

BRAVE AND BOLD

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Turning to give his attention to the young fellow who was lying beside the taxicab, Matt received another start. Strands of long, yellow hair had been released and were waving about Granger's head.

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THRILLING ADVENTURE

No. 362

FIVE

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CENTS

TAXICAB TANGLE;
OR,
The Mission of the Motor Boys

By Stanley R Matthews

MOTOR FICTION

Street & Smith Publishers — New York

“Stanley R. Matthews” was the pen name of author William Wallace Cook (1867-1933). These *Motor Matt* stories were collected in sets of three, the main character’s name changed to Bob Steele, and reprinted word-for-word with only that name change. 33 of these weekly stories were written with the final one never officially published, and only the first 30 turned into *Bob Steele* editions.

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MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE
MOTOR FICTION

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By Stanley R Matthews

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.	A LETTER—AND A SURPRISE.	6
CHAPTER II.	STARTLING NEWS.	12
CHAPTER III.	A TWISTED SKEIN.	18
CHAPTER IV.	MOROT MATT'S DUTY.	23
HAPTER V.	HOW MCGLORY WAS FOOLED.	29
CHAPTER VI.	ON THE BOSTON PIKE.	35
CHAPTER VII.	THE JOURNEY'S END.	39
CHAPTER VIII.	CHUMS IN COUNCIL.	45
CHAPTER IX.	A DARING PLOT.	50
CHAPTER X.	PRISONERS.	55
CHAPTER XI.	BOLD WORK.	60
CHAPTER XII.	PURSUIT.	65
CHAPTER XIII.	IN AN OUT OF LEEVILLE.	71
CHAPTER XIV.	SENDING THE TELEGRAM	76
CHAPTER XV.	AT THE BANK	82
CHAPTER XVI.	A CLOSE SHAVE.	87
FACE TO FACE WITH A MAD DOG.		93
THE BOOMERANG		98
THE MAN-HUNTER.		X
CROCODILES		107
THE RAT CRUSADE.		111

CHAPTER I.

“For its size, pard, I reckon this is about the biggest town on the map. We’ve been here five days, and the traffic squad has been some busy with our bubble-wagon, but if there’s any part of this burg we haven’t seen, now’s the time to get out a search warrant, and go after it. What’s on for to-day?”

Joe McGlory was the speaker. He and his chum, Matt King, known far and wide as Motor Matt, were in the lobby of the big hotel in which they had established themselves when they first arrived in New York. In a couple of “sleepy-hollow” chairs they were watching the endless tide of humanity, as it ebbed and flowed through the great rotunda.

For five days the gasoline motor had whirled the boys in every direction, an automobile rushing them around the city, with side trips to Coney Island, north as far as Tarrytown, and across the river as far as Fort Lee, while a power boat had given them a view of the bay and the sound. Out of these five days, too, they had spent one afternoon fishing near City Island, and had given up several hours to watching the oystermen off Sound Beach.

Matt, having lived in the Berkshires, and having put in some time working for a motor manufactory in Albany, had visited the metropolis many times. He was able, therefore, to act as pilot for his cowboy pard.

“I thought,” he remarked, “that it’s about time we coupled a little business with this random knocking around. There’s a man in the Flatiron Building who is interested in aviation—I heard of him through Cameron, up at Fort Totten—and I believe we’ll call and have a little talk. It might lead to something, you know.”

“Aviation!” muttered the cowboy. “That’s a brand-new one. Tell me what it’s about, pard.”

“Aviation,” and Matt coughed impressively, “is the science of flight on a heavier-than-air machine. When we used that Traquair aëroplane, Joe, we were aviators.”

“Much obliged, professor,” grinned the cowboy. “When we scooted through the air we were aviating, eh? Well, between you and me and the brindle maverick, I’d rather aviate than do anything else. All we lack,

now, is a bird's-eye view of the met-ro-po-lus. Let's get a flying machine from this man in the Flatiron Building, and 'do' the town from overhead. We can roost on top of the Statue of Liberty, see how Grant's Tomb looks from the clouds, scrape the top of the Singer Building, give the Metropolitan—”

“That's a dream,” laughed Matt. “It will be a long time before there's much flying done over the city of New York. I'm going to see if we have any mail. After that, we'll get a car and start for downtown.”

McGlory sat back in his chair and waited while his chum disappeared in the crowd. When Matt got back, he showed his comrade a letter.

“Who's it from?” inquired McGlory.

“Not being a mind reader, Joe,” Matt replied, “I'll have to pass,” and he handed the letter to the cowboy.

“For me?” cried McGlory.

“Your name's on the envelope. The letter, as you see, has been forwarded from Catskill.”

“Speak to me about this! I haven't had a letter since you and I left 'Frisco. Who in the wide world is writing to me, and what for?”

McGlory opened the letter and pulled out two folded sheets. His amazement grew as he read. Presently his surprise gave way to a look of delight, and he chuckled jubilantly.

“This is from the colonel,” said he.

“Who's the colonel?” asked Matt.

“Why, Colonel Mark Antony Billings, of Tucson, Arizona. Everybody in the Southwest knows the colonel. He's in the mining business, the colonel is, and he tells me that I'm on the ragged edge of dropping into a fortune.”

A man of forty, rather “loudly” dressed, was seated behind the boys, smoking and reading a newspaper. He was not so deeply interested in the paper as he pretended to be, for he got up suddenly, stepped to a marble column near Matt's chair, and leaned there, still with the cigar between his lips, and the paper in front of his eyes. But he was not smoking, and neither was he reading. He was listening.

“Bully!” exclaimed the overjoyed Matt, all agog with interest. “I'd like

to see you come into a whole lot of money, Joe.”

“Well, I haven’t got this yet, pard. There’s a string to it. The colonel’s got one end of the string, ’way off there in Tucson, and the other end is here in New York with a baited hook tied to it. This long-distance fishing is mighty uncertain.”

“What is it? A mining deal?”

“Listen, pard. About a year ago I had a notion I’d like to get rich out of this mining game. Riding range was my long suit, but gold mines seemed to offer better prospects. I had five hundred saved up and to my credit in the Tucson bank. The colonel got next to it, and he told me about the ‘Pauper’s Dream’ claim, which needed only a fifty-foot shaft to make it show up a bonanza. I gave the colonel my five hundred, and he got a lot more fellows to chip in. Then the colonel went ahead, built a ten-stamp mill, and started digging the shaft. When that shaft got down fifty feet, ore indications had petered out complete; and when it got down a hundred feet, there wasn’t even a limestone stringer—nothing but country rock, with no more yellow metal than you’d find in the sand at Far Rockaway. I bade an affectionate farewell to my five hundred, and asked my friends to rope-down and tie me, and snake me over to the nearest asylum for the feeble-minded if I ever dropped so much as a two-bit piece into another hole in the ground. After that, I forgot about the colonel and the ‘Pauper’s Dream.’ But things have been happening since I’ve been away from Tucson. Read the letter for yourself, pard. It will explain the whole situation to you. After you read it, tell me what you think. You might go over it out loud, while I sit back here, drink in your words, and try to imagine myself the big high boy with a brownstone front on Easy Street.”

Matt took the sheet which McGlory handed to him, and read aloud, as follows:

“My Dear Young Friend: I knew the ‘Pauper’s Dream’ was all right, and I said all along it was the goods, although there were some who doubted me. Within the last three months we have picked up a vein of free milling ore which assays one thousand dollars to the ton—and there’s a mountain of it. Your stock, just on this three months’ showing, is worth, at a conservative estimate, five hundred dollars a share—and you paid only five dollars a share for it! You’re worth fifty thousand now, but you’ll be worth ten times that if the deal I have on with certain New York parties

goes through.

“Now, from an item I read in the papers, I find you are at Catskill, New York, with that young motor wonder, Matt King, so I am hustling this letter right off to you. By express, to-day, I am sending, consigned to the Merchants’ & Miners’ National Bank, for you, two gold bars which weigh-up five thousand dollars each. Inclosed herewith you will find an order on the bank to deliver the bars to you. On Wednesday evening, the twenty-fourth, there will be a meeting of the proposed Eastern Syndicate in the offices of Random & Griggs, No. —Liberty Street. You can help the deal along by taking the bullion to these capitalists, along with my affidavit—which is with the bars—stating that the gold came out of a week’s run at the ‘Pauper’s Dream’ with our little ten-stamp mill. That will do the business. Random & Griggs have had an expert here looking over the mine. After you show the bullion at the syndicate’s meeting, return it to the bank.

“I am not sure that this letter will reach you. If it doesn’t, I shall have to get some one else to take the gold to the meeting. Would come myself, but am head over heels in work here, and can’t leave the ‘Dream’ for a minute. Wire me as soon as you get this letter. I hope that you are in a position to attend to this matter, my lad, because there is no one else I could trust as I could you, with ten thousand dollars’ worth of gold bullion.

“Catskill is only a little way from New York City, and you can run down there and attend to this. Let me know at once if you will.

“Sincerely yours,

“M. A. Billings.”

“Fine!” cried Matt heartily, grabbing his chum’s hand as he returned the letter.

“It sounds like a yarn from the ‘Thousand and One Nights,’” returned the cowboy, “and I’m not going to call myself Gotrox until the ‘Pauper’s Dream’ is sold, and the fortune is in the bank, subject to Joe McGlory’s check.”

“This is Monday,” went on Matt, “and the meeting of the syndicate is called for Wednesday evening.”

“Plenty of time,” said McGlory. “I’m not going to let the prospect of wealth keep me from enjoying the sights for the next three days.”

“Well,” returned Matt, “there’s one thing you’ve got to do, and at least two more it would be wise for you to do, without delay.”

“The thing I’ve got to do, Matt, is to wire the colonel that I’m on deck and ready to look after the bullion. What are the two things it would be wise for me to do?”

“Why, call at the bank and see whether the bullion is there.”

“I don’t want to load up with it before Wednesday afternoon.”

“Of course not, but find out whether it has arrived in New York. Then I’d call on Random & Griggs, introduce yourself, and tell them you’ll be around Wednesday evening.”

“Keno! You’ll go with me, won’t you?”

“I don’t think it will be necessary, Joe. While you’re attending to this, I’ll make my call at the Flatiron Building.”

“I’ll have to hunt up Random & Griggs, and I haven’t the least notion where to find the Merchants’ & Miners’ National Bank.”

“We’ll get all that out of the directory.”

“Then where am I to cross trails with you again?”

“Come to the Flatiron Building in two hours; that,” and Matt flashed a look at a clock, “will bring us together at ten. You’ll find me on the walk, at the point of the Flatiron Building, at ten o’clock.”

“Correct.” McGlory put the folded papers back into the envelope, and stowed the envelope in his pocket. “I reckon I won’t get lost, strayed, or stolen while I’m attending to this business of the colonel’s, but from the time I take that bullion out of the bank, Wednesday afternoon, until I get it into some safe place again, you’ve got to hang onto me.”

“I’ll be with you, then, of course,” Matt laughed. “Now, let’s get the street addresses of the bank and the firm of Random & Griggs, and then our trails will divide for a couple of hours.”

The boys got up and moved away. The man by the marble column stared after them for a moment, a gleam of growing resolution showing in his black eyes. Turning suddenly, he dropped his newspaper into one of the

vacant chairs and bolted for the street.

His mind had evolved a plan, and it was aimed at the motor boys.

CHAPTER II.

Matt and McGlory decided that they would not use an automobile for their morning's work. The cowboy would go downtown by the subway and Matt would use a surface car. They separated, McGlory rather dazed and skeptical about his prospective fortune, and Matt more confident and highly delighted over his chum's unexpected good luck.

It chanced that Matt had spent some time in Arizona, and he knew, from near-at-hand observation, how suddenly the wheel of fortune changes for better or for worse in mining affairs.

One of Matt's best friends, "Chub" McReady, had leaped from poverty to wealth by such a turn of the wheel, and Matt was prepared to believe that the same dazzling luck could come McGlory's way.

Within half an hour after leaving his chum, the young motorist was in the Flatiron Building, asking the man on duty at the elevators where he could find Mr. James Arthur Lafitte, the gentleman whom Cameron had mentioned as being interested in the problem of aëronautics. Lafitte, Cameron had told Matt, was a member of the Aëro Club, had owned a balloon of his own, and had made many ascensions from the town of Pittsfield, Massachusetts—which was near Matt's old home in the Berkshire Hills; but, Cameron had also said, Lafitte had given up plain ballooning for dirigibles, and, finally, had turned his back on dirigibles for heavier-than-air machines. He was a civil engineer of an inventive turn, and with an adventurous nature—just the sort of person Matt would like to meet.

Having learned the number of Lafitte's suite of rooms, Matt stepped aboard the elevator and was whisked skyward. Getting out under the roof, he made his way to the door bearing Lafitte's name, and passed inside.

A young man, in his shirt sleeves, was working at a drawing table. Matt asked for Mr. Lafitte, and was informed, much to his disappointment, that he was at his workshop on Long Island, and would probably not be in the city for two or three days.

Matt introduced himself to the young man, who was a draughtsman for Lafitte, and who immediately laid aside his compasses and pencil, and climbed down from his high stool to grasp the caller's hand.

“Mr. Lafitte has heard a good deal about you,” said he, “and has followed your work pretty closely. He’ll be sorry not to have seen you, Motor Matt. Can’t you come in again? Better still, can’t you run out to his workshop and see him?”

“I don’t know,” Matt answered. “I’m in the city with a friend, and he has a little business to attend to which will probably take up some of our time.”

“I think,” went on the other, “that you won’t regret taking the time to talk with Mr. Lafitte. He’s working on something, out there at his Long Island place, which is going to make a big stir, one of these days.”

“Something on the aëroplane order?”

The draughtsman looked thoughtful for a moment.

“Suppose,” said he, “that something was discovered which had fifty times the buoyancy of hydrogen gas, that the buoyancy could be regulated at will by electrically heated platinum wires—would that revolutionize this flying proposition?”

Matt was struck at once with the far-reaching influence of the novel proposition.

“It would, certainly,” he declared. “Is that what—”

“I’m not saying any more than that, Motor Matt,” broke in the young man; “in fact, I *can’t* say anything more, but you take the trouble to talk with Mr. Lafitte. It may be worth something to you.”

Matt lingered in the office for a few minutes longer, then went away. The spell cast over him by the clerk’s words went with him. He had often thought and dreamed along the lines of the subject the draughtsman had mentioned.

The drawback, in the matter of dirigible balloons, lay in the fact that the huge bag, necessary to keep them aloft, made them the sport of every wind that blew. If the volume of gas could be reduced, then, naturally, the smaller the gas bag, the more practicable the dirigible would become. With the volume of gas reduced *fifty times*, a field opened for power-driven balloons which fairly took Matt’s breath away. And this lifting power of Lafitte’s was under control! This seemed to offer realization of another of Matt’s dreams—of an automobile flying machine, a surface and

air craft which could fly along the roads as well as leap aloft and sail through the atmosphere above him.

Carried away by his thoughts, Matt suddenly came back to his sober senses and found himself staring blankly into a window filled with pipes and tobacco at the V-shaped point of the Flatiron Building. He laughed under his breath as he dismissed his wild visions.

“I won’t take any stock in this new gas,” he muttered, “until I can see it demonstrated. Just now I’m more interested in Joe and his good luck than in anything else.”

He looked at his watch. It was only half-past nine, and it would be half an hour, at least, before he could expect his chum. Matt had suddenly remembered, too, that it would probably be ten o’clock before Joe could finish his business at the bank, and that would delay his arrival at the Flatiron Building until after the appointed time.

Crossing over into Madison Square, Matt idled away his time, roaming around and building air castles for McGlory. The cowboy was a fine fellow, a lad of sterling worth, and fortune could not have visited her favors upon one more deserving.

By ten o’clock Matt was back at the Flatiron Building. As he came around on the Fifth Avenue side, a taxicab drew up at the curb, the door opened, and a lad sprang out. The youth was well dressed and carried a small tin box.

Matt supposed the lad was some one who had business inside the building, and merely gave him a casual glance as he strolled on. Matt had not gone far, however, before he felt a hand on his shoulder. He whirled around, thinking it was McGlory, and was a little surprised to observe the youth who had got out of the taxicab.

“Are you Motor Matt?” came a low voice.

“That’s my name,” answered Matt.

“And you’re waiting here for your friend, Joe McGlory?”

“He was to meet me here at ten,” said Matt, his surprise growing.

“Well,” went on the lad, a tinge of color coming into his face, “he—he won’t be able to meet you.”

“Won’t be able to meet me?” echoed Matt. “Is business keeping him?”

“That’s it. I’m from the office of Random & Griggs, and Mr. McGlory wants you in a hurry.”

“What does he want me for?”

“That’s more than I know. You see, I’m only a messenger in the brokers’ office.”

He was a well-dressed young fellow, for a messenger, but Matt knew that some of the messengers, from the Wall Street section, spend a good share of their salary on clothes, and, in fact, are required to dress well.

“I can’t imagine what Joe wants me for,” said the wondering Matt, “but I’ll go with you to Liberty Street and find out.”

“He’s not at the office, now,” went on the messenger, “but started into the country with Mr. Random just as I left the office to come after you.”

“What in the world is Joe going into the country for?”

“That’s too many for me. All he told me to tell you was that it had something to do with the ‘Pauper’s Dream.’ He said you’d understand.”

This was startling news for Matt, inasmuch as it seemed to indicate that McGlory had encountered a snag of some kind in the matter of the mine.

“We’d better hurry,” urged the messenger, as Matt stood reflecting upon the odd twist the “Pauper’s Dream” matter was taking.

“All right,” said Motor Matt.

Accompanying the young fellow to the taxicab, Matt climbed inside and the messenger followed and closed the door. The driver, it appeared, already had his instructions, and the machine was off the moment the door had closed.

“My name is Granger, Motor Matt,” observed the messenger, “Harold Granger.”

“You don’t look much like a granger,” laughed Matt, taking in the messenger’s trim, up-to-date garments.

Harold Granger joined in the laugh.

“What’s in a name, anyhow?” he asked.

“That’s so,” answered Matt good-naturedly. “I’d give a good deal to know what’s gone crossways with McGlory. I suppose you haven’t any

idea?”

“There are not many leaks to Mr. Random’s private room,” answered Harold, “and I can’t even guess what’s going on. Mr. Random seemed excited, though, and it takes a lot to make *him* show his nerves.”

“Where are we going?”

“To Rye, a small place beyond Mamaroneck.”

“Great spark-plugs!” exclaimed Matt, watching the figures jump up in the dial, recording the distance they were covering in dollars and cents. “What’s the use of using a taxicab for a trip like that? You ought to have hired a touring car by the hour.”

“Oh, this was the only car handy, and Mr. Random never stops at expense.”

“Why couldn’t he and McGlory have come by way of the Flatiron Building and picked me up?”

“I think Mr. McGlory said you were not expecting him until ten o’clock.”

“That needn’t have made any difference. Joe knew where I was to be in the Flatiron Building and he could have come for me.”

“He and Mr. Random seemed to be in a hurry,” was the indefinite response, “and that’s all I know.”

When the taxicab got beyond the place where the eight-miles-an-hour speed limit did not interfere, the driver let the machine out, and the figures in the dial danced a jig. But Random & Griggs were furnishing the music for the dance, and Matt composed himself.

“You’re a stranger in New York, aren’t you?” Harold inquired.

“I haven’t been in the city for a long time,” Matt answered.

“This is the Pelham Road,” the messenger went on, “and that’s the sound, over there.”

“I was never out this way before,” said Matt, “but—”

Just at that moment something went wrong with the taxicab. There was a wobble, a wild lurch sidewise, a brief jump across the road, and a terrific jolt as the machine came to a halt. The body of the car was thrown over to a dangerous angle, Matt was flung violently against Harold Granger, and

both of them struck the door. Under the impact of their bodies, the door yielded, and they fell out of the vehicle and into the road.

Malt had given vent to a sharp exclamation, and his companion had uttered a shrill cry. The next moment they were on the ground, Matt picking himself up quickly, a little shaken but in no wise injured.

The taxicab, he saw at a glance, had dived from the road into a stone wall. The driver had vanished, and Matt took a hurried glance over the wall to see if he had landed on the other side of it. He was not there, and the mystery as to his whereabouts deepened.

Turning to give his attention to Granger, Matt received another start. The young fellow was lying beside the taxicab, lifting himself weakly on one arm. His tin box had dropped near him, and his derby hat had fallen off. Strands of long, yellow hair, which must have been done into a coil and hidden under a wig of some sort, had been released and were waving about Granger's shoulders.

A woman! Here was a pretty tangle, and Motor Matt was astounded.

CHAPTER III.

As though a taxicab, minus its driver and running amuck into a stone wall, was not enough hard luck to throw across the path of Motor Matt, he had also to deal with a young woman masquerading in man's attire. But for the mishap to the taxicab, Matt would probably never have discovered that the supposed youth was other than "he" seemed.

There were a number of details that perplexed our young friend just then, and among them—and not the least—was the strange disappearance of the driver of the machine. This problem, however, would have to wait. Matt felt that the young woman should claim his first attention.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, feeling more concern on that point than he would have done had his companion been of the other sex.

"No," answered the girl, her face reddening with mortification.

Matt started to help her up, but she regained her feet without his aid and picked up the tin box and the hat.

"I suppose, Miss Granger," said he, "that I should have known, from the way those yellow tresses were smoothed upward at the back of your head, that—that you were not what you were trying to appear; but, of course, I wasn't looking for any such deception as this."

Tears sprang to the girl's eyes.

"I—I don't know what you will think of me," she murmured. "You see, a man has so much better chance for getting on in the world that I—I have been obliged to play this—this rôle in—in self-defense."

"You have played the rôle for some time?"

"For—for a year, now."

"You can't expect me to believe that, Miss Granger," said Matt calmly.

"Why not?" she flashed.

"Well," he answered, "you would have cut off those long locks if you had made a business of playing such a part for a year. That would have been the reasonable thing to do, and I am sure you would have done it."

"Do you doubt my word?" she asked defiantly.

"I don't want to doubt your word, Miss Granger, but I have to take

matters as I find them. You're not a messenger for Random & Griggs, either, are you?"

She did not reply.

"And all this about my chum, Joe McGlory, going into the country and wanting me to join him, isn't true, is it?"

"Yes, it's true," she declared desperately. "You'll have to go with me if you want to find Mr. McGlory."

"Did McGlory go into the country in a touring car with Mr. Random?"

This was another question which the girl did not see fit to answer.

"You're not frank with me," continued Matt, "and how can you expect me to have any confidence in you? Have you any idea what became of the driver of the taxicab?"

"No," she replied.

"I'm going back down the road to look for him. While I'm gone, Miss Granger, you do a little good, hard thinking. I guess you'll make up your mind that it's best to be perfectly frank with me."

Without saying anything further, Matt turned away and started back along the road. He was caught in a twisted skein of events, and was the more perturbed because he could not think of any possible object the girl might have in trying to deceive him.

But, whatever plot was afoot, Matt was positive that the accident to the taxicab had nothing whatever to do with it. That had been something outside the girl's calculations, and an investigation might lead to results.

The driver had not been long off the seat of the taxicab when the machine collided with the wall. This was self-evident, for the machine could not have proceeded any great distance without a controlling hand on the steering wheel.

Less than a hundred feet from the spot where the accident had happened, Matt found the driver sitting up at the edge of some bushes by the roadside. He was covered with dust, and was holding his hat in his hands. There was a vacant stare in his eyes as he watched Matt approach.

"What's the matter with you?" queried Matt.

The driver acted as though he did not understand. He began turning the

hat around and around in his hands and peering into the crown in the abstracted fashion of one who is struggling with a hard mental problem.

A little way back, Matt remembered that they had passed a road house. If he could get the driver to the road house, perhaps the people there could do something for him.

“Come,” said he, catching the man by the arm and trying to lift him. “You are sick, and I’ll help you to a place where they can look after you.”

Mechanically the driver put his hat on his head and got to his feet. For a moment he stood still, staring at Matt speculatively, as though trying to guess who he was and where he had come from; then, suddenly, he whirled and broke from Matt’s grasp, running farther back into the bushes.

In half a dozen leaps Matt was upon him again, and had caught him firmly by the collar.

“I’m a friend of yours,” he said soothingly, “and I want to take you to a place where you can be cared for. You’re not right in your head.”

“Who are you?” mumbled the driver.

“Can’t you remember me? I was in your taxicab; you picked me up at the Flatiron Building.”

“What taxicab?” the man asked, drawing one hand across his forehead.

“Yours.”

The man’s blank look slowly yielded to a glimmering of reason.

“Oh, yes,” he muttered, “I—I remember. The young chap hired me at Herald Square. I was to take him to the Flatiron Building, pick up another fare, and then go along the Pelham Road as far as Rye. I guess I’ve got that straight.”

“Sure it was at Herald Square that the young fellow hired you?”

“Yes, I’m positive of it.”

The driver was getting back his wits by swift degrees.

“What was the matter with you?” asked Matt.

“Sort of a fit. I used to have ’em a whole lot, but this is the first that’s come on me for purty nigh six months. No matter what I’m doin’, I jest drop an’ don’t know a thing for a minute or two; then, after I come out of

it, I'm gen'rally a little while piecin' things together."

"You shouldn't be driving a taxicab, if you're subject to such spells."

"Thought I'd got over 'em. I won't have another, now, for two or three weeks, anyway. Didn't you see me when I tumbled from the seat?"

"No."

"That's blamed queer! Didn't you hear me, either?"

"No."

"How did you find out I was gone from up front?"

"The taxi jumped into a stone wall," answered Matt dryly, "and threw us out. If you'll step out of this patch of brush you can see the machine."

"Was it damaged much?" asked the man anxiously.

"It doesn't seem to be."

"Think I can tinker it up so as to take you and that other young chap on to Rye?"

"That's where you're to take us, is it?"

"Yes."

"And the young fellow hired you at Herald Square?"

"Say, my brain's as clear as yours, now. I know jest what I'm sayin'. I was hired at Herald Square to take him to the Flatiron Buildin', and then to pick you—"

"All right," cut in Matt. "Do you know who the young fellow is?"

"Don't know him from Adam. Never saw him before."

"After you get to Rye, what—"

The drumming of a motor car, traveling swiftly, was heard at that moment. The car was close and, through the bushes, Matt caught a glimpse of its fleeting red body as it plunged past.

Thinking that the car, which seemed to be big and powerful, might be used for towing the taxicab—in case it was very seriously damaged—to the nearest garage, Matt jumped for the road.

By the time he had gained the road, however, the touring car was abreast of the taxicab and forging straight onward at a tremendous clip.

Matt's intention of hailing the machine was lost in a spasm of astonishment the moment he had caught sight of the single passenger in the tonneau. There was one man in front with the driver, but the passenger in the tonneau—there could be no doubt about it—was Joe McGlory!

By the time Matt had recovered full possession of his senses, the touring car was out of sight.

CHAPTER IV.

For Matt, in this queer taxicab tangle, one mystery was piling upon another. Joe McGlory, in a faster car than the “taxi,” had left New York after Matt and the girl had taken their departure. Joe might be with Mr. Random, but the girl had certainly made a misstatement when she said that the cowboy and the broker had hurried off in advance of the taxicab. But then, the girl had made many misstatements.

By the narrow margin of no more than thirty seconds, Matt had failed to reach the road in time to hail the touring car. Fate works with trifles, drawing her thread fine from the insignificant affairs of life.

The driver came unsteadily through the bushes and stood at Matt’s side, gazing toward the taxicab.

“What was you intendin’ to do?” he asked of Matt.

“I was thinking we could hail that automobile and, if the taxicab was too badly injured to proceed under its own power, we could have the machine towed to the nearest garage.”

“We won’t have any trouble findin’ a car to tow us—if we have to. If the machine ain’t too badly smashed, I’m goin’ to take you on to Rye.”

“Perhaps I’d better do the driving,” suggested Matt.

“Bosh! I’m all right for two or three weeks. The spells ain’t bad, but they’re mighty inconvenient.”

“I should say so!” exclaimed Matt. “That other passenger and myself might have been killed.”

“You wasn’t either of you hurt, was you?”

That was the first remark the driver had made that showed any solicitude for his passengers.

“No,” Matt answered. “Let’s get back and see if we can repair the taxi.”

When they reached the taxicab, the girl was sitting on a stone near the machine. Her long tresses had been replaced under the derby hat, and she looked sufficiently boyish to keep up the deception—so far as the driver was concerned. Matt passed her with hardly a glance, and helped the driver make his investigation.

No serious damage had been done to the taxicab. A lamp was smashed, and some of the electric terminals had been jarred from their posts, but not a tire had been punctured, and the machine seemed as capable as ever of taking the road.

If the girl was curious as to the sudden disappearance and reappearance of the driver, she kept her curiosity to herself. When the driver had backed the machine into the road and headed it eastward, Matt turned to the girl.

“Rye is the place we are bound for?” he said tentatively.

She gave him a quick, troubled glance.

“Yes,” she answered.

Probably she was wondering whether he was intending to keep on with the journey.

“Then,” proceeded Matt, “let’s get inside. We’ve lost a good deal of time.”

He held the door open and the girl got into the vehicle. He followed her, after telling the driver to make his best speed.

“The driver had some sort of a fit,” Matt explained, when they were once more under way, “and fell off the seat. You didn’t see him when he dropped, did you?”

“If I had,” she answered, somewhat tartly, “I should have spoken about it.”

“Of course,” returned Matt calmly. “So many peculiar things are happening, though, that I wasn’t sure but the disappearance of the driver might have had something to do with your plans.”

“My plans?” she echoed.

“I don’t know whose plans they are, but I suppose, if some one else laid them, you are pretty well informed or you couldn’t carry them out. What are we to do when we get to Rye?”

“There will be another automobile there—a fast car—waiting to take us on along the Boston Post Road.”

“How far?”

“Somewhere between Loon Lake and Stoughton, on the Boston Pike.”

Again Matt was astounded.

“That’s pretty close to Boston, isn’t it?” he inquired.

“It’s a good deal closer to Boston than it is to New York.”

“When do you think we’ll get to—to where we’re going?”

“Some time to-night,” was the careless response.

“You don’t seem to realize,” said Matt, just the barest ruffle of temper showing itself, “that I hadn’t any intention of taking such a long ride as this when I left the Flatiron Building.”

“Your friend wants you,” said the girl. “If that’s not enough to keep you on the long ride, then you can get out at Mamaroneck—we’ve already passed New Rochelle—and take the train back to New York.”

The girl’s indifferent manner puzzled him. She must have seen the touring car pass the taxicab, and she must have known that Joe McGlory was in the car. What this had to do with her present attitude, if anything, Matt could not guess. For all that, he felt positive she did not think he had seen the touring car dash along the road with McGlory.

“You told me McGlory had left New York ahead of us,” said he.

“That’s what I was told.”

“As a matter of fact, he didn’t leave until after we did, for he passed us while I was looking for the missing driver.”

She shot a quick look at him.

“You saw that, did you?” she inquired.

“Yes.”

“Then why didn’t you stop the car and find out what Mr. McGlory wanted?”

“The car was going too fast. Besides, I didn’t know my friend was in the car until it was too far away.”

She laughed softly.

“Then you *do* have a little confidence in me, after all?”

“Not a bit,” answered Matt, with a little laugh. “For reasons of your own, I believe you’re going to take me to the place where some one else is taking McGlory. I don’t know why, but I suppose I’ll find out if I wait

long enough. Anyway, if Joe McGlory is in any sort of trouble, my place is at his side. And if you try to get away from me before I find McGlory," he threatened, "I shall turn you over to the police in one of these small towns we're passing through."

"You couldn't do that without a legal excuse."

"Haven't I a legal excuse? You got me away from New York by telling me something that wasn't true."

"You don't know, yet, that what I told you isn't true. I don't think you could have me arrested for something that hasn't happened."

Some desperate purpose was urging the girl on. What it was, and why it should be desperate, were beyond Matt's comprehension.

"You're a young man with a mission," said the girl, turning a pair of frosty blue eyes upon the young fellow beside her, "and the mission is to get to where we're going, and find Mr. McGlory. You'll be a whole lot wiser after that."

Matt, in his own mind, did not doubt this statement. But that reflection in no wise helped him just then.

Presently the girl began peering through the window in the top of the door, watching the roadside as they scurried along.

"What are you looking for, Miss Granger?" asked Matt, after the girl had been peering steadily through the glass for several minutes.

"For the other car," she answered, without looking around.

"You said that was to be waiting for us at Rye."

"It may have come this way to meet us, and—Ah, stop!" she cried, lifting her voice. "We'll get out here, driver."

The driver was a surprised man as he brought the taxicab to a halt. It was a lonely piece of road where they had come to a stop, shadowed deeply, as it was, by a thick growth of trees on either side.

"It's a mile, yet, before we get to the town," demurred the driver.

"We'll stop here," said the girl decisively.

"I can't see the other car," spoke up Matt, looking in vain for the automobile that was to take them on.

Although he did not see another car, yet his eye was caught and held by something white fluttering from a bush. While the girl was settling with the driver, Matt made his way to the roadside and examined the fluttering object. It was a white cloth, and had evidently been tied to the bush as a signal.

“Wait a minute!” shouted Matt, as the driver was climbing back into his seat.

Both the driver and the girl whirled around and stared in his direction.

“I may want to go back to New York in the taxicab,” continued Matt. “I’d like to talk with you a minute, Mr. Granger,” he added, putting a little emphasis on the “mister.”

The girl advanced slowly toward him.

“Go back, if you’re afraid to go on and do what your friend wants you to do,” said she.

“I’m not at all certain,” said Matt, “that I’m doing what my friend wants me to do. The only reason I’m keeping on with you is because I saw McGlory pass me in that red touring car. I’d like to ask you, Miss Granger, if you stopped because you saw this signal,” and Matt turned and pointed to the white cloth.

“That’s the reason I stopped, Motor Matt,” the girl replied promptly.

“The plans you are following seem to have been laid with a good deal of care, and to point to something that may prove pretty serious. I think, Miss Granger, that you and I will go on to Rye, and stop there.”

“I’m not going to stop at Rye,” answered the girl, with spirit.

“I think you will,” answered Matt coolly. “On second thought, I believe it’s my duty to turn you over to the authorities until I can find out something more about my chum. You can explain to the judge why you’re disguised as you are.”

“You don’t mean that!” gasped the girl, starting back.

“I do,” declared Matt. “As I said, I believe it’s my duty, and—”

At that precise juncture, something descended over Matt’s head, thrown from behind. It might have been a shawl, or an automobile coat, or a piece of cloth—there was no time to take particular note of it. The attack came

so suddenly, and so unexpectedly, that he was not able to defend himself.

With his face smothered in the thick folds, he was drawn roughly backward. A foot tripped him, and he measured his length on the ground. The next moment he was seized by strong hands and dragged through the bushes and into the woods. He struggled blindly and fiercely against his unseen captors, but they were too many of them. He was powerless to free himself, and the smothering cloth that covered his head and shoulders made it impossible for him to call for help.

CHAPTER V.

McGlory found his way to the address in Liberty Street without any difficulty. But he was too early. The Stock Exchange had not yet opened, and only a few clerks were at work in the brokerage offices of Random & Griggs.

The cowboy sat down in a room where there were a number of chairs facing a big blackboard. There were a stepladder and a chair in front of the blackboard, and off to one side was a machine in a glass case with a high basket standing under it. A ribbon of paper hung from the machine into the basket. This, of course, was the "ticker" which received and recorded the quotations of stocks at the Exchange, but it was not yet time for it to begin work.

McGlory and Matt were at least an hour too early in setting about their morning's business.

While the cowboy sat in his chair in front of the blackboard, wondering how long he could wait for Random or Griggs and yet be at the Flatiron Building as per appointment with Matt, a man sauntered in, looked at an office boy who was just going out with an armful of ticker tape, and then approached McGlory.

He was the gentleman in the noisy apparel—he of the cigar, and the newspaper, and the listening ear and scheming brain. He was playing boldly, for the stakes were worth the risk.

"Young man," said he to McGlory, "are you waiting for some one?"

"I'm waiting for one of the big high boys that boss the layout," answered McGlory.

"Indeed!" The man flashed a quick look around and made sure that only he and McGlory were in the room. "Well," he went on, "I am Mr. Random."

"Fine!" exclaimed the cowboy, getting up. "I'm Joe McGlory, from the land of sun, sand, solitude, and pay-streaks. I've run in here to—"

McGlory got no further. Random grabbed his hand effusively.

"We've been expecting you," said he. "We have a meeting of the syndicate on Wednesday evening, and a letter from the colonel gives your

name and informs us that you will be on deck with the bullion from the test run of the mill. If the gold shows up properly, there's no doubt about our people coming across with the money. But we can't talk here—some one is liable to drop in on us at any moment. This business is private, very private. Come with me, Mr. McGlory, and I'll find a place where we can have a little star-chamber session."

"I don't want to tear you away from business," protested McGlory.

Random waved his hand deprecatingly.

"Griggs will look after the office," said he. "This 'Pauper's Dream' matter is a big deal to swing, and I guess it's worth a few hours of my time. This way."

Random walked out into Liberty Street, rounded a corner, entered a door, passed through a barroom, and finally piloted the cowboy into a small apartment, furnished with two chairs, a table, and an electric fan.

After he and McGlory had seated themselves, Random pushed an electric button. A waiter appeared.

"What are you drinking, Mr. McGlory?" inquired Random. "I can recommend their Scotch highballs, and as for cocktails, they put up a dry Martini here that goes down like oil, and stirs you up like a torchlight procession."

"Elegant!" cackled McGlory. "I reckon, neighbor," and he cocked up his eye at the waiter, "that I'll trouble you for a seltzer lemonade, mixed with a pickled cherry and the cross-section of a ripe orange."

"You don't mean to say that you're from Arizona, and don't irrigate!" gasped Random.

"We irrigate with water, and that's always been good enough for your Uncle Joseph. Besides, I'm training with Motor Matt, and our work calls for a clear brain and a steady hand. Seltzer lemonade for mine."

"You'll have a cigar?"

"That's another thing I miss in the high jump."

"Give me the same as usual, Jack," said Random, to the waiter. "You're a lad of high principles, I see," remarked the broker, when the waiter had retired.

“It’s a matter of business, rather than of principle. Whenever an *hombre* gets his trouble appetite worked up, the first thing he does is to take on a cargo of red-eye. That points him straight for fireworks and fatalities.”

“I don’t know but you’re right,” said Random reflectively.

The waiter returned, and Random mixed himself something while McGlory fished around in his lemonade for the “pickled” cherry. Over their glasses they talked at some length, the broker seeking information about the section of Arizona where the colonel had begun operations on the “Pauper’s Dream.”

“What time is it, Mr. Random?” asked McGlory, in the midst of their talk.

“Just ten,” replied Random, with a look at his watch.

“Sufferin’ schedules!” cried the cowboy, starting up. “I’m to meet Pard Matt at ten, at the Flatiron Building. On my way there, I’ve got to drop in at the bank.”

“Why are you to call at the bank?” asked Random.

“To find out whether the bullion has got here, and to show them my order for it from the colonel.”

“You have the order with you?”

“Sure thing. Just got it this morning.”

“It won’t be necessary for you to go to the bank, Mr. McGlory,” said Random. “I’ve been there, myself, and I know the bullion has arrived. As for showing the order, you won’t have to do that until you take out the gold, on Wednesday.”

“Wouldn’t it be a good scheme to get acquainted with the bank men?”

“Not at all! If they doubt your authority to receive the bullion, in spite of the colonel’s order, a word from me will make everything all right. I believe I will go with you to the Flatiron Building. I’ve heard of this Motor Matt, and should like to meet him.”

McGlory wondered a little at the cheerful way in which Random left Griggs to look after the brokerage business; at the same time, the cowboy felt not a little flattered to have Random neglect his personal affairs for the purpose of meeting Matt.

A cab carried them to the Flatiron Building, and Random waited on the walk while McGlory went bushwhacking for Matt. But Matt wasn't in evidence.

"Perhaps he got tired waiting for you," suggested Random, "and went away?"

"Nary, he wouldn't," returned the puzzled McGlory, "I reckon he's talking with an aviator, upstairs, and has lost track of the time. I'll go find Lafitte, and, ten to one, my pard will be with him. Wait here for a brace of shakes, Mr. Random, and—"

Just then a man pushed forward from the entrance to the cigar store. The man wore a cap and gloves, and looked like a chauffeur.

"I beg your pardon," said he, addressing McGlory, "but are you Motor Matt's chum?"

"That's me," answered the cowboy.

"McGlory's your name, isn't it?"

"Joe McGlory, that's the label."

"Well, Motor Matt had a hurry-up call into the country. It's a long ride, and he went by automobile. He wants you to follow him, and he hired me to wait for you and then take you after him. That's my chug cart," and the man pointed to a red touring car at the curb.

"Speak to me about this!" cried McGlory. "What's to pay? Do you know?"

"Motor Matt didn't say. All he wanted was for me to follow him with you in my car."

"I'll bet a bushel of Mexican dollars it has something to do with Lafitte," hazarded the cowboy. "Of course, I'll go. Mr. Random," and he turned to the broker, "I'm sorry you couldn't meet up with my pard, but I'll bring him around to your office Wednesday."

"Just a minute, Mr. McGlory," and the broker took the cowboy's hand and drew him to one side. "I don't like the looks of this thing," he went on, in a low tone.

"How's that?" asked McGlory, surprised.

"I don't know, but I've got a presentiment that something's wrong."

“There’s something unexpected happened to Pard Matt,” said McGlory, “or he wouldn’t have piked off like this. But his orders are clear enough. I’m to follow him, so it’s me for the country.”

“Perhaps,” and Random wrinkled his brows, “this has something to do with the ‘Pauper’s Dream.’”

McGlory laughed incredulously.

“I can’t see how,” he answered.

“Neither can I, but it’s possible, all the same. We’re to get a good fat commission for placing that property, and I don’t intend to let the commission slip through my fingers.”

“It’s a cinch, Mr. Random, that you’re barking up the wrong tree. This business of Matt’s has more to do with flying machines than with mines, and I’ll bet my moccasins on it.”

“If you haven’t any objections, Mr. McGlory, I’d like to ride with you and make sure.”

“The shuffer says it’s a long trip.”

“I don’t care how long it is, just so I can assure myself that nothing is going crossways with the ‘Pauper’s Dream.’”

“All right, neighbor. If that’s how you feel about it, you’re welcome to one corner of the bubble-wagon.”

The three of them climbed into the touring car, Random in front with the driver, and McGlory in the tonneau. As soon as they were seated, the car began working its way through the crowded streets toward a section less congested with traffic. As the way cleared, the speed increased. Once on the Pelham Road, the chauffeur “hit ’er up,” and the red car devoured the miles in a way that brought joy to McGlory’s soul.

When they passed a taxicab, with its nose rammed into a stone fence, the chauffeur remarked that the taxi was a good ways from home. Mr. Random looked thoughtful, but he made no request that the red car slacken its speed. McGlory saw a young fellow sitting on a boulder, but the spectacle afforded by the taxicab and the supposed youth meant nothing to him. His mind was circling about Motor Matt.

CHAPTER VI.

Motor Matt, helpless and half stifled among the bushes, felt lashings being put on his arms and legs; then, while some one laid a hand on the cloth and pressed it tightly over his lips, a bit of conversation was wafted to him from the road. Because of the smothering cloth, the voices seemed to come from a great distance, although the spoken words were distinct enough.

“What’re you tryin’ to do with that chap?”

This was the driver of the taxicab. His curiosity, as was quite natural, had been aroused by the treacherous attack on Matt.

“That’s all right, my friend,” replied a voice—a voice Matt had not heard before.

“Maybe it’s all right, but it looks mighty crooked to me. Two of you threw a cloth over that chap’s head, downed him, an’ dragged him into the brush. I got a warm notion of goin’ on to Rye and gettin’ a constable.”

The other man laughed.

“You’d be making a fool of yourself, if you did. I’m from Matteawan, and the young fellow is an escaped lunatic. He’s a desperate chap to deal with, and we had to take him by surprise in order to capture him.”

A long whistle followed those words.

“Great Scott! Say, he didn’t look like he was dippy.”

“Some of ’em never look the part—until they find you’re after ’em.”

“Why didn’t you nab him in New York, instead o’ bringin’ him ’way out here?”

“He’s armed, and he’d have put up a fight. In a crowded street, some one would have been hurt. It was better to lure him off here, into the country.”

“I guess you know your business. Who’s the other young chap?”

“He’s the lunatic’s brother.”

“I see.”

“You needn’t say anything about this, driver. The family wouldn’t like

to have it known. You've been put to a little extra trouble, and here's a ten to make up for it."

"That's han'some, an' I'm obliged to you."

It can be imagined, perhaps, what Matt's feelings were as he listened to this. He tried frantically to burst the cords that secured his arms, but the tying had been too securely done. He made an attempt, too, to call out and inform the driver of the taxicab that the tale he was listening to was false, but the hand over his face pressed the cloth more firmly down upon his lips.

Resigning himself to the situation, Matt listened while the purr of a motor came to his ears and died away in the direction of New York. A friend who might have saved him was gone, and Matt was completely at the mercy of his captors.

Some one came through the bushes; there were two of them, it seemed, and they talked as they approached.

"I was up in the air when I heard Motor Matt say he was to stop at Rye," said the voice that had talked with the taxi driver. "What was the matter, Pearl?"

It was the girl who answered, and she told briefly how the driver had fallen from the seat of the taxicab, how Matt had discovered her disguise, and how his suspicions had been aroused.

"I was up in the air myself, dad," finished the girl, drawing a deep breath of relief. "But we're all right, now. The way you pulled the wool over the eyes of that taxicab man was splendid."

"Doing the right thing at the right time, Pearl, is your father's long suit. Where were you when Tibbits went past in the red car?"

"Sitting on a stone at the roadside."

"Where was Motor Matt?"

"Back along the road in the brush, looking for the driver."

"And those in the red car never saw him!"

"No, but he saw them and recognized McGlory."

"Oh, well, this is our day for luck, and no mistake. Watch the road, Pearl, while we're getting out our own car. We don't want to be seen

lifting a bound man into it.”

“I’ll watch,” the girl answered.

Matt was still further impressed with the comprehensive nature of the plans launched against him and McGlory. Three motor cars had been used in the game, and there must be at least four men in the plot besides the girl. But what was the purpose of the plotters? What end were they seeking to gain by all this high-handed, criminal work?

From off to the left Matt could hear the pounding of a motor as it took up its cycle. After the engine had settled into a steady hum, the crunching of the bushes indicated that a heavy car was being forced through them into the road.

“All right, Dimmock!” called a voice.

“Is the road clear, Sanders?” answered Dimmock.

“There’s not a soul in sight.”

“Then come here and help me. We’ll take this coat from Motor Matt’s head and replace it with a gag—a twisted handkerchief will do. The quicker we can get him into the car, now, the better.”

The next moment the smothering cloth was jerked from Matt’s head and shoulders. He had just time to gulp down a deep breath of air when the twisted handkerchief was forced between his teeth and knotted in place.

He saw a slender, wiry man, soberly but richly dressed, and another, short, thick-set, and wearing a long dust coat and cap.

“Take him by the feet, Sanders,” said the slender man, who, from this, Matt knew to be Dimmock.

Between them Matt was lifted, carried out to the road, and shoved into the tonneau of a touring car, while the girl held the door open. There was a top to the car, and Matt was made to sit on the floor and lean back against the seat.

By every means in his power Matt tried to let his captors know that he wanted to talk with them, but they either could not understand him, or else had no intention of letting him relieve his mind. The girl and Dimmock seated themselves on either side of Matt, and the same coat that had been used in effecting Matt’s capture was dropped over him.

In this manner the strange party started away along the road, the prisoner unable to see anything of the route they were taking.

Matt was sensible of the swiftness of their flight, and of the driver's perfect mastery of the machine. The explosion in the cylinders was unfailing, the mixture of air and gasoline was perfect, and the coils hummed their beautiful rhythm to the well-timed spark.

Gradually there was forming, in Matt's mind, an idea that these desperate plotters had made some huge mistake. He could not account, in any other way, for the execution of such a plan as they were carrying out.

He and McGlory were not being kidnapped to be held for ransom. Such an idea was preposterous. Matt had no relatives, so far as he knew, rich or poor; and neither had McGlory.

Yes, Matt was sure that Dimmock, and his daughter, and Tibbits, the man who had dashed past with McGlory in the red car, were blundering in some way. At the end of the journey, wherever that might be, the mistake must be discovered, and the motor boys would be released.

The point that troubled Matt a little was the fact that his cowboy pard was not a prisoner. He appeared to be traveling in the red car of his own free will. Was that because he had been lured away, and had not yet had his suspicions aroused?

There was little talk between Dimmock and his daughter, and Sanders was attending strictly to his driving. Now and then, however, a word was dropped as the car slowed down which gave Matt an inkling as to the course they were taking.

"Stamford," and "Bridgeport" were on the line of their flight, and this proved conclusively that they were proceeding in the direction of Boston.

The day was warm, and Matt, crouched uncomfortably under the coat, was having anything but an enjoyable ride. By twisting about, however, he managed to give some relief to his cramped limbs.

Hour after hour the car swept on. Once they halted at a filling station to replenish their supply of gasoline, but the man in charge of the supply tank was kept adroitly in ignorance of the fact that there was a prisoner in the tonneau.

By degrees a numbness crept along Matt's limbs, and a drowsiness

enwrapped his brain. He slept, in spite of his many discomforts, and was awakened, finally, by a rattle from somewhere forward of the tonneau.

The car was at a stop.

“What was the trouble, Sanders?” called the voice of Dimmock.

“Nothing much,” answered Sanders. “It’s fixed now.”

“Why not let Motor Matt sit up here on the seat between us?” suggested the girl. “It’s so dark no one could see him—even if we happened to be passed by another car.”

“We might as well give him a little comfort, I suppose,” answered Dimmock.

Thereupon the coat was pulled away, and Matt found that it was night. Dimmock reached down and helped him up on the seat.

“We’re doing this for your comfort, Motor Matt,” said Dimmock. “I hope you’ll appreciate it, and not try to make any trouble for us.”

Matt moved his cramped joints and stretched his legs the full width of the tonneau. There were shadowy bluffs on each side of the road, and a tracery of boughs lay against the lighter background of sky. From the fragrant odor, Matt gathered that they were in the depths of a pine forest. He gurgled ineffectively behind the gag.

“He wants to talk, dad,” said the girl. “Why not let him? If any one comes you can prevent him from calling out.”

“You’ve got too much heart, girl, for this kind of work,” returned Dimmock. Nevertheless, he fumbled with the knots at the back of Matt’s head, and removed the handkerchief.

CHAPTER VII.

Matt inhaled deep breaths of the pine-scented air. The ozone held tonic properties and freshened him wonderfully.

“It’s been a long time since I had breakfast, Mr. Dimmock,” were his first words.

“You’ve skipped dinner,” returned Dimmock, evidently pleased to note that the prisoner was taking recent events in such a matter-of-fact way, “but you’ll have a fine supper to make up for it. In less than an hour from now we’ll be where we’re going.”

Sanders cranked up, climbed into his seat, and the car moved on through the forest aisle, the searchlights boring bright holes in the dark.

“Where is the journey’s end to be?” inquired Matt.

“Somewhere between Loon Lake and Stoughton. That’s all you’re to know.”

“This is the Boston Pike?”

“We’ve been traveling the Boston Pike for a long time—but I guess that knowledge won’t help you much if you ever wanted to find the house again.”

“We’re about due at Matteawan, aren’t we?”

Dimmock laughed at that, and the laugh was echoed by the girl.

“I had to tell the taxicab driver something,” said Dimmock.

“This is quite a plot you’re working out,” pursued Matt.

“It was rather hastily evolved by Tibbits, but it seems to be doing the work.”

“Tibbits, if I’ve got it right, is the man with McGlory?”

“You’ve got it right.”

“Did you bring my chum from Liberty Street?”

“Of course, Motor Matt, I hadn’t anything to do with that part of it. Pearl and Sanders and I were to look after you.”

“How did you happen to be hidden away on the Boston Post Road?”

“We thought that was safer than to meet you at Rye.”

Dimmock had a complaisant air—entirely the air of a man whose plans are succeeding, and with ultimate victory assured.

“What was the use of all this juggling with taxicabs and touring cars?” continued Matt.

He was groping for information, in order to lead up to the announcement that Tibbits, Dimmock, and the rest were having their trouble for their pains.

“You see,” explained Dimmock, “it was easier for Pearl to work alone, and pretend to be a messenger for the brokers. If Sanders and I had been along, you’d have suspected something.”

“I suspected something, anyhow, and if you hadn’t resorted to violence, back there on the road, your daughter would have been held in the Rye police station until I could have learned more about what was going on.”

“Which shows our wisdom in waiting for you on the other side of Rye,” commented Dimmock.

“What’s back of all this, Dimmock?” demanded Matt.

“You’ll find that out later,” was the reply. “Tibbits is at the head of this little conspiracy, and most of the talking must be left for him.”

“How did you know I was to meet my chum at the Flatiron Building at ten o’clock?”

“That’s something else you’ll have to learn from Tibbits.”

“Do you know how Tibbits got McGlory to take his ride into the country?”

“Just as we got you, if the business worked out according to plan. You were told that your chum wanted you, and McGlory was told that you wanted him. That seemed to be enough,” and Dimmock laughed under his breath.

“There’s been a mistake, Dimmock,” said Matt earnestly.

“Not on our side,” answered Dimmock.

“Ever since ten o’clock this morning you and your pals have played fast and loose with the law, and you’re under a delusion of some sort.”

“You’re the one who is under a delusion.”

“I believe you’ll find out differently. I feel so sure of that, that I’m perfectly willing to go with you to the end of the journey. The facts will come out, at that time.”

“They will,” said Dimmock, with emphasis.

“My mission is to find my chum—”

“You’ll have fulfilled your mission when we get to where we’re going.”

“McGlory will be there?”

“Yes.”

“That’s all I can ask. Take these ropes off me, can’t you? I’m too anxious to find McGlory to try to get away.”

“The ropes won’t be removed until we reach the house.”

“What’s to be done at the house?”

“Nothing to your physical harm. You and McGlory will be entertained there for a few days. You’ll be able to eat, drink, and enjoy yourselves—within certain prescribed limits.”

“But we can’t do that!” cried Matt, suddenly remembering that his chum had to be back in New York by Wednesday afternoon.

“You’ll have to stay at the house,” was the decided answer.

“Why? What’s the reason?”

“I have talked all I’m going to about the whys and wherefores. Whatever else you learn you’ll have to get from Tibbits.”

Matt relapsed into silence, while the car continued to speed along the gloomy, tree-bordered road, following the long shafts of light like a phantom locomotive on gleaming rails.

Suddenly there was a lessening of the speed, a swerve to the right, a quick stop, and the touring car was nosing a big iron gate, hung between square brick pillars.

“Here we are,” said Sanders.

“See if the gates are locked, Sanders,” ordered Dimmock. “They shouldn’t be. Tibbits said he would leave them unfastened.”

Matt leaned forward to watch the glow from the searchlights as it played over the massive iron work, penetrated the heavy bars, and lost itself in a

dense mass of trees and shrubbery beyond.

The gates were not fastened, and Sanders pushed them wide. After running the car into the yard, the driver left it standing on a graveled drive while he returned to close the gates, and lock them.

“What sort of a place is this, Dimmock?” asked Matt, peering around, but seeing little, except the heavy shadows cast by trees and bushes.

“It’s a fine old place,” replied Dimmock, “and you and your chum should feel highly flattered at being entertained here. The family, as it fortunately happens for Tibbits and the rest of us, are in Europe this summer.”

“Then you haven’t any right here?”

“We have borrowed the use of the house. Tibbits has the run of the place, and we’re here by his invitation.”

Sanders got back and started the car slowly. The gravel road wound through the trees, and finally the searchlights flashed out upon the front of a large mansion. The great house was silhouetted against the sky, and the car lights swept the front door as the machine turned and halted at the broad front steps.

A glow appeared suddenly in the fanlight over the door. Sanders gave three quick, sharp blasts of the horn. This seemed to be a signal, for the door opened as if by magic, and a man showed darkly in the entrance.

“That you, Dimmock?” called the man.

“Who else could it be, Tibbits?” answered Dimmock. “Did you get here safely with McGlory?”

“Yes. And you? Have you got Motor Matt?”

“We have.”

An exclamation of satisfaction fell from Tibbits’ lips.

“I was afraid Pearl had had trouble,” said he. “We passed her on the road, sitting beside a taxicab that had run head-on into a stone wall. Motor Matt was nowhere in sight, and I thought he had suspected that something was wrong, and had escaped. I didn’t dare stop and ask any questions, you see, because McGlory was with us.”

“We came near having a streak of hard luck there, Tibbits, but we pulled

through all right. What shall we do with Motor Matt?"

"Bring him in, of course. His chum's anxious to see him, and I suppose he's equally anxious to see McGlory."

"He's tied," said Dimmock.

"Then untie him. He won't get away."

Tibbits pulled something from his pocket that flashed in the lamplight.

"I'll keep him under the point of this," Tibbits went on, "until he gets where I want him to go."

Sanders, standing on the footboard of the car, leaned into the tonneau and helped Dimmock remove the cords that bound Matt's arms and legs. When the cords were removed, Matt tried to stand, but tottered back upon the seat.

"Pretty rough treatment you've had, eh?" laughed Dimmock. "Well, you'll be entertained so royally here, Motor Matt, that you'll forget all the unpleasant things that have happened to you."

In a few moments, Matt was able to climb out of the tonneau. Tibbits' revolver was leveled at him the instant he dropped down from the footboards.

"Walk straight up the steps, Motor Matt," ordered Tibbits, "and on into the house. I'll follow and tell you which way to go. Be nice about it, and nothing will happen."

Matt mounted the steps. Tibbits backed to one side, to let him pass, and the hall light shone over his face. Matt looked at him sharply. The man was a stranger, and he was positive he had never seen him before. This was another fact to clinch Matt's theory that Tibbits and his pals were making a mistake.

Up the steps, through the great doors, and into a richly furnished hall Matt passed, Tibbits, still with the revolver aimed, following him closely.

"Keep straight on along the hall," ordered Tibbits.

Matt kept on. The musty, close odor of a house, long shut up, assailed his nostrils, and offered proof that Dimmock had told the truth when he asserted that the family were in Europe.

"That door on the right," said Tibbits. "Go in there."

Matt opened the door. As he closed it behind him he heard the rasp of a key in the lock, and the “click” of a thrown bolt.

“Pard!” came an overjoyed yell.

The next moment Matt was caught and given a bear’s hug.

“Joe!” exclaimed the delighted Matt.

“Sure, it’s Joe,” whooped the cowboy. “What’s going on here, anyhow? What do you want me for?”

CHAPTER VIII.

McGlory was under the impression that Matt had sent for him. In spite of the strange proceedings through which the cowboy had passed, he still believed that Tibbits had brought him on that long ride according to the wishes of his friend. Even the locking of the door, after Matt had entered the room, did not appear to have aroused any suspicions in McGlory's mind.

Matt looked around. He was in a large room, lined with bookcases. At one end of the apartment was a magnificent fireplace. A thick carpet, that gave one the impression of walking on down, covered the floor. White busts looked out from niches in the wall, and comfortable chairs were scattered around. A light, suspended from the ceiling, cast a warm glow over the room, and over a table, heaped with food, and set with places for two.

"I've been waiting here for an hour," grumbled McGlory. "Where have you been, pard, and what sort of a layout is this that you've brought me into?"

Matt removed his hat and threw it upon a couch; then, seating himself in a chair, he began rubbing his hands and arms and staring at his chum.

"What's the trouble with you, pard?" asked McGlory. "You act as though you were in a trance."

"I am," returned Matt. "I'm hardly able to credit my senses. In the first place, Joe, I never sent for you and asked you to come here."

The cowboy gave a jump.

"Why, the driver of that red car told me—"

"I guess he told you what some one else told me. I was informed that you had come into the country with Mr. Random, of Random & Griggs, and that you wanted me to follow you. That's why I'm here."

McGlory slumped into a chair, and brushed a hand across his forehead.

"Sufferin' brain twisters!" he muttered. "I came out here to find you, and you came out here to find me!"

"And here we are," laughed Matt.

“And what are we here for?” gasped McGlory.

“Give it up. But I think somebody has made a big mistake, and that they’re going to find it out before they’re many hours older. If that’s our supper on the table, suppose we get busy with it. I haven’t had anything to eat since morning.”

“I had dinner in Bridgeport,” said McGlory. “I was mighty well treated, I’ll say that—and that only makes it harder for me to understand what’s in the wind. I don’t think any one would run away with us just for the fun of the thing.”

“It would be more of a joke on the other fellows than it would on us,” averred Matt, moving to the table and taking a seat. “How long has this supper been here, Joe?”

“About half an hour,” returned the cowboy, taking a chair opposite his chum. “Random is here,” he said suddenly.

“Random, of Random & Griggs?” inquired Matt, showing some surprise.

“What other Random could it be?”

Matt helped himself to a cold roast beef sandwich and a glass of lemonade.

“Tell me what happened to you, Joe,” said he. “I can eat and listen at the same time. Besides, I guess I’m hungrier than you are. You had dinner, and I didn’t.”

McGlory told of his call at the Liberty Street office, of meeting Random, of his talk with Random in the restaurant, of Random’s going with him to the Flatiron Building, of the failure to find Matt, and of the yarn told by the driver of the red car.

“We came through the country lickety-whoop,” the cowboy finished, “but it was the longest kind of a ride, and I wondered what in Sam Hill you were doing ’way over in Massachusetts. It was after sundown when we got to this place. Some one met the driver of the red car at the door, and said that Motor Matt hadn’t come yet, and that we were to wait for him. Random and I came into this room. By and by, a servant began to spread the table for chuck-pile, but layin’ covers for only two. I guessed a little about that, and asked the servant who he was intending to leave out,

Random or Motor Matt. It was orders, he said, and that was all he knew about it.

“After a while, Random got up, told me to wait, and said he would try and find some one who could tell him something. Next thing I know, *you* walk in on me, and the door is locked behind you. Speak to me about this! Where’s Random?”

“The man’s name isn’t Random, Joe,” said Matt, “but Tibbits.”

“Tibbits?” echoed McGlory blankly. “But he met me at Random’s office.”

“That may be, but he’s Tibbits, just the same.”

“If he’s Tibbits, why did he tell me his label was Random?”

“Because that was part of the plot. By posing as Random, Tibbits knew he would have a lot more influence over you. He kept you from going to the bank, he accompanied you to the Flatiron Building, and he came out here with you. He might not have been able to do all that if you had known he wasn’t Random, and that he wasn’t interested in the ‘Pauper’s Dream.’”

The cowboy scowled, and drummed his fingers on the table. Matt helped himself to a piece of pie, and another glass of lemonade.

“Can’t you choke off, pard,” begged the cowboy, “and tell me how they played tag with you? Sufferin’ tenderhooks, but this business has got me all at sea.”

“I’m at sea, too,” said Matt, “but we’re pretty comfortable, so far, and I guess we can wait a little for the thing to work itself out. That’s the way with most mysteries. If you leave them alone they’ll solve themselves.”

“What happened to you? Bat it up to me!”

Matt recounted the manner in which he had been beguiled into the open country by the supposed messenger; and he told about the accident to the taxicab, the revelation that the supposed youth was a girl, the finding of the driver, the passing of the red touring car with McGlory in the tonneau, the work of Dimmock and Sanders, a mile west of Rye, and the journey through Connecticut and into Massachusetts, finishing with his meeting with McGlory.

The cowboy listened, spellbound.

“You’ve had the hot end of this, so far, pard,” said he, “and no mistake. But wouldn’t the whole game just naturally rattle your spurs? What’s the good of it? How are Tibbits, Dimmock, and the rest going to make anything by their work?”

“That’s where I’m muddled, too,” acknowledged Matt, drawing away from the table and resuming his easy-chair. “I think, Joe, that Tibbits, who seems to have been the one that planned this thing, has made an error.”

“That he’s bobbed, and thinks we’re some other fellows?”

“Not that, exactly, for they appear to know a whole lot about us, and our business. Where they’ve made their mistake, it strikes me, is in thinking that we’re mixed up in some affair we don’t know anything about. If that’s the case, then the fact will come out, before very long. All we’ve got to do is to wait until Tibbits comes for a talk with us.”

“I’m hanged if I want to wait!” fumed McGlory. “They’ve fooled us, they’ve got us here, and I’m a Piute if I’m going to stay!”

Jumping up, he ran to one of the two windows of the room. Pushing back the heavy hangings, he raised the lower sash. As he did so, a voice called up from the darkness outside:

“Git back in there, an’ close the winder! If ye don’t, I’ll shoot.”

The cowboy appeared dashed.

“You might have expected that, Joe,” laughed Matt. “You didn’t think, did you, that Tibbits would go to all this trouble and then leave us free to leave the house if we wanted to?”

McGlory closed the window and returned dazedly to his chair.

“Sufferin’ poorhouses!” he mumbled. “I reckon they think we’re millionaires in disguise, and that our folks will hand over a lot of money to ransom us. The laugh’s on them, and no mistake.”

“Let’s take things easy,” advised Matt, “until we can learn more about the game the gang are playing.”

As Matt finished, the key rattled in the lock, the door was pushed open, and Tibbits entered. He had some wearing apparel thrown over his arm, and dropped it the moment he was inside the room. The door was closed behind him, by unseen hands, and again locked.

With an angry exclamation, McGlory sprang to his feet and started toward Tibbits. The latter, with a quick movement, brought out the weapon which Matt had already become acquainted with.

“Steady,” warned Tibbits, smiling, but none the less determined. “Let’s all be nice and comfortable,” he begged, “and no harm will be done. You lads are my guests. Consider yourselves so, and we’ll get along swimmingly. It was a cold supper I provided, but it was the best I could do, under the circumstances. If you—”

“See here, you!” shouted McGlory. “Tell me whether your name is Tibbits or Random.”

“Tibbits,” was the reply.

“And you haven’t anything to do with that brokerage firm in Liberty Street?”

“Not a thing. The first time I was ever there was this morning.”

“What did you—”

“If you’ll give me a chance, McGlory,” interposed Tibbits, “I’ll explain everything to the complete satisfaction of Motor Matt and yourself.”

““Complete satisfaction!”” muttered McGlory. “That means you’re to fill a pretty big order. But go ahead, Tibbits, and let’s find out where we stand.”

CHAPTER IX.

“Let me assure you, in the first place,” said Tibbits, still keeping his revolver prominently displayed, “that no harm is intended either of you lads. You are to remain here in these comfortable surroundings for a week. At the end of that time you will be released, and can make your way back to New York.”

“Guess again about that,” spoke up the cowboy. “There are important doings for me in New York Wednesday, and we’ll have to tear ourselves away from you by to-morrow afternoon, at the latest.”

“You’ve got to stay here a week,” insisted Tibbits.

“You don’t understand,” went on McGlory. “There’s a meeting at the office of Random & Griggs Wednesday evening, and I’ve just got to be there. That’s all there is to it.”

Tibbits fixed his glittering eyes on McGlory for a moment.

“That excuse won’t do,” said he. “You can’t make up a yarn like that out of whole cloth, and expect me to swallow it.”

“Sufferin’ blockheads!” grunted McGlory. “There, read that.”

Jerking the colonel’s letter from his pocket, McGlory tossed it to Tibbits.

The latter removed the two folded sheets from the envelope. After glancing at one, he stooped down and pushed it under the door. The paper was caught and drawn from sight by some one in the hall.

“The order for the bullion!” called Tibbits. “Got it, Dimmock?”

“Yes,” answered Dimmock, from the other side of the door.

Tibbits placed the other sheet in the envelope and flipped it back to McGlory.

“Much obliged,” said Tibbits. “It’s hardly necessary to read the letter from the colonel. I heard Motor Matt read it aloud to you in the hotel, this morning.”

Both boys were dazed by the light that suddenly dawned upon them.

“You blamed tinhorn,” cried McGlory, “are you making a play to get hold of those two bars of bullion?”

“And you never thought of it!” laughed Tibbits. “What else did you suppose we were going to all this trouble for? You wanted to call at the bank, and I didn’t want you to. If you had gone there, the bank officials would have seen you. That would have made it difficult for me to palm off another Joe McGlory in your place. I am obliged to you for giving up the order for the bullion with so little persuasion on my part.”

The cowboy’s wrath was so great that he fairly hopped up and down.

“You think you’re going to get away with this,” he shouted, “but you’ll be fooled. You’re nothing more than just a common thief, eh? And you live in a place like this!” The cowboy looked around the room.

“I don’t live here—not regularly,” said Tibbits. “My uncle lives here, and I’m taking care of the place while he and his family are in Germany.” A sly leer accompanied the words. “It was only by chance that I happened to be in the hotel, this morning, and also by chance that I overheard Motor Matt reading that letter from Arizona. It looked like a fine opportunity to get hold of some easy money. I’m a black sheep. My uncle, who owns this place, thinks I’ve reformed, but he’s mistaken. When opportunity knocks at my door, she finds me hospitable. How long did it take me to find Dimmock after I learned the contents of that letter, discovered what Joe McGlory was going to do, and where he was to meet Motor Matt after he had done it? Just fifteen minutes, by the watch. Dimmock—his real name is not that—is a gentleman of fallen fortunes. Wall Street ruined him. He was as anxious as I to pick up a little ready money, and he and Pearl entered heartily into the spirit of the adventure. Dimmock knew Sanders. In happier days, Sanders used to be Dimmock’s chauffeur. I left Dimmock, Pearl, and Sanders to take care of Motor Matt, while I gave my attention to McGlory. I had to have a car and a chauffeur, but I knew where to find them. Pearl is to play the rôle of Joe McGlory, and I’ve a lad for the part of Motor Matt. They will dress themselves in your clothes, call at the Merchants’ & Miners’ with the order, and get the bullion. They’ll not have any trouble. The colonel has written the bank telling the cashier to hand over the gold when McGlory comes for it with his written order. It will be easy. Dimmock and I will clean up nine thousand dollars, net, divide it equally, then leave for parts unknown. You boys will be kept here for a week, and then released. Dimmock, Pearl, and I will be out of the way, long before that time. Rather clever, I call all that. Don’t you?”

Certainly there was a fiendish cunning in it all, but it was not the sort of “cleverness” that appealed to the motor boys. They were awed by the very audacity of the scheme, and by the facility with which the rest of the plot could be carried out. Simply by keeping Matt and McGlory cooped up in that house, Tibbits could have Dimmock’s daughter and some one else play the parts of the motor boys and secure the gold.

“You’re one of these tin horns, Tibbits,” observed the cowboy, “who’d stand up a stage or snake a game of faro.”

“I’m not taking any money out of *your* pocket,” said Tibbits.

“You’re robbing me of a fortune! If that gold isn’t produced at the meeting in Random & Griggs’ office, the deal for the ‘Pauper’s Dream’ mine may fall through. I’ve got a hundred shares of stock in the ‘Pauper’s Dream.’”

“The deal won’t fall through just because the two bars of bullion have been taken,” asserted Tibbits, “that is, not if Random & Griggs’ men really mean business.”

“You don’t know anything about that, Tibbits,” put in Matt. “But, no matter whether the deal falls through or not, you needn’t think that McGlory is going to agree to let you do what you have planned with that bullion.”

“What will McGlory do?” chuckled Tibbits; “what *can* he do? You boys are safely bottled up here. Dimmock and I and Pearl and the other young fellow go back to New York to-night. Some time to-morrow, before the bank closes, we will have secured the bullion. You boys will be here, and the rest of us will be—where you can never find us.”

“It’s a pretty small stake to run such a risk for,” said Matt.

“Beggars can’t be choosers,” said Tibbits coolly. “But time presses. There”—and Tibbits pointed to the clothes he had brought into the library—“is something for you lads to put on. I’ll take the garments you’re wearing now, if you please.”

“You’ll *take* ’em, all right,” answered McGlory defiantly, “if you get ’em at all.”

“Come, come,” continued Tibbits impatiently. “I have men enough to take the clothes by force, but I don’t want to get them that way. Strip!”

Neither Matt nor McGlory made any move to obey the command.

“Oh, well,” observed Tibbits, “if you’re going to force a rough and tumble, that’s your lookout. Dimmock!” he called.

“What is it, Tibbits?” came Dimmock’s voice from the hall.

“Come in, and bring Sanders and Riley.”

“Wait a minute,” called Matt. With four armed men against him and McGlory, Matt saw the futility of resistance. “We’ll give you our clothes, Tibbits, but under protest.”

“I’ll put the protest on file,” grinned Tibbits. “Never mind bringing Sanders and Riley, Dimmock,” he shouted.

“I’m going to fight this out,” flared McGlory. “If they get my clothes, they’ll get ’em in rags. What’s the good of taking ’em, anyhow? The bank folks have never seen either of us, Matt—Tibbits took precious good care they shouldn’t see me.”

“As for that,” said Tibbits, “we want all the corroborative detail we can give the rôles Pearl and the young fellow are to play.”

Matt stepped over to McGlory.

“It won’t do any good to hang out, Joe,” he counseled, in a low voice. “They’re too many for us. Let them go ahead with their plan—we can’t stop that part of it—but there may be something else we can do.”

“They’ve treated us like a couple of wooden Indians,” sputtered the cowboy, “and—”

“And we’ve acted like a couple,” finished Matt. “Why, we never guessed what their scheme was until Tibbits told us. Take everything out of your pockets, and let them have your clothes. I’m going to do the same.”

With that, he began stripping his pockets of personal property and laying it on the table. McGlory followed suit. Then coats, trousers, and hats were thrown in a heap, and the boys got into the garments Tibbits had brought.

In point of quality, the clothes the boys now put on were far and away better than the ones they had taken off. And the fit of them, too, was passably good; but it chanced that McGlory’s outfit was a full dress suit,

and Matt's was a Norfolk jacket outfit—a get-up he cordially detested.

Tibbits remained until the boys were decked out in their borrowed gear.

“I didn't use much discrimination, in McGlory's case, and that's a fact,” said Tibbits, with a laugh, “but I brought what I could find in uncle's wardrobe that looked as though it would fit. I trust,” he added, with a regret that was undoubtedly feigned, “that you lads won't cherish any hard feelings?”

“We'll do all we can to block you,” answered McGlory, “and will be tickled to death to see you behind the bars. That's the way we stack up.”

“You can't get out of here, remember that,” proceeded Tibbits, the clothes over one arm. “Try the windows, and you'll stop a bullet; break down the door, and you'll run into the same sort of trouble.”

He knocked on the door.

“I'm through in here, Dimmock,” he called. “Let me out.”

The door opened.

“Good-by,” said Tibbits mockingly, and faded into the hall.

McGlory roared wrathfully, and shook his fist at the locked door. Motor Matt lowered himself into a chair and grew thoughtful.

CHAPTER X.

“And this,” grunted McGlory, “is what he calls explaining matters to our ‘complete satisfaction.’ Satisfaction! Sufferin’ Hottentots! Do I look satisfied?”

The cowboy, in his dress suit and boiling with rage, looked far from satisfied. In fact, he presented such a humorous spectacle that Matt laughed.

“Oh,” he grunted disgustedly, “you’d laugh, Matt, if you were going to be hung. But think what this means to me! I want to dig up the hatchet and go on the war-path.”

“There’s nothing we can do just now, Joe,” said Matt, straightening his face.

“What sort of a girl is that daughter of Dimmock’s, to go helping her father in lawless work like this?”

“I can’t understand her,” returned Matt. “But I can tell you one thing.”

“Then tell it.”

“If Pearl Dimmock gets into your clothes and tries to palm herself off as Joe McGlory, the bank people are going to get suspicious.”

“She played the game on you, pard, and you didn’t get suspicious until you got dumped out of the taxicab.”

“I was thinking more about you, then, than I was about the supposed messenger. In the matter of the bank, the case is different. Miss Dimmock goes in there, asks for the bullion, and turns over the colonel’s order for it. The order is all straight enough, but the bank won’t let go of that gold until they’re sure the one who brings the order is Joe McGlory. I’m thinking the hardest part of Tibbits’ work is yet to come, and that the chances are about even whether he’ll win or lose.”

“We can’t leave it like that, pard. We’ve got to get out of here and make a rush for New York. That’s all there is to it. Tibbits, Dimmock, the girl, and the fellow who’s to understudy you, will get away from here to-night. That will leave fewer people to watch us, and I don’t see why we can’t make a break, somehow, and carry it through with ground to spare.”

“We’ll have to consider it.”

“There’s not much time to think it over. New York’s a long ways off, and we’ve got to get there by the time the bank opens, to-morrow.”

“Not necessarily.”

McGlory’s face went blank.

“What do you mean by that, pard?” he queried.

Matt hitched his chair closer.

“Suppose we don’t get away from here until to-morrow morning, Joe,” said he, “why couldn’t we send a telegram to the bank? Wouldn’t that do just as well as though we dropped in there personally?”

“I’m the prize blockhead, all right,” muttered McGlory. “Of course, a telegram will do, in case we can’t get out of here in time to reach New York before the bank opens. But let’s try to break out.”

The cowboy got up and looked around reflectively.

“Where’ll we try first?” asked Matt.

“Watch me!” answered his chum, his face lighting up. He made a dash for the fireplace.

“Here’s where this clawhammer suit catches it,” said he, crawling into the opening.

The fireplace was large, and Matt waited eagerly, expecting results. In a few moments, McGlory reappeared with soot on his hands.

“Not any,” he muttered disappointedly. “There’s a sharp turn in the flue, and the opening isn’t any more’n six inches wide. No getting out by the chimney, pard. I’ll try the window again, and see how careful I can be when I lift it.”

McGlory pushed up the windows with very little noise, but the vigilant guard outside heard him, nevertheless.

“Back in there,” was the gruff order, boomed from the darkness, “or I’ll shake a bullet at ye.”

The cowboy closed the window.

“The galoot out there is right on the job,” said he, and moved to the door.

Bending out a key ring, which he happened to have in his pocket, he

contrived a picklock; but no sooner did he begin operations than a voice from the hall ordered him to stop.

“You see how it is, Joe,” whispered Matt. “The best thing for us to do is to lie low for a while. Wait until after Tibbits, Dimmock, and the others are away.”

“They must be away now.”

“I don’t think so. I haven’t heard any motor cars leaving the place; and, besides that, it will take some time for Miss Dimmock and the fellow who’s to play Motor Matt to get ready. Let’s try and get a little sleep, Joe. If we have some rest, we’ll be better able to cope with the situation later.”

“Sleep! Why, pard, I couldn’t sleep any more’n I could fly—or aviate, without anything to aviate with.”

“Well, I’m off for a nap by myself, then. Wake me, Joe, if anything happens.”

Matt threw himself down on the couch, and was asleep almost as soon as he had straightened out. It seemed to him that he had no more than closed his eyes before he felt a tug at his arm. He sat up quickly.

“What is it?” he whispered.

“Listen,” returned McGlory.

What Matt heard was the distinct throbbing of an automobile, dying swiftly into silence.

“They’re off,” said the cowboy.

“Did that machine leave the house?” Matt asked.

“Yes. Now, what are we going to do?”

“Try the window and the door again, Joe.”

The cowboy repeated his earlier attempts, only to be gruffly warned by the vigilant guards, outside the house and in the hall.

“How many men do you reckon Tibbits left here?” growled McGlory.

“I wish I knew. He seems to have had quite a gang.”

“And they’re all after a little of that ten thousand dollars!” muttered McGlory. “Pretty small pickings for fellows like Dimmock and Tibbits. I can size them up for that sort of grafters.”

“I think we’d better wait till morning before we make any more attempts to get away,” said Matt.

“I reckon we’ll have to,” answered McGlory, in a discouraged tone.

“What sort of fellow was that who came in here, last night, and put our supper on the table?”

“A runt of a chap in an apron and a square white cap. Why?”

“Nothing—now.”

Without any further remarks, Matt shifted his position on the couch, and again went to sleep.

He awoke without being roused, and sat up on the edge of the couch. Daylight was just glimmering through the trees. McGlory, sprawled out on the carpet, with the clawhammer coat rolled into a pillow, was slumbering soundly.

Quietly Matt got up and went to the window, where the cowboy had made his several attempts the night before.

The window looked off toward the stables. To the right of the house was a vine-covered pergola, and between the stables and the pergola ran the graveled drive, leading around the house from the front gate. What interested Matt particularly, however, was a red touring car in the drive, close to the pergola.

Undoubtedly it was the same car that had brought McGlory and Tibbits from New York. Tibbits and Dimmock, on their return to the city, had used the other car—the one driven by Sanders.

The presence of that car spelled possibilities for the motor boys, if—

Matt’s gaze dropped to the side of the house. A man was sitting under the two library windows, smoking a pipe. Across his knees rested a revolver.

Before the motor boys could avail themselves of the red touring car they would have to eliminate the guard. How could that be accomplished?

Matt turned from the window, revolving the problem in his mind. He could think of no method of escape short of boldly leaping from the window and trusting to luck—and the revolver made such an attempt too risky. A plan, which he had thought of vaguely during the night, recurred

to him. This idea had the servant for its nucleus, and promised little better than a sortie by the window.

McGlory, hearing his chum moving around the room, stirred and sat up on the floor.

“What are you prowling around for, Matt?” he asked, yawning sleepily.

“Averaging up the chances,” Matt answered. “Come here, Joe.”

McGlory got up and went to his chum’s side. Matt pointed to the red touring car.

“If we could get out of here and get hold of *that*,” he murmured, “we might do something.”

“The boy with the gun looks sort of fierce,” reflected the cowboy; “still, you never can tell just what a fellow’s going to do with a revolver. If—”

The key rattled in the lock. Matt dropped quickly down on the couch and pretended to be asleep. McGlory, taking his cue from Matt, resumed his place on the floor.

A man, in white cap and apron, entered the room with a tray of steaming food. The door was closed and fastened behind him. Without trying to waken the boys—whom he must have supposed to be asleep—the man picked his way around McGlory, placed the tray on the table, and began collecting the scattered remnants of the supper. His back was toward Matt.

Noiselessly as a gliding serpent, Matt arose and slipped across the space separating him from the man; then, leaning forward, he caught him about the middle with his left arm, at the same time covering his lips with his right hand.

The man began to squirm, kicking out with his feet and fighting fiercely to get away.

McGlory, who had been watching the progress of events, and wondering what Matt was trying to do, went to his chum’s aid. The man was forced to his knees, and then to the floor. Lying on his back, Matt’s hand still over his mouth, he stared upward with frightened eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

“Softly, Joe, softly!” whispered Matt, stifling his own heavy breathing. “Twist a couple of napkins into ropes. Be quick!”

McGlory had not the least notion what Matt was trying to accomplish, but he knew it was something which might help their escape.

“Be quiet,” hissed Matt, in the man’s ear, “and you’ll not be hurt, but if you move, or try to call out”—his voice grew menacing—“you’ll wish you hadn’t!”

McGlory dropped to his knees with the two napkins and began tying one of them about the prisoner’s ankles. He followed this by knotting the other around the servant’s wrists.

“What next?” he asked breathlessly.

“Put on the white cap and apron,” instructed Matt, “then pick up the tray and rap on the door. When the door’s opened, throw the tray in the face of the fellow in the hall. There’ll be a commotion, and perhaps the guard outside will leave the windows. If he does, I’ll get out and make for the red car. Meet me somewhere along the drive, this side the gate. It’s a desperate chance, Joe, but it’s all we have.”

The cowboy chuckled delightedly as he removed the apron from the prostrate prisoner and tied it about his waist; then, picking up the cap, he set it on his head, and grabbed the tray.

“I’m ready,” he whispered, stepping toward the door. “Bravo, pard! It’s the reckless things that win!”

“Sometimes,” qualified Matt; “if you can’t—”

The guard in the hall shook the doorknob.

“Why are you so long, Paul?” he called.

It was not Dimmock’s voice—proof that Dimmock had really gone, and that another guard had taken his place. The question put McGlory in a quandary. He and Matt both recognized the dilemma, in a flash. The cowboy was about to speak, presumably in an attempt to imitate the servant’s voice, but Matt restrained him with a gesture.

“Tell the man outside you’re coming—tell him to open the door!”

Matt King hissed the words in the prisoner's ear, and lifted the hand he was using for a gag.

One word from the servant would ruin every chance. Was the fellow frightened enough to do Matt's bidding? McGlory looked over his shoulder and glared savagely at the man on the floor.

"Paul!" cried the guard, once more rattling the door.

"I'm coming," said the man, but with a shiver of dread in his voice. "Open the door, Miles!"

"What's the matter with you, anyhow?" grumbled Miles. "You've been in there more'n five minutes."

As the door opened, McGlory temporarily deceiving Miles with the tray and the white cap and apron, stepped out.

"Are they asleep," began Miles, "or—Thunder!" the guard broke off; "you're not—"

The cry was interrupted by a smash of dishes. There came a yell from Miles, a snarling shout from McGlory, and then the impact of a heavy blow. After that, running feet could be heard, and the opening of a door.

"Help!" roared Miles; "this way, Barney! The prisoners are on the hike!"

Matt, paying no more attention to the servant, jumped for the door. He saw a mess of food and broken crockery in the hall, and daylight entering through the open door. Miles was just vanishing in pursuit of McGlory.

It was now Matt's turn to see what he could do. Was "Barney" the man on guard below the windows? If he was, and if he had answered Miles' call, then the way was clear in that direction. But there was not a second to be lost. If McGlory got away, he would need the red car. And so would Matt, for that matter. If the automobile was left behind, the baffled guards would use it in giving pursuit.

In two leaps Matt was at the window and looking out. Barney's chair was empty!

To throw up the window and leap to the ground took only a moment, and Matt immediately laid a straight line for the automobile.

He was not long in covering the distance that separated him from the

car, but many doubts flashed through his mind while he was on the way.

If the switch plug had been removed, if the gasoline or oil was low, if—

But he was hoping for the best, and the best came his way, then, when the smiles of fortune were so grievously needed.

Whether there was any one in his vicinity, or not, he did not take time to discover. Reaching the front of the car—which, by good luck, was pointing in the direction of the pike—he grabbed frantically at the crank, and gave it a heave.

Chuff, chuff, chuff-chuff! The sputter died impotently. Manipulating the switch, and the lever controlling the fuel supply, he tried again. This time the engine was successfully “turned over,” and took up its cycle.

“Hi, there!” called a voice from the direction of the stables. “Stop, I tell ye!”

Matt had no time for the approaching man, but leaped into the car, and was off. A detonation sounded above the noise of the laboring motor, and something whistled viciously past Matt’s ear.

But, by then, the lad’s blood was hot for success, and he would have dared anything.

Like a thing of life the red car leaped around the corner of the house, taking a sharp curve with two wheels in the air. Only a short distance separated the fleeing car from the gate, but between the gate and the car was one of the guards. Matt knew at a glance it was not Barney. The chances were that it was Miles.

“Halt!” yelled the man.

“Get out of the way,” shouted Matt, “or I’ll run over you!”

The man got out of the way, hurling himself from the road barely in the nick of time. He did not appear to be armed; at any rate, no lead followed Matt.

But where was McGlory? Matt had no sooner begun to worry about his chum than the cowboy, breathless from running, staggered from behind a clump of lilac bushes and flung up his hands.

With a hasty look behind, Matt slowed the machine.

“It’s all up with us,” puffed McGlory, hanging over the edge of the car.

“We’ll have to leave the machine and take to our heels.”

“Why?” flashed Matt.

“The gates are locked.”

For an instant Matt was stunned. The gates—locked! Of course, they would be locked! Why had he not thought of that when he was planning to use the red car for their escape?

“We’ll never get away if we trust to our heels, Joe,” said Matt grimly. “Get in—be quick!”

By that time, Miles had been joined by Barney, and by the man who had called to Matt from the stables. The three, feeling sure that they had the car in a trap, were advancing cautiously, watching to see what the boys would do next.

McGlory did not know what plan Matt had formed; but, nevertheless, he scrambled into the tonneau.

“How’ll you get past the gates?” cried the cowboy, standing erect in the tonneau, and clinging to the coat rail.

“Get down in the bottom of the tonneau!” ordered Matt, without looking around.

Little by little he let the car out, and the iron barriers came threateningly into view. When a hundred feet away from them the car was going so fast that the gates seemed to be jumping toward it.

But the purpose of his daring comrade was clear to McGlory, and the idea left him gasping.

Matt was going to storm the gates! He was hurling the red car toward them like a cannon ball.

The cowboy fell limply down behind the front seats, wondering vaguely where he and Matt would be after the smash.

Even as the thought formed in his mind, there came a crash, a jar that shook the automobile in every part, and made it reel drunkenly, and a clash of broken glass. After a wild stagger, the car seemed to gather itself for a spring; then it flung itself onward into the road, turned, and glided off on the straightaway.

Dazed and bewildered, McGlory lifted himself in the rocking tonneau

and looked at Matt, who was still in the driver's seat, still bending over the wheel, and still coaxing the demoralized red flyer to its best gait.

Certainly the car was demoralized—not internally, for the motor was doing its work nobly—but the bonnet was bent and broken, the lamps were smashed, and the woodwork splintered and scarred.

“Sufferin’ earthquakes!” gasped McGlory, looking back at the gates.

The gates had been torn ajar, and one of them had been plucked bodily off the brick pier from which it had swung.

“Are you hurt, pard?” cried McGlory.

“No,” answered Matt, “but it was rather a close call for the tires.”

“Tires? Hang the tires! It was a close call for *you*.”

“Not so close as you’d think. I knew if we could force the gates we’d get through safely. Each gate would give way in a solid piece, and there’d be no splinters. We made it, Joe, we made it!”

“But the car has been damaged—”

“We couldn’t help that, Joe! If we keep Tibbits and Dimmock from carrying out that robbery, we have to get to a telegraph office in short order.”

At that moment the motor showed signs of distress. First it missed fire, and then went dead altogether.

“Watch behind, Joe,” called Matt, as he sprang into the road and began an investigation to discover what was wrong.

CHAPTER XII.

“Sufferin’ cyclones!” exclaimed McGlory, keeping close watch of the road behind; “after that jolt it would be a wonder, pard, if something didn’t go wrong with the motor. By rights, considering what this car has gone through, it ought to be a scrap heap.”

Matt adjusted one of the battery wires, then crawled under the car with a wrench. The cowboy could hear him at work; but he could hear something else, too, and that was a patter of hoofs and a grind of wheels.

“Horse and buggy coming, Matt!” he called. “Miles and Barney are hot after us. I took Miles’ gun away from him, and I can use it, if you say so.”

“Not on your life, Joe!” Matt answered, crawling from under the car and looking back over the road. “That would complicate the affair. We’re not to do any fighting, but just show our heels. We’re on the defensive entirely—remember that.”

The horse, driven by Miles, was coming at a gallop.

“I don’t see what they want horses and buggies at that big house for,” growled McGlory. “Automobiles go with a place like that—and when the family’s in Europe, the bubble-wagons ought to all be in a Boston garage. Will the motor work now, Matt, or have we got to use our heels?”

The car started. The motor was still somewhat out of order, but gave the car a speed that easily carried it away from the horse and buggy.

“I reckon we’ll get clear, pard,” observed McGlory, albeit with an anxious, questioning note in his voice.

“We’ll kill the engine again,” answered Matt, “if we keep running it while it’s out of order.”

“Then, kill it, but get as far away from Miles and Barney, and as near a telegraph office, as you can, before we have to take to the woods.”

“I don’t know anything about this country,” said Matt. “What is the nearest town in this direction, Joe?”

“I’ve been trying to think of that ever since we got through the gates, and headed this way, but I can’t seem to remember, pard.”

“It’s poor policy, Joe, to run the engine to a standstill. Everything may depend on the car before we get out of these woods.”

The motor was rapidly going from bad to worse. Matt stopped suddenly, threw on the reverse, and backed the car into the bushes.

“What’s that for?” asked the cowboy.

“I’m hoping Miles and Barney will pass us, and give us a little time to do some more tinkering,” replied Matt.

“Even if that rig does pass us, we can’t follow it.”

“We can go the other way, Joe. I think the nearest town is in that direction, anyhow.”

“Do you mean to pass that house again?”

“Why not? I don’t think there are enough men left at the place to interfere with us.”

Matt got down and began pulling up the bent bushes in front of the car. While he was at work, the galloping horse could be heard, and he drew back hastily, and knelt down to see what happened.

There was no occasion for alarm. Miles and Barney dashed past without giving so much as a glance in the direction of the motor boys.

“Good enough!” exclaimed McGlory. “There’s the chance you wanted, Matt. Can I do anything to help you fix the car?”

“Two of us can shorten the work a whole lot,” said Matt.

He showed McGlory what to do, and for ten minutes both boys were busy. At the end of that time, Matt announced that he was fairly well satisfied with the repairs.

“There’s enough gasoline and oil to take us fifty miles,” he added.

“In other words,” said the cowboy, “we can go clear to Boston, if we have to. What time is it, pard?”

“Nine o’clock.”

McGlory was startled.

“Nine o’clock!” he repeated. “We’ve got to have a telegram on the wires by ten. Let’s pull out and hit the high places.”

There was no indication, so far as the boys could see, that Miles and Barney had discovered the trick which the boys had played on them. If the two men were coming back, they were still a good way off.

The steady hum of the motor, when Matt started it, filled the boys with delight. There did not seem any doubt but that the machine would perform every duty demanded of it. Matt put on the high speed, and they darted back over the course which they had recently covered.

As they drew near they watched anxiously for some sign of those who still remained at the house. No man showed himself, however, and the car flung past the wrecked gates and bore away northward.

“Miles and Barney are welcome to catch us—if they can,” exulted McGlory, who was riding in front with Matt.

The wind of the motor boys’ flight whistled and sang in their ears, and the engine continued to hum merrily and steadily. There was a good deal of rattling, for the mudguards and footboards were loose, but the motor itself was working as well as the day it had come from the factory.

“Sanders must have gone with Tibbits and Dimmock,” remarked Matt.

“There was quite a party of pirates in that other car,” said McGlory.

“Did you ever see Miles or Barney before we broke out of the house, Joe?”

“I never saw Barney, Matt, but Miles was the fellow who brought Tibbits and me from New York.”

“You must have had quite a set-to with Miles in the hall.”

“Speak to me about that!” laughed McGlory. “Miles was one surprised man, and don’t you forget it, pard. The skirmish was short, and I reckon it was the tray of chuck that did the work for the shuffer. He got the hot coffee full in his face, and when he fell back he dropped his revolver. I hit him once, just to give me time to pick up the gun, and then I made for the front door. If that had been locked—”

McGlory winced.

“But it wasn’t,” said Matt. “I heard you rush out of the house, and I got to the hall door just in time to see Miles going after you. He gave you quite a run, didn’t he?”

“I ran till I was black in the face, Matt, doubling back, dodging around flower beds, and getting mixed up with all kinds of horticultural arrangements. Gee, man, but that’s a fine old place to be used by such a gang!”

“It will cost a hundred or two to repair those gates.”

“And two or three hundred, I reckon, to get this car back in its usual shape.”

“More than that, Joe. I don’t think five hundred will repair the car as it was before we used it for a battering-ram.”

“That ten thousand in bullion is costing the tin horns pretty dear,” commented the cowboy.

“They’ll not be paying anything for damages. If Miles owns this car, he’s the one that foots this part of the bill.”

The cowboy laughed.

“I’ll bet Miles pretty near had an attack of heart failure when he saw you aiming the car at those iron gates, and giving it full speed ahead!”

“We can understand why Miles is so eager to catch us, I think,” answered Matt.

McGlory’s thoughts went off on another tack.

“About what time was it, do you think,” he asked, “when Tibbits and his gang left the house, last night?”

“I didn’t look at my watch,” said Matt. “How long had I been asleep when you awoke me?”

“About two hours.”

“Then it was nearly midnight when the car pulled out.”

“How long would it take that outfit to reach New York?”

This was rather an important point. Up to that moment, Matt had not given it much thought.

“I should think,” said he, after a little reflection, “that the trip would take eight or ten hours. The car would have to hit a smart clip, at that, and keep it up.”

“Then Tibbits and his gang couldn’t reach the city before nine or ten o’clock?” queried McGlory.

“I don’t think they could.”

“I reckon there’s plenty of hope, yet,” and the cowboy heaved a long breath. “There’s a house, Matt,” he added abruptly. “We’re getting out of

the woods.”

“We’ll probably see a town pretty soon. Wonder what the speed limit is through the villages in this part of the country?”

“Never mind the speed limit, pard. Keep her wide open.”

Five minutes more of rapid traveling saw the houses thicken along the road. People began to be seen, and two or three machines were passed.

“Better slow down,” a passenger in one of the cars called to the boys as they scurried past. “They’ll nab you in Leeville if you don’t.”

Matt thought the advice good, and heeded it.

The disreputable appearance of the red car excited a good deal of curiosity. McGlory, too, came in for a fair share of guying. He had on the dress suit, of course, and, although he had lost the white cap, he still wore the apron.

“I’ve been too excited to think about the apron,” he laughed, removing the object, and casting it into the road. “I’m wearing this dress suit, I reckon, at the wrong end of the day, but I can’t get rid of that for a while yet.”

Neither of the boys had a hat, but that fact was of minor importance.

A turn in the road brought them into the outskirts of a village. The road itself formed the main street of the place, and while the boys were jogging at a very leisurely gait toward the huddle of store buildings, a man in a flannel shirt and with his trousers tucked in his boot tops, jumped across the road, dragging a rattling chain behind him.

One end of the chain was fastened to a tree, and before the battered car reached the man, the other end had been similarly secured.

“Sufferin’ blockades!” cried McGlory, as Matt shut off the power and put on the brake. “What’s the matter with that Rube?”

The man who had manipulated the chain advanced upon the boys from his side of the road, a badge of authority in the form of a tin star. At the same moment, another man descended upon the car from the opposite side of the pike.

“This looks as though it might prove interesting,” muttered Matt. “What do you want?” he called to the man with the star.

“My name’s Hawkins,” snapped the officer, “and I’m town constable. You two fellers are pinched.”

“Pinched?” echoed McGlory. “Why, neighbor, we weren’t going eight miles an hour.”

“I don’t keer a blame how fast ye was goin’,” proceeded the constable aggressively. “That ain’t why ye’re arrested. Got a telephone message from the old Higbee place, sayin’ as how two fellers, answerin’ your description, had stole a motor car. Hiram an’ me’ll jest git in an’ ride with ye to the lockup.”

Telephone! The motor boys had entirely forgotten that modern, everyday convenience.

They had been trapped in Leeville—and a telephone message had turned the trick!

CHAPTER XIII.

“Mr. Hawkins,” said Matt, attempting to argue the matter, and show the constable the error of his way, “you’re a little mistaken in this matter.”

“Way wide of the trail,” chipped in McGlory.

“You can’t teach me no law,” scowled the constable. “I know my business.”

“Of course you do,” went on Matt, signing to McGlory to let him do the talking. “I’m not saying that you don’t know all about the law, or are not trying to do your duty. It’s the fellow at the other end of the line who has started you wrong.”

“D’you own this car?” demanded Hawkins, slapping the broken hood.

“No, but—”

“Didn’t you run away with it?”

“Yes, but if you’ll let—”

“I calculate that’s a-plenty,” cut in Hawkins, with a triumphant look at Hiram. “We’ll hop in an’ show ye the way to the jail.”

“I want to explain this,” cried Matt.

“Oh, ye do!” gibed the constable. “I can tell, just by the look of you, you’re a pair of scalawags. You can’t do any explainin’ that’ll help your case any.”

“Take us before a justice,” pleaded Matt.

“The jedge is away, fishin’, an’ he won’t hold court till this arternoon. I’ll haul ye up in front o’ him, soon enough, an’ if he don’t hold ye to a higher court to answer for the larceny of one benzine buggy, I’ll miss *my* guess. Hiram,” and the constable turned to his comrade, “I’ll git in with ’em, so’sst to make sure they don’t run, then you take down the chain, an’ git in, too.”

“You bet I will,” assented Hiram, with great alacrity.

“Is there a telegraph office in town?” asked Matt, while Hiram was removing the chain.

“Course there is,” replied Hawkins. “We got a railroad, too, and an op’ry house, and everythin’ else that makes a town worth livin’ in.”

“We want to stop at the telegraph office and send a message,” said Matt.

“No, ye don’t! You fellers can’t play any shenanigin tricks on Bill Hawkins. I’m too old a hand to be come over by two younkens like you.”

“Sufferin’ jaybirds!” growled McGlory. “Say, constable, this message we want to send is mighty important. If we can get it through, it will prevent a ten-thousand-dollar robbery in New York.”

Bill Hawkins laughed.

“You’re funnier’n a Joe Miller joke book,” said he. “Jest as though ye could make me swaller a yarn like that. Git in, Hiram,” he added. “You drive this automobile right down Main Street till I tell ye to stop,” he finished, addressing Matt.

“Will you let me send that telegram?” pleaded McGlory. “It will only take a minute.”

“Well, I guess not,” said the constable, snapping his lean jaws decisively. “Start the car,” he ordered sternly.

Matt took two five-dollar bills from his pocket, offering one to each of the men.

“You can read the telegram, Mr. Hawkins,” said Matt. “It’s important.”

Hawkins went up on his toes and fairly bristled.

“Say,” he snorted, “you ain’t got money enough to bribe me from doin’ my duty. Now I *know* ye’re crooked. Tryin’ to bribe Bill Hawkins! Well, by jing! What d’ye think o’ that, Hiram?”

“Scand’lous!” gurgled Hiram, horror-stricken.

McGlory leaned toward Matt.

“Put on full speed, pard,” he whispered excitedly, “and let’s snake ’em out into the country.”

But Matt shook his head and started the car slowly into the village.

All the inhabitants of the place, Matt judged, had been drawn to the scene of the “arrest.” Men, women, children, and dogs clustered around the car, and proceeded with it as it took its melancholy way along the street.

“There’s the place,” said Hawkins, pointing, “that two-story red

buildin' on the right. Hardware store on the first floor and the jail's upstairs."

Matt steered for the curb, and halted the car at the edge of the walk, then Hawkins took him in charge, Hiram looked after McGlory, and the motor boys were led toward an outside stairway by which they were to climb to the "jail."

The cowboy, halting at the foot of the stairs, renewed his desperate attempt to get permission to send his telegram. Hiram spoke harshly, Hawkins put in a few warm words, and the crowd jeered. Then McGlory gave up, and followed Hawkins and Matt as they climbed the stairs.

The second floor of the building was partitioned into two rooms. A sign proclaimed that the front room was occupied by a "Justice of the Peace," while another sign, bearing the one word, "Jail," set forth the uses to which the rear room was put.

Matt and McGlory, it appeared, were the only occupants of the jail. The room was meagrely furnished, with a table, a cot, and two chairs, and there were two grated windows overlooking the rear of the premises.

Here the motor boys were left, McGlory sinking disconsolately into one of the chairs, while Matt roamed around, making himself as familiar as possible with the situation.

From the grated windows he could look off for half a block to the railroad station. The station building was about as large as a good-sized packing case, and there was one spur track, running between the main track and the rear of the hardware store, with a lonely flat car on the rails.

"Here's a go!" wailed McGlory. "Jugged! Jugged by a country constable, just when a telegram might save the day for us in New York! Sufferin' cats! Can't we do something, pard? We're not going to let a couple of hayseeds knock us out like this, are we?"

Matt was trying the bars at the windows. The ends of the bars were set into the wood of the casing, and the casing was old, and partly decayed.

"We can break out," said Matt, "but what good will that do us, Joe? We'd be apprehended by the villagers before you could get to the telegraph office. It won't be possible to send a message from here."

"How can we send it from anywhere," cried the cowboy, "if we don't

get away from this place?”

“Jail-breakers are apt to have quite a hard time of it.”

“I’ll take my chances on the hard time if we can make a getaway.”

“The only thing for us to do, so far as I can see, is to wait till the judge gets back from his fishing trip. We can talk to *him*, and he’ll have to listen to us.”

Matt sat down, and McGlory, grumbling his disgust, started up and went to one of the windows. Laying hold of a bar he gave it a wrench, breaking the end completely out of the wood. A gap was left, through which the boys might squeeze their way to liberty—if it seemed advisable.

“There’s a shed under the window,” reported McGlory. “We could get out on the shed and reach the ground too easy for any use.”

“That part of it is all right,” returned Matt, “but how could we get out of town without being seen? There’s the rub, Joe. Be guided by me, and let’s wait for the justice.”

“There’s no telling when he’ll get here. Why, right now, this minute, Tibbits may have his pals at the bank!”

Urged on by his frantic thoughts, the cowboy began hoisting the window. In a few moments, a path to freedom, through the bars and over the shed roof, lay open to the motor boys.

“Let’s make a try of it, pard,” pleaded McGlory. “We can reach the spur track, crawl along it through the bushes, and maybe get out of the town. Then we can hoof it to the next town, drop in at a telegraph office—”

“And find a telegram from Leeville asking the authorities to capture and hold us as jail-breakers,” said Matt.

“We haven’t done anything we ought to be jugged for, have we?” demanded McGlory.

“Of course not.”

“Then it’s right for us to get away if we can, isn’t it?”

“Certainly, Joe, but I don’t see how we can manage it.”

Just at that moment a distant whistle was heard.

“A train!” exclaimed McGlory. “If it stops here, Matt, why can’t we—”

Matt caught the inspiration of his chum's words. Again fortune was favoring him and McGlory. There was a chance to escape, but they would have to be quick if they took advantage of it.

“Crawl through the window, Joe!” whispered Matt. “Be wary! The jig's up if we're seen.”

The cowboy began at once crowding himself through the bars. He succeeded, and alighted on the roof of the shed on hands and knees. Matt followed, made his way carefully over the top of the shed, dropped from the edge of the roof, and found himself beside his chum at the rear of the hardware store.

The train was just pulling into the station. Without losing a moment, the boys scrambled over a fence, skirmished onward under the screen of the flat car, dodged beneath it, raced across the narrow stretch separating the spur from the main track, and climbed aboard the forward coach of the train.

The station was on the other side of the cars, and, so far as the boys could discover, not an inhabitant of the village had seen them.

Where the train was going they did not know; but they did know that it would halt at a more friendly town than Leeville, that there would be a telegraph office in the town, and that they could forward their message to New York.

“In and out of Leeville,” murmured the cowboy, as he and Matt sank breathlessly into a seat. “I reckon old Bill Hawkins will have another guess coming, eh?”

CHAPTER XIV.

The conductor, when he came through the train collecting tickets, was somewhat taken aback at the sight of Matt and McGlory.

“Where’d you get on?” he inquired, looking the boys over and grinning a little at McGlory’s bare head and dress suit.

“At Leeville,” said Matt.

“There was only one man got on at Leeville. I didn’t see you.”

“We climbed aboard the train on the side that was away from the station,” explained McGlory. “We were in a rush, and got aboard the handiest way we could.”

“You were in so big a rush that you forgot your hats,” commented the conductor suspiciously. “Where are you going?”

“Where does this train go, conductor?” put in Matt.

“Fall River.”

“Then we’ll pay our fares to Fall River,” and Matt handed the conductor a bill.

“You’re a queer pair, and no mistake,” said the railroad man, while making change.

“What’s the next stop?” continued Matt.

“Stoughton.”

“Do you stop long enough at Stoughton so we could get off and send a telegram?”

“You have the message all written out and I guess you’ll have time.”

With a puzzled look at the boys, the conductor left the car.

Matt, on the back of the colonel’s letter to McGlory, began writing out the message.

“Mark it ‘rush’” said McGlory, “and address it to the cashier of the Merchants’ & Miners’ National.”

“I’ve got that,” answered Matt.

Then, as plainly as he could, he wrote the following:

“Order for two bars bullion, given to Joe McGlory by Colonel M. A. Billings, of Tucson, Arizona, stolen. If presented, hold bullion until you hear from me.

“Joe McGlory.”

Matt handed the message to his chum to read.

“That’ll do the trick,” said McGlory, “providing the gold hasn’t already been delivered. I hope that car of Tibbits’ broke down somewhere, and that he was hung up for a few hours on the road to New York. That’s our only hope, Matt.”

Before Matt could answer, the conductor came along the aisle, ushering a gray-whiskered man who was carrying a carpetbag.

“Here they are,” said the conductor to his companion, halting opposite the boys. “Do you know them?”

“Well, by hokey!” ejaculated the other, staring at the motor boys as though they were a couple of ghosts.

“Know them?” repeated the conductor.

“I’ve seen ’em, conductor,” was the reply. “Bill Hawkins, our town constable, arrested them two fellers for stealin’ an automobile, an’ they was put in the lockup not more’n an hour ago. How the nation did you fellers git out?”

That was not a time to dodge responsibility. The truth, and the whole truth, must be told.

“I had an idea something was wrong with you two chaps,” frowned the conductor. “This man”—he nodded to the gray-bearded stranger—“got on at Leeville, so I thought I’d bring him forward to have a look at you. Surprising information he’s giving me. What have you got to say for yourselves?”

Sternness had crept into the conductor’s voice.

“The gentleman from Leeville is telling the truth,” replied Matt. “I and my chum *were* arrested by the constable and put in the Leeville town jail, but we twisted a bar from the window, crawled over the roof of a shed, and caught this train.”

“Well, well!” gasped the man from Leeville.

“You’ll get off at Stoughton, all right,” said the conductor, “but it’ll be for something beside sending a telegram.”

“Wait a minute, conductor,” begged Matt. “If you and the other gentleman have time to listen, I want to tell you just what happened. We’ll be as quick as we can.”

The conductor hesitated.

“There are two sides to a story, you know,” went on Matt earnestly. “You’ve got one side, and now, in justice to us, you ought to have ours.”

There was something in Matt’s steady gray eyes that lent a powerful appeal to his words. The conductor, turning back the forward seat, motioned to the man from Leeville to sit by the window.

“Now,” said the conductor, sitting down, “I haven’t got much time. We’ll be at Stoughton in fifteen minutes. Fire away.”

A good deal of detail was necessary, if Matt wanted to make out a strong case for himself and McGlory, so he began with the receipt of the colonel’s letter by his chum, and offered the letter in evidence. It was read by both the conductor and the Leeville man.

Then, taking events in sequence, Matt went over his and McGlory’s experiences during the preceding day, while they were prisoners in the old Higbee house and while they were fighting for their freedom.

It was an exciting story, and was listened to with deepest interest, not only by the conductor and the Leeville man, but also by two or three other passengers, as well.

“By hokey,” murmured the Leeville man, when the recital was finished, “if that’s the truth, young feller, you an’ your friend ought to have a medal. I never heard anythin’ like it before.”

“You said you wanted to send a telegram from Stoughton,” observed the conductor. “Who was the telegram going to?”

“To the New York bank,” replied Matt, “in order to keep the bullion from being delivered to Tibbits and his gang.”

“Have you written out the message?”

“Here it is,” and Matt turned over the colonel’s letter and showed the message to the trainman.

The conductor read it through carefully, and then read it aloud to the man from Leeville.

“To my mind,” said the conductor, “this is evidence that these lads are telling the truth. They wrote that message before I brought you here to identify them, so they couldn’t have framed it up to get out of a tight place.”

“I’m pretty sure they’re tellin’ the truth,” returned the man from Leeville, “because their story holds together. Mr. Higbee, I happen to know, has a nephew who’s a good deal of a black sheep. His name ain’t Tibbits, but it ain’t likely he’d have given his real name while doin’ underhand work like what he was up to. Mr. Higbee, too, left this nephew at the country place to look after it while he an’ his family are abroad.”

“I’ll bank on Motor Matt and Joe McGlory!” declared the conductor, reaching over to slap each of the boys on the shoulder. “If that Leeville constable had known as much as the law allows, he’d have given the lads a chance to tell their side of the story; and for him to refuse to let them send such an important telegram was an outrage. I hope,” the conductor added to Matt, “that the message will be received in time to save the bullion. In order to make sure that it is rushed through, you’d better let me attend to the sending of it myself.”

“That’s mighty kind of you,” said Matt gratefully.

“Don’t mention it, my lad,” the trainman answered. “I’m glad to be able to do something for you.”

“I’m goin’ to Fall River to visit my married daughter,” put in the Leeville man, “an’ when I git back home, I’ll let Hawkins know what I think of his fool way of doing bizness. It’ll cost him his job, next ’lection, you can lay to that.”

“I wouldn’t bear down too hard on him,” counseled Matt. “Hawkins thought he was doing his duty.”

“He’s a false alarm,” growled McGlory, “and he ought to have the pin pulled on him. Maybe I’ve lost a fortune through his foolishness—I don’t know.”

At that juncture the train began to slow down.

“Stoughton!” called the conductor, getting up and making for the rear

door of the car.

Matt and McGlory watched the conductor as he crossed the station platform and disappeared inside the telegraph office. He was gone for a couple of minutes, and when he reappeared he signaled for the train to pull out.

“That’s done, my lads,” he announced, when he again came into the car. “In less than half an hour the telegram should be in the hands of the cashier.”

“I hope to gracious it’ll git there in time,” said the Leeville man. “I’d hate to have it said that ten thousand dollars was lost jest because a constable in our town hadn’t sense enough to do the right thing.”

“Something ought to be done to the rest of that rascally gang at the old Higbee house,” suggested the conductor.

“It’s too late for that,” said Matt. “As soon as Joe and I got clear away from them, the scoundrels probably proceeded to make themselves scarce.”

“I’ll bet they’re absent a whole lot,” chimed in the cowboy. “It was a good deal of scheming they did just for a measly ten thousand dollars.”

“That sum is plenty large enough to make a whole lot of men go wrong,” asserted the conductor. “But, say, I’d like to have a picture of you two boys breaking through those iron gates in that automobile! It’s a wonder you didn’t get killed.”

“I should say so!” breathed the man from Leeville. “You ought to’ve seen them gates, conductor. I’ve seen ’em, dozens o’ times. They’re big, an’ high, an’ hinged to heavy brick columns. It’s a miracle that car wasn’t smashed to kindlin’ wood, an’ the youngsters along with it.”

“I was pretty sure we’d get through,” said Matt, “or we wouldn’t have tried it.”

“He’s the lad to figure things out,” expanded McGlory proudly. “His mind works like a rapid-fire gun, an’ it ain’t often he misses the bull’s-eye, either.”

“I guess you hit it off about right,” laughed the conductor. “I’m glad you had the nerve to tell me the whole story, Motor Matt, and that you didn’t try to dodge when I confronted you with this gentleman from Leeville.

What you've said has made me your friend, and I'll bet the Leeville man feels the same way."

"You bet he does," avowed that gentleman, with emphasis.

CHAPTER XV.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when a touring car drew up in front of the Merchants' & Miners' Bank. There were five passengers in the automobile—four besides the driver.

The driver was Sanders, and beside Sanders sat Tibbits. In the tonneau were Dimmock, his daughter, and a young fellow who wore clothes that were a very poor fit and who seemed exceedingly nervous.

"Buck up!" admonished Dimmock to the young man. "Show what you're made of now, Charley."

"I'll—I'll do the best I can," answered Charley.

"Let *me* do the talking," said Miss Dimmock.

The girl's attire was scarcely better, in the matter of fit, than was Charley's, but she wore her costume with an easy grace that made up for any of the other shortcomings.

"We'll wait for you around the corner," said Tibbits, as the girl and the young fellow got out.

There was a worried look on Dimmock's face as the touring car left the front of the bank and moved slowly along the street.

"It's a lot of trouble and risk we're taking for ten thousand dollars," he muttered.

"You've taken more trouble and risk for less, Dimmock," said Tibbits.

"I have, yes," admitted the other, his face gray with anxiety, "but never before have I asked Pearl to help me in such a matter. It will be the last time."

"Bah!" sneered Tibbits.

Meantime, the girl and Charley had entered the bank. Charley's nervousness had increased to a painful degree. The frosty blue eyes of the girl, observing his abstracted manner, led her to infer that Charley, so far from being a help, would prove a source of danger.

"You stay back here, Motor Matt," she whispered, "and I'll talk with the cashier alone."

Charley was only too glad to receive a command of that kind. Leaning

against a writing desk at the wall, he watched his companion as she boldly made her way to the railing behind which the cashier transacted his business. Something like admiration awoke in Charley's soul—that is, if there can be anything admirable in such an attempt as the girl was about to make.

The long, yellow tresses had been cut from the girl's head—a sacrifice demanded by the exigencies of the case.

The cashier, as it chanced, was busy with some one else. Calmly and patiently the girl waited. Finally the other customer went away, and the girl pushed respectfully up to the railing and stood under the sharp eyes of the bank official.

“What can I do for you?” asked the cashier briskly.

“This will explain, I think,” said the girl, presenting the colonel's order for the bullion.

The cashier glanced at the order, then gave the girl a keen scrutiny.

“You are Joe McGlory, are you?” he queried.

“Yes.”

“Are you personally acquainted with the gentleman who sent you this order?”

“I am.”

It was a pity, indeed, that Dimmock should have forced his daughter into such a tangle of deception; and doubly a pity that one so young and fair could have played the despicable part so boldly, and given her false answers without a tremor, or a pang of conscience.

“Have you any other means of identifying yourself?” went on the cashier.

Here was the place where the supposed Motor Matt was to be used, but Charley had not proved equal to the part.

“I'm a stranger in town,” said the girl, “and I had supposed that order of the colonel's was enough.”

“Our orders are to deliver the bullion upon the presentation of this demand. You understand, Mr. McGlory, that we are simply acting as trustees for Colonel Billings.”

The cashier looked at the paper reflectively. He had many important matters on his mind, matters in which hundreds of thousands were concerned, and two gold bars were a mere bagatelle.

Again he studied the girl. She met his eyes frankly.

“After all,” said the cashier, “this order lets us out. I will give you a receipt to sign, and while you are putting your name to it, I will have the bullion brought from the safe.”

He scribbled a few words on a pad of printed receipt blanks, tore off the top slip and handed it to the girl, nodding his head toward a writing desk. Pearl stepped to the desk, and the cashier pressed an electric call for one of the bank attachés.

The employee who answered the call brought with him a telegram.

“That message just came, sir,” said he, “and is marked ‘rush.’”

The cashier took the message.

“Get me that bag of bullion from the vault, Jenkins,” said he, tearing the end off the yellow envelope, “the two bars of gold from Colonel Billings, of Tucson, Arizona.”

“Very well, sir.”

Jenkins started. The cashier read the telegram at a glance. Not a line in his face quivered.

“Oh, Jenkins!” he called.

The clerk came back.

“Instead of getting the bullion,” said the cashier, in a low voice, “bring the bank policeman.”

Jenkins nodded and started off again, this time in a different direction.

“Here is the receipt, sir,” said the girl.

“Ah,” smiled the cashier, getting up and opening a wicket. “It will take some little time to get the bullion, Mr. McGlory, and you had better step into my private room and wait. Keep the receipt until you receive the gold. That is only business, you know.”

He led the girl across the open space in front of his desk, pushed ajar a door, and waved the girl into the private room; then, returning to his chair,

he waited.

Meantime, Jenkins had found the bank policeman.

“Mr. Hamilton wants you at once, George,” said Jenkins.

Charley overheard the words, and he had already seen the cashier talking with Jenkins and ushering the girl into the private room. That was quite enough for Charley, and he left the bank in a hurry.

“What is it, Mr. Hamilton?” asked the policeman, leaning over the cashier’s railing.

The cashier handed up the message for the policeman to read.

“That sounds business-like, Mr. Hamilton,” said the policeman, dropping the message on the cashier’s desk.

“Very much so, George.”

“It’s from Stoughton, Massachusetts.”

“Yes.”

“If the order comes in here, we can arrest the man that brings it.”

“It has already been handed in, George. Here it is.”

A startled look crossed the policeman’s face.

“Was the bullion delivered?” he asked.

“Not yet. A young man who says he is Joe McGlory is in my private room. You know what to do. Take him out the side entrance so there won’t be a scene out front.”

The policeman passed through the wicket and entered the private room. The cashier turned, serene as ever, to give a greeting to one of the bank’s customers.

A call from the door of his private room caused the cashier to turn.

“Just a moment, Mr. Hamilton,” said the policeman.

The cashier stepped to the door, and the policeman took his arm and drew him inside.

The room was empty!

Then, for the first time, the cashier showed annoyance and concern.

“How do you suppose that happened, George?” he demanded.

The policeman pointed to an open window.

“I have always said, Mr. Hamilton,” he remarked, clinching a point that he had been hammering at for a long time, “that you ought to have bars across that window. All the other windows are protected, and that one should be. The fellow got out, dropped ten feet to the alley, and has escaped.”

“But why did he leave?” queried the cashier. “I am sure he didn’t learn anything from me.”

“Chaps of that sort are naturally suspicious. The mere fact that you asked him into the private room was enough.”

“See if there is any trace of him outside. He’s a youngish chap, seventeen or eighteen, I should say, rather effeminate in appearance, and wears—”

“I saw him when he came in, sir,” broke in the policeman. “It will be useless to hunt for him, but I’ll see what I can do.”

“Anyhow,” and the cashier laughed as the policeman hurried away, “we’ve got the bullion.”

What was it that had aroused Pearl Dimmock’s suspicions? Only the secret workings of her own mind could reveal that point. Perhaps, at the last moment, her courage failed her, and she could not carry out the plan. This would be the charitable supposition.

Yet, be that as it may, the girl vanished, and even her sex remained a mystery to the cashier and the policeman. The telegram, sent from Stoughton by the motor boys, had fulfilled its mission. That the girl had escaped was, to them, an unimportant detail. The main thing was to foil Tibbits and keep the bullion.

CHAPTER XVI.

Motor Matt and Joe McGlory reached Fall River in the afternoon. They had planned to catch one of the night boats for New York, and there was an hour or two at their disposal. They put in the time to good advantage buying clothes. Mr. Jacobs, the man from Leeville, was familiar with the town and, before going to his daughter's, was glad to show the boys around and give them all the aid he could.

When he left Matt and McGlory, the lads were completely equipped in new "hand-me-downs," and feeling more like themselves.

There was a little fear, on their part, that Bill Hawkins might have used the telegraph lines and that they would have trouble in Fall River. But the trouble did not materialize.

"We're jail-breakers, all right," laughed McGlory, when they were safely in their stateroom aboard the sound steamer, "but Constable Bill, I reckon, has found out something about Miles and Barney that keeps him from running out our trail."

"Hawkins and his friend Hiram," said Matt, "have discovered that they've made a mistake. I don't see how they could have learned this from Miles or Barney, though, and I'm rather inclined to think that the justice of the peace got back from his fishing trip and said a few words in our behalf."

"What's the difference, pard, so long as we're at large? We've lost two suits of clothes and collided with a lot of hard knocks, but we got that telegram off."

"Also," laughed Matt, "we've spoiled a pair of nice iron gates, destroyed some Higbee china, and played hob with one of the finest motor cars I ever handled. I guess the damage isn't all on one side."

"I'll be 'completely satisfied,' as Tibbits remarked, when I learn that the bullion has been saved."

"We'll discover that to-morrow."

The motor boys slept their way down the sound, and reached New York early enough to go to their hotel and have breakfast before the bank opened. Immediately after breakfast they took an elevated train for

downtown.

“I’ve connected with a good lesson, pard, during this taxicab tangle,” remarked McGlory.

The cowboy was constantly thinking of various matters connected with recent experiences, and entering them on the profit side of his personal account.

“What’s this one, Joe?” asked Matt.

“Never to read an important letter aloud in a public place. That’s the thing that got us into this mix with Tibbits. He happened to be in this hotel, and he happened to hear the letter. After that—well, I reckon the memory of what happened is still pretty green.”

It was with some trepidation that the boys entered the Merchants’ & Miners’ Bank and made their way to the cashier’s desk.

“What can I do for you?”

It was the same brusque query which the cashier put so many times a day that its use had become a habit.

“You can do a whole lot for me, *amigo*,” said McGlory. “Principally, though, I’m pining to learn whether two gold bars from Tucson, Arizona, are still in your strong box.”

The cashier was interested at once.

“Why do you ask?” he inquired, leaning back in his chair and studying the faces of the boys.

He was a proficient reader of character; as a matter of fact, he had to be. The ability to take a man’s sizing at a glance had saved him from many a pitfall.

“Now you’re hitting me right at home,” said the cowboy. “If that gold is here, I’m the happiest maverick that ever strayed from the Southwest; if it’s not here, I’m due to get unpleasant tidings from the colonel. You see, *amigo*, I’m the easy mark they call Joe McGlory.”

A slow smile was working its way over the cashier’s face. There was something open and free about Joe McGlory—too free, at times, those who did not know him might have been tempted to think.

“You don’t look much like the Joe McGlory who came here yesterday,”

remarked the cashier casually.

The cowboy lopped down on the railing.

“I’m going to ask for a hot flat and a cup of ginger tea in a minute,” he murmured dejectedly. “Friend, was there a yellow-haired stranger here yesterday, in my clothes?”

“Such a person called. Whether he wore your clothes, or not, of course I can’t say.”

“Woosh! Johnny Hardluck is getting ready to hand me one. Stand close, Matt. I’m going to need you, I reckon. Yes, *amigo*, they were my clothes. Did she give you an order from the colonel for the bullion?”

“She?” echoed the cashier, lifting his brows.

“Of course you couldn’t know that,” said McGlory, “but the fellow who claimed to be me was a *moharrie*. She gave you the colonel’s order and you handed her the gold?”

“No. I had her sign a receipt and was just about to send for the gold when a telegram arrived. I had—”

“Then—then—”

“Just a minute, please. I had the young woman step into my private room, and instead of sending for the gold I sent for the bank policeman. When he went into the room to arrest the girl, she had vanished. Something, I suppose, had aroused her suspicions. At any rate, she slipped from a window and made good her escape. I’m very sorry it happened. It is a blow at law and order for such a would-be criminal to get away.”

The cowboy stared; then a glow overspread his face, and he grabbed for the cashier’s hand.

“Sorry!” he exclaimed. “Why, pard, this isn’t a time to be sorry about anything! You’ve still got the colonel’s gold in your safe, and I’m the happiest stray in all New York! You hear that, Matt?” and he whirled and caught his chum by both hands. “It was a close shave, but that message of ours did the trick! The gold’s here, and Tibbits has been done—done to a turn! If there weren’t so many people around, I’d yell.”

“You say you’re Joe McGlory?” said the cashier casually, “but I’m from Missouri—after what happened yesterday. You haven’t the colonel’s order, and even that isn’t a safe means of identification. How are you going to

prove you're Joe McGlory?"

"My pard, Motor Matt, will go on record. Matt, am I McGlory, Joseph Easy-mark McGlory?"

"You're Joe McGlory, all right," laughed Matt.

"That's good, as far as it goes," said the cashier, "but who's to vouch for Motor Matt?"

"That's me, pard," bubbled McGlory. "We vouch for each other."

The cashier joined in the merriment of the motor boys.

"You're a team," said the cashier.

"A whole team and something to spare," chuckled the cowboy. "Honest, I'm feeling so good over that bullion that I'm nearly locoed."

"This will help to identify us," said Matt.

He took from his pocket the letter McGlory had received from the colonel. The conductor, when sending the telegram from Stoughton, had had the message copied on a telegraph blank and had returned the letter to Matt.

The cashier read the letter carefully.

"This also is good—as far as it goes," he remarked. "The order for the bullion came with this?"

"Yes."

"And you lads sent me a telegram yesterday?"

"You can bet your roll-top desk against a copper cent we did. If you knew how we had to work to get that telegram off to you, you'd rather think we sent it."

This, of course, was from the cowboy.

"Where was the message sent from?"

"From Stoughton, Massachusetts. Turn that letter over, neighbor, and you'll find a copy of the message on the back of it."

The cashier read the copy.

"That's good circumstantial evidence, Mr. McGlory," said he, handing the letter to the cowboy, "and you can have the colonel's gold whenever

you come after it. Will you take it now?"

"The meeting of the syndicate is called for to-night, at the office of Random & Griggs," said McGlory, "and I don't want those two bars until the last thing before the bank closes at three o'clock. That bullion has caused trouble enough, and I'm putting up my fences against any more."

"Very well; come at three and you'll get the gold."

The boys turned and slowly left the bank.

"Somehow," said the cowboy, "I'm glad that girl got away."

"So am I," answered Motor Matt.

THE END.

The next number (363) will contain "A Hoodoo Machine; or The Motor Boys' Runabout No. 1313," by Stanley R. Matthews.

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FACE TO FACE WITH A MAD DOG.

“I can’t say that I object very much to the muzzling order,” remarked Captain Peyton. “I have had too many experiences with mad dogs, and my voyage with one of them I am never likely to forget.”

“How was that?” we inquired eagerly; and after a little pressing the captain spun us the following yarn:

The thing happened, he began, on board the ship *Globe*, when I was a young man before the mast, coming home in her from Denmark.

Our captain had procured the animal for a friend of his, who lived somewhere in the country, and wanted such a dog to keep off tramps and other trespassers.

I have seldom seen a larger or more vicious-looking dog. He was of the breed called the Great Dane, a kind noted for size and fierceness; and though only a year old, he did honor to both these characteristics.

He would make friends with no one forward, and sometimes would even show his large white teeth upon a too familiar caress from the captain, his master pro tem.

You may be sure that not a single one of us ever kicked that dog out of the way or took any other liberty with him.

“That animal will be a treasure to Captain Gale’s friend,” the second mate remarked one day. “Why, if I had him I should expect to come home some afternoon to find my wife in half a dozen pieces, and my children lying about in little strips. What can a man be thinking of to want such a creature as that about the place?”

We used to think that he had more teeth than other dogs—at least, his mouth appeared absolutely full of them—two great, white shining rows that it made one shudder to see.

Once he snapped at little Roy Drew, the ship’s “boy,” and took a piece out of his duck trousers, but without tearing his flesh.

Fortunately Captain Gale was at hand, and a loud, quick shout from him prevented any further demonstration. He accused Roy of carelessness, and said the dog would not have attempted to hurt him if he had been minding his business.

Roy was dreadfully frightened, though, for it was a narrow escape.

“That dog ought to be chained up,” said the first mate.

“Nonsense!” retorted Captain Gale obstinately, “the animal will not hurt any one if left alone, and the men must not meddle with him if they do not wish to be bitten.”

After a time the brute began to lose his appetite. He slept more than usual, and at last refused his food altogether. There was evidently something the matter with him.

“It would be an awkward matter for us if he had hydrophobia,” said the first mate.

“He might easily do so,” replied the second mate. “They say dogs generally behave like that before going mad.”

We sailors also felt rather uneasy; but the captain, as usual, treated the matter very lightly.

“He may die, of course,” he said, as the mate suggested some precaution, “but I won’t have him killed; and as to tying him up just because he won’t eat, I shan’t do that either. He may be all right again in a day or two.”

Although the animal slept much, he would often get up and turn around as if he were not easy in any position. His eyes, too, had a very strange, glassy stare.

He remained in this state for a week, sometimes moving a few feet, but generally asleep.

He growled at every one who came near him, and I believe that even the captain, although too obstinate to acknowledge it, would at last have been glad to see him knocked on the head.

When the crisis finally came, it came suddenly. Most of the foremast hands were aloft in the rigging, I myself being in the maintop. The mate was busy somewhere about the deck, and the captain was leaning over the quarter rail, watching his opportunity to strike a porpoise which had come under the ship’s counter.

Presently we heard him shout to the mate:

“I’ve got him, Mr. Gibson! Come and lend a hand.”

The officer hurried to assist him; but at that moment another cry came from the man at the wheel:

“Look out, Captain Gale! Look out, Mr. Gibson! The dog is raving mad!”

As he spoke he let go of the wheel and sprang for the mizzen rigging. The captain and mate, looking hastily round, saw the mad brute close behind them, leaping up aimlessly and snapping at the air. I need not tell you that they went into the shrouds probably more quickly than they had ever done before.

Every one not already aloft got there without loss of time, so that the deck was soon entirely deserted.

Meanwhile the dog was traversing the deck at a brisk trot, snapping at everything in his way.

Sometimes he would come to a full stop and spring straight up; at others he would tear away at some large rope, as if trying to devour it. Occasionally he uttered a wild, dismal howl.

What was to be done? Had he been a small dog we might have attacked and killed him with handspikes; but with so large and powerful a creature the case was different.

The captain had a revolver in the cabin, but while we were becalmed off the Orkney Islands he had shot away all his cartridges at sea birds that came near the ship, so that now the firearm was useless.

All this while the ship was left to herself, the topsails backing and filling, and the spanker moving from side to side.

“Why not try to lasso the brute?” called out the mate at last.

The captain thought the suggestion worth acting upon, and a number of us going down to the foot of the shrouds, attempted to take off some coils of the running rigging from the pins.

But the dog was there before us, and, leaping up, he fixed his teeth in the shrouds in a way that showed what would be our fate if we did not keep out of his reach.

However, as some of us were on one side of the ship and some on the other, we finally succeeded in getting at the slack of some of the ropes, and then, standing well up in the shrouds, we did our best at lasso-throwing. But we were no cowboys, and all our efforts resulted in failure.

Our attempts served only to irritate the rabid animal, so that he was now

perfectly frantic, leaping, howling, and rushing about in a terrible manner.

Just as we had begun to despair of effecting anything in this way we heard a shout from forward. It was little Roy Drew.

“Hello, there!” he said; “I’m on the bowsprit. I’ve just come down the forestay. I see how he can be got overboard.”

As we stood in the shrouds, the ship’s fore and main courses, which were set, prevented us from seeing the boy, but we could easily judge of his position and intention also.

“Look out for yourself, Roy!” was the cry from more than one voice, as all realized the fearful risk that he ran.

But the little fellow had his plan. He made a great stamping and shouting, and the dog, which happened just then to be forward, leaped upon the fore-castle.

We, who were in the rigging, hurried down to the deck, no longer thinking of any danger to ourselves, and then the whole scene was before us.

Roy had run out along the bowsprit and jib-boom, and the dog was trying to follow him.

The upper side of the bowsprit being flat, the mad animal could easily traverse it, but we did not believe that he would be able to walk on the jib-boom. To our great alarm, however, we saw him dash out upon it without falling.

“Roy! Roy!” we called, “take care of yourself—quick! quick! Don’t let him get hold of you!”

But the lad was prepared even for this. Away out on the end of the boom he stood, with his hand on the flying jibstay, and when the dog was within a few feet of him, he grasped the hoops of the sail which were around it and went up the log rope like a squirrel.

The mad dog made a sort of half leap, as if to reach him, staggered, lost his balance, and fell with a splash under the ship’s bows.

Probably the sudden immersion threw him into one of those convulsive fits so common in the rabies, for, after a few minutes of violent tumbling, he sank outright, and we saw no more of him.

“Now,” said Captain Gale, after all was over and the ship had been put

upon her course, “I’ll finish catching my porpoise.”

And, sure enough, upon going to his line, he found the iron still fast to it.

During the remainder of the voyage, concluded Captain Peyton, little Roy Drew was the hero of the ship. He had performed what all the rest of us combined had been unable to accomplish, and even the captain gave him full credit for his gallant act.

THE BOOMERANG.

Since the memorable time when Captain Cook sailed into Botany Bay in 1769 and saw the naked native Australian poised erect to hurl his peculiar weapon, the boomerang has continued to excite the curiosity and amazement of the civilized world; and truly the finding of such a scientific weapon in the hands of this so-called lowest order of mankind is an astonishing fact, to be simply accepted as another oddity of this odd, topsy-turvy corner of the world.

This novel weapon became an intensely interesting object to me very soon after arriving in Australia; and for the purpose of studying it, I went persistently among the black fellows, whose friendship I cultivated in different ways, and so succeeded eventually in learning how to make and throw the boomerang. So far, well and good; but of its history I could learn nothing. Of the origin of the crooked stick there is no knowledge; one can only conjecture. It is possible it may have been born with the race itself from the accidental throwing of a flat stick; for from childhood the black fellow shows a natural bent for throwing things, as you can see by watching him use his only other weapons, the spear and club. The bow and arrow, so common in other lands, is not used, except in the extreme northern portion of the great island continent, where there is a mixture of the race with the Papuan of New Guinea.

There are the war boomerang, hunting boomerang, and amusement boomerang. This last is used for light hunting, such as killing ducks, cockatoos, and parrots, and is the one that is referred to when speaking of the boomerang. These sticks measure from a foot and a half to three feet and a half in length, the fighting and hunting ones being the largest and heaviest. The hardest and toughest wood is selected, and the form of the weapon follows the grain of the wood; thus, if the crook of the root or limb is little or much, so is the form of the boomerang. You will find that nearly every one is of a different shape. In my collection I have them varying from almost straight to a shape like that of the letter V, nearly straight, curved, plain, ornamented, some with strange carvings, and all varying according to different sections of the country and individual tribes, each having its own make or style, showing respectively rough crudeness or considerable finish, and being especially characteristic in the ends or points—all of which a boomerang connoisseur will distinguish at

once, and locate as to tribe and section.

In the black fellow's humpy, where he keeps his collection thrown down in a corner with a pile of spears, clubs, rags, bark, and skins of kangaroo and wallaby, I have seen very rare and curious specimens.

The nomad black fellow makes his primitive humpy, or hut, in a location chosen temporarily, according to his necessities for hunting, fishing, and the like, by cutting a young sapling half through about four feet from the ground, and bending it over to a horizontal position, thus forming a ridge pole, against which boughs and strips of bark are laid. The covered side is always against the wind, and before the open front a fire is always burning or smouldering. He does not like the wind, and if it changes, presto! the humpy, too, is changed in a twinkling.

Down in this humpy corner, underneath the pile of bark and skins, he will burrow like a rabbit when he goes to sleep, and from the same place he will provide himself with a weapon when starting off for a hunt.

I have been with him at various times and in sundry places, but remember particularly one tramp with a tall, bushy-headed fellow, whom somebody had appropriately named Long Green.

Starting from the humpy, we crossed a little stretch of scrubby country, and struck into the sun-fretted gum-tree forest, locally known as "the bush." The black fellow is always on the alert for crooked boughs or roots, and as we trudged on Long Green in his quiet way kept his keen eyes on duty. Nothing escaped the observation of this child of the bush—bird or animal, crooked stick, stripping bark, or foot track, all were so many letters on the familiar page of his only book, the book of Nature. However, finding nothing near, he led the way in and out to a spot where he was sure of getting crooked roots. When a suitable one was found and cut away by Long Green's hatchet, we turned our faces humpyward.

Arrived at the camp, fresh fuel was put on the smouldering fire, the embers were blown into a lively flame, and then the black fellow began operations by splitting the crook into slabs, cutting them thinner and thinner until of the required thickness. This was the first step in the making of a boomerang. The next was to put the slabs on the fire, where we watched them roasting and sizzling, for they were green and full of sap. In this state the wood is very pliable, and from time to time he took a

crook off, held it between his toes, knees, and teeth, and twisted out all its inequalities. I have noticed that these people use their teeth with great dexterity.

More chipping, then more roasting, and the growing boomerang was now and again tossed carelessly on the ground just to see how it would act, while he glanced at it sideways, gave it a poke with his foot, and reminded me of a sedate old tom cat playing with a mouse. At last he gave it a gentle shy along the ground; then a stronger motion. It was buoyant, satisfactory. For the finishing off, it was scraped with a piece of broken bottle, the edges sharpened all around, and it was done—the boomerang was made! “White fellow, boss, chuck!” he said, handing it to me. It weighed about half a pound; the under side was rather flat, yet not entirely so, and the upper side slightly rounded, with the ends a little thinner than the centre. It was about half an inch thick and two and a half inches broad. After having amused myself while he was making another, I handed it back to him and told him to “chuck.” It proved to be a very good one, and he entertained me with it for a long time. It is held with the flat side down and the concave edge forward, and is thrown from over the shoulder. At the moment when it leaves the hand it must be in an upright or perpendicular position.

The black fellow, with a short run and a grunt, sent the thing with a sudden jerk at an angle of some twenty-five degrees. After whirling through the air for nearly two hundred feet it began to rise, and its flight curved toward the left, taking in a circle of a hundred yards or more in diameter, and fell close to our feet, while throughout its whole course of nearly a thousand feet it kept up a harsh, whirring sound, like the wings of a partridge in full flight, the rotary motion giving it the appearance of a ring or wheel moving through space. He caused it to form in its course the figure eight a hundred yards in length, then again he sent it off in a horizontal direction for a hundred feet or more, when it quite suddenly turned and flew upward to a great height. It would wheel along the ground in a straight course and also in a circle, apparently possessed of some power in itself, and the black fellow would jump up and down, talking and ejaculating to it as though it understood him. He was an excellent thrower, and made it perform two and even three circles before falling to the ground. At his will it went from right to left, and from left to right. Most all boomerangs go but one way, being made for that purpose only.

Now, all this seems contrary to the laws of nature and mathematics; but it is all right, and all the eccentric movements of the boomerang can be accounted for on scientific principles. Projectile force, rotary motion, and gravitation do it all, and though these are big words they mean something. You must not expect to throw it successfully without long practice. It is dangerous, too, in the hands of a beginner, for it is then that it “shows off,” and is liable to run wild and chase some bystander in a most vigorous manner. It is all very amusing to see a man running to escape, but he invariably runs the wrong way; and, if hit, it might be a serious matter for him.

There were several other humpies near by in the bush, and whenever my black fellow threw the boomerang the other fellows would shout “kout kout!” meaning “look out!” and the women would seize the little naked blacks, and cuff them, and tumble them into the humpies in a most unceremonious manner; notwithstanding, their little black heads were soon peeping out again. The larger boys, of some six or eight years, were not interfered with, and they would run about and bring the boomerangs which fell at a distance, for before we got through there were several black fellows with their boomerangs in the game. It was great fun. They stood in a row, I among them, and we sent the boomerangs chasing through the air. Some were thrown in one direction, some the opposite, passing each other in their flight; and as they began to return I had to hop about in a lively way. The black fellows ditto.

The boomerang has a favorite trick of hiding itself in the grass or bushes, and I have looked for one in vain in an open field, and given it up as lost, when, on returning the next day, it was found at once. But they cannot hide from these little black fellows. They have most wonderful eyes, deep set in their heads, and their sight is perhaps keener than that of any other member of the human race. When a boomerang fell at a distance they would run as fast as they could until near the place, then stand perfectly still for a moment, like a hunting dog, make a dive into the bushes, and reappear with the boomerang in the hand. One little fellow was hit in the calf of his leg while standing thus. It was a bad cut and bled freely. He disappeared among the humpies without a whimper, soon coming out again with a bandage of rags around the wounded leg.

It was now late afternoon. I knew the blacks liked to get in under cover before dark, so, with a half-crown to Long Green, some cakes for the little

bushy heads, and good-bys, I walked off like a veritable savage, grasping firmly my newly made aboriginal boomerang.

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