he'd know better than to send the Eye of Buddha to us. And in a common express package, at that. What value did he put on it?"

McGlory picked up the wrapper that had covered the box and looked over the address side.

"No value at all!" he exclaimed. "Either he didn't think of that, or else he didn't want to pay for the extra valuation. If there had been a railroad wreck, and the ruby had been lost, our excellent mandarin would have collected just fifty plunks from the express company—and I reckon the Eye of Buddha is worth fifty thousand if it's worth a cent."

"Sometimes," said Matt reflectively, "it's safer to trust to luck than to put such a terrific value on a package that's to be carried by express."

"Well," grunted McGlory, "I don't like his blooming

Oriental way of doing business, and that shot goes as it lays. I'll tell you what we can do," he added, brightening.

"What?"

"We can jump aboard that New York boat and tote the ruby back to New York; then we can hunt up Tsan Ti and return the thing to him and tell him not any—that we have done as much for him as we're going to. Where's his letter sent from? What's the name of the hotel?"

In his eagerness, McGlory snatched the letter from Matt's knee and began looking it over.

"There's no address," said Matt.

"Tsan Ti may be in Chinatown," went on McGlory. "Such a big high boy couldn't get lost in the shuffle around Pell and Doyer Streets. Let's go on by that boat and take our chances locating him!"

"No," and Matt shook his head decidedly, "that's a move we can't make, Joe. I'm no more in love with this piece of work than you are, but we're in for it, and there's no way to dodge. Tsan Ti has unloaded the ruby upon us and we've got to stand for it."

"But we're responsible—"

"Of course, up to a certain point. If the stone should be taken away from us, though, Tsan Ti couldn't hold us responsible. We didn't ask for the job of looking after it, and we don't want the job, but we're doing what we can, you see, because there's no other way out of it."

"You could stow it away in a safer place than your pocket," grumbled McGlory.

"In that event," returned Matt, "we might be responsible. The thing for us to do is to follow out our

instructions to the letter. If anything happens to the Eye of Buddha then it's the mandarin himself who's responsible."

"And we're to hang out in the Catskill Mountains until Tsan Ti comes for the ruby!" mused McGlory, in an angry undertone; "and he's not going to come until Grattan is 'beheaded' or clapped into jail. We're liable to have a long wait. Of all the tinhorns I ever saw, or heard of, that Grattan is the sharpest of the lot. Fine job this red-button heathen has put onto us!"

Matt disliked the work of taking care of the valuable gem, and he would have shirked the responsibility if he could have done so, but there was no way in which this could be brought about. He and Joe would have to stay in the Catskills, for a while anyway, and wait for Tsan Ti to present himself. Meanwhile, the trip to New York would have to be postponed.

More to soothe his friend than as an expression of his own feelings, the king of the motor boys began taking a pleasanter view of the situation.

"We know, pard," said he, "that Tsan Ti is a man of his word. When he says he'll do anything, he does it. He'll come for the ruby, and I think he's clever enough to fool Grattan, and we know he'll pay us a thousand dollars. That money will come in handy while we're in New York."

"If we ever get there," growled the cowboy. "We may get into so much trouble on account of that Eye of Buddha that we'll be laid up in the hospital when Tsan Ti presents himself in these parts."

Matt laughed.

"You're so anxious to see the sights in the big town, Joe," he observed, "that it's the delay, more than anything else, that's bothering you."

"When I get started for anywhere," answered McGlory, "a bee line and the keen jump is my motto. But, so long as we have anything to do with Tsan Ti, we never know what's going to happen. I wish the squinch-eyed heathen would leave us alone."

Just then a form rounded the front of the hotel, gained the steps leading up to the porch, and climbed to a place in front of the motor boys.

McGlory lifted his eyes. The moment they rested on the form, and realization of who it was had flashed through his brain, he jumped for the man and grabbed him with both hands.

"Bunce!" he whooped. "I told you things would begin to happen, pard, and right here is where they start!"

Then, with considerable violence, McGlory pushed the old sailor against one of the porch posts, and held him there, squirming.

CHAPTER IV.

BUNCE HAS A PLAN.

"Avast, there!" gurgled Bunce, half choked, trying to pull the cowboy's hands from his throat.

The green patch was over his left eye, and the right eye gleamed glassily in the electric light.

Matt was as much surprised at Bunce's appearance as was McGlory, but he held his temper better in hand. The cowboy, profoundly disgusted with the trend of recent events, showed a disposition to take it out of the sailor.

Had Bunce been even the half of an able seaman he would have given McGlory a hard scramble, but he seemed a wizened, infirm old salt, although he had proved active enough during the experiences the motor boys had already had with him.

"Don't strangle him, Joe!" called Matt. "Take your hands from his throat and grab his arm. He came here openly, and he must have known we were here. Judging from that, I should say that his intentions are peaceable."

"Ask him," gritted McGlory, "why he doesn't change eyes with the patch. Let's get to the bottom of this moving-picture business, too. We can have a little heart-to-heart talk, I reckon, and find out a few things before we turn the old webfoot over to the police."

"Right you are, my blood," gasped the half-suffocated Bunce, as the cowboy dropped his hands to his arm and dragged him down into a chair, "a heart-to-heart talk's the thing. Didn't I bear away for this place for nothin' else than to fall afoul o' ye? Ay, ay,

that was the way of it, but split me through if I ever expected such treatment as this what I'm a-gettin'. Motor Matt's the lad, says I to myself, to fill the bill for Bunce, so I trips anchor an' slants away, only to be laid holt of like I was a reg'lar skull-and-crossbones, walk-the-plank pirate, with the Jolly Roger at the peak."

"Oh, put a crimp on that sort of talk," growled McGlory. "Sufferin' freebooters! If you're anything better than a pirate, I'd like to have you tell me."

"So, ho!" and Bunce's eye glittered wrathfully, "if I had a cutlass, my fine buck, I'd slit ye like a herrin' for that. I'm a fair-weather sort of man, an' I hates a squall, but stir up nasty weather an' then give me somethin' to fight with, an' I'm a bit of a handful. Nigh Pangool, on the south coast o' Java, I laid out a hull boat's crew with my fists alone, once, not so many years back. That was when I was mate o' the brig *Hottentot*, as fine a two-sticker as ever shoved nose into the South Seas—reg'lar bucko mate, I was, an' a main hard man when roused."

At the time the Eye of Buddha was recovered, Bunce had made his escape with Grattan; and he had been equally guilty, with Grattan, in the theft of the ruby from the Honam joss house. That the sailor should have shown himself at all, in those parts, was a wonder; and that he should have shown himself to Matt and McGlory, who knew of his evil deeds, was a puzzle past working out.

"You say you came here to see me?" inquired Matt.

"Ay, ay, my hearty," answered Bunce. "Motor Matt, says I to myself, is the lad to fill the bill for me, an' I luffed into the wind an' bore down for Catskill. Here I am, an' here's you, an' if I blow the gaff a bit that's my business, ain't it? But take me to the cabin; what I has to say is between us an' the mainmast with no other

ears to get a sizing of it."

McGlory glared at Bunce as though he would have liked to bore into him with his eyes and see what he had at the back of his head.

"If you're trying to play double with us, you gangle-legged old hide rack," he threatened, "you'll live to wish you'd thought twice before you did it."

"Now, burn me," snorted Bunce, "d'ye take me for a dog fish? By the seven holy spritsails, I'm as good a man as you, an' ye'll l'arn—"

"Enough of that, Bunce," broke in Matt sharply, getting up from his chair. "You want to say something to us in private, and I'm going to give you the chance. Come after me; you trail along behind him, Joe," and, with that, Matt went into the hotel and up the stairs to the room jointly occupied by himself and McGlory.

At the door, Matt pushed a button that turned on the lights. As soon as McGlory and Bunce were in the room, the door was locked and Matt took charge of the key.

"That's the stuff, pard," approved McGlory, with great satisfaction. "If the old tinhorn don't spout to please us, we can phone the office for a policeman."

"Ye're not sending me to the brig this trip, mates," spoke up Bunce. "'Cos why? 'Cos in fillin' the bill for me, ye're givin' the mandarin a leg up out of a purty bad hole."

"What have you got to tell us?" inquired Matt curtly. "Out with it, Bunce."

"When ye last seen me, my lad," said Bunce, "I was sailin' in convoy with Philo Grattan. But he's doin' things I don't approve of, not any ways. It was all right

to put our helm up an' bear down on a chink joss house to lift the Eye o' Buddha, an' it was all right, too, when ye helped the big high boy get the ruby back. That was all in the game, an' we'd ought to've made the most of it. But not Philo Grattan. D'ye know what he's layin' to do? Nothin' more, on my soul, than to strangle Tsan Ti with a yellow cord an' take the ruby away from him. My eye, mates, but Grattan's a clever hand at overhauling his locker for a game like that. The boss of the Chinee Empire sends these yellow cords to the chinks he don't like an' don't want around. When the cords come to hand, then the chinks receivin' thereof uses them to choke out their lives. Tsan Ti is found, dead as a mackerel, with the yellow cord twisted into his fat neck. Eye o' Buddha is missin' from his clothes. What's the answer? Why, that Tsan Ti lost the ruby, an' used the cord sent him from the home country. That'll seem plain as a burgee flyin' from the gaff o' one o' these fresh-water yachts. Won't it, now?"

Matt knew that Tsan Ti had received the yellow cord from China, and that he had been allowed two weeks in which either to find the stolen ruby or to use the cord. Of course, the ruby had been recovered, and there was no necessity for using the hideous cord; but, if he was found strangled, it would have seemed as though he himself had committed the deed in compliance with orders from the Chinese regent.

Bunce may have been romancing, but there was a little plausibility back of his words.

"Where is Grattan?" demanded Matt.

"In these here hills, shipmate," replied Bunce.

"Tsan Ti isn't in the Catskills!"

"No more he ain't, which I grant ye offhand an' freely, but supposin' he's in Noo York, held a pris'ner

in a beach comber's joint in Front Street? An' supposin', furthermore, this same beach comber is a mate o' Grattan's, an' waitin' only for Grattan to come afore he makes Tsan Ti peg out? Put that in your pipe an' smoke it careful."

"You mean to say that Tsan Ti is a prisoner in New York—a prisoner of a confederate of Grattan's?"

"That's gospel truth! It happened recent—no longer ago than early mornin'. I bore the word to the beach comber in a letter of hand from Philo, an' the beach comber met me in a snug harbor on the front where sailormen are regularly hocused an' shipped for all parts. I don't know where the beach comber's place is, not me, but I did get him topping the boom an' he reported the whole matter entire. However Tsan Ti fell into the net is a notch above my understandin', but there he is, hard an' fast, an' when I'd done with the beach comber I took the train for Catskill to find Grattan an' tell him what's been pulled off."

Bunce was a trifle hard to follow.

"Let's see if I've got this right," said Matt, "When you and Grattan escaped from the officers, at the time the ruby was recovered, you hid yourselves away among the Catskills?"

"Ay, so we did!"

"And then Grattan gave you a letter to some man in New York and you carried it personally?"

"Personally, that's the word. I carried it personally."

"And this man in New York entrapped the mandarin and is holding him a prisoner until he can hear what Grattan wants done?"

"Ye've got the proper bearin's, an' no mistake."

"And you came back on the train to tell Grattan?"

Bunce nodded, and pulled at his fringe of whiskers.

"Then, why didn't you go and tell Grattan," asked Matt, "instead of coming and telling me?"

"I'm no blessed cut-an'-slash pirate," protested Bunce. "So long as the ruby was to be come by without any stranglin', I was willin' to bear a bob an' do my share; an' while mebbly there ain't anythin' morilly wrong in chokin' the breath out of a heathen Chinee, yet they'll bowse a man up to the yardarm for doin' the same. Mates, on the ride back to the Catskills I overhauled the hull matter, an' I makes up my mind I'd sailed in company with Grattan as long as 'twas safe. If I can save the mandarin, I thinks to myself, mebbly Motor Matt'll play square with me an' let me off for what I done in helpin' lift the ruby. If so be he thinks that way, says I to myself further, then he's the one to fill the bill for Bunce. So, instid o' slantin' for the cove where the motor car is hid away, I 'bouts ship an' lays a course for this hotel."

"What's your plan, Bunce?" queried Matt.

"Easy, does it; simple as a granny's knot. You kiss the Book that I'm free as soon's I do my part, then I takes you to where Grattan is, an' you lays him by the heels—just us three in it an' not a man Jack else. The beach comber don't do a thing to Tsan Ti till he hears from Grattan; an' how'll he ever hear from Grattan if he's safe in irons in some jail in these hills? That's my plan, an' you take it or leave it. If ye don't follow the course I've laid, then Grattan gets the ruby back, an' the mandarin's life along with it. If ye think I'm talkin' crooked, an' put the lashings on me an' hand me over to the police, then not a soul'll ever know where Grattan's hid, an' he'll clear out an' get to Noo York whether I see him or not—but Tsan Ti'll be for Davy

Jones' locker, no matter what ye try to do to prevent it. I've said my say an' eased my mind; now it's you for it."

With that, Bunce calmly drew a plug of tobacco from his pocket and nibbled at one corner reflectively.

CHAPTER V.

BUNCE SPEAKS A GOOD WORD FOR HIMSELF.

Matt made a brief study of Bunce, leaning back in his seat and gazing at the mariner through half-closed eyes. The sailorman's get-up reminded Matt of *Dick Deadeye* in "Pinafore." Whether Bunce was really a deep-water humbug, and whether he was to be taken seriously, were questions that gave Matt a good deal of bother.

"He's stringing us, pard," averred McGlory bluntly. "That tongue of his is hung in the middle and wags at both ends."

"Avast, my man-o'-war!" came hotly from the mariner. "I'm no loafing longshore scuttler to let go my mudhooks in these waters and then begin splicing the main brace out of hand. You'll get your whack, my blood, and get it hard, if you keep on in the style ye're goin'. Belay a bit, can't you?"

McGlory snorted contemptuously and put his tongue in his cheek. Bunce began fingering his knife lanyard.

"No more of that give-and-take," said Matt.

"I'm a hard man," observed Bunce, "an' I've lived a hard life, winnin' my mate's berth on the ole *Hottentot* off Trincomalee by bashing in the skull of a Kanaka. More things I've done as would make your blood run cold just by listenin' to, but I'm straight as a forestay for all that, d'ye mind, an' I've a clean bill from every master I ever sailed with. 'He ain't much fer looks, Bunce ain't,' as Cap'n Banks, of the ole *Hottentot* used to say, 'but in a pinch you don't have to look twice for Bunce.' An' there ye have it, all wrapped up, tied small,

an' ready for any swab as doubts me."

"Bunce," said Matt dubiously, "I'm frank to say I don't know just how to take you. By your own confession you're a thief—"

"Only when chinks has the loot," cut in Bunce hastily, "an' when it takes a bit of headwork an' a matchin' o' wits to beat 'em out."

"You helped Grattan steal the Eye of Buddha. Plotted it on a sampan off Canton, didn't you?"

Bunce shoved in his chair and showed signs of consternation.

"Scuttle me!" he gulped. "Wherever did you find that out? Grattan never told you where we had our chin-chin in the river of Honam."

"It's all pictured out," said Matt, "and you can drop into a theatre, in this town of Catskill, and see yourself and Grattan committing the robbery."

Bunce fell limply back.

"So, ho!" he mumbled. "Then them pictures are out, eh? They wasn't to come out for a month yet—it was in the agreement."

"Agreement?"

"Ay, no more nor less. It was on the trip from 'Frisco, east, mate, when Grattan an' me had the ruby but not a sou markee in our pockets. We needed money. Grattan knew some of these moving-picture swabs in Chicago, and he allowed he could turn a few reds by givin' 'em the plan of the robbery an' helpin' act it out. 'Avast,' says I, feelin' a warnin' twinge, 'don't touch it, Philo!' But he would—an' did, first gettin' an' agreement from the swabs that they wouldn't put out the pictures for two months. We got a couple of hundred yen for the work, an' that's what brought us on to the Catskills. So

it's out, so it's out," and Bunce wagged his head forebodingly.

"Did you play a part in the pictures, Bunce?" went on Matt.

"Not I, mate! I may be lackin' in the head, once in a while, but there's a few keen thoughts rollin' around in my locker. I wouldn't go in for it, an' you can smoke my weather roll on that."

"There's a one-eyed sailor in the picture," said Matt.

"And he's a dead ringer for you," added McGlory.

"Which it ain't me, d'ye see?" scowled the mariner. "It's a counterfeit, got up to look like me—an' nothin' more."

"Then it's a mighty good counterfeit," averred the cowboy.

"I'm a man o' high principles, mate, even though I do say it as shouldn't. I was brought up right, by a Marblehead fisherman who hated rum, couldn't abide playin' cards, an' believed the-ay-ters was milestones on the road to the hot place. Actin' in a play I wouldn't think of, an' that's the flat of it. But what's the good word, shipmate? Are you sailin' this cruise wi' me to save the life o' the mandarin? I must know one way or t'other."

"Where is Grattan?"

"Five miles away, snug as a bug in a rug where he'll never be found unless I con the course. We'll have to go to him soon, if he's captured. I'm due at the meetin' place to-night."

"You spoke of a motor car—"

"Ay, that I did. It's hid in the woods beyond the railroad yards. We'll use that."

"You had a couple of motorcycles," said Matt.

"Which you and Grattan stole from us," supplemented McGlory. "What's become of them, Bunce?"

"Wrecked an' sunk," answered Bunce. "Mine sprung a leak an' went over a cliff in fifty fathoms of air; Grattan's bounced up on a reef an' went to pieces. Then we lifted the motor car, usin' of it for night cruises."

"You stole a motor car, eh?" said McGlory grimly. "And on top of that you have the nerve to come along here and speak a good word for yourself."

"Stow it," growled Bunce, "or you an' I'll be at loggerheads for good. What's the word?" and he turned his gleaming eye on Matt. "You can use the telephone an' hand me over to the police, or you can do as I say an' save the mandarin. What's the word?"

"When will we have to start after Grattan?" asked Matt.

"By early mornin', mate, just when it's light enough to see."

"And where'll we meet you?"

"In the woods beyond the railroad yards. Go there, stand on the track, an' whistle. I'll whistle back, then we'll come together—an' fill the bill."

"You can expect us at six o'clock," said Motor Matt, unlocking the door and pulling it open.

"Brayvo, my bully!" enthused Bunce. "An' ye'll come armed? Grattan is a hard man, an' sizable in a scrimmage."

"We'll be prepared to take care of Grattan," answered Matt. "Good night, Bunce."

"Good night it is," and the mariner vanished into the hall.

As soon as the door was again closed, Matt turned to find McGlory staring at him as though he thought he was crazy.

"Sufferin' tin horns!" exclaimed the cowboy. "You can't mean it, pard?"

"Yes, I do," was the answer.

"Why, that old fore-and-after never told the truth in his life! He was using his imagination overtime."

"The chances are that he was, but there's a bare possibility he was telling the truth. We know Tsan Ti is in New York, and we can't feel absolutely sure that the Chinaman hasn't fallen into some trap laid by Grattan. If that's the case, the mandarin may lose his life."

"There's about as much chance of that, pard, as that you and I will get struck by lightning."

"We'll say the chance that Bunce is telling the truth is about one in a hundred. Well, Joe, that hundredth chance is what we can't take. Besides, Grattan is wanted. If he is really in the hills, and we can capture him, that will clear the road for Tsan Ti."

"But what will you do with the Eye of Buddha?"

Matt was in a quandary about that.

"Will you tote it along on a trip of this kind?" proceeded Joe, "or will you leave it in the hotel safe? Maybe that's what Bunce is playing for."

"He don't know we have the ruby. How could he?"

"I'm by. But he's up to something, and that's a cinch."

"We'll have to give him the benefit of the doubt—on

account of Tsan Ti."

"Consarn that bungling chink!" grunted the cowboy, venting his anger on the mandarin as the original cause of their perplexing situation. "You can't do a thing with that red stone but lug it along."

"If the banks were open between now and the time we start, I might leave it with one of them for safe-keeping."

"And go dead against your letter of instructions! Then you would be responsible."

"I'll think it over to-night," said Matt, and began his preparations for turning in.

But sleeping over the question didn't answer it. Matt's quandary lasted until far into the night.

He had no faith in Bunce; he couldn't understand why Tsan Ti should have sent the ruby to him for safe-keeping; he doubted the wisdom of going into the hills with the mariner, and he understood well the risk of carrying the priceless Eye of Buddha with him on the morning's venture.

When McGlory opened his eyes in the first gray of the morning, Matt was tying up the box in which the ruby had come by express.

"What are you going to do, pard?" inquired the cowboy, jumping out of bed and beginning to scramble into his clothes.

"I guess, after all," answered Matt, "that I'll leave this box with the clerk."

"Wish I knew whether that was the proper caper, or not, but I don't. One thing's as good as another, I reckon."

At five-thirty they had a hurried breakfast, and, a

little before six, Matt handed the small box to the hotel clerk and asked him to put it away in the office safe. Then the motor boys started for the railroad track and followed it away from the river and into the wooded ravine beyond the yards.

"This is far enough, I guess," said Matt, and began to whistle.

The signal was promptly returned from a place on the left, and the head of the mariner was pushed through a thicket of bushes.

"Ahoy, my hearties!" came from Bunce. "Come up here and bear a fist with the car, will ye?"

Puzzled not a little at this request, Matt and McGlory climbed the bank of the ravine and came alongside the mariner on a small, cleared shelf on the bank side. The "motor car" was before them, and at sight of it McGlory exploded a laugh.

"Speak to me about this!" he exclaimed. "Had you any notion it was this sort of a bubble, Matt?"

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOMEMADE SPEEDER.

What Matt saw was an ordinary hand car equipped with a two-cylinder gasoline engine. Across one end of the car was a bench, tightly bolted to the framework; back of this was a shorter bench for the driver of the queer machine. The king of the motor boys examined the car with a good deal of curiosity. Power was communicated to the rear axle by chain and sprocket. The gasoline tank was under the driver's bench, and he unscrewed the cap and tested the fuel supply by means of a clean twig picked up from the shelf.

"Oh, she's loaded full," wheezed Bunce. "I filled her myself, not more'n ten minutes ago."

"Do you know anything about motors, Bunce?" inquired Matt, giving the mariner a sharp look.

"Ay, that I do—in a way. I can turn on the oil and the spark when I wants to start, an' I can cut 'em off an' jam on the brakes when I wants to stop. That's all ye got to know in runnin' these benzine machines."

"Where does this belong?"

"Track inspector owns it. Grattan an' me borried it." Bunce grinned. "When we're done with the machine, we'll give it back."

"We'll make a picture, pard," grumbled McGlory, "trailin' along with this tinhorn on a stolen speeder."

"Avast, I say!" growled Bunce. "Ye're too free with your jaw tackle. Lend a hand, an' let's get her on the track an' make off. The section gang'll be out purty soon, an' we want to be away afore they see us."

"Sure you do," agreed McGlory sarcastically. "It'll be healthier for my pard and me, too, I reckon, if we're absent when the section men come along. That's why you wanted to make such an early start, eh?"

Without more ado, the motor boys helped Bunce get the speeder down the slope and upon the rails.

"Any trains coming or going at this hour?" asked Matt, with sudden thought.

"Say," jeered McGlory, "it would be fine if we went head on into a local passenger!"

"No trains comin' or goin', mate," said Bunce. "That's another reason for the early start. Want me to run the thing?"

"I'll do the running," answered Matt. "You climb up in front with McGlory."

Bunce and McGlory got on the front bench. Matt "turned the engine over" by running with the speeder for a few steps, then climbed to his seat, and they began laboring up a stiff grade through the ravine.

The road was full of curves, and when it couldn't go around a hill it went over it.

From his talk with Bunce, the night before, Matt had been under the impression that the stolen car was an automobile, and he had made up his mind to return the car to its owner—if the man's name could be learned—after it had been used for running down Philo Grattan. Now, that he had discovered that the car was a track speeder, he was no less resolved to hand it over to the railroad company on the return to Catskill.

The speeder performed fairly well, considering that it must have been knocked together in the company's shops by men whose knowledge of their work was not extensive. A secondhand automobile engine had

furnished the motor.

"This isn't so bad," remarked McGlory, as they ducked around the shoulder of a hill, still on the up grade, with the motor fretting and pounding. "A motor ride's a motor ride, whether you're on an aëroplane, or rubber tires, or steel rails."

"This is what they call a joy ride, Joe," called Matt, from the rear. "The owner of the car doesn't know we're out with it. I'll return it to the railroad company when we're through with our morning's work."

"That's you. I hope the railroad company don't find out we've got it before we give it back. Gee, man, how she's workin'!"

"Fine day an' clear weather for fillin' the bill," remarked Bunce. "Did ye come armed, mateys?"

"Sufferin' hold-ups!" exclaimed McGlory. "Did you think for a minute, Bunce, we'd jump into this without being heeled?"

The cowboy, as he spoke, reached behind him and drew a short, wicked-looking six-shooter from his hip pocket.

Bunce recoiled.

"Where'd you get that, Joe?" asked Matt.

"Borrowed it from the hotel clerk."

"Well, put it away. I don't think we're going to need it. If we find Grattan there'll be three of us to take care of him. He's alone, I suppose, Bunce?"

"Sailin' by himself, mate," answered the mariner. "Better le' me take the gun, my hearty," he added, to McGlory.

"Speak to me about that!" scoffed the cowboy. "Why?"

"I'll have to go for'ard when we come close to the place, an' if Philo gets vi'lent, I'll look at him over the gun, an' it'll be soothin'."

"I'm able to soothe him, I reckon, no matter whether you're ahead or behind."

The speeder was making a terrific clatter. Everything rattled—the brake shoes barged against the wheel flanges, the engine rocked on its bed, and the levers jarred in their guides. In order to talk, and make themselves heard, those aboard had to lift their voices.

"Sufferin' Bedlam!" cried McGlory. "It's a wonder Grattan and Bunce were ever able to steal a rattletrap like this and get away with it. We're making more noise than a limited express."

Suddenly the motor gave a flash and a sputter and went out of business. In a twinkling the car lost headway and began sliding back down the grade toward Catskill. Matt threw on the brakes. The rear wheels locked, but still the car continued to slide downward. Shutting off the power, Matt dropped into the roadbed over the back of the bench, cleared the rails at a leap, and wedged one of the wheels with a stone. He had been obliged to work rapidly, for the car was on the move, and going faster and faster, as its weight gathered headway. But the stone sufficed, and the speeder was brought to a standstill.

"What took us aback, like that?" demanded Bunce.

"Too much gasoline," answered Matt, tinkering with the supply pipe, "and I couldn't check it with the lever control."

"This is a great old chug cart," laughed McGlory. "The railroad company ought to have been willing to pay somebody for running away with it. How'd you ever get over this road with it, Bunce?"

"When I came over the road it was downhill," answered the mariner, "an' all I had to do was to keep the craft on her course, an' scud along under bare poles."

"You had to climb a hill before you took the down grade, didn't you?"

"Ay, so I did, but the car came up the hill easy enough."

Matt soon had the valve in the supply pipe adjusted, and all hands had to push in giving the car a start. When they were going, and the engine had taken up its cycle, there followed a wild scramble to get aboard. This was finally accomplished, and once more they were puffing up the hill, but with less pounding than before.

"Say, Bunce," demanded McGlory suddenly, "did you take the speeder off the track and up the slope into those bushes alone?"

"Ay, ay, mate," was the answer. "But I had a rope and tackle to help."

McGlory was convinced that Bunce was wide of the truth, and Matt inclined to the same opinion, although why the mariner wanted to deceive them in such a small matter was difficult to understand.

Presently, to the great relief of the motor boys, the top of the hill was reached. The descent angled downward, around rocky uplifts and through thick timber, so that it was impossible to watch the track in advance for any considerable distance.

The descent, on such a makeshift power car as the speeder, was fraught with greater perils than the climb up the mountain. No power would be necessary, for the car would go fast enough without any added impetus. In order to keep it from going too fast, and

jumping the track, the brakes would have to be judiciously used.

"We're off!" cried McGlory, as the speeder began coasting down the grade.

Matt tried out the brakes. They were capable of slackening the pace, but as for stopping the car, no appliance could have done that.

With rear wheels locked, the speeder hurled itself down the mountain, acquiring greater and greater speed as it went. In and out of cuts the car dashed, here and there rumbling over a trestle which gave the passengers fearful glimpses of space below them.

McGlory and Bunce hung to their bench with both hands. There was no talking, now, for all three passengers were holding their breath.

Finally the descent became less steep. As the grade flattened out slowly into something approaching a level, Matt's work with the brakes began to achieve results. By degrees the mad flight of the car commenced to slacken.

"Sharp curve ahead!" sang out McGlory, heaving a deep breath of relief as the car continued to slow down.

Matt saw the sharp turn in the track where it rounded a shoulder of rock. Naturally he could not see around the turn, and he was speculating as to whether their reduced speed would be sufficient to throw the speeder off the rails at the bend, or whether the car would make it safely.

Before his calculations had been brought to an end, the problem was working itself out.

The speeder struck the curve, whirled around it with a shrieking of flanges against the rails, and then there

went up a wild yell from McGlory and Bunce.

Directly in front of the car was a tie across the track!

A collision with the tie was inevitable. Matt foresaw it, and clung desperately to his bench.

"Brace yourselves!" he yelled.

The next moment they struck the tie.

The jolt was terrific. Motor Matt was thrown roughly against the seat in front, and Bunce went into the air as though shot from a gun.

CHAPTER VII.

TRAPPED.

Matt saw that McGlory had managed, like himself, to stay with the car, then both motor boys had a flash-light glimpse of the mariner ricocheting through the atmosphere and striking earth right side up by the track. But Bunce did not remain in an upright position. The force with which he had been thrown launched him into a series of eccentric cartwheels, and when he finally stopped turning he was in a sitting posture, with his back against a boulder.

Apparently he had escaped serious injury, which was a remarkable fact, in view of the circumstances. A broken neck might easily have resulted, or, at the least, a fractured arm or leg.

"Shiver me!" gasped Bunce, dazed and bewildered by the suddenness of it all.

Then Motor Matt's and McGlory's shocked senses laid hold of another detail of the situation which was most astounding.

The green patch had been shaken from the mariner's head, and he was peering around him with two good eyes!

"Tell me about that!" roared McGlory, pointing. "Look at his lamps, Matt! He's got two!"

"I see," answered Matt grimly. "Suppose we approach closer, Joe, and find out about this."

Bunce watched the boys descend from the speeder and advance upon him, but there was still a dazed gleam in his eyes which proved that he was slow in recovering his wits.

"Are you all right, Bunce?" asked Matt, reaching the mariner's side and bending down.

"That—that craft must have—have turned a handspring," mumbled Bunce. "Purty tolerable blow we had, mates, an' I was snatched away from the bench, an' tossed overboard. It was done so quick I—I hardly knowed what was goin' on. By the seven holy spritsails! it's a wonder I'm shipshape an' all together." He got up slowly and began feeling gingerly of his arms and legs. "Nothin' busted, I guess," he added.

The ground where he had landed was cushioned with sand. To this fact, more than to anything else, he owed his escape from injury.

McGlory picked up the green patch.

"Here's an ornament you dropped during that ground-and-lofty tumbling, you old tinhorn," said he. "What did you wear it for, anyhow?"

"Blow me tight!" exclaimed Bunce, staring at the patch with falling jaw. "Ain't that reedic'lous?" he added, with a feeble attempt to treat the matter lightly.

"It is rather ridiculous, Bunce, and that's a fact," answered Matt. "You've a pair of very good eyes, it seems to me, and what's the good of that patch?"

The mariner grabbed the bit of green cloth and pulled the string over his head.

"I never said I'd lost one o' my lamps," he averred, settling the patch in place. "Off Table Mountain, South Africy, a cable parted on the ole *Hottentot*, an' I was hit in the eye with a loose rope's end. For a while, I thought I was goin' blind. But I didn't, only the eye has been weak ever sence, an' needs purtection. That's why I wear the patch."

"You've got it over the wrong eye, Bunce," observed

McGlory. "You've been wearing it over the left eye, and now it's over the right. Have you got any clear notion which eye was hit with that rope's end?"

Bunce hastily changed the position of the patch.

"I'm that rattled," said he, "that I'm all aho, an' don't rightly know what I'm about. I—"

For an instant he stared up the track, breaking off his words abruptly; then, without any further explanation, he whirled and rushed for the timber.

With a yell of anger, McGlory started after him.

"Come back, Joe!" shouted Matt. "Here come some men who seem to have business with us."

The cowboy whirled to an about face, and followed with his eyes the direction of his chum's pointing finger.

Four men in flannel shirts and overalls, and carrying spades, picks, and tamping irons, were hurrying up the track in the direction of the curve.

"The section gang!" muttered McGlory.

"A good guess," laughed Matt. "We've been trapped."

"Trapped?"

"That's the way it looks to me. We were seen coming down the mountain and those men, recognizing the speeder, laid the tie across the rails to catch the thieves."

"Sufferin' kiboshes, but here's a go! This comes of trying to fill the bill for an old tinhorn like Bunce."

"Ketched!" yelled one of the approaching men, flourishing a tamping iron; "we've ketched the robbers that run off with Mulvaney's speeder! Don't you make no trouble," he added, slowing his pace and coming

more warily.

The other three men spread out and then closed in, barring escape for the motor boys in every direction.

"You've made a mistake," said Matt.

"Oh, sure!" jeered the section boss, "but I reckon we'll take ye to Catskill, an' let ye tell the superintendent all about the mistake."

"Don't be in a rush about taking us to Catskill," threatened McGlory. "You listen to what Motor Matt says, and I reckon he'll make the layout clear to you."

"Motor Matt!" returned the boss ironically. "Why don't ye say ye're the governor o' the State, or somethin' like that? Ye might jest as well. Motor Matt ain't stealin' speeders an' runnin' off with 'em."

The king of the motor boys had become pretty well known in the Catskills through his previous work in recovering the ruby for Tsan Ti. Even these section men had heard of his exploits. Matt, seeing the impression his cowboy pard's words had made, resolved to prove his identity in the hope of avoiding trouble.

"What my chum says is true, men," he declared. "I am Motor Matt. We didn't steal the railroad speeder. That was done by the man who was with us—the fellow who ran away. You saw him, didn't you?"

"Sure we saw him," answered the section boss, "but I wouldn't try to put it all off onto him, if I was you."

"Sufferin' blockheads!" rumbled McGlory. "Use your brains, if you've got any, can't you? Do we look like thieves?"

"Can't most always tell from a feller's looks what he is," returned the boss skeptically. "And this other chap can't be Motor Matt, nuther, or he wouldn't have stole

the speeder. That there speeder has been missin' for three days, an' orders has gone out, up an' down the line, for all hands to watch out for it. When I seen it comin' down the grade, I knowed we had ye. All we done was to throw that tie acrost the track, an' the trick was done. Ye'll have to go to Catskill, that's all about it."

"Are you men from Catskill?" inquired Matt.

"No, Tannersville, but Catskill's the place you're wanted. We'll put ye on the passenger, when it comes along."

"But we don't want to go back to Catskill just yet," Matt demurred. "We've got business here, and it can't be put off."

Matt believed that Bunce had run to get away from the section men, who, he must have realized, had caused the speeder's mishap in the hope of catching the ones who had stolen the car. There was yet a chance, Matt thought, to overhaul Bunce and find Grattan. To go back to Catskill, just then, would have been disastrous to the work he and McGlory were trying to do under the mariner's leadership.

"Sure ye don't want to go to Catskill," went on the section boss, "right now, or any other time. But ye're goin', all the same. Grab 'em, you men," and the boss shouted the order to the three who had grouped themselves around Matt and McGlory.

"Hands off!" shouted the cowboy.

Matt saw him jerk the revolver from his pocket, and aim it at the man who was reaching to lay hold of him. The man fell back with an oath of consternation.

"Don't do that, Joe!" cried Matt.

"Oh, no," sneered the boss, "you fellers ain't thieves,

I guess! What're you pullin' a gun on us for, if ye ain't?"

"I'm not going to argue the case with you any further," Matt answered shortly. "We're going back to Catskill after a while, but not now. When we get there we'll report to your superintendent and explain how we happened to be aboard the stolen speeder. I was intending to return the car to the railroad company as soon as we had got through with it, and then—"

"Sure ye was!" mocked the boss. "Ye wasn't intendin' to do anythin' but what was right an' lawful—to hear ye tell it. We got ye trapped, an' I ain't goin' to fool with ye any longer. Put down that gun, you!" and he whirled savagely upon McGlory. "We're goin' to take ye, an' if you do any shootin' ye'll find yerselves in a deeper hole than what ye are now."

"You keep away from me," scowled McGlory, still holding the weapon leveled, "and keep your men away from me. Try to touch either of us, and this gun will begin to talk. We're not thieves, but that's something we can't pound into your thick head, so we're going to attend to our business in spite of you."

The section boss was a man of courage, and was resolute in his intention to take the boys to Catskill. Certainly, so far as appearances went, he had the right of the matter, and Matt didn't feel that he could explain the exact situation with any chance of having his words believed.

"Here's where I'm comin' for ye," proceeded the section boss, "an' if you shoot, you'll be tagged with more kinds o' trouble than you can take care of. Now _"

The section boss got no farther. Just at that moment the rumble of a train coming up the grade could be heard. Instantly the attention of the section boss was called to another matter.

"The passenger!" he cried, jumping around and staring at the speeder and the tie. "There'll be a wreck if we don't clear the track. Come on, men! Hustle!"

The peril threatening the passenger train banished from the minds of the section men all thought of the boys. All four of the gang ran to remove the obstructions from the rails.

"Come on, pard!" said McGlory; "now's our chance."

Matt, with a feeling of intense relief, bounded after his chum, and they were soon well away in the timber.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CUT-OUT UNDER THE LEDGE.

McGlory was inclined to view recent events in a humorous light.

"Speak to me about that, pard!" he laughed, when he and Matt had halted for breath, and to determine, if possible, which way Bunce had gone. "I told you what was on the programme if you became trustee for the Eye of Buddha. We never know when lightning's going to strike, or how."

"I don't like episodes of that sort," muttered Matt. "It puts us in a bad light, Joe."

"Oh, hang that part of it! We can explain the whole thing to the railroad superintendent as soon as we get back to Catskill. That section boss was a saphead. You couldn't pound any reason into his block with a sledge hammer. Forget it!"

"But you drew a gun on the section men. That makes the business look bad for us."

McGlory chuckled. "See here, pard," said he. With that, he "broke" the revolver and exposed the end of the cylinder.

There were no cartridges in the weapon!

"Now, what do you think?" laughed the cowboy. "I borrowed the gun in a hurry, and didn't think to ask whether it was loaded—and I reckon the hotel clerk didn't think to tell me. It's about as dangerous as a piece of bologna sausage, but it looks ugly—and that's about all there is to this revolver proposition, anyhow."

Matt enjoyed the recent experience, in which the

harmless revolver had played its part, fully as much as his chum.

"Well," said the king of the motor boys, "what's done can't be helped, and we'd better be about our business with Bunce. But what's become of the mariner? He ought to be around here, somewhere."

"He's ducked," returned McGlory, "and I'll bet it's for good. We've found out he had a pair of good eyes, and he's got shy of us."

"If we don't find him," mused Matt, "it's a clear case that he was playing double with us. If we do find him, then we can take a little more stock in what he tells us about Tsan Ti. It will be worth something to feel sure, either way."

"Maybe you're right, but how are we going to pick up the webfoot's trail?"

Matt studied the ground. The earth was soft from a recent rain, and the fact gave him an idea.

"Track him, Joe. You're used to that sort of thing. Put your knowledge to some account."

"In order to track the mariner," said McGlory, "we'll have to go back to the place where we saw him duck into the timber. It'll be a tough job, but I'm willing to try if we can once pick up the trail."

"That's the only thing for us to do. If Bunce was intending to deal squarely with us, he'd have shown himself before this."

"Let's see," mused the cowboy. "He said that Grattan was hiding out about five miles from Catskill, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then I reckon the place is somewhere around here.

We're about five miles from the town, I should judge. Still," and disgust welled up in the cowboy as he voiced the thought, "you can't tell whether Bunce was giving that part of it straight, or not. He's about as crooked as they make 'em, that tinhorn."

The boys, during their talk, had been moving slowly back in the direction of the railroad track. Cautiously they came to the edge of the timber, close to the right of way, on the alert not only for the tracks left by Bunce, but for the presence of the section men, as well.

The section gang, they discovered, had left the vicinity of the sharp curve, and were nowhere in sight. The speeder, badly shaken by the jar of its collision with the tie, was off the rails, and the tie lay beside it.

"No sign of the section men," announced Matt, after a careful survey of the track.

"Mighty good thing for us, too, pard," said McGlory. "Here's Bunce's trail, and he traveled so fast he only hit the ground with his toes. Come on! I can run it out for a ways, anyhow."

McGlory's life on the cattle ranges had made him particularly apt in the lore of the plains. The trail was very dim in places, but even the disturbed leaves under the trees, and the broken bushes told McGlory where the mariner had passed.

The course taken by Bunce led across a timbered "flat" and down into a rocky ravine, then along the ravine to a ledge of rock which jutted out from a side hill. The under side of the ledge was perhaps a dozen feet over the bottom of the ravine, and under it was a sort of "pocket" in the hill.

Here there were evidences of a primitive camp. The soft earth under the ledge was trampled by human feet, and there was a large, five-gallon can that had

once held gasoline, but which was now empty. A small mound of dried leaves had been heaped up at the innermost recess of the "pocket," and the bed still bore the faint impression of a man's body.

"Bunce was right about Grattan being in hiding near Catskill," observed Matt. "Here's the place, sure enough."

"And Bunce came here, pard," went on McGlory; "he made tracks straight for this hang-out as soon as he got clear of us. Judging from what we see, I should say Bunce met Grattan, and that they both hurried off. But what was that gasoline for?"

"For the speeder, maybe," replied Matt.

"They wouldn't keep the gasoline supply for the speeder so far from the track, would they?"

"I shouldn't think so; still, I can't imagine what else they'd want gasoline for."

"What sort of a game was Bunce up to? If Grattan was here, then everything was going right, so far as the plan to capture Grattan was concerned. Why didn't Bunce wait for us, back there in the timber, and give us the chance to come on here and put the kibosh on the man we want?"

"It's a mystery, Joe," said the puzzled Matt. "Perhaps Bunce believed that we'd be captured by the section men and that it wouldn't be possible to get hold of Grattan. If he thought that, he might have come on to this place, given his New York report to Grattan, and made up his mind to see the rascally game through to a finish. Bunce couldn't have any idea that we'd escape from the section gang."

"Well," growled McGlory, "he might have waited and made certain of it."

There was no accounting for the queer actions of the mariner. It seemed as though, after the collision with the railroad tie and the coming of the section men, he had changed his mind about helping the boys capture Grattan.

Matt and McGlory moved around under the ledge, trying to find something else that would point positively to the presence of Grattan in the "pocket."

There was a strong odor of gasoline—much stronger than would have come from the uncorked, empty can. Suddenly Matt found something, and hurriedly called his chum.

"What is it?" inquired McGlory, running to Matt's side.

Matt pointed to two straight lines in the earth, leading out and up the ravine.

"Motorcycles," said he laconically, "two of them!"

McGlory struck his fist against his open palm.

"Well, what do you think of that!" he cried. "Motorcycles and speeders! Say, those tin horns were well fixed in the motor line. And Bunce told us both motorcycles had been destroyed! Sufferin' Ananias, but he's a tongue twister!"

"There's no doubt but that Grattan was here," went on Matt, "and that he had the two motorcycles with him. The gasoline was used to fill the motorcycles' tanks. As soon as Bunce got to this place, the wheels were made ready and Bunce and Grattan rode off."

"They're headed for New York, I reckon, to 'fill the bill' for poor old Tsan Ti!"

"I don't believe it," declared Matt. "I didn't take much stock in the story when Bunce told it, but on the chance that it might be true, I felt as though we should

give Tsan Ti the benefit of the doubt. But, now, I'm fairly certain the yarn was all moonshine."

"Bunce took a whole lot of trouble for nothing, pard," commented McGlory. "What was the good of his coming to the hotel, running the risk of our turning him over to the police, and then motoring out here with us on that ramshackle speeder if he never intended to help us capture Grattan?"

"Maybe we'll discover that later. Suppose we follow the trail of the motorcycles, Joe?"

"Why? They're a dozen miles from here, by this time."

"We can't overtake them, of course, but we can discover which way they went."

It was an easy matter to trail the heavy machines up the ravine. About half a mile above the camp under the ledge, a wagon road crossed the ravine, and the wheels had turned into it. To the surprise of the boys, the wheels had turned in the direction of Catskill.

"It can't be those two tin horns would have the nerve to go to the town," said McGlory.

"I don't think they would," agreed Matt, "but they have gone in that direction, at all events. It's up to us to walk back, so we may as well follow the road and the motorcycle trail."

"This is what I call tough luck," said the cowboy, when he and Matt were swinging along the road. "I didn't think there was any sense taking up with Bunce, in the first place. Nice way for that move to pan out! We go gunning for Grattan on a speeder, and then hoof it back—to face a charge of robbery preferred by the section men!"

"We'll settle that robbery charge quick enough,"

returned Matt.

"No doubt about that. I wouldn't feel so worked up over the thing if I could make any sort of guess as to what it was all about."

"Well," laughed Matt, repeating one of McGlory's favorite remarks, "we can't know so much all the time as we do just some part of the time, Joe."

"No more we can't, pard," said the cowboy.

CHAPTER IX.

BETWEEN THE EYES.

The wagon road which the boys were following led them into Catskill near the railroad station. The motorcycle tracks, after holding a straight course toward town for a long time, had finally vanished at an elevated point from which the motor boys had secured their first view of the river.

"We might just as well call on the superintendent," suggested Matt, when they were close to the station, "and explain about the speeder. By doing this now, we may dodge trouble later."

"Good idea," assented McGlory.

They found the superintendent in his office, and he gave them an immediate hearing.

"We called to tell you about that speeder, Mr. Bronson," began Matt, having caught the super's name off the painted window in the door.

"You mean Mulvaney's speeder," returned Bronson, "the one that was stolen two days ago?"

"Yes. My name's King, Matt King, and I'm stopping at the—"

"Motor Matt?" interrupted Bronson, whirling squarely around in his swivel chair. He had suddenly developed a great interest in the interview.

"Yes," laughed Matt, "I'm called that more often than I'm called by my last name. This is my chum, Joe McGlory," and he nodded toward the cowboy.

"I've heard of both of you," smiled Bronson. "That was great business of yours, over near Purling. But

what in the world have you got to tell me about the stolen speeder?"

"Then you haven't heard about what happened this morning?"

"Haven't heard a thing about the speeder to-day. Why?"

"Well, Joe and I and another fellow were chasing down a grade with it, a few miles out of town, and a section gang from Tannersville saw us coming and put a tie across the rails."

"That stopped you, did it?"

"Did it!" echoed McGlory. "Why, it stopped us so hard and quick that one of the passengers was scattered all over the right of way."

"We hadn't anything to do with stealing the machine," went on Matt, "and we didn't—"

"Of course not!" struck in Bronson. "But where did you get it, and what were you doing with it?"

"You heard how the great ruby was recovered, and how the thieves got away?"

The superintendent's eyes sparkled.

"Everybody around here has heard about that," he answered.

"We thought we had a chance to capture one of the thieves," proceeded Matt. "The crook's pal came to us and offered to show us where Grattan was, and when we joined the fellow this morning, he had the speeder tucked away among the bushes. We knew the speeder had been stolen, and were intending to bring it back as soon as we had finished our work; but the section gang made things so warm for us we had to change our plans."

"And now you're fretting for fear the section men will send in word, and that I'll have you pinched!" laughed the superintendent. "I guess I'd think twice before I had Motor Matt arrested for stealing an old speeder like that. Mulvaney, our track inspector, made it himself. He's rather choice of it, and that's why I sent out word to have the thing found, if possible. But, tell me, did you capture Grattan?"

"No, sir. We found where he has been staying, but he had got away before we reached the place."

"Hard luck! By the way, they've got a moving picture in one of the nickelodeons here, that tells the story of a ruby called 'Buddha's Eye.' Everybody is going to see it. Is that the same story as the one connected with the 'Eye of Buddha?'"

"It's the same, Mr. Bronson, even down to the minor detail of the identity of the thieves."

Bronson whistled.

"How in the dickens does that happen, eh?" he asked.

Matt could see no harm in explaining that point, as Bunce had covered it, and told how the thieves, needing money in Chicago, had suggested the idea for the picture, and how at least one of them had volunteered to play a leading part.

The superintendent was astounded at the audacity of a thief who, after perpetrating such a successful robbery, and with the ruby then in his possession, could publish his crime through the medium of a moving picture.

"It merely goes to prove," said the superintendent, "what a clever and daring scoundrel this fellow Grattan is. Too bad he escaped at the time the ruby was so cleverly recovered. More than likely, Motor Matt, he'll

make trouble for you."

"I guess he'll be too busy looking out for himself," laughed Matt, "to pay any attention to me."

"I hope so, certainly."

Matt and McGlory got up to leave.

"Don't bother your head about the speeder," the superintendent went on. "I'm glad your report reached me ahead of the one from the section gang. I'll know how to handle the matter, now, when I hear from the section boss. Good-by, my lads, and good luck to you."

"It didn't take long to fix that up," said McGlory, when he and Matt were once more on their way to the hotel.

"I knew it wouldn't," returned Matt, "just as soon as we could get to some one who would be willing to take our word for what happened."

"What the super said about Grattan trying to get back at you, Matt, for what you did in the old sugar camp, near Purling, sounded to me like it had a lot of good horse sense mixed up in it."

"What I told the super had a little horse sense in it, too, didn't it, Joe?"

"You mean about Grattan having so much to do to keep out of the clutches of the law that he won't find any time to hit up your trail?"

"Yes."

"I don't know about that. Grattan is a tinhorn who is in a class all by himself. He seems to have all kinds of nerve, and to be willing to take all sorts of chances. That moving-picture deal gives us a pretty good line on him."

When the boys got to the hotel, McGlory stumbled

into a chair on the veranda.

"Gee, man, but I'm tired!" he exclaimed. "A cowboy is built for riding, and not for this footwork. It sure gets me going. Sit down here for a while, Matt, and let's palaver about New York, and what the chances are for our getting there."

"They're pretty slim, I guess," answered Matt, dropping into a seat at his chum's side, "if we're to wait until Grattan is captured. Tsan Ti says, in his letter, that he won't come on until Grattan is behind the bars, or safely off his trail."

"Which means to hang on here until—we don't know when. We're rid of Bunce, but there'll be something else to hit us between the eyes before we're many minutes older. You can bet your moccasins on that. As long as we're tangled up with that ruby, we'll find hard luck flagging us all along the pike."

At that moment the clerk emerged from the hotel office and crossed the veranda. He wore a troubled look, as though something had happened to worry him.

"That man came, Motor Matt," said he, "and I gave him the box."

McGlory fell back as though some one had struck him.

"What man? What box?" he roused up to inquire wildly.

The clerk caught the alarm in the cowboy's voice and manner.

"Why, don't you know?" he cried, appealing to Matt. "It was the small box you left with me early this morning."

"And—and you gave it up?" gasped McGlory huskily.

"What else could I do?" protested the clerk. "I had the written order from Motor Matt. The man brought it."

McGlory was too dazed to answer. His jaw fell, and he stared at the king of the motor boys.

"Let me see the order," said Matt.

The clerk pulled a letter from his pocket.

"I hope there's nothing wrong?" he asked, handing the letter to Matt. "I've been thinking there might be something wrong, but I didn't see how there could be. The handwriting of that letter matches your fist on the register—I was careful to look that up before I gave the man the box."

"Read it, pard," implored McGlory, in a mechanical tone.

"Please deliver to bearer the small box which I left with you for safe-keeping, early this morning," Matt read. "I need it at once, and find that I can't come for it in person.' That's all of it, Joe," said Matt, "and I must say that it's a pretty good imitation of my handwriting. The name is a tremendously good forgery."

The clerk nearly threw a fit; and McGlory nearly helped him.

"Then the letter is a forgery?" cried the clerk. "The man didn't have any right to the box?"

"How could he have any right to the box," stormed McGlory, "when the letter asking you to turn it over to him was never written by Motor Matt? Corral your wits. Sufferin' hold-ups, it's come! We no sooner get out of one raw deal, than we tumble headfirst into another. Now—"

"Take it easy, Joe," cut in Matt. "Wait a minute." He

turned to the clerk. "Don't get worked up about this," said he; "you're not to blame. When did the man call and deliver the forged letter?"

"Not more than an hour ago," answered the clerk, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "Was there anything very valuable in the box?"

"What sort of looking man was he?" proceeded Matt.

"Slim, and dark, and undersized. Fairly well dressed."

"Well, never mind. Don't let it worry you."

The clerk, visibly distressed, in spite of Matt's reassuring words, went back into the office. As soon as he had vanished inside the hotel, the king of the motor boys gave vent to a low laugh.

McGlory peered at him.

"Pard!" he murmured, leaning over to drop a hand on Matt's knee. "Have you gone off the jump on account of that confounded ruby? It's a blow between the eyes, all right, but, for heaven's sake, don't let it get you locoed."

"Locoed!" and Matt pulled himself together, reached inside his vest and brought out a knotted handkerchief. Untying the knotted ends of the handkerchief, he opened it out on his knee. "See here, Joe!" said he; "that's how badly I am locoed."

What McGlory saw was the ruby, glowing redly against the white linen.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN FROM THE "IRIS."

Not many times in McGlory's life had he been so tremendously at a loss for words as he was then. He stared at the ruby and he stared at Matt.

"You see, pard," said Matt, "the ruby wasn't in the box when I gave it to the clerk. I kept the Eye of Buddha safely about me, all the time. It gouged me a little when the speeder stopped and I was slammed against the forward bench."

"Speak to me about this!" rumbled the cowboy. "It wasn't in the box—a tinhorn blew in with a forged letter—he got the box, but he didn't get the ruby. Matt's done something—and he never told me what he was doing. What—how—why— Look here, you blooming old maverick, how did you ever come to think of such a dodge?"

"It wasn't much of a dodge," answered Matt. "In the first place, I didn't take any stock in that wild yarn told us by Bunce. At the same time, while I didn't believe in it, I couldn't afford not to go with Bunce on Tsan Ti's account. I tried to think why Bunce should want to coax us into the hills, and the only idea that came to me had to do with the ruby. Now, I reasoned, if the ruby *was* back of Bunce's little game, then it was clear he knew it had been sent to me for safe-keeping. I wanted to find just how much Bunce knew, so I left the box with the clerk. Bunce was watching, or else he had somebody else watching. If he'd thought I had the ruby with me, an attempt would have been made to get it while we were in the hills. But Bunce believed I had left the ruby in the safe, so he dodged away, leaving you and me to be nabbed by the section men, while he

went on to that 'pocket' under the ledge, found Grattan, told him where I had placed the box, and the two got on their motorcycles and came close enough to town to get a man to help them secure the box.

"Grattan must have forged the letter. Then this third man took it. The rascals had to work quick, for the game was played while we were taking a look around at the camp in the ravine, and walking into town. Can't you understand, Joe? By getting us into the hills, with that fairy story about Tsan Ti, Grattan could play his hand either way. If we had the ruby with us, he could get hold of it; if we had left it behind, he could take advantage of our absence from Catskill to execute some ruse in town while we were out in the country."

"Clever?" breathed McGlory; "why, he's the cleverest crook that ever happened. But I'd like to have a picture of him now!" The cowboy fell back in his seat and roared with mirth. "Wouldn't I like to look in on him while he and Bunce are opening that box?" he sputtered. "Oh, but it's rich! Clever as he is, Grattan has found that he's butted up against some one who can give him cards and spades, and then beat him out. I've been proud of you, pard, more times than I can tell, but I'm just a little prouder now than I ever was before. Shake!"

Matt caught his chum's hand.

"It was only a guess, Joe," he deprecated, "and it happened to work our way. There was nothing clever about what I did. The result was entirely a—an accident."

"You had your head with you, all the same," insisted McGlory, "when you put that empty box in the safe. But how in thunder did Bunce get next to that? How did he know that Tsan Ti had sent you the ruby, in the first place?"

"Well, he did know, and that's enough. A third man has jumped into the deal—another pal, who is helping Grattan and Bunce. Perhaps he had something to do with keeping track of the ruby."

"Perhaps. But that old two-eyed counterfeit with the green patch—I wonder how much he'd sell out for, about now?"

"Bunce is pretty clever, in his own way, too," averred Matt. "He must have laughed in his sleeve when he saw how we had swallowed that fish story of his about Tsan Ti."

"He can laugh, now, on t'other side of his face. We're helping Tsan Ti, all right. Grattan is on our trail instead of his. I'm not saying it was the right thing for the mandarin to shift the responsibility for that ruby onto you, but he was pretty long headed when he did it. He understood that if any one could take care of the ruby it was Motor Matt."

"It will soon be dinner time, Joe," said Matt. "Suppose we go up to our room, shake the dust out of our clothes, take a bath, and get ready to eat?"

"That reminds me how hungry I am!" exclaimed McGlory, springing up.

By the time dinner was ready, the boys were ready for dinner. Their experiences of the forenoon had put a keen edge on their appetite, and the cowboy was in high good humor.

He and Matt had put in a strenuous morning, and so long as McGlory thought they had not accomplished anything, he was disgusted and "out of sorts." But to learn that Grattan and Bunce had been beaten at their own game, set twanging a most delightful chord in the cowboy's make-up.

The motor boys had no plans for the afternoon, so

they put in their time idling about the veranda. It was about three o'clock when a tall man, dressed in a natty white yachting costume with the name "Iris," in gilt letters on the band of his cap, came briskly up the veranda steps, passed Matt and McGlory and went on into the hotel.

The man claimed only casual attention, on his first appearance, but, a few seconds later, he captured the entire attention of the two boys. He returned to the veranda, ushered by the clerk, and both stepped toward Motor Matt.

"Matt," said the clerk, "this is Mr. Pardo, of the yacht *Iris*. Mr. Pardo, Mr. King. He wants to see you about some business matter," the clerk added, as he vanished back into the hotel.

The man from the *Iris* smiled cordially as he clasped Matt's hand.

"This is a pleasure, I assure you," said Pardo. "I have heard quite a little about Motor Matt."

"What can I do for you, Mr. Pardo?" asked Matt.

"That's the business part of our interview," was the answer, as Pardo helped himself to a chair, "and I'm going to get right down to it. You are familiar with gasoline motors, I understand?"

"Yes."

"With marine motors?"

"I reckon you never heard how he put an automobile engine in a launch, at Madison, Wisconsin," struck in McGlory, "and won a big race. He's right at home with every kind of an explosive engine, whether it drives a craft in the air, on wheels, or in the water."

"My chum is a trifle prejudiced, Mr. Pardo," smiled Matt.

"Well, I guess you can do the work, all right. The question now is, can I secure your services?"

"What for?"

"Of course," laughed Pardo, "that's what you naturally want to know. I'm the owner of a power yacht, fifty feet over all, ten feet beam, equipped with a fifty-horse-power motor. She's the *Iris*. I dropped down from Albany, this afternoon, and when we tied up at Catskill my engineer received a telegram from Buffalo saying that his father was dangerously sick. He left at once, and here I am, anxious to make a quick run to New York, but caught in the worst kind of a hole. Can't I get you to help me out? As soon as I reach New York I can get any number of reliable men to take charge of my engine room, but here in Catskill help of that sort is scarce."

McGlory's joy shone in his face. Here was a chance to get down the river in style, and all that stood between Matt and the trip was the ruby.

"Can't you run the motor, Mr. Pardo?" asked Matt.

"Don't know the first thing about it," was the answer. "You see, I haven't had time to learn. This is my first trip in the *Iris*, and I haven't had much chance to pick up a knowledge of her machinery. It's my idea that every man ought to know how to run his own boat—and I'll know it, too, before I'm many days older. But, just now, I've got to have some one. What do you say?"

Pardo noticed that Matt was not especially eager to help him out.

"If you can just get me down to New York," he pleaded, "that's all I will ask. If you have to come back to Catskill for anything, you can come on the train in the morning. You won't be away very long, and it will be a big accommodation to me. I'll pay you well for

your trouble, too, if that will be any inducement."

"Better go, pard," urged McGlory. "I don't think your business will suffer any. We can be back here by nine in the morning, if we want to."

It was hardly likely, as Matt reasoned the matter out, that Tsan Ti would present himself and ask for the ruby before he and McGlory could get back from New York. The opportunity to make a little money in a pleasant way was appealing, for the king of the motor boys had long desired to have the run of the engine room on a big power boat.

"What time do you want to start, Mr. Pardo?" Matt asked.

"At nine, this evening," was the reply. "If you can help me out, you'd better arrange to be aboard at, say, eight-thirty. The *Iris* is close to the day-line dock, and you can't help but find her."

"How much are you willing to pay for the trip?" queried Matt. "It's just as well, you know, to have all that settled beforehand."

"I'll give you a hundred dollars—not so much for the work, you understand, as for the time you are losing. Your time may be worth even more than that. If it is—"

"You are more than liberal," broke in Matt. "I and my chum will be aboard the *Iris* at eight-thirty."

The man from the *Iris* heaved a deep breath.

"That's a big load off my mind," said he. "I could have telegraphed New York and had an engineer come up on a late train—but that would have delayed the start until close upon midnight. I shall expect you, Motor Matt," and Pardo got up and went his way briskly.

CHAPTER XI.

ABOARD THE STEAM YACHT.

"I don't know," said Matt, "whether this is the thing for us to do, or not, Joe. Tsan Ti's letter asked us to stay in the Catskills."

"Oh, bother the old heathen!" returned the cowboy. "He won't show up here for quite a spell. Anyhow, if he does arrive to-morrow morning, before we do, he can wait for us, can't he?"

"He's paying us for our time."

"What if he is, pard? The old boy won't find any fault if we take this little run down the river. There's a point, too, that you don't seem to have thought of."

"What is it?"

"Why, Grattan has quit trailing Tsan Ti and gone to trailing you. By taking this trip down the river we may be able to throw Grattan off the track."

"That's so," answered Matt, struck with the idea.

"If the tinhorn is laying any more of his plans," chuckled the cowboy, "we'll fool him."

"I'll leave word with the clerk," said Matt, "to tell Tsan Ti where we've gone, and when we'll return; then, if he *does* happen to get here before we do, he'll know we're intending to come back and meet him."

"That's the talk!"

Matt immediately went into the hotel and stepped to the clerk's desk.

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Pardo?" he asked.

"Never saw him before," answered the clerk. "He came in here, introduced himself, and said he was looking for Motor Matt. I knew you were on the porch, so I volunteered to take him out and introduce you. Looks like a fine gentleman. Interview satisfactory?"

"Yes. He has a power yacht at the landing, and wants an engineer to get her to New York for him. I've taken the job, and Joe and I will be away all night and not get back until sometime to-morrow forenoon. If any one calls and asks for me, you need not tell them where I have gone, but just let them know when I expect to return."

"I'll do it, Matt. Didn't know you had an engineer's license?"

"He's got everything," put in McGlory, "that goes with running a motor."

The boys had no preparations to make, and as there were two hours to be passed before supper they concluded to run down to the dock and take a look at the *Iris*. There was no difficulty at all in locating her, and the sight of her trim and graceful lines made Matt eager to have a look at her interior plan. There was no one about her decks, however, whom he and McGlory could hail, and he hesitated to go aboard and arouse any one who might chance to be in the cabin.

The cowboy, who was a wretched sailor, quite unaccountably was an enthusiast about boats, and his doting eyes sparkled as they traveled over the *Iris*.

She had a very high freeboard forward, and this, with her perfect lines, gave her an easy entrance and a guarantee that she would not pound or ship seas in any sort of weather. There was no midship bridge, or forward pilot house, but the boat was steered and the engine controlled from a big and roomy after deck.

"She's a fair daisy!" declared the cowboy, "as spick and span as a freshly coined four-bit piece. Sufferin' bones, but I'd like to own a boat like that!"

"You'd find such a craft an expensive luxury, Joe," said Matt. "If you did much cruising, it would keep you poor just buying gasoline. Let's go back up the hill. We can't see inside the boat, and it don't take long to get a pretty fair idea of the outside."

Returning to the hotel, the boys idled away the time until the supper call sounded. The meal over, there were still some two hours of waiting before they were due aboard the *Iris*.

McGlory suggested another visit to the theatre for a second look at the "Buddha's Eye" pictures. Matt, thinking that as good a way as any for passing the time, acquiesced, and they were soon at the moving-picture place.

There was standing room only—which proved how much of a hit the ruby robbery had made. The hit, of course, was entirely because of Matt's adventures while recovering the gem for Tsan Ti. If those attending the show had known that Motor Matt was also present, and that he had the very Eye of Buddha in his pocket, there would have followed a furore of no small proportions.

But the king of the motor boys, often in direct opposition to his best interests, was reserved and diffident.

"Gee!" exclaimed the cowboy, as he and Matt left the theatre and wandered along the street, "if those people back there had only known who you were, and what you had in your pocket, there'd have been something of a stir."

"I don't like that kind of a stir," said Matt.

"That's you! Say, pard, you're altogether too modest and retiring. If you wanted to splurge a little, you could make yourself talked about from one end of the country to the other."

"I'll leave that to those who like it. It's the quiet chap, who plugs along and does things without blowing his own horn who makes the biggest hit in the end."

"I don't know but that's right, too."

They dropped in at another show, promenaded the street, and finally discovered that it was nearly eight-thirty. Turning their steps toward the water front, they presently reached the wharf alongside the *Iris*.

The craft had her "running" lights in position. There was a white light in the bow, visible from straight ahead and for ten points on either side, a green light to starboard and a red light to port, each screened so that it could be seen from dead ahead to two points aft of the beam, and a high white light aft and directly over the keel, showing all around the horizon.

But, notwithstanding all these lights on deck, there were none visible through the cabin ports.

"I wonder if Mr. Pardo has got here?" said Matt.

"What's the odds, Matt?" returned McGlory. "It's eight-thirty, and we're due."

They got aboard, gaining the after deck. The elevated white light cast a dim glow over polished mahogany and glittering brasswork, and Matt bent down to examine the bulkhead controls. A door opened in the bulkhead, on the right of the steering wheel, and a man showed shadowily in the dark.

"Is that Motor Matt?" he called.

"Yes," was the reply.

The man clambered up two or three steps, knocking his shins and swearing because of the darkness.

"You're expected," said he. "Go down into the saloon—a stateroom is the first thing you come to, and the saloon is beyond that."

"Why don't you light up?" asked Matt.

"Mr. Pardo has a headache, and the light bothers him. Go on down—he's waiting for you."

Matt led the way, and McGlory followed. They left the door open, and a faint radiance followed them, but they were in unfamiliar surroundings, and had to grope their way along.

"Is that you, Motor Matt?" called a voice, which they recognized as Pardo's.

"Yes," Matt answered.

"Come on in here. I'm not feeling very well to-night, and the light hurts my eyes. You can guide yourself by the sound of my voice, can't you?"

"We'll get there, all right."

"Is your friend with you?"

"Yes. I never travel without him."

The next moment Matt gained the open door in another bulkhead. Before he could pass through it, two sinewy arms went around him from behind and a hand was clapped over his lips. He struggled, but he was caught as in a vise, and his efforts to free himself were useless. From near at hand, too, he heard sounds which indicated that McGlory, also, had been seized.

"Got them?" came the voice of Pardo.

"Yes, sir," answered the man who was holding Matt, "but they're fightin' like a pair o' young demons."

"Then throw them down on the side seats and hold pillows over their heads. We'll get under way at once."

Matt felt himself borne down on a cushioned bench. The hand was jerked from his lips, and the half-formed cry that escaped him was smothered in the pillow that was immediately pushed over his head.

A bell jingled, and steps could be heard on the deck above, moving swiftly.

"All right!" came a muffled voice.

Matt, half suffocated, could hear no more. He was fighting fiercely for his breath.

Presently he was conscious that the *Iris* was moving, and, as he lay gasping and helpless under the strong hands of his captor, there came faintly to his ears the hum of a motor and the lapping of waves against the hull.

How long he was held down on the seat, half smothered by the pillow, he did not know. It seemed hours, but was probably no more than so many minutes.

Then, suddenly, the pillow was jerked away, and he lifted himself on his elbow, a glare of light in his eyes. For a moment or two the dazzling light blinded him. When his eyes became somewhat used to it, he discovered a man standing near him, his flannel shirt parted at the throat and his bronzed arms bare to the elbows. The man held a dirk in one hand and a piece of rope in the other.

From this frowning figure, Matt's gaze shifted across the narrow aisle to a cushioned bench opposite. McGlory was there, and there was likewise a ruffian keeping watch of him.

"What—what does this mean?" demanded Matt.

"You'll find out, quick enough. Are you goin' to make any trouble? If you are, say so, now, and you'll save yourself a knife in the ribs."

"I want to know about this!" declared Matt.

"Then get up and go into the saloon."

"You, too," said the man who had charge of McGlory. "Foller yer mate inter the saloon, an' if either o' ye let out a yell ye'll never know what struck you."

Matt, fearing the worst, swung his feet down from the upholstered seat and started forward. McGlory, who appeared to be in a trance, followed him mechanically.

The door of the saloon was open, and Matt passed through it, and stopped. McGlory crowded in beside him.

The saloon was the full width of the boat, with seats on each side, and a table at one end. The small room was flooded with light, and three figures were seen in an angle formed by one of the seats where it partly crossed the forward bulkhead. The fixed table stood in the angle, and the three figures were leaning upon it.

One of the men was Grattan, another was Bunce, and the third was Pardo. In front of Grattan, on the table top, lay two objects. One was a revolver, and the other the small box in which the ruby had been expressed to Matt from New York.

All three of the men were smiling.

"Speak to me about this!" muttered McGlory. "Nabbed! Nabbed as slick as you please! And I never guessed a thing. Oh, sufferin' easy marks!"

CHAPTER XII.

GRATTAN'S TRIUMPH.

Motor Matt understood the situation. The full realization came to him with something like a shock. In some way Grattan had secured the aid of the owner and crew of the *Iris* in carrying out his villainous designs. He had triumphed, for he had only to have Matt searched in order to secure the ruby.

Philo Grattan was an educated fellow, and could be a man of pleasing address when he so desired. In almost any honest line of work he could have distinguished himself, for his ability was high above the average. Yet, like so many others equally gifted, he had been drawn toward a life of crime.

"Motor Matt," said he, in a tone and with a manner that was friendly, "we meet again. The pleasure, on your part, I presume, is unexpected, and perhaps of a doubtful quality, but so far as I am concerned, I assure you that this renewing of our acquaintance leaves nothing to be desired."

"Not a blessed thing," struck in Bunce, contorted with inward mirth, "sink me, if it does!"

Grattan dropped a heavy hand on the mariner's shoulder.

"Keep a still tongue in your head," he ordered sternly. "I'm able to do the talking."

"Then," and Matt turned toward Pardo, "this is simply a plot you have engineered to get me into the hands of Grattan?"

"Simply and solely," was Pardo's cheerful answer.

"Pardo is my friend," explained Grattan. "He lives in Albany, when he's at home—but he's rarely at home. He has been fortunate, of late, in sundry little ventures, and happened to be well supplied with money. No sooner had I lost my buckthorn cane, there in the old sugar camp, at Purling, and been made aware of the fact that the Eye of Buddha had been found, than I communicated with friend Pardo. I had met him in Albany on my way to the Catskills, so I knew he was at home. He met me in my temporary camp, and agreed to charter the *Iris* to help me down the river and out of the country after I had got back the ruby. The *Iris*, together with a crew of men on whom we can depend, has been awaiting my convenience for the past two days. Of course," and Grattan showed his teeth in a smile, "my friend's name is not Pardo, any more than mine is Grattan, or than this salt-water bungler on my left is named Bunce."

Although Matt followed Grattan closely, he had, at the same time, been covertly using his eyes.

The door leading into the stateroom behind him was closed. On the other side of it he knew there was one brawny ruffian, and perhaps two. Beyond the saloon's forward bulkhead he could hear the purring motor. There, he inferred, was the engine room and the galley, with another man who could be "depended on." At the steering and engine controls on the after deck was surely another man, and probably one on the deck overhead.

He and McGlory were hemmed in on all sides. There must have been, counting those in the saloon, all of seven or eight men against them. So far as Matt could see, the case was hopeless.

Matt's covert looks had not escaped the keen eyes of Grattan. The scoundrel seemed able to read even the young motorist's thoughts.

"Don't think of escape, Motor Matt," said he. "That is entirely out of the question. Neither you nor your friend are in any danger. I think too highly of you to rob the world of so much talent and ingenuity. Let us have another friendly and intimate chat such as we had in the old sugar camp. I do not object to telling you things of great moment to me, because I have already taken measures to make the knowledge harmless. I escaped from the sugar camp, did I not? And all I told you then did not in any way hamper me in proceeding with my plans. I am willing to be equally frank now, in the hope that you, on your part, will give me some of your confidence.

"You thought Tsan Ti, the mandarin, had started for San Francisco with the ruby. Orientals are crafty. He gave it out that he was going to San Francisco, and immediately started for New York. I had him followed from the Hotel Kaaterskill, and shadowed while in New York. The man who served me was clever, but not clever enough to keep Tsan Ti from learning that he was under espionage. The mandarin became nervous. He did not appeal to the police, as his heathen mind counsels him to have nothing to do with the peace officers who serve the foreign devils. But he had his man, Sam Wing, and other Chinamen, continually guard him. One of these Chinamen was faithless. Some of my money, expended by the man I had set to watch Tsan Ti, bought him. This Chinaman was Charley Foo, and he betrayed the mandarin's trust for the sum of ten silver dollars.

"Charley was in the room with Tsan Ti when the ruby was boxed, wrapped and addressed to Motor Matt. Charley, also, went with Tsan Ti and Sam Wing to the express office, and saw the package sent. Then, quite naturally, Charley told my man, and my man telegraphed Pardo at Hudson, and Pardo got the message to me, out there in that lonely ravine.

"Then I began rehearsing Bunce in his part. Bunce is a natural blockhead, and I was three hours teaching him what he was to say and do. As an example of his folly, I will say that it was Bunce who stole the speeder. The owner of the machine was inspecting a bit of siding that wound around a low hill. The speeder was on the main track. All Bunce had to do was to get aboard, switch on the gasoline and the spark—and there you are. But why did we need the speeder when we had two good motorcycles? Bunce can't tell. He doesn't know. He has a low mind, and the itch to steal unimportant things runs in his blood—and has more than once proved embarrassing to me.

"However, I saw a chance to use the speeder in beguiling you to my ravine. The motorcycles would only have carried two, and there were to be three of you, including Bunce. Besides, the machines might have aroused your suspicions. So the speeder was used, and Pardo went over the hill with Bunce and helped him hide the speeder within an arrow flight of the Catskill railroad yards.

"Bunce took a risk. He knew it. I impressed upon him the fact that, if he did not carry out his programme with earnestness, you would make a prisoner of him and turn him over to the police. We knew Tsan Ti had written that you must keep the ruby about you, and leave it nowhere for security. I flattered myself you would bring the gem with you, concealed somewhere upon your person. But Pardo, wearing clothes which made him look vastly different, saw you leave the little box with the hotel clerk. Instantly Pardo ran ahead of you to the place where Bunce was waiting, and told him. The seeming failure of our plans threw Bunce into a panic—you can expect so little of Bunce in a pinch!—and he would have thrown over the whole matter, then and there, had not Pardo advised him. 'Take them out into the hills,' said Pardo, 'and leave them stranded

there while you get away to the ravine and tell Grattan. Grattan will know what to do.' And Grattan did."

An ironical smile crossed the face of the strange man, and he paused a space. When he continued, his manner was again easy and vivacious.

"Ah, those section men! They helped gain time for me, and afforded Bunce his opportunity to get away from you. Bunce fled—you know how. He came to me and told me about the box, the box Motor Matt had left with the hotel clerk to be put in the safe. A fountain pen and a sheet of letter paper sufficed for the letter. I have seen your written name, Motor Matt, and when I have once seen a person's handwriting, I can copy it from memory after a lapse of one year or ten. Some say it is a gift.

"We had sharp work ahead of us, Bunce and I. We rolled out of the ravine on our motorcycles, gained the river bank below Catskill and signaled the *Iris*. Pardo came ashore in the tender, and he loaned us his motor-man for the work that claimed us. You know how he got the box, and we know what it contained—cotton wadding, but no ruby. Motor Matt, I could have shaken your hand and congratulated you—if you had been near and I had had time.

"A few rebuffs are what I need to bring out the best that is in me. Quick as a flash I thought of the motor-man's sick father in Buffalo, and Pardo's call at your hotel to get you to take the *Iris* to New York. Shall I call it an inspiration? I believe it amounted to that.

"Bunce and I, snuggled away in this saloon, slept and waited for the issue of our scheming. Pardo came to report that you would be aboard the *Iris* at eight-thirty. I was almost sure of success, but not certain. You have a way, Motor Matt, of disappointing people like me, and I was not counting positively upon success

until I had you in my hands.

"Well, here you are. I have only the kindest feelings toward you, but you know what I want, and what I want, in this instance, I am going to have."

Grattan got up and stood beside the table, a superb figure of a man whose head just cleared the deck above.

"I have devoted time, and study, and faced dangers innumerable," he proceeded, betrayed into passionate vehemence, "to secure the Eye of Buddha! I have beaten down every obstacle, and secured the stone only to lose it; now it is mine again, mine. Motor Matt," and he stretched out his hand, "I will trouble you for the Eye of Buddha!"

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE OPEN PORT!

Motor Matt made no move to give the ruby into the possession of Grattan. Thief though he was, yet Philo Grattan had a remarkable personality. Matt had listened to him with deepest interest, but one hand had been busy in his pocket. McGlory was so deeply absorbed in what the master rogue was saying that his jaws gaped, and he hung breathlessly upon his words.

Near Matt's left hand, with only the width of the side seat between, was an open port.

"What!" exclaimed Grattan, as though intensely surprised, "you hesitate? I dislike to treat you with any more roughness, Motor Matt. It seems to me you might understand how hopeless it is for you to try to keep the ruby. What is this Tsan Ti to you that you will risk so much for him? Is it the money he pays you? I can't believe that. You have made a good deal of money in your work, I have been told, and you are not in need.

"Is it because you desire to help an unfortunate Chinaman who must use the yellow cord in case he cannot return to China with the Eye of Buddha? Foolish sentiment! What would this fat mandarin of the red button do for you if your positions were reversed? Take the present case. What has Tsan Ti done? He is a coward. Instead of facing his risks like a man, he turns the ruby over to you, thereby unloading the danger and responsibility. After you have me safely jailed"—and Grattan's voice throbbed with contempt and scorn—"then this mandarin will hunt you up, take the ruby, which is worth a fortune, and pay you a thousand dollars! Why are you the friend of such a

coward? Tell me, will you? Here is where I should like a frank expression of your views."

"I don't think Tsan Ti is a coward," Matt answered.

"You have the proof."

"I have your side of the question, not his."

"My side of the question! Is there any other side?"

"There may be."

"I am disappointed in you, Motor Matt. Such talk is foolish—almost worthy of Bunce, here."

"There is something else, too, Grattan," went on Matt, "something, I suppose, you will appreciate even less than what I have just said."

"I don't think there can be anything I would appreciate less. However, let's hear what it is."

"Being true to a trust," answered Matt sturdily. "Even if a Chinaman trusts you, standing fast and not betraying his confidence."

Bunce snickered, and Pardo laughed outright. Only Grattan kept a serious face and peered steadily at Matt.

"Yes," murmured Grattan, "there is something in that. It is not for me—I have turned my back on such principles—but you are young and quite likely you have started right. That, however, does not affect our present situation. It is impossible for you to remain true to the trust the cowardly Tsan Ti reposes in you. I have you in my power. It is night, and the *Iris* is in the middle of the Hudson River. The ruby is tied up in a handkerchief in your coat pocket. I tell you I want it."

The voice was imperious, compelling. Motor Matt still passively faced Grattan.

"Oh, shiver me!" grunted Bunce. "Let's lay hold of

him an' take it."

Pardo pushed a hand toward the revolver on the table.

With one movement, Grattan, although still with his eyes on Matt, dropped his own hand to the revolver and another hand on Bunce's shoulder.

"You'll speak when you're spoken to, Bunce," said he savagely, "and Pardo, you'll leave the revolver alone. I've managed this matter with fair success, up to now, and I believe I can wind it up. The ruby, Motor Matt!"

"There it is!" said Matt.

His hand darted toward the open port. A knotted handkerchief, weighted with some small object, flashed through the port and vanished downward.

A yell escaped Bunce, and he flung himself across the table in a frantic attempt to lay hold of Matt. Pardo leaped for him, and the door leading into the stateroom opened and the man who was waiting stepped into the room.

McGlory had jumped to help Matt against Pardo. The man who had just entered grabbed the cowboy and flung him roughly on the seat at the side of the room; then he and Pardo hurled Matt to the floor.

"Search him!" ordered Grattan calmly.

"By the seven holy spritsails!" bellowed Bunce, "what's the use o' searchin' him? Didn't he just throw the Eye o' Buddha into the river?"

"He ought to be strangled for that!" cried Pardo, in a temper.

"Search him, I tell you!" roared Grattan. "Are you all a pack of fools? He didn't throw the ruby into the river."

"But we saw him," insisted Pardo.

"You saw his handkerchief go into the river, but it was only a trick. Do you think he would sacrifice the ruby, even to prevent me from getting it? Search him, I tell you."

The search was made, and thoroughly. Motor Matt's pockets were turned inside out, but without result. Garment by garment his clothes were stripped away and crushed in eager hands, but still without result.

The ruby was as large as a small hen's egg, and not easily to be hidden.

McGlory had gone into a trance again. As he lay on the seat and stared, he wondered if Matt had really tossed the priceless gem into the Hudson.

"He hasn't got it, Grattan," announced Pardo.

"Then his friend has it," answered Grattan confidently. "Search him."

Thereupon the cowboy came in for his share of the rough handling. Matt once more got into his clothes. Just as the search of McGlory was finished, Motor Matt was reaching for his cap, which had tumbled off in the scuffle in the other room, and had been thrown into the saloon after the boys had entered it.

"Nothing here," announced Pardo, as he turned from McGlory.

"Nary, there ain't," fumed McGlory. "Motor Matt's not the lad to shift his responsibilities like Tsan Ti. Sufferin' hornets! You're a fine outfit of tin horns, I must say."

Stepping quickly out from behind the table, Grattan passed to Matt and snatched off his cap. He weighed the cap for a moment in his hand, felt of the crown with his fingers, and then, still holding the cap,

returned quietly to his seat.

"Sit down, Bunce, you and Pardo," ordered Grattan. "Pierson, go out and close the door."

When the two men were seated, and after Pierson had left the saloon, Grattan leaned his elbows on the table, Matt's cap between them.

"This Motor Matt," said he, "is a lad whom I greatly admire. He takes precautions. His first precaution was removing the ruby from the box and depositing the box with the hotel clerk before he went out into the hills with Bunce. In running away from the ravine with Bunce to carry out my plan for securing the box, I ran directly away from Motor Matt and the ruby. Motor Matt had the ruby tied up in his handkerchief, then. He was seen, on the hotel veranda, to untie his handkerchief and show the ruby to his friend. When he came aboard the *Iris* he had taken another precaution. Something else was tied up in the handkerchief, and the ruby was in the lining of his cap."

Swiftly Grattan's hands descended, tore at the cap lining, and brought out the imperial stone. He laid it on the table, turning and turning it so the light might catch its fiery flash.

"Blow me tight!" mumbled Bunce. "Say, mates," he added, drawing a sleeve across his forehead, "that was a scare I don't want ever to go through ag'in. We've risked so much for that bloomin' Eye o' Buddha that I near went wrong in the head with the thought that it was in the bottom o' the river!"

"It's comparatively easy for you to go wrong in the head, Bunce," taunted Grattan.

"So that's the thing!" murmured Pardo, his fascinated eyes on the gleaming stone.

"Did you ever see anything more beautiful?" asked

Grattan. "It's a true pigeon-blood ruby, and worth ten times the value of a diamond the same size."

Then, drawing out his own handkerchief, he wrapped the ruby carefully, and as carefully stowed it away in his pocket.

"So," said he, "after a number of startling adventures in the Catskills, the ruby is finally where it ought to be."

"It ought to be in the head of that idol, in Canton," said Matt.

The king of the motor boys was calm, and, while he may have had regrets, he had nothing to reproach himself for. He had done his best to keep the ruby—and he had failed.

"Motor Matt," returned Grattan, "a heathen temple is no place for such a jewel as this. In the Honan joss house it benefits no one. When I sell it, it will benefit me a great deal, and Bunce a little."

"And me," put in Pardo. "Don't forget that I stand in on the divvy."

"And Pardo," added Grattan.

"And Tsan Ti must strangle himself with the yellow cord," said Matt.

"If that is his will, yes. I have no patience with these pagan superstitions. A heathen, who lives by them, cannot let them shuffle him out of the world too quickly. As for you, Motor Matt, you have nothing to be sorry for. You did your best to keep the ruby out of my hands—no one else could have done so much."

"It's not the ruby I care for so much as saving Tsan Ti," answered Matt.

"Find out if there's a landing near this point, Pardo,"

said Grattan.

Pardo stepped out of the room and could be heard talking with the man at the steering wheel.

"No," he reported, coming back, "there's no safe landing for the *Iris* anywhere near here."

"Then put over the tender," ordered Grattan; "Motor Matt and his friend are going ashore."

CHAPTER XIV.

LANDED—AND STUNG.

Pardo left the saloon to give the necessary orders to the man outside. There was a splash in the water as the tender was put over, and the *Iris* slowed until she had no more than steerage way.

"Get into your clothes, McGlory," said Grattan to the cowboy. "I'm about ready to send you ashore."

"The quicker the better!" exclaimed McGlory wrathfully. "We don't want to lose a minute getting to some place where we can send the officers after you."

Grattan laughed.

"You will have your trouble for your pains," said he. "After you are landed, the *Iris* and those aboard her will vanish as completely as though they had gone to the bottom. I have planned for this. Do what you please, and as soon as you please. Philo Grattan and his friends will never be captured."

"Ten thousand demons of misfortune pester a man who has anything to do with the Eye of Buddha," snarled McGlory, stamping into his shoes. "My pard and I know that. Sufferin' hoodoos! Haven't we been tangled up with all sorts of backsets since we met Tsan Ti? If it ain't one thing, it's two. You never know what minute's going to be the next."

"I'll risk the ten thousand demons," smiled Grattan.

"Something'll hit you," declared McGlory. "You take that from me, and spread your blankets on it."

"You forget that I have carried the ruby for a good many thousands of miles."

"I'm gloomed up more to think we ever saw that Eye of Buddha," scowled McGlory, getting up from the seat and jamming on his hat, "than to know that we lost it."

"Are you ready?" asked Grattan.

"I've been ready to leave this boat ever since we came aboard! You're a fine bunch of outlaws, the lot of you, and you'll all get hung, one of these days. I'd like to be around when it happens."

Matt left his wrathful chum to do the talking. So far as he was concerned, he had nothing to say.

"We're going to put you ashore near a place where you can catch a train north, to Catskill," said Grattan, after a brief, whispered conversation with Pardo. "There doesn't happen to be any telegraph station at the place, but the train will stop on signal."

"There are other telegraph stations," fumed McGlory. "I reckon we can find 'em."

"I hope, Motor Matt," went on Grattan, "that you don't cherish any hard feelings?"

"No matter how I feel, Grattan," returned Matt, "I think you've made a big mistake."

"How?"

"Why, in your choice of a career. Half the energy you put into your criminal work would make you a power in the world."

"I used to talk like that," said Grattan, with a tinge of bitterness, "when I was young. Good-by."

Matt did not answer, but went out of the saloon and through the stateroom to the steps leading to the after deck. McGlory came close behind him. When they gained the deck, Pierson was in the tender, and another man stood ready to help them over the side.

Silently Pierson rowed them ashore through the moonlight. When the boys had debarked, Pierson rowed swiftly back to the *Iris*, and the lads on shore could hear the noise as the tender was taken aboard.

"Landed," muttered Matt.

"And stung," finished McGlory. "Wasn't it neat? Say, I take off my hat to Grattan. He's the king bee of all the tin horns. Let's watch and see which way the *Iris* goes."

The boys watched, but under their staring eyes the lights vanished one by one from forward and aft, and from starboard and port. The cabin windows winked out in darkness, and the gloom of the river swallowed up the motor yacht. Her disappearance was helped by a cloud which floated across the face of the moon and threw the river into deepest shadow.

"Speak to me about that, pard!" exclaimed McGlory. "I wonder if it would do any good to send out telegrams?"

"I don't think it would, Joe," Matt answered, "but if there was a telegraph office handy, we'd try it."

"Let's find the place where the trains stop. If a train comes along pretty soon, we can get to a telegraph office."

When the cloud had swept on, and the moon shone out again, a survey of the place showed the boys a dark building at the top of the bank. They climbed up to the structure and found that it was an open shed, with benches. There was no light, and the cowboy struck a match and hunted for a time card. He could find none.

"Oh, hang such a place!" grumbled McGlory. "If we knew how far it was to the next station, pard, we could set out and hoof it."

"Haven't you done enough walking for one day,

Joe?" asked Matt. "I believe I have. I'm going to sit down here and wait for a train to come along."

Suiting his action to the word, Matt dropped down on one of the benches. His chum took a place beside him.

"You're as full of surprises, pard," remarked McGlory, "as a cocoanut is of milk. There's no guessing what you're going to do next. You didn't tell me anything about taking the Eye of Buddha from that empty box when you left it with the clerk, and you never let out a yip about removing the ruby from the handkerchief and putting it in your cap. Regular greaser trick—carrying things in your hat."

"I thought I had to do something, Joe. When I was at work in the engine room, I had planned to take off the cap and put it in my pocket."

"What did you have in that handkerchief?"

"My pocketknife."

"Great guns! Was the knife in the handkerchief when we left Catskill?"

"No. The knife and the handkerchief were both in the same pocket. I managed to tie the knife up in the handkerchief, after a fashion, while we were facing Grattan, and he was talking."

"Well, glory to glory and all sashay! And Grattan never saw you!"

"I'm inclined to think he did, from the way the thing turned out."

"You didn't think you could fool Grattan so he wouldn't search you, did you?"

"It was a desperate chance to keep him from looking into my cap. But I might have known I couldn't fool

him."

Just at that moment a lantern could be seen coming from down the track. A man reached the shed and began lighting a lamp at each end of it.

"Hello, neighbor!" called McGlory. "Do you belong around here?"

The man turned and looked toward the boys. Evidently he had not seen them before, and the call startled him.

"I live down the track a ways," he answered.

"Do you take care of this palatial depot?"

"I put out the lights," was the reply.

"A little late getting them out to-night, aren't you?"

"Well, no. There's no use putting them out before, 'cause the first train to stop hasn't come along yet."

"How far is it to Catskill?"

"Twenty mile."

"Where's the nearest telegraph office?"

"Three miles below. You fellers waitin' to ketch a train for Catskill?"

"Yes. When will it be along?"

"It's due now."

"Does it stop here?"

"Yes, if it's signaled."

"How'll we flag it?"

"I'll do that for ye with the lantern. That's what I come up here for—to put out the lights an' do the flaggin'."

"Here's a piece of luck, anyhow, Matt," said McGlory. "We can go on to Catskill and do our telegraphing from there."

"We might just as well," said Matt.

Matt's failure to keep the ruby was preying on his spirits. He couldn't help what had happened, but the sting of failure, when he always prided himself on "making good," was hard to bear.

"Buck up, pardy!" cried McGlory. "Old Tsan Ti can't find any fault with you."

"I know that. I'm thinking, though, we weren't cautious enough in going aboard that boat."

"Cautious? Tell me about that! Who wouldn't have been fooled, when the game was worked like Grattan worked it? I don't know how any one could have helped what happened."

"Anyhow," said Matt, "we fell down. It might have been just as well if I had disobeyed Tsan Ti's instructions and placed the ruby in some bank vault."

"But the mandarin said no. You carried out orders to the letter, and that's what lost us the ruby."

"We were to stay in the Catskills, and we didn't. Because we broke over our instructions, we fell into the hands of Grattan."

"He'd have got at you somehow even if we'd stayed in Catskill. I never saw such a man to keep after a thing he's set his mind on. Now, if we—"

"Train's comin'," called the man, stepping upon the track and waving the lantern.

The rumble of the passenger could be heard, growing rapidly in volume.

"Well," remarked McGlory, as he and Matt got up,

"we've shuffled off the hoodoo and nothing more will go crossways with us. That's worth a whole lot. And if Tsan Ti is fool enough to choke himself with that yellow cord, well, let him do it. Grattan was more than half right in what he said about that."

The train, with its row of dimly lighted windows, came to a halt. Matt and McGlory climbed aboard, and the train started on again.

The boys walked from one car into another trying to find a vacant seat which they could share together. At last Matt, who was in the lead, came to a halt in the aisle at the rear of the second coach.

"Move on, pard," said McGlory. "We'll try the next car. It can't be that all the coaches are as full as this one."

But Matt did not move on. He turned, amazement shining in his gray eyes, and pointed to a seat ahead of him, and on the right.

Two drowsy Chinamen occupied the seat. One of them was fleshy, and took up two-thirds of the space. This man wore a black silk cap with a red button. His chin was sunk on his breast and he was snoring loudly.

"Tsan Ti!" murmured McGlory, wondering if his eyes were playing him a trick.

"And Sam Wing," added Matt. "The mandarin is going to Catskill to get the ruby. Here's where I have to tell him the truth."

With that, Motor Matt leaned over and touched Tsan Ti on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XV.

A CRAFTY ORIENTAL.

Meeting Tsan Ti in this peculiar fashion was a seven-day wonder to the motor boys. The workings of chance, in connection with various matters appertaining to the stolen ruby, could not have been better exemplified.

Tsan Ti roused himself under Matt's touch, and blinked up at him through sleepy eyes. By degrees the lad's face took form before him, and he gave an incredulous grunt and floundered to his feet.

"Estimable, never-to-be-forgotten friend!" the mandarin wheezed, his flabby face beaming as he reached for Motor Matt's hand. "Also the notable McGlory, friend of my friend! This is a delight, all the more joyful because not expected until Catskill. Why is it I have the great honor to see you here?"

"That's quite a yarn, Tsan Ti," replied Matt.

"Let me hear it forthwith, I beseech!" and Tsan Ti ordered Sam Wing out of the seat and motioned for Matt to take his place.

The mandarin had been educated at one of the most famous colleges in the United States, and seemed, as McGlory expressed it, to have spent most of his time corralling adjectives.

Sam Wing, apparently not in the least excited by the sudden appearance of the motor boys, got a seat across the aisle and continued his doze. McGlory managed to secure a place behind Matt.

"I, most devoted youth," said Tsan Ti, as soon as Matt was seated, "am on my way to Catskill of a

purpose to talk with you. No longer am I followed by the suspicious person whom I know to have been in the service of Grattan. So soon as I discovered this, I started immediately to find you. The five hundred gods of good luck must have decreed this meeting."

"Rather," answered Matt, "the ten thousand demons of misfortune. I suppose, Tsan Ti, you are after the Eye of Buddha?"

"Quite true, honorable youth."

"Well," said Matt, "I haven't got it."

Tsan Ti started, then slumped back into his seat.

"It has escaped you, vigilant one?" he inquired, his puffy eyelids half closing as he regarded Matt.

"It has escaped me, all right."

"And who has it now?"

"Grattan."

The mandarin turned his face away and looked out of the car window into the night. Motor Matt felt miserable enough. His words, just uttered, might have sealed the doom of the mandarin.

"Converse with me at length upon the subject," said Tsan Ti, again turning toward Matt. "What you say is of vast importance, excellent friend."

Matt had twenty miles of slow traveling in which to make his disclosures, and he made them in detail, with now and then an explanatory word from McGlory.

He began at the point where he had received the ruby, and set forth the manner in which Bunce had presented himself. Bunce's cock-and-bull story was gone into, and Tsan Ti's eyes twinkled humorously—Matt wondered at the humor—as he heard how he had been lured into a basement by a beach comber and was

being held a prisoner. The leaving of the box with the hotel clerk, the flight into the hills, and the disappearance of Bunce, all dropped into the recital in chronological form; then came the tracking to the "pocket" under the ledge, and the following of the motorcycle trails in the direction of Catskill, the arrival of the boys in town, and the report of the clerk concerning the forged letter and the removal of the box.

"So there," put in the mandarin, "is where my ruby escaped from your unfortunate hands."

"Don't be so quick in your snap judgments, Tsan," spoke up McGlory. "The ruby wasn't in the box, but in Motor Matt's pocket. My pard had left the empty box with the clerk for a bluff."

The mandarin chuckled, and his body shook with his suppressed mirth.

"Remarkably well planned!" approved Tsan Ti. "Who could have done better? You have a brain of great power, my renowned friend, and your talk gives me much amusement and instruction. Grattan had the empty box and you had the ruby. What then?"

Then followed the call at the hotel of the man from the *Iris*, and Matt's agreement to take charge of the yacht's motor on the down-river trip, Matt to return to Catskill on the following morning. The treachery aboard the boat was listened to by the mandarin with flashing eyes.

"Grattan is possessed of a demon," declared Tsan Ti. "His wits are as keen as a sword's edge, and he knows how to use them. I do not wonder, estimable friend, that you fell into his power. Even I, had I been in your place, could not have saved the jewel."

"What's to be done now, Tsan Ti?" asked Matt

anxiously.

"Nothing," was the answer.

"But—but—the yellow cord!"

"It shall not be used by me."

Here was a mystery. If Tsan Ti could not bear the Eye of Buddha back to the Canton temple, it was the august decree of the regent that he should perish by the yellow cord. The ruby had been recovered, and lost again, but Tsan Ti had no intention of strangling himself by invitation of his ruler.

Failing to understand this point, Matt shifted the subject.

"Did you know, Tsan Ti," he queried, "that while you were in New York you had a Chinese spy around with you? A man who was carrying news of everything you did to an agent of Grattan's?"

"You refer to Charley Foo, honorable one?"

"Yes."

"Grattan can plan, my son, and so can the mandarin. This agent of Grattan paid Charley Foo ten silver dollars to betray me, and Charley Foo told me of it, showed the money, and asked what it was I would have him tell this hireling of Grattan's. Charley Foo was of much help to me."

Tsan Ti folded his hands complacently over his capacious stomach.

"Well, sufferin' bluffs!" murmured McGlory. "Charley Foo was the kind of a dark horse they were playing both ways. He told Grattan's man only what Tsan Ti wanted him to know; then why, in the name of all that's hard to figure out, did Tsan tell Charley to let it be known that the ruby was being sent to Motor

Matt?"

"It was my wish that Grattan should know about the sending of the ruby," said this most amazing Chinaman.

"Then," went on McGlory, "you expected that Grattan would get on Motor Matt's trail and make a dead set to get back the Eye of Buddha."

"I thought it most likely, sagacious youth."

"Then," averred McGlory warmly, "you can't blame Motor Matt for losing the ruby."

"Am I blaming him, inconsiderate one?" returned Tsan Ti. "Have I said one scolding word, or emitted anything but praise? Motor Matt has done excellently well, and I shall engrave his deeds on the tablets of my memory."

"But the ruby is gone!" said Matt.

"Not so, highly esteemed but most deceived friend. Observe!"

With that, Tsan Ti opened his yellow silk blouse and revealed a small bag suspended by a chain from his neck. Opening the bag, he gave Matt and McGlory a swift glimpse of a shining, blood-red jewel.

"Behold the Eye of Buddha," smiled the mandarin. "Not Grattan, with all his evil work, has it, but I."

This, as might be expected, heaped up the measure of astonishing events and topped off the motor boys' bewilderment.

"But the ruby—the Eye of Buddha Grattan took from me—"

"That, generous youth," answered the mandarin, dropping the bag on his breast and rearranging his blouse, "was not a ruby, but a base replica of the true

gem. It is worth, possibly, five dollars. I secured it from a stonecutter in New York."

By degrees the mandarin's crafty performance dawned on the motor boys. They were awed by the scope and audacious success of the design—completely fooling Grattan as it had done. As a specimen of Oriental craft, it was a revelation to Matt and McGlory.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MANDARIN WINS.

"Listen, honorable friends," said Tsan Ti, "while I talk to you instructively. In the words of the great Confucius, 'the cautious man seldom errs.' When I departed from you, amiable ones, on recovering the Eye of Buddha, I said that I was returning to my country by way of San Francisco. Such was my intention, of the moment, but further reflection dissuaded me. I decided to go to New York and proceed to China by the longer, but perhaps the safer, way.

"In the great city I discovered that I was being pursued and spied upon, and a great fear overcame me. Immediately I thought of Motor Matt. Should I visit him with possible dangers, I besought of myself, in order that I might preserve the precious relic from the temple at Honam? I thought of your bravery, never sufficiently to be praised, and I decided to make the risk. The cutter of precious stones was sent for, and I showed my ruby and asked that he make a counterfeit of it that would deceive any but a dealer in jewels. This was done, and quickly. I sent this comparatively valueless replica to you, Motor Matt, and told Charley Foo to let Grattan's man know what I had done. Also, the man was to be informed of my desire that Motor Matt should carry the stone about with him continually.

"What would happen? I inquired of myself. Most certainly, reflection made answer. Grattan will be upon the brave youth's track, and he will never rest until he secures the gem. This is as I desired, although I dared not so express myself in my letter which accompanied

the false gem.

"After the package had left me, my heart failed. I feared I had exposed you to dangers which might cause your undoing. Hence, without lingering further, Sam Wing and I took this train for Catskill, I being of the intention to tell you what I had planned, and to let it be known, through Charley Foo, that the real gem was in my hands and not yours.

"And see, I have come too late. Grattan, the wise and unscrupulous, has taken the counterfeit ruby and is pleased to think he has cheated me, and that I shall pass by means of the yellow cord. All is well, and my plans are maturing most successfully. The five hundred gods of good fortune are smiling upon me. While Grattan goes his course, firmly believing he has the Eye of Buddha, I travel mine, knowing he has been justly deceived."

There was a little resentment in Matt's heart as he listened to the mandarin's explanation of his crafty ways and means for circumventing Grattan. Tsan Ti had thrown upon Matt the weight of the whole proceeding, and had not taken means to inform him of the true state of affairs. The king of the motor boys, had he understood the nature of the mandarin's scheme, could have worked out his part of it even more successfully than he had done while being kept in ignorance.

"You're a keen one, Tsan," grunted McGlory, "but I'm a Piute if I admire the free-and-easy fashion you have of making dupes of your friends."

"It is that which has pained me," admitted the mandarin, "and it is my regret which was carrying me speedily to Catskill to tell my widely known friend the exact truth. Fate was quicker in the race than I. Events have come swiftly to pass, and out of them rises

Grattan with the false ruby. I have been fortunate, and while he goes to parts unknown, I shall hope to reach China before he discovers his error."

"Queer that Grattan, who knows the great ruby so well," said Matt, "could be fooled with a piece of glass of the same shape and size."

"And likewise of the exact color," returned Tsan Ti. "The color was most important of all. That Grattan was fooled shows how admirably the cutter of precious stones has done his work."

"You're really going to China this time, are you, Tsan Ti?"

"Of a certainty," declared the mandarin. "Now that you have been met most wonderfully on this train, I shall not get off at Catskill, but will accompany the cars to Buffalo. From there, without delay, I shall go on to Chicago, from there to Denver, and so to San Francisco, where I will embark on the first ship that will carry me across the Pacific."

Tsan Ti leaned over in front of Matt and called out something in Chinese to Sam Wing. Sam Wing lifted his nodding head with a start, and from his blouse produced a small sack of alligator skin, which he handed to his master.

The sack was stuffed with banknotes, and from the lot the mandarin extracted three five-hundred-dollar bills.

"Will you consider it of an insulting nature if I offer you these?" inquired the mandarin of Matt.

"I won't, if he does," chimed in McGlory.

"I think I'm entitled to the money, Tsan Ti," said Matt. "The way you Chinamen do business doesn't make much of a hit with me. Your little plot wouldn't

have been hurt in the least if you had just mentioned in the letter you sent with that supposed ruby that the gem was false, and that you sent it to me hoping Grattan would get it and keep off your trail. I could have helped you even more in achieving your purpose."

"It is to be regretted deeply that I did not," answered the mandarin humbly. "In my own country I would not have given two thoughts to the troubles I caused another, so long as my aim was just and wise; but here, in America, different standards rule, and that I brought dangers upon your head I shall never forget."

The door of the coach opened and a brakeman thrust in his head to call out the station of Catskill.

"That means us, pard," said McGlory. "Grab your money and let's hike."

Matt took the money and slowly placed it in his pocket.

"You bear no ill will, worthy one, and friend whose memory will always blossom in the gardens of my recollections?" asked Tsan Ti.

"It's all right, Tsan Ti," returned Matt, getting up. "You win, and are off for the Flowery Kingdom with the Eye of Buddha. Grattan loses, and he'll find it out sooner or later. As for Joe and me, we'll call accounts square. Good-by, and good luck to you." He took the mandarin's hand cordially.

"May the five hundred gods of good luck smile continually upon you," said Tsan Ti.

With that, Motor Matt and McGlory left the coach and dropped off the train.

"Back in Catskill!" said the cowboy, "and after being fooled by Bunce, and Grattan, and Tsan Ti!"

"We've fooled Grattan twice where he has fooled us once, Joe," returned Matt.

"Right you are, pard; and there's plenty of chance for Tsan Ti to run into a snag between here and China."

"I'm hoping he makes the trip without any trouble."

"I don't know but I hope the same thing, although I get a trifle hot under the collar every time I think of the way we fretted over a piece of colored glass."

They stood on the platform until the tail lights of the train had vanished from sight up the track.

"The mandarin is getting a good start on the home trail, anyhow," remarked McGlory, as he and Matt turned away to climb the slope that led to their hotel. "He's bound west by train, while Grattan is fooling around, somewhere on the Hudson, with the *Iris*. I wouldn't turn over my hand, after what Tsan Ti told us, to put the kibosh on Grattan, or even Bunce."

"Grattan and Bunce have got their deserts," asserted Matt. "They'll be punished enough when they discover that they've had all their trouble and taken so many chances for nothing more than a bogus ruby."

"Fine business," chuckled McGlory; "and yet," he added, with a perceptible change in his voice, "there's something about that Philo Grattan that makes a hit with me. Maybe I've got a yellow streak in my make-up, somewhere, and that it's wrong for me to own up to such a notion, but it's the truth."

"If Grattan was honest," said Matt, "he'd be a fellow any one could like. But his ideas are all wrong. He can't see where the harm comes in removing a valuable ruby from an idol in a heathen temple, but if he'd step into Tiffany's, in New York, and extract a gem like that from the show case and make off with it, his crime wouldn't be any the less."

"A heathen has got property rights," agreed the cowboy, "just the same as you or me—or Grattan, himself. Where do you suppose Grattan, and that choice assortment of tinhorns he has with him on the *Iris*, are going?"

"I don't know, pard, and what happens to them now doesn't bother me much. We're rid of them all, and I'm thankful for it. We've had too much of Tsan Ti, as well as of Grattan and Bunce."

"That's what you say now, but just let the mandarin write you one of those embroidered letters of his, asking for help, and you'll head in his direction just a-smoking."

"Not again, Joe. I know what the Yellow Peril is, now, and I'm going to fight shy of it."

"Amen to that, pard, and I hope you stick to it."

"I will."

"And there's nothing more between us and a high old time in Manhattan?"

"Nothing but a stretch of river—or of railroad track, Joe, if you'd rather go by train."

"Hooray!" jubilated McGlory.

THE END.

The next number (32) will contain:

Motor Matt's Double-Trouble

OR,

THE LAST OF THE HOODOO

The Red Jewel—Another End of the Yarn—Shock Number One—Shocks Two and Three—A Hot Starter—McGlory is Lost, and Found—"Pocketed"—Springing a Coup—Motor Matt's Chase—The Chase Concluded—A Double Capture—Another Surprise—Baiting a Trap—How the Trap was Sprung—Back to the Farm—Conclusion.

MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING MOTOR
ADVENTURE FICTION

NEW YORK, September 25, 1909.

TERMS TO MOTOR STORIES MAIL SUBSCRIBERS.

(Postage Free.)

Single Copies or Back Numbers, 5c. Each.

3 months	65c.
4 months	85c.
6 months	\$1.25
One year	2.50
2 copies one year	4.00
1 copy two years	4.00

How to Send Money—By post-office or express money-order, registered letter, bank check or draft, at our risk. At your own risk if sent by currency, coin, or postage-stamps in ordinary letter.

Receipts—Receipt of your remittance is acknowledged by proper change of number on your label. If not correct you have not been properly credited, and should let us know at once.

Ormond G. Smith, } *Proprietors* **STREET & SMITH, Publishers,**
George C. Smith, } **79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.**

JERRY STEBBINS' HOSS TRADE.

At a recent interview with one Jeremiah Stebbins, he freed his mind in the following choice language:

"Everybody I've saw lately has ben a-winking and a-smirking, and a-laughing, and a-saying, 'How de dew, Jerry? how's the hoss trade?' and sich like, and I've got tired on't; and I'm a going to tell the hull story to you newspaper fellers, and let you print it and done with it.

"You see, the way on't was this. I live up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and once in a while I takes a trip down to Philadelphia to see the sights, do some dickering, buy some store things, and so on.

"I've al'ays considered myself pooty cute, and have gi'n lots o' advice to them that's around me, telling 'em about the city, and its big shows, and its cheating scamps, and what to do when they goes there, and how not to get took in, and all sich; and I 'spect it's jest because I've done all this ere that the laugh comes in agin me pooty rough-like.

"You see there's a feller living right nigh me, named Jim Smithers, who's been down to Philadelphia four times, and every time so'thing's happened to him in the way o' getting fooled by some o' them confounded scamps what don't 'pear to do nothing for a living but lay around, like nasty spiders, watching for flies, to ketch some o' us country chaps by some dirty trick or other, and git hold o' some o' our hard-earned dollars to loaf around on. I ain't afeared to speak my mind about 'em, and I don't keer a goll darn if you print it, nuther, and let 'em know that I think they're just about as mean as mean kin be.

"Waal, about Jim Smithers. He's pooty green yit; but the first time he went down to the big city he was as raw as a new cabbage, and he got took in fifteen dollars' worth on what you newspaper fellers calls the drap game.

"In course you know all about that ere. A feller comes up behind the country chap, and, all unbeknown to him, drops a pocketbook, picks it up, and tells him it's hisn. But it ain't, you know, and the country feller says so. Then the city scamp opens it a lettle, and it 'pears to be stuffed full o' bank bills; and he says it's a pity that some honest man has got to lose it, 'cause he hisself's a stranger in town, and is jest a-going out ag'in, and he can't stop to advertise it, and git the big reward that's sartin to be offered for it; but if the country feller's a mind to take it, give him fifteen or twenty dollars or so, he'll let him have his chance, and so on.

"Waal, Jim Smithers was ketched in this way, and he gin the other feller fifteen dollars—nigh all the money he had—and when he went to put so'thing into the *Public Ledger* about it, and handed over one o' the bills to pay for 't, the grinning clerk told him as how he'd ben 'sold,' and the money wa'n't wo'th as much as white paper. Wa'n't Jim mad, then? and didn't us fellers plague him peskily about it arter he got home?

"Waal, the next time Jim went to the city he got ketched in some keerd trick, and lost a twenty-dollar bill afore he knowed it. The third time he spent five dollars, a-buying prize packages that didn't have no prizes in 'em 'cept brass rings; and the last time some scamp ketched him ag'in on a hoss affair.

"'Jim Smithers,' says I, arter he'd told me all about it, 'if I's you I wouldn't go down to Philadelphia ag'in alone—I swon I wouldn't. Jest as like as not some critter, a-running loose in the streets, will take you fer

a green pumpkin, and eat you all right up, so's you won't never git back to your mar any more,' says I.

"'Oh, you think your darn smart, Jerry Stebbins, don't ye?' says Jim back ag'in. 'Jest you look out that you don't git ketched some day your own self.'

"'They've all tried me, and found me too smart for 'em,' says I.

"'We'll see in the end,' says Jim.

"'Bout a week or so arter that, I went down ag'in to Philadelphia. I had some arrants to do for some o' my neighbors; and I'd a notion to tend a auction sale of hosses, and if I could see any going right cheap, I thought mebbe I might buy one on a spec—for, though I says it myself, I'm pooty cute in a hoss trade, and have made a good many dollars afore now in fattening up some old critter and then swapping him off and gitting boot.

"'Waal, I went to town, and, arter gitting through with my other business, I started right over to the bazaar, where they sells hosses—for I'd been there afore and knowed exactly where it was.

"'Jest as I was a-going in, I met a dressy-looking chap a-coming out; and he says to me, says he:

"'Mister, kin you tell me where I kin buy a right good hoss pooty cheap?'

"'I couldn't, less it's in here,' says I 'for that's jest what I wants to do myself.'

"'Waal, I shan't buy in this here cheating place,' says he, 'for I done that once afore, and paid a hundred dollars for a critter that I arterward had to sell for thirty-five; and right glad I was to git that much, and only lose sixty-five on the trade. If I's you I wouldn't risk no money in here.'

"I knows a hoss when I sees him,' says I, pooty proud, feeling my oats, 'and if anybody makes anything off o' Jerry Stebbins in a hoss trade, I hope they'll let me know.'

"S'pose you could pick out a good nice critter for me, Mr. Stebbins, and not get cheated in the price?' says he.

"I s'pose I could if I'd try,' says I.

"And would five dollars make you try?' says he.

"I guess it would,' says I.

"Wal, then,' says he, 'I'll give you a five-dollar bill to do it,' says he.

"He rammed his hand into his pocket to git the money; but afore he'd drawed it out, a slick-looking feller comes riding up on hossback, and says to my chap, says he:

"Do you know anybody what wants to buy a right good hoss dirt cheap?'

"I dew,' says my man.

"How high be you willing to go?' says the hossback chap.

"I don't keer a darn, so's the critter's wo'th the money,' says t'other, and he gin me a sly wink.

"Then I'll take you to a place where I know you'll be suited,' says the hossback chap.

"Fur from here?' axes t'other.

"Not more'n a mile at the outside,' says him on the hoss.

"Will you jest go along, 'arn the five, and see that I ain't cheated?' says the foot feller to me, in a tone so low that t'other couldn't hear.

"I said I would; and then my man axed the man on the hoss for his keerd, which he gin him and rid away.

"While we was a-going to the place, my feller told me that his name was John Jenkins; that he'd got as much money as he keerd about having, and if he could only git a hoss to suit him, and not pay more for't than 'twas wo'th, he'd be mighty pleased.

""Tain't 'cause I ker a darn for the money, Mr. Stebbins,' says he to me, confiding-like; 'but it's 'cause I knows as how all these racehoss-jockey fellers takes a pride in gitting the best of everybody they deals with, and I hates to be beat in that are way. Now I sees by your eyes, Mr. Stebbins, that you ain't a chap to be took in in a hoss trade, and I wants you to use 'em for me; and if things comes out all right, I won't stop to put another ten or twenty a-top of the five, you know.'

"'I'll do my best, Mr. Jenkins,' says I; 'and I guess you'll find my best right up to the handle.'

"When we got to the place we seen a stable, in a little, back, dirty street, and in it was two men and three hosses.

"Two of these 'ere hosses wan't o' no great account, but t'other one was a pooty slick smart-looking critter.

"'How much for this 'ere one?' says Mr. Jenkins, putting his hand onto the beast.

"'Waal, really,' says the dealer, 'we don't keer about selling that are critter.'

"'I was recommended to come here for a place where I could buy a good hoss cheap,' says Mr. Jenkins.

"'We really hain't got nothing to sell 'cept the other two critters,' says the jockey. 'We'll sell you them cheap.'

"'I don't want 'em,' says Jenkins, 'but only this 'ere

one. Hey, Stebbins! what d'you say?' he says, speaking to me.

"Waal, the critter you've picked out is pooty likely,' says I, 'but I don't think much of t'others.'

"He called me out one side, and axed me what the best hoss was really wo'th.

"A good hundred and twenty-five,' says I.

"How about a hundred and fifty?' says he.

"I wouldn't go a mite over a hundred and forty,' says I.

"I'll have him, though, at some price, for I've sot my mind on't,' says he, in a determined way.

"Then he went back to the jockey, and offered him a hundred dollars for that critter.

"The jockey chap laughed right in his face at fust, and then he 'peared to get mad, and said, says he:

"You're either a dealer yourself, or else you wants to insult me; and no matter which it are, I ain't a-going to trade with you at no price.'

"I'll give you a hundred and twenty-five,' says Jenkins.

"Pshaw!' says jockey.

"A hundred and fifty,' says Jenkins.

"No,' says t'other.

"A hundred and seventy-five, then.'

"No.'

"I'll give you two hundred.'

"You can't buy him at no price,' says the hoss dealer, looking awful mad.

"Then let us go to a more decenter place, Mr. Stebbins,' says Jenkins to me.

"We started off together, and as soon as we'd got out of sight of the stable, Jenkins says to me, says he:

"Friend Stebbins, I wants that are hoss right bad, 'cause he's jest the critter to suit me. I wonder if you couldn't buy him for me?"

"I don't 'spect I could,' says I, 'for the feller that owns him has got his Dutch up, and won't sell him to neither of us.'

"Would you mind going back by yourself and trying?" says he.

"To obleege you I'll dew it,' says I. 'But the hoss ain't wo'th what you offered, and nothink like it.'

"I don't keer for that, Mr. Stebbins,' says he; 'it a'nt making a spec' I'm arter; I wants the hoss for hisself, 'cause I've sot my mind on't, and money ain't no object with me. I'll tell ye what I'll dew. If you'll buy that are hoss and fetch him round to my stable, I'll jest plank down two hundred and fifty dollars cash for him, and you may make what profit you kin. I don't keer what you give for him, but I'll give you two hundred and fifty dollars jest the minute he reaches my stable, and I'll go right down there now and wait for you.'

"I told him I'd try my luck, and he writ down the direction for me to come to.

"Waal, I went back and found the two hoss fellers talking with the chap that had fust told us about the place.

"The minute this chap seen me, he come for'ard and said he was right down sorry that his pardners had got mad at my friend—and if he'd been there it wouldn't have turned out so—though it was a insult for him to

offer only a hundred dollars for a hoss like that are, which nobody could find his match nowhere for a cent less than three hundred dollars in gold.

"Tell you what 'tis, mister,' he says, 'I know your friend, John Jenkins—though he don't recollect me—and I know he's mighty rich, and a right down good customer where he likes to deal, and I hate like fury that he went away disapp'inted. Now if you'll find him, and fetch him back, and git him to trade with us, I'll give you a five-dollar bill.'

"I thought I'd got a good chance for a spec, so I says, says I:

"I don't think I could git him back; but if you folks here wants to sell that are hoss, and will take what he's wo'th, I don't mind buying him for my own self.'

"You kin have him for two hundred and twenty-five dollars, and not a cent short,' says he.

"That's more'n I'd give my old daddy for him,' says I.

"Then we began to talk, and palaver, and hile, and at last I got him down to two hundred and ten, and him to give in a old saddle and bridle, so's I could ride him off.

"Waal, I paid down the money, and then rode off for Jenkins' stable feeling pooty proud and happy that I'd made a clean forty dollars by my barg'in.

"But, somehow or other, I couldn't find Jenkins' stable, nor Jenkins nuther, and I hain't found 'em since.

"To git right down to the gist on't, I'd been awfully fooled, and tricked into paying two hundred and ten dollars for a hoss that I didn't want myself, and that I's glad to git rid on, arterwards for one hundred and five, jest one-half the critter cost me.

"Waal, mister, that's the story that all the folks round my way is a-grinning and a-snickerin' over, and I s'pose I've got to grin and bear it till the hull darned thing dies out and be darned to it.

"It's l'arned me for one thing, that them slick-looking, slick-talking city fellers kin lie and cheat like thunder; and for another thing, that it don't dew for a country chap to butt his brains ag'in them city scamps and al'ays 'spect to git the best on't."

THE PHANTOM ENGINEER.

"Whenever I tell the story," said Alf Whitney, throwing away his half-smoked cigar, and putting his long legs on the top of the table, in a way some men have when a story is to be forthcoming, "everybody winks at everybody else, as much as to say, 'Alf had taken too much whisky that time,' or 'Alf was asleep and dreamed the whole thing.' But I tell you, comrades, though you are at liberty to disbelieve what I tell you, it is true; and that's all I know about it. I'm no long-headed metaphysician to reason it all out—I only know what happened, and it's that I'm going to tell."

We gathered closer around the red-hot stove in the bar-room of the Anderson House, for it was a biting cold night, and the snow was too much for our train, destitute as we were of a snowplow, and we had given up the attempt to push through to C— that night, and retaken ourselves to the hospitalities of the Arlington.

It had often been whispered among the railway employees that Alf Whitney had once had something strange happen to him. He was a young man yet, though the oldest and most skillful engineer on the road—noted for his skill and judgment, no less than for his sturdy endurance and his bravery, which nothing ever overcame.

I suppose you people who ride in Pullman cars, rocked in velvet cushions, and look at the scenery rushing past, through plate glass windows, heavy with gilt and rosewood mouldings, never think much of the man upon whom your safety depends—the man who, with his hand upon the lever which controls the monster that is bearing you along, stands tireless at his post, through cold and heat, through storm and

sunshine, smutty, grimy with smoke, greasy and weather-hardened, but oftentimes the bravest and noblest man among you all. But this is a digression.

We all hastened to assure Alf that we were ready to believe whatever he might say; and he, smiling a little, as if he doubted the sincerity of our assurances, began his story. I give it in his own words, which are much better than mine would be.

"Six years ago, one dark stormy night, Jack Horton lost his life in a smash-up at Rowley's Bend. Jack was an engineer, and as fine a fellow as ever trod the ground. He was handsome, too, and notwithstanding his dirty occupation, a great favorite with the ladies; for when he was off the machine long enough to get the oil and cinders washed off, and his other clothes on, he was the best-looking, as well as the best-mannered, young man anywhere in this vicinity.

"He was engaged to marry Esther Clay; and Esther was a beauty without anything by way of art to help her—a sound-looking, wholesome, healthy young girl—none of your die-away kind, fainting at the sight of a spider, and going into tantrums over a cow a mile off. She was just the kind of woman I could worship, and not put myself out any to do it, either!"

"Why didn't you go for her after Jack was dead?" asked Tom Barnard carelessly.

"Hush! she is dead!" said Alf, in a subdued voice; and the unwonted pallor that settled round his mouth gave me a slight clue to the reason he had never married. And afterward I knew that Esther Clay, dead, and pledged through all eternity to another, was more to him than any living woman!

After a little he went on.

"When Jack was killed, it was the breaking of an axle

that caused the mischief; and, of course, this axle broke on just the worst part of the road. They always do. You all know Rowley's Bend? You all know just how high the grade is there, and just how rough and jagged the rocks lie all along the embankment, clear down to the river. No need to dwell on this. The train pitched down into the dark, head first, and Jack, true to his duty, never stirred from his post. It was a good while before we could get to him, the broken timbers of the piled-up cars so completely caged him in. She came there before we had taken his body out, and I shall never forget how she went down into the ruins where even the bravest of us hardly dared to venture, so insecure was the footing, and worked with her white, slender hands, until the blood ran from their wounds. She never minded it a particle, but worked on, with a face as pale and rigid as marble. But I am making a long story, and dwelling too much on details. Jack was dead when they found him, and she lived just a month afterward. And, though everybody lamented at her funeral, and said it was 'so sad,' I do not think it was sad, for when two people love each other, truly and loyally, and one of them dies, it seems to me Heaven's special mercy if the other is suffered to go along.

"Jack and I had always been great friends; and once when we were talking about the supernatural nonsense that so many believe in, Jack said to me laughingly:

"If I die first, I'll keep a watch over you, old fellow; and when I see you running into danger, I'll whistle the brakes down. Now remember!" After he died these careless words of his kept coming back to me, and try as I would not to remember them, the more they were present to my mind.

"It was nearly two years after Jack's death that I was taking the ten-fifty accommodation out to L—. It was a dark, drizzly night, and the headlight on the front of

the engine pierced but a short distance into the gloom and fog ahead of us. I was running carefully, as I always run on such nights, and had nearly reached Carney's Ford when I saw something on the track before us. I whistled to down brakes, and reversed the lever. The train slackened, and I could see distinctly ahead of us the tall figure of a man. But we got no nearer to him, for though he seemed to be only walking, his speed was fully equal to ours. We should never overtake him. A cold shiver ran through me as I noted this fact. No mortal man could walk like that.

"'Richards,' said I to the fireman, who, ghastly and trembling with fear, was gazing at the strange apparition, 'it must be Old Nick himself, with the seven-league boots on!'

"As I spoke, the figure turned toward us, and then I saw that in his hand he carried a red lantern, the well-known signal of danger. He lifted it, swung it slowly round his head once, and, as he did so, the blood-red light fell full on his face—the face of Jack Horton. For a moment he stood motionless, then he was enveloped in a pale, azure flame, which died out instantly, and left—nothing!

"All this, which it has taken me so long to describe, took place in an instant of time, and by the time the phantom had vanished Richards and I had managed to stop the train. We got off and went ahead. The red lantern had not signaled 'danger' for nothing. A heavy stick of timber was spiked across the track, and, had we gone on at full speed, it would have sent us to swift destruction.

"The company ferreted out the rascal who had done this vile thing, and he is serving out a long term in the State prison now. I have seen him and talked with him, and he swore to me, with a voice that trembled even then with horror, that after he had spiked down the

timber and had hidden in some bushes near by to watch the result, he had seen a tall man, with a red lantern in his hand, start up in front of the engine and walk, as nothing human could walk, until he reached the very spot where the danger lay.

"And then," said the miscreant, "he changed into a blue flame, and vanished, and I knew that my plan was upset, and that for once Satan had gone back on them as he'd set to work."

"Well," said Tom Barnard, "what else?"

"That is all," said Alf, lighting another cigar.

"But what was the fellow's object in seeking to disable the train?"

"Plunder. He had ascertained that a carrying company would have a large sum of money on board that night, and he was not averse to turning an honest penny."

"But the phantom—how do you explain it?" persisted Tom.

"I don't explain it," said Alf quietly.



LATEST ISSUES



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

The best detective stories on earth. Nick Carter's exploits are read the world over. **High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.**

649—The Triangle Clue; or, Nick Carter's Greenwich Village Case.

650—The Hollingsworth Puzzle; or, Nick Carter Three Times Baffled.

651—The Affair of the Missing Bonds; or, Nick Carter in the Harness.

652—The Green Box Clue; or, Nick Carter's Good Friend.

653—The Taxicab Mystery; or, Nick Carter Closes a Deal.

654—The Mystery of a Hotel Room; or, Nick Carter's Best Work.

655—The Tragedy of the Well; or, Nick Carter Under Suspicion.

656—The Black Hand; or, Chick Carter's Well-laid Plot.

657—The Black Hand Nemesis; or, Chick Carter and the Mysterious Woman.

658—A Masterly Trick; or, Chick and the Beautiful Italian.

659—A Dangerous Man; or, Nick Carter and the Famous Castor Case.

660—Castor the Poisoner; or, Nick Carter Wins a Man.

661—The Castor Riddle; or, Nick Carter's Search for a Hidden Fortune.

662—A Tragedy of the Bowery; or, Nick Carter and Ida at Coney Island.

663—Four Scraps of Paper; or, Nick Carter's Coney Island Search.

BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The most original stories of Western adventure. The only weekly containing the adventures of the famous Buffalo Bill. **High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.**

425—Buffalo Bill's Balloon Escape; or, Out of the Grip of the Great Swamp.

426—Buffalo Bill and the Guerrillas; or, The Flower Girl of San Felipe.

427—Buffalo Bill's Border War; or, The Mexican Vendetta.

428—Buffalo Bill's Mexican Mix-up; or, The Bullfighter's Defiance.

429—Buffalo Bill and the Gamecock; or, The Red Trail on the Canadian.

430—Buffalo Bill and the Cheyenne Raiders; or, The Spurs of the Gamecock.

431—Buffalo Bill's Whirlwind Finish; or, The Gamecock Wins.

432—Buffalo Bill's Santa Fe Secret; or, The Brave of Taos.

433—Buffalo Bill and the Taos Terror; or, The Rites of the Red Estufa.

434—Buffalo Bill's Bracelet of Gold; or, The Hidden Death.

435—Buffalo Bill and the Border Baron; or, The Cattle King of No Man's Land.

BRAVE AND BOLD WEEKLY

All kinds of stories that boys like. The biggest and best nickel's worth ever offered. **High art colored covers. Thirty-two big pages. Price, 5 cents.**

338—Working His Way Upward; or, From Footlights to Riches. By Fred Thorpe.

339—The Fourteenth Boy; or, How Vin Lovell Won Out. By Weldon J. Cobb.

340—Among the Nomads; or, Life in the Open. By the author of "Through Air to Fame."

341—Bob, the Acrobat; or, Hustle and Win Out. By Harrie Irving Hancock.

342—Through the Earth; or, Jack Nelson's Invention. By Fred Thorpe.

343—The Boy Chief; or, Comrades of Camp and Trail. By John De Morgan.

344—Smart Alec; or, Bound to Get There. By Weldon J. Cobb.

345—Climbing Up; or, The Meanest Boy Alive. By Harrie Irving Hancock.

346—Comrades Three; or, With Gordon Keith in the South Seas. By Lawrence White, Jr.

347—A Young Snake-charmer; or, The Fortunes of Dick Erway. By Fred Thorpe.

348—Checked Through to Mars; or, Adventures in Other Worlds. By Weldon J. Cobb.

349—Fighting the Cowards; or, Among the Georgia Moonshiners. By Harrie Irving Hancock.

350—The Mud River Boys; or, The Fight for Penlow's Mill.
By John L. Douglas.

351—Grit and Wit; or, Two of a Kind. By Fred Thorpe.

*For sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address
on receipt of price, 5 cents per copy, in money or postage
stamps, by*

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 79-89 Seventh Avenue,
New York

THE BEST OF THEM ALL!!

MOTOR STORIES

Every boy who reads one of the splendid adventures of Motor Matt, which are making their appearance in this weekly, is at once surprised and delighted. Surprised at the generous quantity of reading matter that we are giving for five cents; delighted with the fascinating interest of the stories, second only to those published in the Tip Top Weekly.

Matt has positive mechanical genius, and while his adventures are unusual, they are, however, drawn so true to life that the reader can clearly see how it is possible for the ordinary boy to experience them.

- 1—Motor Matt; or, The King of the Wheel.
- 2—Motor Matt's Daring; or, True to His Friends.
- 3—Motor Matt's Century Run; or, The Governor's Courier.
- 4—Motor Matt's Race; or, The Last Flight of the "Comet."
- 5—Motor Matt's Mystery; or, Foiling a Secret Plot.
- 6—Motor Matt's Red Flier; or, On the High Gear.
- 7—Motor Matt's Clue; or, The Phantom Auto.
- 8—Motor Matt's Triumph; or, Three Speeds Forward.
- 9—Motor Matt's Air Ship; or, The Rival Inventors.
- 10—Motor Matt's Hard Luck; or, The Balloon House Plot.
- 11—Motor Matt's Daring Rescue; or, The Strange Case of Helen Brady.
- 12—Motor Matt's Peril; or, Cast Away in the Bahamas.
- 13—Motor Matt's Queer Find; or, The Secret of the Iron Chest.
- 14—Motor Matt's Promise; or, The Wreck of the "Hawk."
- 15—Motor Matt's Submarine; or, The Strange Cruise of the "Grampus."
- 16—Motor Matt's Quest; or, Three Chums in Strange Waters.
- 17—Motor Matt's Close Call; or, The Snare of Don Carlos.

- 18—Motor Matt in Brazil; or, Under the Amazon.
 19—Motor Matt's Defiance; or, Around the Horn.
 20—Motor Matt Makes Good; or, Another Victory for the Motor Boys.
 21—Motor Matt's Launch; or, A Friend in Need
 22—Motor Matt's Enemies, or, Struggle for the Right
 23—Motor Matt's Prize; or, The Pluck That Wins
 24—Motor Matt on The Wing; or, Flying for Fame and Fortune
 25—Motor Matt's Reverse; or, Caught in a Losing Cause
 26—Motor Matt's "Make-and-Break"; or, The Pluck That Wins
 27—Motor Matt's Engagement; or, On The Road With a Show
 28.—Motor Matt's Short-Circuit; or, The Mahout Vow
 29.—Motor Matt's Make-Up; or, Playing a New Rôle
 30.—Motor Matt's Mandarin; or, Turning a Trick for Tsan Ti
 31.—Motor Matt's Mariner; or, Filling the Bill for Bunce

No. 32.—Motor Matt's Double Trouble; or, The Last of the Hoodoo

TO BE PUBLISHED ON October 1st

No. 33.—Motor Matt's Mission; or, The Taxicab Tangle

32 LARGE SIZE
PAGES

SPLENDID COLORED
COVERS

PRICE, FIVE CENTS

At all newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, by the publishers upon receipt of the price.

STREET & SMITH, *Publishers,* NEW YORK

IF YOU WANT ANY BACK NUMBERS of our Weeklies and cannot procure them from your newsdealer, they can be obtained from this office direct. Fill out the following Order Blank and send it to us with the price of the Weeklies you want and we will send them to you by return mail. **POSTAGE STAMPS TAKEN THE SAME AS MONEY.**

_____ 19__

STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Dear Sirs: Enclosed please find _____ cents for which send me:

<p>TIP TOP No _____ WEEKLY, s. _____ _____</p> <p>NICK " _____ CARTER _____ WEEKLY, _____</p> <p>DIAMOND " _____ DICK _____ WEEKLY, _____</p>		<p>BUFFALO Nos. _____ BILL _____ STORIES, _____</p> <p>BRAVE " _____ AND _____ BOLD _____ WEEKLY, _____</p> <p>MOTOR " _____ STORIES, _____ _____</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Name _____ Street _____
 City _____ State _____

