

TREASURE OF THE ICE



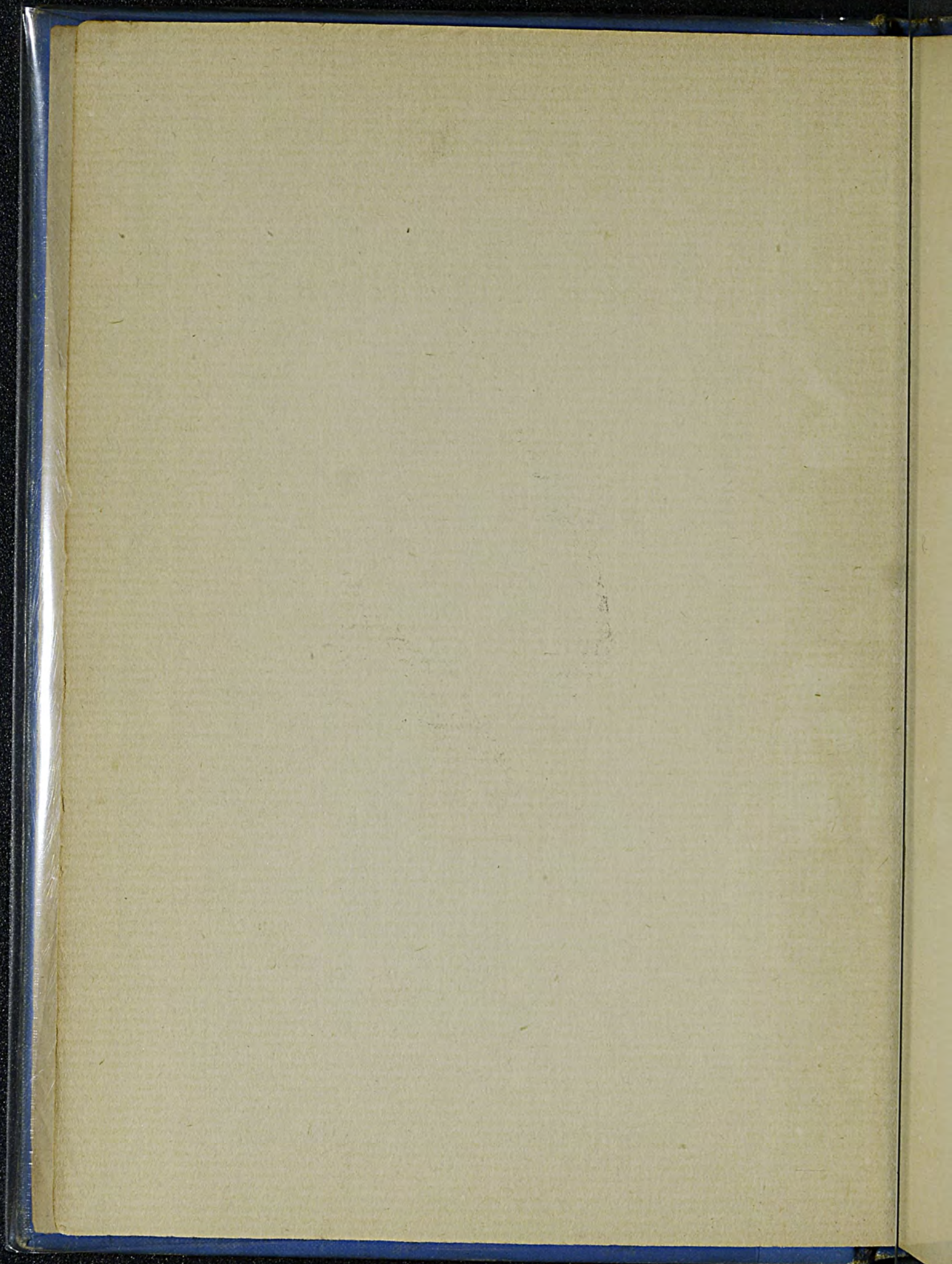
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THE
TREASURE OF THE ICE.

A ROMANCE.

BY
EUGENE SHADE BISBEE.



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THE TREASURE OF THE ICE.

CHAPTER I.

CAPE HORN.

THE cold, bleak and barren shores of Patagonia lay off our starboard quarter as the *Polaris* cleaved the icy waves and tossed the foam-crested seas from her rugged breast. I leaned against the rail, and gazed ruefully at the desolate picture so many thousands of briny leagues from home and comfort, then filled my pipe, and with the fragrance of the smoke, fell into yet deeper introspection. I was one of a party of six explorers who had left New York on board this stanch whaler for a cruise in the icy seas of the Antarctic. Our party consisted of Professor George Kent, the famous geologist and antiquarian; Richard Murdock, a young man of fortune and already a noted traveler; Rex Barton, a graduate of Yale who was trying to kill time for the next two years until he should have attained the age of twenty-five, and come into his entire property; Major Alexander Bangs, U. S. A., and his *confrère*, Captain O'Rourke, who had been sent out by the Coast Survey to secure data for the use of the department at Washington; and myself, Robert Bardwell, man of small fortune and

much leisure, with a predilection for travel and study, an alumnus of Yale, and a surgeon by virtue of a diploma, though not in active practice. Why I came I did not exactly know, save that my reasons could probably have been traced to the solicitations of Rex Barton himself, to whom I had for years been a sort of elder brother, and was now, by reason of his father's will, sole executor of the young man's eventual estate. When Rex heard from Professor Kent that there was on foot a project to invade the domains of the Ice King, and that for once the North was to be given a rest, and that the South Seas were the objective point, he at once threw himself into the plan with his whole heart and soul, and so worked upon my pliant nature that ere I knew it I had not only promised him my co-operation and companionship, but had furthermore "invested" ten thousand dollars of my own funds, with an equal amount of his, in what I afterward termed a harebrained scheme to waste good money and valuable time. But no amount of argument would convince Rex that he was a fool, and it had been done, and as a sequence of my love for the boy, I found myself on this clear morning in January watching the barren coast of the extreme tip of South America from the black deck of a whaler, smoking my pipe in moody silence. From earliest childhood I had heard of Cape Horn—where is the child who has not?—but in my most pessimistic fancy I had never had the hardihood to paint it in such desolate lack of coloring as it wore on that morning when I caught my first view of it. The month being January my knowledge of the seasons in sub-equato-

rial regions told me that it was midsummer, but when the thought came to me I drew up the collar of my reefer, and pulled my cap down to shield my ears from the biting wind that howled and shrieked like a thousand demons through the rigging, and dashed the spray far up against the smokestack. We were going along at a good clip, with foresail set to keep her steady, and had taken coal enough at Buenos Ayres for twelve thousand miles steaming.

The *Polaris* was bark-rigged, and in the event of an accident to her machinery, could still make ten knots with her sails, she having been converted into an auxiliary steamer after ten years' service under canvas alone. We had provisions aboard for thirty men for three years, and the party of which I was a member had outfitted for two, expecting to be set ashore near the cape, where we intended to make a permanent camp, and prospect as we pleased along the coast, or in the interior. But, "*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose,*" and as fate would have it, our camp on the continent of South America was a camp in the imagination only.

The breakfast gong interrupted my reverie, and I went below, glad enough to feel the grateful warmth of the cabin after the morning sample of summer weather on the cape. The members of our party appeared, and formality was not considered, for we all had our sea legs on, and were gifted with such appetites as would have almost called forth the envy of an Eskimo. It was some minutes before any one could find time to speak, and the first one to vocally break the silence was Captain Ruggles.

"We will soon round the cape now, my friends," he began, "and I can set you ashore either to-day or to-morrow, but, as I intend to sail due south from here and return in about a fortnight, I can show you some whale-catching if you are not in a hurry to land. We spoke the Solomon Blake, of New Bedford, last night, and she reports a full cargo of oil, and the big school with which she fell in about two hundred miles to the south'ard."

"That's glorious!" broke in Rex; "of course we'll go, captain; why, I wouldn't miss a show like that for all the prehistoric old fossils that ever were dreamed of!"

"I should consider the spectacle of a large school of whales, taken in conjunction with their killing and the conversion of the blubber into oil, a most instructive form of entertainment, and well worthy of our presence," remarked the good Kent, geologist and philosopher, in measured and accurate accents.

"Well," remarked Murdock, "I have no pressing engagement during the coming week, and personally accept with pleasure Captain Ruggles' kind invitation to participate in a whale hunt, providing the part assigned me be no more onerous than that of spectator, for I have no very great yearning to be hit hard amidships by the flipper of a full-grown whale, having seen a stuffed one once at a circus, and——"

"Oh, do let up, Dick, and let's hear what Captain Ruggles has to say about it," broke in Rex, while Dick solemnly shied a piece of biscuit at his chum and held his peace.

"I think I had finished," said the captain, "but I

am glad you like my suggestion, and if all feel disposed, we need not stop until our return."

There was an unanimous vote favoring it, and as for myself, I can only say that any plan postponing our landing on those inhospitable shores met with my hearty approval. Even as we sat at table the wind grew to hurricane force and the sea rose higher and higher; the pitching of the vessel increased, and it was with great difficulty that I made my way to the deck, where Rex and Murdock sat upon a spar and smoked, their collars turned up, the spray dashing in clouds about them. Captain Ruggles came up, his jolly, bearded face wreathed in smiles as he caught sight of us, and we were presently joined by the war horses, Bangs and O'Rourke.

"Blowing a bit," said the captain laconically, pulling a black pipe from his pocket, his voice, with forty years of sea usage, coming to us like the bellow of a megaphone.

"Is this a sample of summer weather down here, captain?" ventured Bangs.

"This is only a stiff breeze," roared Ruggles, "wait for a few hours and you'll see a good blow; the glass is falling."

He turned away, and in a moment more the crew were engaged in setting the canvas in close reefs, while the *Polaris* jumped into the seas like a sportive porpoise. Ugly black clouds scudded across the sky, and the wind increased with each moment. The seas began to come over the deck, and appreciating a dry skin more than a vantage view of Nature in one of her wildest moods, I followed the precept of a certain

naval hero of song and fiction, and went below. The representatives of the army shortly appeared in the cabin, and O'Rourke said: "Be Jinks, I'd rather be out on the Staked Plains o' Texas in a 'norther' than above there! It's the kind av a mornin' when a man's apt to think av the snooze he had the day afther doin' guard an' the thermometer shrivelled up to a bit av a buckshot in the bulb, like it used to go whin the regiment was up at Keogh. That's a fine summer resort—Fort Keogh—why, whin they were shippin' a polar bear from Alaska or somewhere up there, an' got him as far as Keogh, the train got into a snow bank an' the bear froze to death, be Jinks! The Lord only knows how cold it was, fer that lot av summer thermometers they sent out from New York all busted to bits whin it began to dhrop in earnest. It was too much fer the bear, anyhow, but av coorse a soldier could stand it—that's what he enlisted fer, be-Jinks! The next time I get an appointment on special duty I'll make application fer Africa, be Jinks!"

"Why, you don't call this cold weather, do you, O'Rourke?" cried Bangs. "It's supposed to be mid-summer down here."

"Now none o' your chaffin', Bangs; the man don't live that can convince me that summer comes in January, be Jinks!"

"But the seasons are reversed down here south of the equator!" laughingly urged the major.

"Reversed the divil! It's January, an' it's cold an' if that combination don't make winter, you can smoke a box av Reny Victorias at my expinse whin we git back to Governor's Island—if we ever do, be Jinks!"

Bangs laughed, but made no reply. Years of service with the jolly Irishman had taught him that he was conviction proof when once a certain opinion had found root in his mind. While we sat and talked, Professor Kent, books and charts piled high around him, was deep in the mysteries of some prehistoric age, studying the pictures of fossils as only the born scientist can, and utterly deaf to any noise surrounding him when in the depths of his hobby. While one of the most lovable men in the world, Kent was never frivolous; play seemed utterly beyond him, and a joke a solemn thing to be demonstrated by the rules of logic. Had he heard O'Rourke make the statement regarding the death of the polar bear in a Montana blizzard he would have sought to have unravelled the phenomenon attending the occurrence, yet never have questioned the sincerity of the narrator, and had it been of sufficient interest to him would either have proved its falsity or established its truth, if it took months of his time, and called into requisition dozens of volumes to do so. His code of ethics demanded that all things susceptible of demonstration be put to the severest test, and in following out his idea he would ponder for weeks over a tiny bit of fossilized bone, and either prove that it was of no particular importance, or from it build the skeleton of some fearsome monster of an age unlighted by history, and stand triumphant in his satisfaction. Once at college, the students went to great pains to build a dodo, and when it was completed it was really a work of art, and worthy of a better cause. They presented the stuffed specimen of the extinct bird to Kent, who

received it with unfeigned delight, and tears of joy in his kindly eyes. The boys laughed about "Old Kent," whom they had fooled with their dodo, and a day was set when the whole scheme was to be unfolded in the college paper and the laugh be on the professor. But a few days before their *coup*, he very gravely informed them that he had spent much time in studying the creature, and had made the remarkable discovery that the numbers of scales upon the bird's legs did not correspond; that since nature had never been known to make any such error, the young artists who had done so very creditably in other respects, would now be given a thorough course in ornithology, and particular attention would be given the dodo. There was a burst of applause in the classroom, and Kent came nearer smiling than ever before in his life. But those who know him never care to see him smile, for if that expression in those kindly eyes is not the soul itself shining upon you then man is soulless.

All forenoon we remained in the cabin. Owing to the rolling of the vessel cards were out of the question, and reading took their place. Without going on deck we were easily able to note that the hurricane was full upon us, and by noon we were in the midst of a terrific storm, the seas running mountain high and pounding upon the deck until their booming sounded like a man-o'-war in heavy action. Not once did the face of Captain Ruggles show itself, and for the first time since leaving New York we ate our dinner without him. Even Kent put aside his books and peered cautiously through the port whenever it emerged from the water. There was an ominous silence

among us that told of an anxiety too great for words. Once did I try to go on deck, but found that the hatches were fastened down and we were prisoners in the cabin, with no means of egress until the storm showed some signs of abatement, or succeeded in casting us to the bottom. For forty hours we labored in the fearful sea, and then there came a steadying of the vessel almost as if she had entered a landlocked harbor. Shortly after, there was a tremendous crash, and then a loud thumping sound, and the faces gathered in the cabin paled as we silently asked each other what it meant. Our ignorance was soon dispelled by the entrance of the captain, his features pale and drawn, and dark circles from his long vigil about his eyes.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, "it is nothing serious, but we shall have to depend upon sail hereafter; we have broken our propeller, but the gale has subsided, and we are all right otherwise. That was the worst trip I ever made around the Horn, and I've been sailing these seas for many a year."

He dropped on to a cushioned locker, and was sound asleep before we could ask him a question. We then went on deck. Far away on our quarter could be seen the tossing billows through which we had come, while now, we were sailing before a stiff breeze, and rising and falling over the long green swells only. The sea was still high, but the change from the terrible mountains of water through which we had passed, made the swell seem like veriest calm. I looked at the compass and found that we were headed southwest by south, and even as I noted this the needle changed

and pointed to a half-south. Winslow was at the wheel, and said, "I can't keep her headed right, sir, she seems to be drifting."

I fancied that something must be wrong with the propeller, but not being a nautical man, held my peace.

The captain slept for hours, and as the sun was sinking into the western ocean came on deck. The wind had changed, and was now blowing gently from the northeast, while, although the ship was held to her course of southwest by south, she was making no headway, but apparently seemed to be now going due south. The captain and First Officer Winslow held an earnest, whispered consultation, and after supper the former took a careful observation by the stars. The air was perceptibly colder than when O'Rourke had complained two days before, and he made various comments on the beautiful summer weather that was given this section of the globe. About ten o'clock, or, as we had long since become accustomed to saying, four bells, Ruggles came below, and looking from one to the other, said: "I don't believe in keeping secrets when they concern every man on board, and there's something queer with this ship. She's drifting south, and drifting fast, too. The steering gear is all right, and so are her keel and sails, but they none of them have any effect; we are in a current I never knew was down here, and we don't seem able to get out of it. We haven't made a mile west since last night, but we've been going south at an eight-knot clip right along, and the current is going faster with every hour. Of course it's nothing serious, and we'll get out of it

all right in time, but I can't understand it. If it carries us far enough we'll land up against a solid wall of ice; but that's not the object of this voyage."

He tried to smile, but the effort was a feeble one, and we all looked serious. Then Kent, who carried with him text-books on every conceivable subject, arose, brought out his volumes, and proceeded to study up ocean currents. He was decidedly more interested in the fact that he had been a witness to a possible discovery of a new current than that he was an involuntary passenger toward the mysterious South Pole. We discussed the problem from every point, and it was midnight when we turned in, after receiving the fresh information that the current had increased to a speed of ten knots, and was still bearing us due south.

CHAPTER II.

THE WALLS OF ICE.

I do not think any man of our party could be accused of laziness on the morning following the information we had received from Captain Ruggles, for the sun had not yet appeared above the waters when we were all on deck, anxiously scanning the horizon and discussing our position. Kent had been unable to identify the current with which we were traveling, and Ruggles found it on none of his charts, yet there was no doubt that it was a current of a very pronounced type, for repeated examinations of the steering gear and every part of the vessel, showed all in perfect order save the broken shaft, and the now silent and useless machinery, while every observation taken demonstrated our rapid and steady course toward the south. The breeze had died away, leaving us in almost a dead calm, though there was still enough motion in the air to partially fill the sails. By mid-day, however, even this abandoned us, and we found ourselves given over entirely to the whims of the ocean river. The cold had increased, and heavy coats began to take the place of our sweaters and pea-jackets, while O'Rourke was constantly amusing us, in spite of our anxiety, with his observations and

comments anent the beautiful summer weather off the coast of South America. Along toward evening he came on deck and said: "We're goin' to swing an awnin' presently, and serve ice cream; it's a pity the ladies aren't along, for there's nothin' a pretty girl so much enjoys as a plate av cream an' a lover to say swate nothin's to her while aff on a summer avenin's sail. Ah, sure if I hadn't got meself all thwisted up when we left New York in the winter time, and forgotten altogether that the seasons were reversed down here, and that when it's winter down here it's summer up there, I'd have had the good sense to ask Bangs there to bring the wife along, as well as some av the young ladies at the post, so's to while away these delightful summer evenin's, be Jinks!"

"I presume that Captain O'Rourke is jesting," solemnly remarked Kent upon hearing him, "but you must take into consideration, captain, the fact that we are now about sixty-five degrees south latitude, and the weather is remarkably mild for the position of the ship. Should we continue on our present course, and at the same relative rate of speed, we will, within a few days, be among the bergs; in fact, at the present moment we are very close upon the Antarctic Circle. We have been traveling at the rate of four degrees in every twenty-four hours, which rate of progress would, with no barrier of ice interposing, convey us to the South Pole in just six days. But, there being known to exist vast fields of ice for hundreds of miles from the pole, it is clearly evident that our progress will shortly be barred, and we shall be forced to the necessity of devising some means to

escape ere the winter comes, and imprisons us among the bergs and floes."

Kent delivered himself of this speech with the ponderous air so familiar to the classroom, and Rex openly smiled at the well-remembered tones, while Dick Murdock looked comically serious and winked at me as he said: "It may be possible, professor, that we shall find animal life on the Antarctic Continent, and if so, we can prosecute our studies and explorations while our forced occupation of the land continues."

"It is well known that many forms of animal life do exist there, Mr. Murdock, but all have been classified, and I do not anticipate any novelty. I am more desirous of a research on the mainland of America for evidences of prehistoric civilized man," said Kent, bowing, and turning away toward the cabin and his beloved books and bones.

Evening wore on, and no change in our condition having occurred, we turned in in good season, and were soon in that phantom land where the soul holds sway supreme. I was utterly tired out with the day's anxiety and slept like a baby until the call for breakfast aroused me. Before going to the table, however, I followed my habitual custom, and went on deck for a breath of fresh air. The desire was quickly gratified, for the air was indeed fresh, and a glance at the thermometer showed me that the temperature was but fifteen degrees. A hasty look about me at once told the reason, and I shall never in my life forget the sight that met my eyes. On every side, from a few yards distance to miles away, we were surrounded by

tremendous icebergs floating grandly and solemnly in the glassy water. For the most part they were simply enormous blocks of ice, their sides smooth and precipitous, but occasionally one could be seen whose colossal proportions were wrought into the most fantastic and artistic forms, some resembling mere huts, while others were cast in the likeness of weirdly grand cathedrals, their spires and arches mimicking man's handiwork, though far surpassing it in beauty. Fancy, if you can, the great Cologne or Milan Cathedral, or even hoary Canterbury, cast in a mould of crystal, while the whole was lighted up by the rays of the rising sun until each corner and cranny gleamed with the fires of a million great opals, their colors constantly changing like the turning of a kaleidoscope. Picture this mass of indescribable beauty floating in sparkling, liquid sapphire, while a broad pathway of molten gold led from the ship to the horizon, and if your fancy is exceptionally vivid, you will have a faint conception of the scene I looked upon that morning. Its effect upon me was reverential, and in the sublime presence of this immensity I truly felt what an humble and insignificant thing I was. All day we remained in the midst of the great field, and late in the afternoon the man at the lookout gave the cry: "There she blows!"

Every ear caught the words for which we had all been waiting, and our thoughts were instantly diverted from our strange condition by the novel excitement the shout promised.

We were equipped with every modern device and invention for the capture of whales, and in a moment's

time two boats were over the side, and making away toward the west where the lookout had indicated the game. I confess I could see no whale, but Captain Ruggles noted my expression and helped me out. The landsman's eyes then caught the fountains that were playing from the ocean some three miles away, and I had soon counted sixty streams at one and the same time. "There's a monster school there," said Ruggles, "and I guess they are the ones the Solomon Blake ran into, but they have come a long way since then."

"Do they travel rapidly, captain?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; sometimes many miles in a single day; a great deal depends upon the movements of their small prey."

In the meantime the two boats were making good time toward them, and before long were in their very midst. We were all gathered on the starboard bow, and presently saw the smoke from the harpoon gun, and then a tremendous splash of water as the stricken whale threw his tail high in the air and dove. The other boat came up to them, and when the game rose for air, another gun flashed, and a second harpoon buried itself in his body. Then came a fight. The whale sounded again, and then rose to the surface and proceeded to tow those two boats at a forty-mile-an-hour clip. And the course he chose was directly toward the ship. Two geysers of foam spouted from either side of the bow of the little craft, and he came so swiftly that they were soon within a mile of us, and we could hear the shouts of the crew reverberate among the giant bergs. They were occasionally hid-

den behind the ice, but not for long, and the view of the race from the deck was superb. But the long tow had tired the monster, and with a final spurt at an increased speed, he lay on his side as if exhausted. The two boats stealthily approached, and from a safe distance another harpoon was sunk into his black side. Instantly the water was in a terrible commotion, and he struck such blows with his tail as seemed sufficient to sink even the *Polaris* itself had they hit her, then once more he dove, but not for long; the lines slackened, and before a man could move to save himself one of the boats was thrown high in air, men, implements and oars flying in confusion, but this accident only to be followed by a tragedy the like of which I hope never again to witness, for when the boat fell back into the water, the angry monster made one snap of his immense jaws, and bit the steel craft in two as if it had been pie crust, while two of the ill-fated crew perished between those rows of glistening teeth. The rest struggled in the water and were soon picked up by the other boat, while the author of the tragedy, his last act one of revenge, lay over on his side and was dead.

Since the mountain would not come to Mahomet, and Mahomet could not go to the mountain in a dead calm and against an insidious current, there was nothing to do but launch two extra boats and tow the great beast to the ship. By sunset this was accomplished. Rex and Dick, who had each taken an oar, were flushed with excitement and the newly revived memories of Yale and New London that the rowing had evoked. The carcass was moored to the ship, and

the process of cutting up and trying out began, making of our hitherto clean craft a reeking, smoking inferno of foul odors and grease. But the work could not be postponed, for rough weather might at any moment come, and the present calm was a blessing to the toilers at the vats and on the great black body, which seemed to me to be nearly a hundred feet long, but which, I dare say, fell considerably short of this figure, the novelty of the scene having rather a tendency to feed my imagination. On the morrow they succeeded in capturing three more from the same school, and the labor of trying out went on. Captain Ruggles was so delighted with the good fortune that he cast aside all worriment about our strange predicament, and built his air castles amid the thick tobacco smoke of the cabin when six pipes were going at once. We kept company with that school until the *Polaris* had filled every available foot with oil and bone, and broken all whaling records, and a generous sum in addition to what they would have received was named as the share of the families of the poor fellows who had met their deaths on the first day.

"Just think of it!" cried Ruggles; "here we've filled our hold in a week, and we fitted out for three years! Such a strike was never known! Now if we could only get out of this infernal current and turn around, we could sail straight for home."

"I regret to say, captain," said Kent, "that I have made the discovery that the current is augmenting in speed, and we are at this hour in latitude eighty-four degrees south, and but six degrees from the pole, several hundreds of miles nearer that point than any

explorer has hitherto penetrated. The sea is comparatively free from ice, but within six hours the probabilities are that we shall be locked in."

The professor spoke with the authority of science at his back, and in a shorter length of time than he had named we had entered a clear channel among the bergs, and could for the first time since leaving Cape Horn observe that we were in motion. The ice soon took the form of a solid wall on either side, while the *Polaris* glided peacefully along on the bosom of a salty river varying from a few hundred yards to several miles in width, with bergs which soon became towering mountains lining its shores. The increasing height of these mountains convinced all that we were between two bodies of land, for no mere ice formations could have assumed such gigantic proportions. That they were mountain chains, buried under the accumulated ice and snows of untold centuries, there was not the smallest doubt, but the explanation of the mysterious current that carried us south was as much an unsolved riddle as ever. Even Professor Kent was, in a double sense, at sea; by no rule or guess could he hazard an opinion, and it was with childlike trust that we waited any new developments. The cold had grown intense, and the liquid in the thermometers left the zero mark far above their levels. O'Rourke had not ceased his joking about the summer weather, but there was an air of mournfulness about him that made his solemn observations about the climate even more ludicrous than before. Furs had been brought out, and we all bundled up like arctic explorers, while the stove in the cabin was kept red-

hot all the time. I spent many hours on deck, and took keen pleasure in contemplating the panorama that seemed passing before us, so silent and smooth was the motion of our vessel. I had been for some time gazing in silence at the landscape, when a shout from Rex on the opposite side startled me from a reverie, and I hastily turned my head.

"A bear! A white bear!" he cried. "Let's lower a boat and go for him;" then running to the captain's cabin, he dragged the good-natured sailor out and pointed to the lee shore. Not only one, but a dozen enormous white bears could now be seen solemnly watching the ship as the strange visitor glided through their domains, and a thrill went even through my own veins as I saw them. I was not so many years in the van of Rex but that the sight of the game made my blood tingle, and I added my voice to the request for a boat. The captain could not withstand our united plea, and when Bangs and O'Rourke came piling out to learn the cause of the excitement, and spied the bears, he hove to, anchored, and we manned a boat. The anchorage took well-nigh all the chain—the depth of the sea was astonishing—and having no means of guiding the vessel to the shore and tying to the ice, we were forced to drop her in midstream. To allow the ship to proceed would have meant death to the hunters, for her pace being about ten miles an hour we could never have overtaken her. Bangs and O'Rourke, Dick, Rex and myself, each with a rifle, jumped in a boat and were lowered away, my four companions rowing, while I, from my place in the stern, directed the course. While we approached

them, rowing directly across the current though being carried steadily downward, the bears looked on curiously and gave not the slightest indication of alarm. We landed about half a mile below their point of observation, secured the boat to a hummock, and made our way on foot over the ice. Interposing mounds concealed our approach, which was at a rapid walk, and in the course of ten minutes we came within sight of the great shaggy creatures, all sitting and standing in a group not above two hundred yards distant, looking at us inquisitively. It was at this point that we made a grave error, for, instead of being satisfied with one or two of the animals, which two or three bullets striking simultaneously would have killed outright, we each selected one and fired in unison. The effect was electrical. Five bears rolled over on the ice, and each vied with the other in ear-splitting screams of pain and rage. Before the smoke had cleared away Rex was going over the ice like a wild man, stopping twice to fire at the ones that had taken to their heels, but missing both chances. Ere we realized it, he was among the struggling beasts that had been hit. Two were killed outright, but the others rose to their feet, and with a concerted growl of rage rushed upon the intrepid author of their misfortunes. I was still a full hundred yards away when the largest one of the three sprang upon him and bore him to the snow before he could fire, while the other two rushed to their comrade's aid. Rex lay against a sharp projection of ice, still as death, while his rifle had been knocked thirty feet away. The great beast paused for a moment, then catching sight of us run-

ning toward him, gave poor Rex a stunning blow that threw him ten feet away, and charged down upon us, followed by his companions. Realizing instantly that nothing but a volley would check them, I cried to the others, and as the great animals came shambling on, we drew up, and our repeaters poured their missiles into them in volley. The leader fell dead, and then the second, but the third had more vitality, and the four bullets scarcely swerved him as he came bounding on. At this moment the courage and coolness of O'Rourke were displayed. With a bound he was in front of us, his rifle at his hip, and the bear not ten feet away. One bound and the beast had the black barrel in his teeth, but at the same instant there came a flash of flame from his mouth, a dull report and a cloud of smoke, and the entire top of his head was blown off.

"I knew the baste would thry to ate that gun barrel, be Jinks!" was the officer's sole comment when we had regained our composure and started for Rex; "that's always the way with bears, they get ugly and want to ate the first thing that comes their way."

But we all realized that he had placed his own life in imminent peril when ours were in jeopardy. Rex lay quite still, but a brisk rubbing with snow soon restored him to consciousness and the fact that he was badly bruised. No bones were broken, but he had only his heavy furs to thank for that, for the last blow the bear gave him would have staved in the ribs of a horse, to say nothing of a man. He walked to the boat, and we soon reached the ship, where, securing the life raft, we returned, and fastening the five

bears upon it towed them to the vessel. The skins were splendid specimens, and one now adorns my library floor, but that is something beyond my story. Weighing anchor, we once more began to drift with the current, and soon left far behind us the scene of our brief but stirring adventure on the Antarctic Continent.

CHAPTER III.

THE CATARACT OF FIRE.

Nothing of unusual interest occurred during the twenty-four hours succeeding our bear hunt, save that the mountain ranges on either shore increased in height, until they now resembled the Andes in altitude, could the imagination cover the latter in a shroud of crystal, and Rex, whose severe handling kept him rather quiet, sat on the deck enveloped in furs, and enjoyed the unusual scene. At noon the captain took his customary observation, and it was in a voice of extreme solemnity that he said: "My friends, my calculations tell me that we are now in one hundred and ten degrees west longitude, and eighty-nine degrees south latitude. We are within a single degree of the pole, and our course is still due south."

"At the present rate of progress," said Professor Kent, "and continuing on this course, we will reach the pole in about seven hours. Reasoning from theory, which has heretofore been our sole guide, I should say that the temperature of the atmosphere in such an extreme latitude should be very low, yet careful observation shows that it has risen during the past ten hours, and is now increasing at the rate of twenty

degrees an hour. Reasoning from the hypothesis that this increase will continue in steady ratio, and since the instruments now record twenty degrees below zero, it is safe to assume that at the pole itself there is a tropic climate of one hundred and twenty degrees. I confess that I cannot comprehend the paradox."

It was a very short time before we had reason to accept the conclusions of the professor, for the air grew actually balmy in comparison to the arctic weather we had been experiencing, and furs were soon discarded for lighter coats and caps. The sun shone continuously, describing a circle in the sky and approaching the horizon once in every twelve hours, yet never sinking far below the mountain ranges. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when a faint wreath of cloud appeared in the clear sky directly ahead and increased in size until it poured like smoke over a projecting peak. I observed it curiously for some moments, when, the channel turning the base of a sharp promontory, there burst full upon my eyes at once the most remarkable and terrifying sight they had ever beheld, and I cried aloud in my excitement, calling the others from various parts of the ship, until crew and passengers alike were training their eyes upon the grandest picture in all nature. Far ahead—some thirty miles, we calculated—smoked a tremendous volcano in full activity. Its sides were barren of snow, while a monster river of glowing lava poured down them and across a sloping plain. Its course, as nearly as we could judge, was about three miles in length, when it plunged over a precipice

a full thousand feet in height and fell into the sea. Opposite this grand cataract of fire the channel widened to several miles, the land on the shores showing distinctly, black and barren, while a tremendous cloud of steam arose to a great height, and the roar of the falls could be heard as a thousand Niagaras. Beginning several miles from the volcano, and continuing as far inland as the eye could from this point see, there was a dense green vegetation rivaling the tropics, while the now rapidly rising temperature demanded summer clothing. We made a pretense of securing this from among our stores, though nothing we had was cool enough, and our costumes were none of the heaviest, be assured. In the meantime we were approaching the falls of fire rapidly, and had come to within fifteen miles of them before it occurred to us that we were in imminent danger of being engulfed in the igneous marvel. Before us there spread a paradoxical, tropical arctic landscape of overpowering beauty, the great forests and green plains being banked and guarded in the distance by grand ranges of ice mountains, while far away could be seen the curling smoke of other volcanoes.

Steadily drifting toward the awful falls, some means of escape must be determined upon at once. Hurriedly ordering out the remaining boats, Captain Ruggles commanded them manned and hawsers attached, and then began the struggle for the saving of the ship and our provisions. The prospect of death before us by fire, or ashore by starvation, gave to each arm an added strength, and every man plied his oar deep in the clear water. Slowly we partially

overcame the downward drift, and the *Polaris* began to move toward the shore, but so slowly that her progress was scarcely perceptible, and with every yard we gained on the shore, a mile away, she seemed to approach many times nearer her destruction. After an hour's work the heat became almost unbearable, and we were still a good five miles from the cataract. I felt that we could never make it, for the speed of the current was now increasing rapidly. Just I was about to call to the captain, he himself saw that all hope of saving the ship was gone, and in the hope of securing a few provisions before her end, he gave the order, and we all turned and rowed toward her, our bodies reeking with perspiration, our breasts heaving with the work. The boat containing our party was filled first, and we pulled away for shore. The heat was now awful, and we did not pause until dry land was beneath our feet and the boat drawn up. Only then did we realize the tragedy that was being enacted in midstream. The men in the drifting ship were signaling frantically, while the two small boats were nowhere to be seen. But in the placid water was a small, dark object making its way toward us, and we sprang to our boat and made toward it to render what assistance lay in our power.

It was Captain Ruggles swimming ashore!

We caught him up, and he told us all. The greed of the men left behind for the last boats had swamped them, he said, and knowing that his only chance lay in swimming, he had sprung overboard. None followed him, and before we had rowed half the distance to the ship the last man had fainted, mercifully spared

the realization of his awful fate. We were now so near the torrent that delay were deadly, and it was a fight against fearful odds that brought us safely ashore within a mile of the boiling lava, where we stood with skins blistering in the glare of the furnace, and watched our vessel glide slowly and gracefully to destruction. Within half a mile she took fire, and with the flames leaping from her masts and rigging, sailed grandly into the face of the seething cataract and became lost in the terrible caldron.

The falls were semicircular in shape, and we looked upon them from a three-quarter view. Try and fancy a volume of molten fire fully six times the height of Niagara and more than a mile across, pouring over a ledge, while a fearful roar pervaded the atmosphere and clouds of steam arose a mile on high, and you will be fairly able to dimly picture the sarcophagus of our good ship *Polaris*.

We were not long able to stand the frightful heat, and made our way to shelter, each busy with his own thoughts and speculations. The loss of the ship and nearly all of our provisions left us two thousand miles from Cape Horn, the nearest possible haven of safety, without one chance in a million of ever reaching there, and the alternative of starvation staring us in the face if we remained where fortune had seen fit in one of her sportive moods to cast us. The outlook was far from cheering, yet we could not long remain disconsolate in the presence of the beautiful panorama that unfolded itself before us as we left the vicinity of the cataract, which Professor Kent had promptly christened "The Falls of the Gods."

The oasis created by the titanic heat beneath the earth's crust extended for perhaps fifty miles on three sides of the volcano, which we calculated to a reasonable certainty must be directly over the point from which there is but one direction—north. The South Pole was indeed a pole in very truth, a pole that belched forth flame and poured a fiery torrent over a cliff a thousand feet high into the sea. On every side was a forest of vegetation covering hills and valleys alike, the whole walled in by a mountain ranges of eternal ice; truly a magnificent picture. The plants and trees were tropic in their species and growth, though the shrubbery was not nearly so dense as in the tropics themselves, and long vistas of waving grass could be seen beneath the splendid palms and tree ferns. We moved on across this exquisite land until a protecting hill gave us shelter from the direct glare of the flowing lava, and here we paused, resolving to make camp.

There were remaining but my companions and Captain Ruggles, and four of them immediately volunteered to go for the boat, leaving Professor Kent and myself to select the most suitable spot for our temporary home. When the boat arrived, my companions again bathed in perspiration from exposure to the terrific heat, an example was shown of what men will do under the strain of great excitement, for on top of the pile of clothing and provisions with which the boat was deeply laden, were three of the five bear skins, a reminder of the cold of a few days previous, a cold we could now scarce comprehend, suffering as we were in our heavy clothing under an equatorial climate.

Rex and Dick led the others in divesting themselves of their outer garments, and we were all soon at work building a temporary camp and arranging a place for cooking what few provisions we had to cook. We unanimously chose Captain Ruggles to look after the commissaries, and after looking over what we had brought, he ventured the opinion that we had ample for about thirty days. After that—well, we must begin an immediate exploration of the land, and learn if it would sustain life.

The excitement and fatigue of the last few hours had given us all excellent appetites, and we were soon in the midst of a good supper, Rex's experiments with the chafing dish, and my own experience on hunting trips, making us cooks of no mean order, and it was not until we lighted our pipes that we gave ourselves over to the sad thoughts occasioned by the tragic loss of the entire crew of the *Polaris*. By this time we had grown accustomed to the constant sight of the sun, and learned to speak of the time as morning or evening, according to the horizon near which the orb of day at the time was. After our supper he sank for a moment behind the ridge of great peaks that rose from the edge of the oasis, only to reappear a little further along and continue the never-ceasing circle. Novelties began to throng upon us, and the altogether strange one that the direct rays of the sun were in no-wise warm, our heat coming from the opposite direction, and being caused solely by the subterranean fires, and the torrent of molten lava that flowed over the cliff into the sea. The temperature hovered constantly in the region of one hundred degrees Fahren-

heit, and there was no escape from it, since the open air and shade alike were torrid. There was nothing for it but to move our camp, and after an hour's rest this we proceeded to do, starting across the open and then entering the forest, whose deep shade gave great relief to our eyes after days of the blinding glare of snow, ice and sun. We had not penetrated far into the tropical growth when from our very feet there bounded forth a herd of deer, half a dozen in number, beautiful, dainty creatures resembling the Virginia variety, and so sudden and unexpected was their appearance, and so altogether grateful to our homesick senses, that we had not the hearts to destroy the beautiful life, and they soon stopped and stood gazing at us, wonder expressed in their great brown eyes. But their appearance raised a load of anxiety from our minds, for now we were assured that if game existed in this strange world into which we had been brought, we were at any rate in no danger of starvation. We proceeded some four or five miles through the forest, and found it alive with deer and some smaller animals. This condition of the forest itself gave us the assurance that the Falls of the Gods were of no recent origin, but had evidently existed for ages in order to produce the miracle of a tropic forest amid mountains of perpetual ice. At our second camping place we noted that the trees and shrubbery had in a measure lost their tropical character, and the growth, though still dense, was more in accord with semi-tropical latitudes. There were giant oaks shrouded in the hoary moss so familiar a feature of the Florida landscape, and great fields of wild sugar cane, while

the grass was of shorter growth than that nearer the volcano we had seen. The thermometer, too, had fallen, and at a temperature of seventy-five degrees we found comfort, and made camp with a sense of gratitude. Indeed, was mortal man ever yet so blessed? Here was a variety of climate excelled nowhere on the globe. An hour's stroll in either direction would bring one to the heat of the Amazon valley, or the bracing atmosphere of Labrador, while an extended walk would place you in a scorching temperature where life could not exist, or among the mountains of ice where the spirit in the tube fell far below zero, and nothing but arctic animals could find a habitat. Professor Kent was dumb. He had not ventured a theory or an opinion since his first view of the falls, and now, from where we had made our camp on an eminence amid a splendid grove of oaks overlooking them, he sat upon a rock and contemplated the majestic spectacle in silence. I suggested the advisability of an exploring party venturing out, and the suggestion meeting with approval, the captain produced the compass he had brought from the boat. As he looked at it he gave a cry of amazement that quickly brought us all to his side, and we saw that the needle was jumping about as if bewitched. It refused to remain stationary for a second, but kept up its erratic action constantly.

Professor Kent, watched it for a moment, then said: "We are practically at the pole, and since every direction is north, there is no point toward which the needle can direct itself, therefore it can but spin round and round as it is doing. Were we directly over the pole, it would probaby spin even faster than now."

Having relieved himself of this bit of wisdom, he returned to his place of observation, preferring, he remarked, to remain where he was for a few hours, to indulging in any exertion which, for his part, could well be postponed. O'Rourke also preferring to remain behind, the captain, Rex, Dick and myself, our pipes in our pockets and our rifles slung over our shoulders, started forth, taking a course through the forest which we judged to be nearly northwest, and expecting to be absent some three or four hours, when we would return, obtain provisions, and again go forth to remain several days.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOLDEN CITY.

WE pursued our way through the forest, coming occasionally upon an open space of natural meadow garbed in grass of luxuriant growth, and catching glimpses of the dazzling mountains that on three sides walled in this garden spot. Small bands of deer sprang ever and anon from our pathway, and their absence of fear led to the natural inference that we were the first human creatures they had ever seen. How these animals, whose natural habitat was the temperate zone, came to be in this antipodean land, none ventured to guess, nor had we at this time leisure for reflection, our object being merely a cursory exploration of the land within a few miles of our camping place. We had penetrated some five or six miles into the forest when we came rather suddenly to an opening, and looked down upon a broad, verdant valley, its sides sloping to meet the foothills of the icy mountains in the distance. A hasty computation placed the mean diameter of the valley at seventy miles, while its bed lay about a thousand feet beneath the forest-crowned hill upon which we stood. On our right hand, and some ten miles distant, there flowed from the hillside a magnificent stream of water, taking

its foaming course straight into the valley, where it disappeared. Following out a well-defined ledge of rock, beginning where the river disappeared, we all noted a peculiar metallic gleam in the bright light of the sun which was now pouring its rays over the whole landscape.

"By the eternal gods, a city!" cried Rex.

Our eyes must have stood from our heads, for Rex was right, a city indeed lay before us. Owing to the sudden glare of ice and sun when we emerged from the forest, we had not at first noticed it, particularly as it lay some thirty miles away, but now that the astounding truth dawned upon us, we held our breaths and gazed long at the wonder. In the midst of the most perfect valley man's eyes ever beheld, it sat, its walls of gleaming white and softest reds and browns, while every roof shone with the effulgence of pure gold, bringing to mind the roofs of various buildings at home, though here there was no exception to the rule—all alike were of gold. The sight was one no man, having beheld, could ever forget. The distance was too great to observe any life, if life there was, and my attention was presently turned again toward the river. After as careful a scrutiny as the distance admitted, I felt sure that there was but one explanation of the mysterious disappearance of the stream. From the point where it could last be seen, there led a tiny white line across the valley and through the very center of the city where, at a point shortly beyond, it abruptly ceased, and the river seemed to spring from the ground and again begin its interrupted course, flowing across the other side of the

valley, and finally disappearing among the green hills far away. It was an aqueduct! No other explanation would fit the case. After a time spent in admiration of the beautiful panorama laid beneath our feet, we made haste to return and acquaint Kent and O'Rourke with our grand discovery, and I noted an expression of incredulity on the latter's face, while Kent accepted the information with that imperturbability for which he was famous at college, and among all his friends, and at once made preparations for returning and inspecting the city in person. We supplied ourselves with rations for a week, and secured the balance of our possessions beneath the overturned boat, which we dragged ashore behind a ridge of hardened lava. Among other things, Captain Ruggles had saved a fine pair of marine glasses, and these we found very useful when we had returned to the place from which we had secured our first view of the city and the remarkable aqueduct. The first glance through them showed us that before us lay no dead city of antiquity, but one teeming with life, and seemingly thronged with people, though from the distance these looked more like ants than human beings, and the glass showed many handsome buildings, presumably residences, dotting the valley. It being entirely inconsistent that a savage race inhabited such a splendid city, we had no hesitation in descending into the valley and striking a direct course for the center of life and activity. A steady walk of two hours, during the course of which we crossed several small streams, and started numerous flocks of birds from cover, brought us seemingly no nearer the city than we had been when on

the mountain side; in fact, it seemed even more distant than from that point, a condition due to the clearness of the atmosphere with which those who have spent any length of time in a mountainous country are familiar. The climate of this part of the valley was temperate, and the vegetation that of the temperate zone.

After traveling some twenty miles we concluded to make camp for a few hours and rest, and the coffee we brewed was most delicious, while some small birds which Rex had shot were a most welcome change from our long-continued ship diet. They were a species of grouse, resembling both the prairie chicken and the ptarmigan, having the soft gray plumage of the former on the body, while the wings and head were snowy white; the cocks possessed in addition a white crest and tail.

The long sleep that followed was most refreshing to our wearied bodies, and we arose with stronger hearts as well as limbs for the continuation of our march. We were now not above ten miles from our objective point, and three hours ought to bring us to it, we thought. Between us and the city we could distinguish scores of splendid houses which we were now certain were residences, nor were we long in verifying this surmise, for in passing around the first one and coming to the front entrance, we came suddenly upon a group of ladies in classic garb, resting beneath the broad portico of what was in every sense a palace.

Built entirely of light-colored onyx, its roof—as we had seen at a distance—was of gold, like the others, while the beautiful pillars supporting the portico were

carved in spirals, and the walls beneath bore beautiful landscapes in mosaic. All this we gathered at a glance, and then were espied by the occupants, who sprang to their feet, while one ran into the house. Before we had time to approach and calm their fears, twenty men, garbed in tunics and armed with short, heavy swords, charged down upon us from out the doorway through which the woman had run, but seeing nothing in our demeanor to indicate hostility, paused at a short distance, and while all eyed us with even more curiosity than we extended to them, one approached a step and spoke to us in a strange tongue. I at once made a sign of noncomprehension, but as I did so, heard Kent addressing the leader in a foreign language. At this the man and his fellows threw down their swords, and crossing their arms on their breasts, approached us in the most friendly attitude.

"They are Greeks!" cried the professor, in accents of the greatest delight he was capable of showing. "They are using the tongue of Socrates in all its ancient purity. I never heard it before, but years of study have not failed me, and I recognized it the moment that man spoke."

He was more nearly excited than I had ever seen him, and his pleasure shone in his face as he reopened conversation with the man, who seemed as happy as himself at the unexpected meeting.

I presume Kent informed them that he was the only one of our party who could speak their language, for they none of them attempted to address us, but listened while he spoke, showing by their manner alone that they were our friends. Wishing to calm the

anxiety of the ladies, they escorted us to the house, where the timid one who had given the alarm peered at us from the doorway. The dwelling was indeed palatial, the grounds were laid off in most artistic landscape gardening, with blooming flowers on every hand, while the magnitude of the whole amazed me. The portico was some thirty feet in width, and extended around the entire house, having on each side a frontage of about two hundred feet. The building was but one tall story in height, but what it lacked in this respect was fully made up in beauty, and in its ground dimensions. Kent presently informed us that we were at the country seat of the prime minister of the empire, and that messengers were to be sent to the city at once to communicate our arrival. He said he would tell us more later, and then addressed himself for an hour or more to the ladies and the leader of the men, the latter being guards, who now retired within the palace. The ladies were gowned precisely as we are habituated to seeing pictured in the portraits of the ancient Greeks, and wore sandals of cloth of gold and silver, while the officer who had talked with Kent was barelegged, and wore a tunic and a sash, through which latter he had sheathed his sword, and sandals, the laces of which reached far up the calf. It was one of Tadema's pictures brought to life. The ladies reclined on heaps of cushions cast here and there over the rugs which covered the broad veranda, and were in appearance precisely what I had always fancied them to have been in the days of the Iliad. I readily discerned that if I did well I would brush up on my rusty Greek, and determined then and there to waste

no time, but make Kent's life miserable by electing him my tutor. Refreshments were after a time served us, and never did I taste such delicious grapes and oranges, or sip such perfect wine as delighted my palate within twenty miles of the South Pole.

Kent made an inquiry, and then told us that the groves and vineyards were on the south side of the oasis, while on the opposite were the orchards and fields of the temperate fruits and vegetables. This enabled them to keep their tables constantly supplied with every luxury, while, the climate being always free from frost, there was the never-ending summer of the tropics, or the delightful temperate zone. In the winter, he said, when the sun disappeared for a time, the whole land was lighted to a rich red glow by the fiery lava, and it was then that vegetation took a partial rest.

My attention was presently drawn toward the city, and I saw coming along the perfect roadway a large troop of horsemen. They drew up at the gateway, and leaving their animals to their own devices, came up to the house. With much ostentation we were presented to Prince Kalma and suite, and it was then that I found that we had been entertained by his wife—the Princess Helen—who greeted him with stately affection. I was now for the first time aware of the fact that I had not seen a hat since entering this empire of the South, and catching sight of my own cap lying on the floor, I picked it up, and taking out my knife, cut it into bits and threw them away. A ringing laugh greeted this act of destruction, and my companions looked at me as if they thought I had suddenly gone mad.

"Of what use is a hat?" I cried; "look at these handsome people, these beautiful women; they never heard of such a thing in their lives, and pray look at their hair; why, it's glorious! While I am in this land I intend to do as the people do, and there goes the first piece of civilized foolishness."

"Right, 'Bardy!'" cried Rex "let's set 'em a good example;" and out came his knife, his cap following mine.

One by one they all disposed of their headgear, even Kent, with a reluctant air, parting with a monstrosity he called a cap. Rex, with his blue eyes and black hair, would himself have made a typical Greek, and it was easy to see that our act had been taken by the whole company as a sincere compliment.

Prince Kalma spoke long and earnestly with Kent, while I sat near and endeavored to gather the gist of their conversation. I found that I could distinguish many words and occasionally translate an entire sentence, but the sound of the dead language had a different meaning to me than the appearance of the words upon a printed page. Rex and Dick, fresher from college and Greek plays than I, were doing better, but to poor Ruggles the whole thing was a mystery he could never hope to clear up. Greek cannot be acquired in a day, and the honest captain and the brave O'Rourke were at sea, while Major Bangs was not much better equipped, what little he knew of it serving rather to hinder than aid him, and he gave it up without much concern.

Acting as interpreter, Kent told us that the Prince begged him to say to us that he and the Princess

would esteem it a high honor if we would consent to become his guests for an indefinite time, and that he would take a wealth of pleasure in personally presenting us to his sovereign, the queen. It is needless to say that we accepted the hospitable invitation with gratitude. We suffered ourselves to be conducted to a suite of apartments selected for us by the Prince himself.

Shall I attempt to surfeit with a description of these rooms? No fairy dream could rival their magnificence. Walled with rarest onyx in tints of cream and rose, they bore along their sides mosaic pictures of splendid hunting scenes, while the floors were wrought in intricate floral patterns. Graceful statuary in purest marble was disposed about, but the ceilings were more gorgeous than all else. They were set with amethyst, turquoise and immense opals, the whole interlaced with a delicate fretwork of gold. Around the walls were low couches of mahogany, ornamented with gold and bearing rugs and pillows. Our suite extended along one entire side of the building, the bath being in the center and opening on the portico. This bath was an apartment about fifty feet square and thirty high. Immense windows of beautifully stained glass opened on either side of the broad doorway, and in the middle of the room was a pool of crystal water quite forty feet square. The entire apartment was in the same rare onyx, and the walls were lined with divans covered with rugs. The ceiling was a work of the most graceful art, being a representation of a group of water nymphs bathing. The figures were of gold in heavy relief, the water was silver, and the

foliage on the banks a mosaic in malachite faithfully imitating nature.

The delight of the bath in which I was soon reveling will never leave my memory, and the nap that followed reinvigorated me beyond measure. After a more formal repast, the prince, with several of his suite, joined us, and Kent became interpreter for all seekers after information. In substance, the prince informed us that during the year following the assassination of the Roman Emperor, Julius Cæsar, a company of men and women banded themselves together into a society numbering nearly one thousand souls, and with a fleet of fifty ships, set sail from Athens with the avowed intention of skirting the west coast of Africa and establishing a colony in the temperate latitudes of the South. No intent had they to establish an Utopia, but simply to make for themselves a new home and country. After many weeks' sail along the coast they were about to make a landing, when a violent storm arose and drove them out to sea. Many of the vessels were lost, and the balance sought to return to the coast. Weeks merged into months, when the weather grew unbearably cold and they seemed being driven by some unseen force into still colder regions. They were unable to control their ships, and the fleet of thirty that were left sailed serenely into the regions of eternal ice. They eventually came within sight of the Falls of the Gods, and succeeded in making a landing. They explored the strange land and founded their colony, having not the least idea where they were, and caring less, for any haven was a blessing after the misfortunes through

which they had passed. The land contained everything necessary to sustain life; they tilled the soil, built houses, formed a government—establishing an hereditary throne—framed laws, built the great aqueduct, and made further explorations. On these latter they learned that this was not the only garden spot among the mountains of ice, and they had discovered and settled nine more, all smaller than this one, however, and each one of which had for its source of heat and life an active volcano. From the nearest peak, he said, the entire ten could be seen, each separated from the other by a single mountain chain in no case more than ten miles across. To simplify communication, they had tunneled through the ice from point to point, and could cross from one to the other valley in two hours at most. Translating his terms of measurement into English, we found that the aqueduct was nearly forty miles in length. It was built of white marble, of which they had an inexhaustible supply, and had required one hundred and twenty years to construct. Their fuel was a species of coal resembling jet, very hard, but possessing excellent combustible properties. The entire community now numbered about two hundred thousand souls, while horses and other domestic animals were counted by tens of thousands. The oasis containing the capital, and in which we had found such charming hospitality, had a population of sixty thousand, and of late there had sprung up a rivalry between it and the others, who had all banded together against the mother and chosen a queen of their own, whom they boasted they would place upon the throne. Thus, after a peaceful life of

nearly two thousand years, there were dissensions and mutterings of strife in the air. Gold, the prince informed us, could be had for the taking, it being the commonest metal they knew, and obtainable by the mere melting of the lava everywhere underlying the soil. The proportion was nearly fifty per centum pure gold from every pound of lava thus melted. They used it for currency, but there was little danger of counterfeiting, since the penalty was death by horrible torture of the guilty one and his entire family. Not a single case had been learned for a thousand years. Here dwelt a body of two hundred thousand enlightened people, practicing the arts of civilization, who had never heard of England save to know it vaguely as Britain, a land of savages conquered by Julius Cæsar; who had been lost to the world fifteen hundred years before America was discovered; who had never heard of the birth of the Savior, the invention of gunpowder, the discovery of steam, the use of the lightnings of heaven or the invention of paper. The clock and the compass were alike unknown to them; they told their time by the dial, and gauged direction by the stars. The arts known to the ancient Greeks had been by them developed to a marvelous degree; they made glass that could be rolled, drawn or bent, and stained it as no other artisans on earth could; they hardened gold to the strength of steel, and made pictures in mosaic that no painter's brush could shame; their sculpture would have set the civilized world on fire, and ladies' gowns of spun glass had here been made for two thousand years. Yet the striking of a match caused this educated prince to

spring up in alarm, and a long explanation was necessary to restore his peace of mind. I questioned him as to his theory why the fiery cataract did not melt the ledge over which it fell, and he had none; yet my knowledge of asbestos answered the question. We asked him into the grounds, and taking a small stone, I tossed it into the air, while Rex, with his rifle, broke it into a thousand fragments. He called it the "destroyer of the gods," and made a prayer to some pagan deity. I went through a detailed explanation of the arm, even taking a shell apart and burning the powder, then explaining the force of the gases thus generated that expelled the bullet. He laughed with the delight of a child. They wished to slaughter a calf. I asked permission to be the executioner, and showing them all the cartridge, placed it in the gun, and aiming at the heart, pulled the trigger. The calf sprang into the air and dropped stone dead. The act placed me in the position of a magician in their eyes, and the prince vowed that I should receive high rank upon being presented to the queen. He could hardly understand it, and to his mind it was more magic than art, and no honor could be too exalted for me. He had explained to us that severe restrictions protected the deer we had seen, and they were only killed on feast days. The gladiatorial *fêtes* were still in vogue with them, and instead of having discovered a people living in the nineteenth century, I could scarce believe I was not dreaming, for it seemed as if we had all been translated backward for two thousand years, and set down in the midst of the civilization of ancient Greece.

CHAPTER V.

OUR PRESENTATION TO THE QUEEN.

WHEN we first entered the city on our way to the palace and presentation to the queen, I was for the first time made fully aware of the real beauties of the architecture in this strange land. The streets were narrow, perfectly paved with blocks of varicolored lava, and kept in a condition of perfect cleanliness. As we passed along—clad after the fashion of the people—we created an intense curiosity among them, yet it was not vulgarly displayed, and in nowise objectionable. Rex looked and carried himself like a young Greek god—the very embodiment of manly beauty. The sun shone with that cold brilliancy from which we had looked for heat, but we were gradually becoming accustomed to the strange conditions existent in a land where the temperature was even higher in the shade than in the sun's open glare. The mountains, in the clear atmosphere, seemed but a stone's-throw away, their towering peaks of ice standing guard over the lovely valley, while away to the south could ever and anon be seen the red glare of the fiery falls as they cast their weird radiance against the changing pall of smoke that waved its plumes above them.

and the new world from which we had come, and answered her many questions. I have always been an observant student of human nature, and I did not fail to notice that, though with the natural coquettishness given to woman in all climes and ages, she addressed most of her questions through Kent to the officers and myself, yet her eyes were for the most part upon Rex, and when caught in the act of overinterested observation, she invariably gave a slight start, while her cheeks colored in confusion. She could scarce have been blamed for her admiration, for Rex was as handsome a young fellow as I ever saw, and now, clad as he was in the classic garb that so well became his muscular figure, he seemed the very acme of physical manhood—a Hercules brought to life. Looking from him to the queen, I could not avoid a comparison of the two types of beauty before me, and an acknowledgment of their attractiveness for each other. The gown of the queen outlined her sinuous form, bringing into beautiful relief the curves of beauty, while her sleeves, falling away, revealed her bare arms in their exquisite softness and dainty coloring: Rex, his sandals buckled about his muscular calves, his low cut tunic exposing his broad, deep chest, his black hair clustering about his forehead, looking every inch a king. It is no wonder that the picture compelled her admiration, but if it was reciprocated in the mind of the young Apollo, he gave no visible sign, save by a respectful attention when she spoke, and a deep interest constantly.

Near the close of the audience, she took from an attendant a tablet and stylus and wrote something upon it which was carried away. The messenger presently

returned and spoke to the queen, whereupon she addressed Kent, who turned to us and said that she had commanded a suite in the palace to be set aside for us, and that we were thenceforth to be her guests. This was my first experience in being commanded by royalty, whom etiquette could not suffer to stoop to consult our pleasure, yet in whom nature had implanted a heart of common clay that beat with emotion at the sight of an ordinary mortal whom she had never before seen.

The music suddenly grew in volume, and then I recognized the cry of the people: "All hail Eurydice, fair Queen of Grecia!"

Making obeisance, we all left the royal presence and were conducted, to the melody of the strange music, to our new apartments in the palace, where Prince Kalma left us, promising to return at the middle of the following *αἰών*. I at once inquired their method of determining time, and as to what constituted an *αἰών*, when the genial prince smiled and informed us that their day began when the sun hung directly above the peak of Hephæstos—the volcano which was the source of the Falls of the Gods—and that an *αἰών* was one revolution of the sun. I then recognized the modernized word *æon*, and our still further anglicized *eon*, but in our own reckoning we considered the word to mean a great length of time, while in the early Greek it signified any period set and made customary. This was merely one of hundreds of interesting studies of the growth of language that fell to me while among this interesting people.

If the rooms we had occupied at the house of Prince

Kalma had been grand, their magnificence was dimmed by the splendor into which we were now ushered. Onyx and gold were everywhere, while the splendid rugs and draperies, and the jewels in ceiling and wall dazzled the eye. Nymphs and goddesses, in a pink marble whose fidelity to life was startling, supported fountains the spray of which was the rarest and most delicate of perfume; birds sang among the foliage of tropic plants, and scores of serving maids glided hither and thither, their soft, white gowns and sandaled feet making a melody none can fully appreciate who has not passed through the experiences that had been our lot since the terrible storm off the Cape. Life in this land was a dream of luxury; we had no wish that was not granted, and more frequently anticipated; instructors were sent to familiarize us with the language and customs of the people, and we were daily honored by an audience with the queen. I observed that Rex was the object of her attention, and one day shortly after our advent he was given an opportunity to display his prowess and earn her open gratitude.

He and I had gone for a stroll in the palace gardens, and observing a number of the maids-in-waiting gathered about a large fountain, stopped at a respectful distance to witness their play, and saw that one of their number, in the foolhardiness of youth, had entered the water and was swimming about, her flowing gown waving with her graceful motion. The fountain was very deep, and its sides were sloping: once within, it was a very difficult feat to return to shore, and ere the girl was aware she had become too fatigued to

raise herself up the slippery incline, and giving a despairing cry, let go and sank beneath the rippling surface. We both sprang toward the spot, and her body could be seen lying at the bottom of the crystal water—twenty feet at least. In a second Rex had dived, and swimming downward, caught her in one arm and made for the surface.

"I can hold her until you get a rope," he cried to me, the unconscious form against his broad shoulder.

A rope was an easier thing to call for than to produce, but in ten seconds her companions' quick wits had asserted themselves and a dozen girdles were in my hands, knotted and thrown to him, when I drew them both ashore. At the moment the maids fell back and the queen stood before us, gowned in crimson and sandaled in gold. Rex dropped to one knee before her, while she, without other word, took him by the hand and said: "Arise, Prince Rex, and deign to accept the gratitude of Eurydice."

She motioned the maids to their work of resuscitation, and us to follow her to the palace, where, with her own hands she placed upon Rex's finger a splendid ruby, the insignia of his new rank, and overwhelmed me with emotion by giving me an emerald token and naming me a noble of the first rank. There was more than gratitude in her eyes as she took his hand and placed the ring upon it in the presence of her attendants, and the operation seemed to require an unnecessarily long time—for which I believe I was quite as grateful as Rex.

If I had not thought the idea too absurd, I should not have restrained myself from falling desperately in

love with the beautiful creature, and perhaps if she had been of another country and not a queen, it would not have been so utterly preposterous, but—well, I was not the man, that was plainly evident, though I do not think that at this time even Rex himself had guessed the true state of affairs within her heart. He was probably not more than her own age, and she was a woman—old as Eve herself in the wiles and subtleties of her inscrutable sex.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHARIOT RACE.

WE had been the guests of the nation for a month when great preparations began for the annual games in honor of Jupiter. Not having been sent among them as missionaries, we had no desire to alter their faith and belief, moreover, we were desirous of studying them, and being broadminded and impressed with the idea that one religion, admitting its sincerity, was quite as good as another, we made no mention of any conflicting faith. Here were a people whose many virtues could find no complete duplicate among the many nations of Christendom; who had been separated from their sister nations for two thousand years, and denied the privilege of knowing that Christ ever existed; who were habituated to bowing down to pagan gods and goddesses; yet they not only had not retrogressed, but in what some would call the darkness of their ignorance had risen superior to their environment; they had developed their gifts to an unusual degree; they had grown handsomer and stronger, and braver with each generation; their integrity and honor were above reproach, and their women were spotless.

With this sample of paganism before our eyes, it

would have been less wonder if we had embraced their pagan belief than it may be that we did not harass them and disturb their contentment by a crusade for the Christian church.

Civilization had taught us that it was barbaric to shed human blood for amusement, yet we of the north were not squeamish about prize-fights and football. The only difference was that when a gladiator met an adversary in the arena, he entered the contest with a firm determination to put his man *hors de combat* for all time; and no law stood in his way. On the other hand, when a prize-fight occurred in the civilized land of the north, the contestants had at heart the same desire as their pagan brethren, but the law said: "You must not kill your victim, but merely maim him, so that he will suffer awhile and then recover;" while the records of the football field show a greater list of broken bones than do the arenas of these Greeks dwelling amid the eternal ice of the south. No Englishman or American would go to see a football game were it not rough and bloody, and the greatest throngs are found at prize-fights. Why is this so? Because man's savage instinct craves the sight of blood. In the Greeks the desire was gratified by pitting men against each other to battle for their lives. Even a fallen gladiator could always save his life by appealing to the spectators, but one rarely did so. When he did raise his hand in appeal, the famous "thumbs down" was never denied him. They learned a bravery unknown to our people; and in the months I spent among them I have yet to see a single craven, or hear a word of scandal, while daily acts of heroism

became commonplace. I saw a tiny child whose foot had been crushed by a chariot wheel lie in its mother's arms while she firmly bound the member, and though the spontaneous tears streamed from his innocent eyes, no sound of pain passed his heroic lips. I did not see a single deformed person there. From the beginning this people who had forsaken home and country to found a new nation and bring forth a perfect race, had made it a rule to kill every child born deformed. Their course may have been barbarous, but it resulted in physical perfection, and the progressive evolution had advanced to such a state that for a thousand years a deformed child had been unknown, wherefore it seemed that the end justified the means. Men and women were alike flawless, and being so, could not beget other than strong and healthy children. A perfect record of births, marriages, and deaths, had from the beginning been kept, and a clear genealogy could in any case be traced to the original settlers of the land they had so affectionately and appropriately named Grecia.

The people were tall, muscular and healthy; sickness was unknown, and a graceful carriage and athletic bearing predominated. There was no poverty; the law had long ago eliminated it, and if a man once assisted, through his own fault fell again into the rut, he was given a prompt trial and usually executed. They had no room for drones. The consequence was that a single hundred years had drained every drop of sluggard blood, and for nineteen hundred years they had dwelt together in harmonious contentment.

This nation needed no missionaries to inculcate new

ideas into minds as nearly perfect as it was probably intended the human mind should become on this earth, and we let them religiously alone in their happy ignorance of the existence of any other God than the one they saw in all Nature.

Their annual games consisted of running, chariot racing, wrestling, and fights between gladiators, and occupied three days. The arena was open, and so immense that it would comfortably accommodate the entire two hundred thousand of the population—it was quite twice the size of the Roman Coliseum—and its capacity was usually taxed, for the people of the ten tribes then flocked to the capital, mothers with babes in their arms coming with the multitude. All occupations were abandoned, and the three days were turned into feasting, excitement and song.

On the first day our party repaired early to the arena with the royal contingent, this latter consisting of the Queen Eurydice, and about one hundred high officers of state, together with a like number of her maids-in-waiting, and we were given posts of honor at the right hand of the young and beautiful sovereign, while the others were disposed all about her. The seat for the queen was a gorgeous couch of crimson with a canopy of gold, and as she reclined above the edge of the arena, her royal robes of violet contrasting in their rich coloring, she seemed the very perfection not only of royalty, but of that royal gift which is rarer—perfect, beautiful womanhood. Cleopatra in her palmiest days never looked more the queen than did our fair Eurydice upon her crimson throne.

The first day was given up to chariot races and equestrian combats, and the very first race was between ten chariots, each driven by a brother of one of the maids-in-waiting, and this lovely group was filled with excitement as the time drew near. Rex, gorgeously arrayed in a tunic of crimson and gold, reclined at the feet of the queen, so near that he could have touched her had he wished, and I could see from the glances which from time to time he ventured to cast upon her, that he was not wholly oblivious to her charms, while she in turn was generous with her smiles, frequently bending and speaking to him, though this action on her part could by no means have been construed into anything more than a friendly glance save by the intuition of such a friend as I was to the boy. He had made wonderful progress in the language—as well he might when *tête-à-tête* with so fair a woman were his reward—and the low tones in which he spoke to her conveyed a deeper meaning to me, who was more interested than he may have supposed, had he thought of it at all. It was a pretty romance, delicately acted.

With a fanfare of trumpets the chariots entered the arena and circled round and round, their horses champing at their bits and tossing the impatient foam from their mouths as they pranced about in their restraint, while their drivers, cool, collected and uniformly handsome, bowed from side to side in acknowledgment of the plaudits of the multitude. Passing the royal gallery, every driver drew up his horses and made a profound salaam, which was acknowledged by Eurydice with a gracious inclination of her head, the

golden, jewel-studded diadem flashing as she did so. When all had performed their devoirs, they gathered at the end of the amphitheater, where each horse, preceding the word, was held by a groom.

Every eye among the racers was on the tower on which stood the judge holding a handkerchief. Suddenly it fell, and with it came a crash and the thunderous pounding of those six score of mighty hoofs as the great animals, three abreast, sprang forward and dashed down the road.

The drivers, their garments and ribbons flying behind them, stood straight in the chariots, each urging on his team to victory.

The race was twice around the arena—about an English mile in all—and the prize was a palace near Athenia, the capital city. The assembly gave vent to cheers that could be heard for miles as first one favorite then another surged to the fore; the maids near the queen held their breaths, and with clinched hands and fluttering hearts awaited the result. Once around, and Hermion, the handsome brother of Phryne, chief maid to the queen and own cousin to her majesty, led by a full length, but was hard pressed by half a dozen others who were driving so close together that their swaying chariots barely escaped collision. The pace was terrific, neither drivers nor horses seeming to have any idea of reserving strength for the finish, but putting every ounce into each foot of the way. The handsome animals were covered with foam, their drivers, maddened by excitement, still urging them with whip and voice to greater effort. Down the stretch they came, the great nostrils flam-

ing with the fires within, their eyes bulging, their hoofs pounding the earth into thunderous reverberations, and—Hermion still leading.

So close to the finish were they now it seemed impossible that he should be beaten, and the great concourse of people gave vent to shouts of encouragement for the final effort. Nothing but a miracle could beat him now, and both the queen and Phryne waved their kerchiefs in their enthusiasm. They were within a hundred yards of the end, when the nearest chariot to the leader swerved from its course, there was a crunching sound as its neighbor caught it, then an ominous crash as the two wheels came together with awful force, and in another instant nine chariots and men, and twenty-seven crazed, kicking horses were an inextricable, struggling mass, while Hermion tore over the line a winner.

The applause was deadened by the cries of horror from the people, and I saw Rex leap over the rail and fly toward the scene of the accident, snatching a sword from his belt as he ran. Plunging among the wounded animals, he had killed six that were badly injured, and pulled three unconscious men from the wreckage before another rescuer was on the scene, and the cheers that greeted this act of courage and rare presence of mind were louder than had been the applause for the contestants, while help now came from every side. Several more fine animals had to be quickly sacrificed in order to save the men beneath the maddened mass, and when the work was concluded, the casualties footed up two men killed, and seven—all but Hermion—injured, while the nine

chariots were for the most part wrecks, and a dozen horses lay dead upon the ground.

When Rex first sprang to the rescue I observed the queen to half-rise as if to follow him and then sink back upon her cushions with a catch in her breath as if realizing the impropriety of the act. It was quick, and instantly corrected, and none, I dare say, but myself caught it, but to me it was a proof more conclusive than anything that had gone before that the beautiful queen had lost a maiden heart to the dashing dare-devil who had come so unexpectedly into her life, and I began conjuring with fate and asking myself what would be the result.

The wreckage was cleared away, the victor crowned with laurel, and the games proceeded. Accidents were expected, and could not be permitted to spoil the pleasure of the day. The next number on the program was an equestrian combat in which a representative from each province took part, and was pitted against an adversary by lot. None of these gladiators had any special affection for each other, but the one chosen to represent Athenia seemed to have no friends save the people of the capital, and we were given our first taste of the rumors of coming rebellion when the smaller provinces refused to cheer upon his entrance. He rode a coal-black charger, and was a perfect horseman—a centaur. His feet were sandaled, and shields protected his legs below the knee, while an ægis, bearing on its front the Gorgon's head, was strapped to his breast. In a gold-chain gauntleted right hand he held a jeweled sword of hardened gold with which he saluted the queen as he passed to the encounter.

His opponent rushed down upon him with the fury of an avalanche, when Græcus—our hero—slid beside his horse, avoiding the terrible blow which would have cut him in twain, and as the other passed, struck a fearful, swinging, back hand stroke that caught his man on the back of the neck and tumbled his head from his body into the dust of the arena. The body swayed for an instant and then fell from the horse, while Græcus turned and made once more a low obeisance to the queen.

The encounter had been so brief, the outcome so unexpected, that it was a moment ere the people realized its bloody termination. When they did, they broke into the wildest enthusiasm, which was, however, interspersed with lamentations and an ominous murmur from the enemies of the victor, they demanding that he fight again. Smiling his readiness, he rode his horse before the queen and awaited her selection of his adversary. Fearing to anger the people by a prejudiced choice, she hesitated and there were loud cries of "Taxiles! Taxiles!"

"So be it; let Taxiles be thy adversary, brave Græcus," said the queen, whereupon a resounding cheer broke from the throng, and the greatest gladiator of the whole nation rode to the front.

He was a man of fifty; as strong as a lion, he had never known defeat, and our hero seemed young and tender beside his mighty antagonist, who advanced with a smile of disdain upon his face. At twenty paces they paused and glared at each other, then Taxiles urged his horse forward, while Græcus remained quite still. Every breath was held awaiting

the onslaught, when there came a flash and a resounding ring of metal, and Græcus fell from his horse while Taxiles rode on, his sword broken in half where it had struck the other's as he guarded his breast. The force of the blow had unhorsed Græcus, but in a second he had regained his seat and was after the unarmed Taxiles. A sword was thrown the latter, which he deftly caught as he faced the onrushing Græcus. Another flash, but this time no sound. Taxiles had missed his aim, and before he had recovered his guard, Græcus had checked his horse to his haunches, and leaning backward, plunged the glittering blade between the giant's shoulders; there was a torrent of blood, a concerted cry of horror, admiration, and disappointed rage, and the second victim to the prowess of our champion lay dead on the floor of the arena.

I am prone to confess that the excitement attending this barbarous exhibition was so intense that I felt not the least repulsion at the tragedy, and applauded as loudly as the rest. The natural barbarism inherent in my nature was having a satisfactory outlet for the first time in my life, and I was enjoying every moment and every act of the play.

Rex reclined at the feet of the queen, whose glances of admiration were now more frequently than before bestowed upon him—though covertly—while the maids in attendance upon the sovereign gazed at him as they might Apollo had he suddenly appeared before them in the flesh.

The remainder of the contests and races passed off without fatal results, and the day was pronounced a decided success. On the morrow there were to be

long and short distance footraces, while the third and last day promised the bloodiest of all exhibitions when an hundred gladiators were to meet and battle to the death. Rex had been a fine long-distance runner at college and had entered in a race from the arena to the source of the aqueduct and return, a distance of about thirty miles and in which nearly three hundred runners were to contest. Other races were to occur while the great one was in progress, its finish closing the day's exercises. With great pomp we left the arena, and in chariots directly behind the queen drove back to the city; but for Rex was reserved an honor envied by every man in the nation, for at the last moment, and in recognition of his act of courage and heroism, the queen had taken his hand and leading him to the chariot seated herself, while he took the reins and drove her in person, her guard running on ahead.

CHAPTER VII.

CLEO ANDROMEDA.

"SAY, boys, do you know that young divil av a Rex Barton is walkin' around the garden smokin' a black briar-root when the big race is not an hour away, an' that beautiful young thing that's clear aff her head fer him is stakin' her heart on him winnin'? He'll no more win that race than your humble servant P. O'Rourke, U. S. A., an' the same is not goin' to run, be Jinks!"

The captain turned and left the apartment, his eyes flashing with indignation at the foolishness of the "young divil" in question, while I earnestly cursed the thought that made Ruggles throw that keg of tobacco from the doomed ship into our boat, for Rex and his pipe were inseparable companions, and he had even gone so far as to discover a variety of grass whose blades resembled corn "shucks" and made excellent cigarette wrappers. Indulgence in tobacco being known to me as a trainer of the crew in Rex's freshman year to be the very best thing in the world to destroy an athlete's wind, my anger was equal to O'Rourke's as I hastily went in search of the young scamp who thus endangered his chances and jeopardized our faith in him. The best runners of the nation

were scheduled for the big race: men trained from childhood, and among them was the queen's fastest messenger, a man who sought the hand of Phryne, whose brother had won the chariot race of the day before. He was looked upon as a foregone certainty in the winning of the race, and what little hope I had felt had been shattered by the information O'Rourke gave us a few hours before the start.

Sure enough, I found the truant in the garden, and smoking. He was sitting on the lawn beside the great fountain pouring clouds of smoke from his pipe, and upon hearing my approach looked lazily up.

"That's all right, old fellow," he said, in reply to my reproaches, "used to smoke whenever I got the chance while you were coaching, and the night before the race when we beat them twenty lengths, Holton of Shef and I got into a box of pies and root beer, and I ate seven pies and drank a dozen bottles; don't believe in starving to death to train for a race, and I'm going to take along an armful of grub to-day to eat on the way; I'll be hungry before I get back."

Argument with a man like that was a waste of vital energy, and I came away.

The trumpets sounded in announcement of the queen, and the procession formed for the second day at the arena. Rex and I rode in a state chariot directly behind her majesty, and he handled the ribbons in the style of an expert four-in-hand driver. The chariots were springless, but the excellent roads made the way as smooth as the finest boulevard, and we tore along at a fast gallop, the forerunning trumpeters clearing a way for the sovereign and her escort. A

company of fifty men on black chargers rode on each side, and the five score maids-in-waiting brought up the rear in other chariots.

With a great flourish of brass, and the word from Eurydice, the three hundred runners were off, Rex marked by a streaming blue sash that had been given him by the queen in honor of his new rank, and being well up among the leaders as they left the mark. The mighty cheer from an hundred thousand throats that rent the air reverberated from the guardian peaks miles away, and echoed and re-echoed over the plain as the athletes grew smaller and smaller in the distance. The test of human endurance was to be a tremendous one, and I had scarce a hope that Rex would ever complete the run as I turned to the amphitheater and the running and wrestling there about to begin.

The splendid exhibitions of strength and courage displayed by these perfectly trained athletes amazed us from a land where not the masses but the few were heroes of the field. Here we saw men whose locks wore the frost of age wrestling like young Samsons, and more frequently than their juniors bearing off the coveted laurel amid the acclamations of the spectators. The day was rent with the din of trumpets and human voices, and the humor of the outlying provinces seemed better than on the day before, for many of their favorites were victorious. Prominent among these people, I could not well have helped observing a young woman who bore herself with great majesty, and seemed to be the cynosure of thousands. She was very tall, was gowned in cloth of gold and black, and possessed of a physique rivaling a Juno or a Milo's

Venus. Her splendid hair was raven and hung far below her waist, while a golden band partially confined the clusters of curls that framed her forehead and seemed to resent the restraint. She occupied a position but a short distance from my place near the queen, and in moments of excitement would rise to her feet and wave a banner of gold, while the cheers that rent the air seemed given as much for her as for the successful contestant, the eyes of her friends resting upon her in admiration.

Her height must have rivaled my own proud six feet of manhood, and she could not have been above twenty years of age. Altogether, she was the most perfect specimen of physical womanhood I had ever seen. Her particular style of beauty could in no way have conflicted with the exquisite femininity of our lovely queen—the two types were as distant as the poles—and any man could have felt equal admiration for both; for the one for her pure mind and strong, light limbs, her graceful body and delicate womanly features; for the other because of her grand figure, her superb strength, her splendor of person. One had been born to be a queen; to have men do her abject homage on account of that queenliness; to command from a throne because she knew that the love of her subjects would preclude disobedience or treason; the other seemed destined to rise above the commonplace and become a leader of men, a Joan of Arc who would command respect and fealty by reason of her strong personality, her indomitable will. As I looked at the magnificent creature standing in the center of an admiring coterie, I felt a thrill that had never before

possessed me, and I believe if this were the message of love, I could hold no man guilty of a crime done under the influence of such potent passion. I felt that I could never rest again until I had known her and seen that regal head bowed before a mighty sway of emotion such as I felt for her. Were it not for my love for Rex, I could have wrested the throne from Eurydice and placed this beautiful creature there in her stead. If this were love, then I had never before felt its fires, and for thirty years the smouldering passion in my nature had lain dormant, only to be awakened by a beautiful pagan at the bottom of the earth. And as I thought of these things I marveled at the hand of destiny.

Occasionally she turned in my direction, but I dared not hope she was attracted by myself, however much my four months growth of beard made me conspicuous among my smooth-shaven neighbors, yet the simple act of turning her head and lustrous eyes toward me caused a suffocating feeling to come into my throat and I trembled with a novel emotion. The games had lost all interest for me save that they were of the most vital moment to her, and I found myself cheering when she waved her banner at some hero who had come out victorious, and sharing her disappointment when her favorites lost. She was intensely enthusiastic, and had wrought herself up to a high pitch of excitement during the progress of the feats of strength within the arena, until her cheeks glowed like two damask roses and her bosom rose and fell like the gentle tide of a summer sea. With all her strength her body was as lithe as a panther's, and she swayed

from side to side like the plumes of a graceful palm, or suddenly stood erect and motionless like the marble statue of some splendid goddess, her glossy black curls framing her face, her luscious red lips parted in ecstasy.

So completely had I been dominated by her that I leaned toward the Prince Kalma and said: "Who is that beautiful girl standing with the banner in her hand?"

Without even looking in her direction he glanced covertly at the queen, and said in a voice almost a whisper: "It is Cleo Andromeda, of the Province of Ilyssus, adjoining Athenia, and the one person whom our gracious queen has most cause to fear. We have guarded well the secret from her majesty, and she has no inkling of the imminence of revolt, but in the event of it becoming a revolution in fact, Cleo Andromeda would be placed upon the throne of Grecia—she is the chosen queen of the opposing element, and their every move while [attending the games is watched and reported to me. The gods be praised! There is but one more day of uncertainty, for if they make no move to-morrow, then we shall be able to guard against future uprisings. I trust you, my friend Bardwell, and your companions, for I know you are and will be loyal to our beloved queen."

At this moment there was a great cry from across the arena, and people by the thousand arose and shouted that the runners were returning. Far across the plain could be seen a few moving forms, and asking Ruggles for his marine glasses, I adjusted them and looked.

As I live to record it, that dare-devil Rex was coming along toward us at an easy swing, leading the vanguard by a good half-mile. The topmost seats being but a few feet above the level of the plain, while the arena was sunk below it, the entire field was readily covered at a glance. In my joy I shouted and handed the glasses to Eurydice. She took them as might a child a peculiar toy and raised them to her eyes, then, for the nonce forgetting her royal dignity in her delight at the sight of her loved one leading the fastest runners of the empire in the great race, she cried aloud: "Bravo, Prince Rex! Bravo! bravo! bravo!" and frantically waved her kerchief with her free hand.

But her demonstration could of course not be seen by the one for whom it was intended, though I glanced quickly at Prince Kalma and saw a peculiar smile flit across his face. The kindly prince had daughters approaching the age of Eurydice, and understood the symptoms, nor for his life's sake would he have grudged her the one happiness of her life whom cruel law had barred from the greatest joy a woman can feel.

I sprang to the ground, and running to the line where the race was to finish, awaited the runners. They were coming steadily on, Rex within a mile of the post by the time I had arrived there, and a large group now appeared over a slight rise in the rolling valley, but they were hopeless losers. As I looked, that inscrutable boy actually threw himself on the turf, and an agony of fear came over me, for at the same time his nearest competitor spurted and gained rapidly upon him. Nearer and nearer he came to the

recumbent leader, and I knew that even as victory was within his grasp some accident had befallen our hero, and I felt keenly the disappointment that I knew was being suffered in the royal gallery. Now he is almost upon our Rex; in a few strides he will overtake him; but even as the thought crossed my anxious mind, there was a cry from a thousand throats as Rex arose and once more took the path. They were running side by side, and Rex constantly turned his head as if speaking to his rival. Within two hundred yards I saw the other to be Herxes, the queen's messenger, and felt, from the set look on his face, that he meant to win or die. But fifty yards separated them from the finish line when the Greek was seen by a thousand people to draw a dagger from his belt and run nearer to Rex. A cry of warning attracted the latter to his danger, and quick as a flash he dropped or threw himself to the ground before the feet of his treacherous rival, who promptly turned a headlong somersault over Rex, while the quick-witted American sprang to his feet and came rushing across the line amid the cheers and huzzas of a hundred thousand wildly excited people!

Herxes had not risen, and a few ran to the spot where he had fallen. In a moment they bore him in, and all saw that his treachery had been his death sentence, for he had fallen upon the dagger with which he had sought to slay Rex, and the golden point had pierced his heart.

Our hero was carried about the arena on the shoulders of his admirers, while flowers and wreaths of laurel were flung upon him until he resembled Flora

herself. Coming to a pause in the arena before the queen, she, with tears of emotion in her eyes, announced him the winner, and with her own hands placed the victor's wreath upon his brow.

The day was ended, and the victors were all cheered again and again *en route* to the city, while Rex a second time rode with the queen.

I looked again for the beautiful Cleo Andromeda, but unless she was the center of one particularly dense mass of people, could not locate her, though I carried her image indelibly graven upon my memory—forever fixed upon the tablets of my heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE QUEEN IN PERIL.

A DOZEN hours of rest and we were again back at the arena to witness the bloody encounters reserved for the last day. I put these periods of time as days for the better guidance of the reader, for the sun shone continually, and what are here termed days were merely those *wons* upon which the people based their computations.

I confess that I had become in a measure surfeited with the excitement attendant upon these so-called "games," and felt no regret that the last day had come. Other reasons perhaps influenced me; my solicitations for the safety of the queen, and a natural anxiety regarding the final outcome of the mutterings of dissatisfaction among the outlying tribes being paramount. On leaving the palace I became doubly vigilant, listening for any word that might give me a clew to the intentions of the rebels. I circulated among the suspected ones, and looked eagerly for Cleo Andromeda, whom I presently observed, and it surely confirmed my belief in telepathy, for at the moment of my most intense thought I glanced up and she was looking straight into my eyes and not ten feet distant. I caught my breath and we stood looking at each

other for some seconds, when I made a profound bow to her, she smiled most bewitchingly, and I passed on to my place in the gallery of the queen.

But I had seen her, and it would now require an unusual event in the arena to distract my attention from her. She was gowned as on the preceding day, and carried her golden banner, which she now waved in a welcome to the appearing gladiators.

They came on, each wearing a helmet, sandals, and trunks of gold chain armor only, bearing a short sword, and a small, heavy shield. Their muscles moved like serpents beneath the white flesh, and they were such a magnificent body of men that salvos of approbation rang again and again from the vast concourse of spectators, while the young Cleo was wildly beautiful in her excitement, and waved her banner until fatigue drew her to her seat.

Our queen was radiant; her lovely features wearing a deeper tinge of color while she watched the warriors in the arena below as they presented themselves before her, and then withdrew to await the summons to deadly strife. When all was in readiness she waved a small flag and two gladiators approached each other from their respective sides. Cautiously they came together, while every breath was held, and for the first time in sixty hours could be heard the dull roar of the Falls of the Gods as their deep-toned melody came wafted on the gentle breeze. The combat was brief and bloody, and one fell wounded unto death. He was quickly removed, the victor received the customary prize and the tumultuous approval of his friends, and two more entered to re-enact the scenes of

bloodshed. Here I must admit a feeling of repulsion. Hitherto, the comparatively small loss of life had been attended with the grandest of excitement, while to-day's features seemed nothing short of cold-blooded and barbaric murder, at which my whole nature revolted.

Rex sat at the feet of the queen, apparently unmoved by the spectacle, and as for that refined-looking woman, I could not gather from any outward expression what her feelings may have been, but it did seem impossible that so perfect a creature could have been created with the nature of a bloodthirsty tigress. The gladiators fought on and on. Half the series had been fought, and half a dozen brave men sacrificed to the savage pleasure of their fellows. A magnificent young fellow appeared and faced his opponent.

Prince Kalma leaned over and whispered in my ear: "It is Cadius, the brother of Cleo Andromeda; if he loses, watch yourself, for the signal may be given."

In addition to the ordinary accouterments of the gladiator, Cadius wore about his throat a kerchief of flaming scarlet, and as he approached the other my eye caught a sudden wave of color on the other side of the amphitheater, and I saw that it was caused by these kerchiefs in imitation of the one he wore, while the applause and encouragement showered upon him told only too plainly his popularity. He was of a physique that did honor to his parentage and made him well worthy his beautiful sister, while his splendid muscles were under perfect subjection, and his generalship superb.

The first assault ended with honors even, but upon

the second meeting his adversary parried the blow and returned with one upon the other's helmet that but for that protection would have split him to the shoulders. Half the people roared with delight, but the others gave vent to ominous mutterings that could be heard like some giant undercurrent of some mighty torrent. A third time they came together, and the representative of Athenia rushed upon Cadius with the fury of a lion. Their swords clashed together again and again; such blows I had never heard struck by human arm; the battle of the young giants raged, first one securing a momentary advantage, then the other. All the while Cleo sat leaning forward, too intent upon the murderous strife to seize a full breath, and as I kept my eyes upon both her and the arena, I wondered what her brother's possible defeat would mean to her. Even as I gave myself up to this thought there was a furious assault between the two men and Cadius fell, while his victor stood with one foot upon his chest, his sword raised on high in that attitude made familiar by the portraits of Spartacus, and awaited the verdict of the people. The hands of the fallen man lay at his side, and he made no effort to raise them in an appeal which his courageous heart scorned, but even if he had bidden for mercy, it would have availed naught, for in the twinkling of an eye ten thousand frantic people had jumped into the arena, and in an instant his conqueror was surrounded by the surging mass, while loud cries came from all sides: "To the palace! To the palace! Down with Eurydice! Long live our queen, Cleo Andromeda!"

Then followed an example of the finest discipline I

had ever seen enacted. As if rising from nothing, there was an instant formation of a thousand soldiers armed with spears and shields, who formed a hollow square about the queen's gallery, while thousands more sprang into the arena and gave battle to the insurgents. The din of clashing metal, the shrieks of the demoniac men fighting below, were terrible. I had sprung up and attempted to pass the solid phalanx surrounding us, but I might as well have attempted to swim the cataract of fire. Prince Kalma shouted some orders, and the queen was quickly lifted into a sort of sedan chair by four men who bore her along toward the exit, the hollow square retaining perfect formation as it proceeded. The storm of conflict grew louder, and I could readily distinguish the opposing forces by the flaming kerchiefs of the rebels. Outside a vast throng was engaged in a fight for mastery, while a large body of our men were far in advance on their way to the city and the palace. Down the roadway we went, and it was not until we had entered the city that I was able to escape from my self-constituted protectors and take a sword in defense of the woman whom I was as proud as they to call queen. All thought of my love for the woman whom Eurydice's enemies would place upon her throne had vanished, and I felt no stronger emotion than patriotic fealty to my benefactress and gratitude to my friends of Athenia.

Down the street facing the palace I saw a hundred of our soldiers fighting against desperate odds, and threw myself among them. As forethought had ordained I had that morning concealed my heavy revol-

ver and a belt containing a hundred rounds of ammunition beneath my tunic, and as we retreated to the city, had brought them out and buckled them about my waist. I had never had occasion to use them, nor had any of us, save on the day the few shots were expended for the benefit of Prince Kalma, a circumstance for which I now gave mental thanks. As I reached the scene of battle a tremendous fellow rushed upon me with uplifted sword, and I put a bullet between his eyes and captured the sword. At the report of the pistol and the miraculous death of their comrade, every man stopped in his tracks and stood looking at me in awestruck wonder, even my friends. Then suddenly I cried to the enemy to surrender, and assuming the leadership, ordered the men to take them prisoners to the ancient dungeons beneath the palace gardens; but at the command, these men, who knew the meaning of death but not surrender, came down upon me in living torrents. My pistol had spoken five times and claimed as many victims, when fate interposed in my behalf and they paused in their awe of the strange weapon long enough for me to reload. Resolving to economize on ammunition, when they again came on I fought with my sword until my arm grew numb with exhaustion, and then used the pistol, and it is a lucky thing for me that they were not equal to me in the use of the sword, else this narration of those stirring times would have been written by some one else and included my obituary. But I outpointed them. The street was flowing with blood, and the noise of raging battle made the whole city a hell of din and confusion.

The superiority of trained soldiers over mere angry men soon made itself manifest, and we began to drive them off, following as they retreated down the street.

Suddenly I heard a fusillade of shots in the rear and close at hand, and turned my head for an instant. The act was well-nigh fatal, for a blow caught me just as a shot cracked in my ear, and my left arm hung listless at my side. I thought the shoulder had been broken, but fortunately the blow was a glancing one and merely sliced off the top of the flesh.

"Now, Bardy, me boy, that's what we'd call in Montana 'a close call,' " came in the rich accents of O'Rourke, and I saw that it was the gallant Irishman who had shot the man as he delivered the blow, thus saving my life, while lined beside him were Ruggles and Bangs. With our combined forces we put the enemy to rout and left a score of dead in the road. Our side had suffered large loss as well, and the red neckerchiefs were well balanced by our dead and dying among them.

We paused for a moment only, and then started toward the palace, where a howling mob of fully two thousand had congregated and were endeavoring to fight off the guards, when we heard a quick succession of shots, and knowing they could come from no one but Rex, started for the point on the run. We found him surrounded by a mob of twenty men whose number he was rapidly diminishing with his pistol. It seemed that with the true American scent of a row in the air, we had all come prepared, and the strange weapons created consternation among our enemies, who now for the first time showed the white feather.

and scattered in all directions. We were all together but Kent, and Rex told us that he was penned in the palace and raving like a wild man at his enforced confinement, but the queen would not permit him to venture forth, and that he himself had only escaped by asking her if she cared so little for his manhood that she could allow him to be called a coward. More shots rang out further down the street, and we realized that for the first time we missed Dick Murdock. The shots came from within a large house, and we crowded in through the open doorway.

His back against the wall, blood flowing from his face in several places, stood Dick; his empty pistol hung in his hand, but with a sword he was fighting furiously against five men. They fell at the volley we poured into them and Dick sank fainting to the floor. While the others stood guard, I ran through the house for water, caught up a pitcher and stooped at the fountain in the atrium to dip some up. As I bent over, I experienced that peculiar sensation that comes over one when being watched, and turned my head.

Behind me stood the beautiful Cleo Andromeda, and in her hand, its point pressed directly between my shoulders she held a cruelly sharp sword.

"You are my prisoner!" she said in steady tones.

The incongruity of being taken captive by a woman, and that woman the one in all the world whom I could have least desire to harm, struck me in a funny vein and I actually laughed aloud, while she showed her pearly teeth in one of her rare smiles, yet did not remove the sword.

"Rise quickly, and go that way," she said, point-

ing to an open door, and ignoring the revolver that hung at my belt, the significance of which she could not have known, and with a feeling as of an actor in some melodrama, the sword all the while against my back, I silently obeyed.

Through the opening she forced me to go, and following, closed the door. A brazier swung above our heads, but we did not pause here, but continued into another apartment where she commanded me to halt. The room was dark, but I could distinguish its size to be considerable, and heard her fumbling in a recess, but my curiosity was aroused more than any possible fear, and I was anxious to see the outcome of my farcical capture by a woman. At the same time I wondered what my friends would think had become of me. Presently a dim light shone from her direction, and she then closed and bolted the second door, when she bade me to be seated. I dropped on to a couch I saw before me and she took another directly opposite and barely five feet away. Nothing from the outside world could be heard, the sounds of strife, if they had not ceased, being deadened by the thick walls of my strange prison.

"Now we will talk," she said.

I bowed, and she continued, in those classic accents of Demosthenes that I had learned to love so well,

"You know me, do you not?"

I responded, "You are Cleo Andromeda?"

She inclined her head.

"My people would place me upon the throne of Athenia, the queen of all Grecia, and for this ambition have this day made the fight you have witnessed,

but when I saw the beautiful girl whose throne they would have me usurp, I could not take it. I dare not make this known to my people, yet I have a sisterly love for the fair Eurydice and would be her friend."

Her voice was low and tender as she spoke, and its melody in the dimly lighted chamber made me thrill with the old emotion of loving.

After a brief pause, she continued: "It is because of this that I am in hiding. As a child I lived within these walls; their secrets are open to me; we are here safe from intrusion or pursuit, and I have no fear of one who has displayed such bravery as I have watched in you. We shall either die together in this chamber, or you will assist me in carrying out my plans. I swear to you my eternal faith and ask your help."

"What would you have of me?" I queried, pondering over her enigmatical words.

"To follow in absolute faith where I lead; to do my bidding blindly, and trust that my whole design is to save the fair Eurydice and her throne."

"Are you sincere?" I asked doubtfully.

She came over and sat beside me on the couch.

"Do you now doubt when I place myself thus within your power? You could take my life if you would."

I was strangely moved by the bravery of the girl, and under the influence of an overwhelming passion, cried: "I trust you, Cleo, because I love you; I loved you from the first moment I saw you and drank in your dazzling beauty in the arena; no star in heaven can shine for me when your eyes are my guides; lead where you will, I follow!"

"The honor you have done me by giving me your trust may be rewarded, you will now be put to the test. Come."

She rose, and taking up the brazier, stepped to the furthest wall. I followed. She placed her hand upon the stone, and a door in the wall opened, bringing to my ears the rush of a great volume of water. She stepped within the opening, and when I had followed, the stone swung to, and by the pale light I saw that we were standing on a narrow ledge, while twenty feet below flowed the river.

"Wait for me here," she said, and I stood still against the wall while she moved along the ledge and disappeared in another chamber far away. The light had gone and left me in Stygian darkness, with no sound to relieve my straining ears save the eternal rush of the water. My thoughts flew about, picturing the scenes of the day and wondering what new experience was in store for me, when the light again appeared far along the passage, and moved quickly toward me. When it had come within a few feet I suddenly saw that it was not my companion who carried it, but a man, and with the thought of protecting her uppermost in my mind, I drew my pistol.

"Halt!" I cried.

The figure with the light paused and two dark eyes shone upon me, but at the same instant the musical voice of Cleo spoke to me, while a merry laugh startled the echoes of the dungeon.

"You did not know me, Robert?" she said, using my baptismal name as easily as if she had been accustomed to it always, and I realized that she had assumed a disguise.

As she came nearer and set the light upon the floor, I scrutinized her closely. She had abandoned the garb of her sex, and was clad in a short tunic and sandals, while her glorious hair she had not sacrificed, but had wound about her head after the manner of many fashionable young men of the empire, binding it with an ampyx. Her tunic was red, like the straps of her sandals that were bound from ankle to knee, and in her belt she carried a golden sword. Her splendid figure showed to great advantage in her disguise, and she showed not the least concern under the fire of my unconcealed admiration, but folded her arms and stood as if posing for my critical inspection and approval.

"You are magnificent!" I cried.

"Will I be recognized?" she asked, smiling at my enthusiasm.

"Your wonderful beauty may lead to it, but you make a perfect boy, and the disguise will never be penetrated," I answered.

"It is your self-confessed love of Cleo that makes you speak so of my beauty," she said, "others will not notice it."

"You are wrong!" I exclaimed; "thousands of eyes have felt no other magnet when you were near; your beauty is absolutely unique!"

"One moment more, then, and we will alter it," she said, running along the ledge toward the chamber where she had made the change of costume, and before I could follow to prevent the sacrifice of her hair, as I suspected, she emerged once more into the rays of the lamp, rubbing something upon her cheeks. In

a moment she looked up at me; and I saw that the clear, pale olive of her skin had changed to a dusky Italian hue, and an alteration in her brows effected a complete transformation. She then applied the ointment to her arms and throat, and to her marble-like limbs, and from a divinely beautiful woman in disguise, she had become a handsome young Greek, tanned by exposure. I would have passed her close by and never have recognized her.

"Perfection!" I cried, further words beyond me.

"Then let us go," she said, leading me toward the wall from whence she had just come. We passed down a flight of stone steps and paused at the brink of the water.

"We are at the river," she said; "you have given me your faith, and once again I pledge you mine. If we escape alive no wish that you may have will be denied you by Cleo; come."

She extended her hand, and I saw that a boat was moored at the foot of the steps. Placing the flaming brazier in the prow, she stepped aboard and seated herself in the stern, taking the tiller. I followed, and she motioned me to a place at her feet. I sank down, and resting one arm on the seat beside her, gave myself into her keeping. She pushed off, and we glided along into the awful darkness on the bosom of the subterranean river, our destiny—unknown.

CHAPTER IX.

THE TREASURE CHAMBER.

WE sailed along for what seemed to me an hour, the weird light casting a dim radiance but a few feet ahead. We were going through the great aqueduct, and its marble roof and walls gave back ghostly echoes when we spoke.

"If you would save the throne for Eurydice," I said, breaking a long silence, "why do you not simply renounce it and call off your warriors?"

She smiled upon me as she might have patronized a child. "Ah," she said, "you do not know our people. For months the flame has been fanned; all of the great men of state were chosen from Athenia, while Ilyssus had none; they saw the injustice; they are slow to anger, but for three days now they have tasted blood, and no power can stay their hands; we must use strategy, that only can succeed."

"And your plan?"

"Presently you shall know," was her reply.

I lay back in the boat and studied the flat roof, marveling that such strength could be secured without the use of the common modern arch, and reflecting that these strange people had wrought upon the same lines as their ancestors two thousand years before,

and now recalling that an arch was something I had not seen since entering their domain, flat roofs, and domes and columns being the principal features of their architecture. Passage after passage opened from the main channel, our lamp throwing its rays a short distance into them as we glided by. Suddenly altering the course of the boat, Cleo guided it to the wall and brought it broadside to the current, when, before I could scarce realize it, we slipped into a large by-channel and stopped.

"This is the end of our journey," she said; "fasten the boat. You will find a chain in the wall."

I sprang up and went to the bow, where I at once saw a chain hanging from the wall; it was seemingly solid gold and very massive. I moored the boat and returned for Cleo, who took my hand and stepped to the bow where she felt with her hand along the damp wall, when the solid masonry parted and a stone six feet by four turned on a pivot and disclosed a flight of stone steps. Quickly she stepped out, carrying the light; I followed, she touched a secret spring and the door swung shut, leaving us upon the steps, which she at once ascended. She spoke not a word, but I felt the greatest trust in her. At the top she pushed open a door and we entered a large apartment perfectly bare of ornament of any sort. Here she paused, and turning to me, said: "We are in the first room of the palace dungeons; we will go to the treasure chamber, but will first perfect our plans."

We at once left this chamber and passed into a long corridor with gloomy cells on either side. More than a hundred feet along she opened another door, the

room of which was a most gorgeous apartment, furnished in the richest and most lavish style. She took the small lamp and with it had soon lighted several others, giving an illumination that seemed to my unused eyes, blinding. She must have been very tired, for she threw herself on to a couch among a pile of pillows, while I made myself comfortable on another nearby and awaited her pleasure. After a short rest she spoke.

"Nearby is the great treasure chamber; none know its location or the secret of its lock save the queen and Prince Kalma, her treasurer—none save I. Three generations ago, when my grandfather was a young man, Queen Helen II. felt for him such esteem that she made him royal treasurer, but a great indignity was afterward put upon him, and he swore that his descendants should benefit by his knowledge and avenge him. Before he died he gave to me, his favorite, a small golden plate containing the secret of the chamber and the mystery of its lock. The secret tunnel in the other house, and the door leading to it where we entered, as well as where we emerged into these dungeons, are all unknown, save the door into the tunnel from the house where I lived when a girl. That door was known to my father alone, and 'twas he who, years before his death, imparted the secret to me. There is supposed to be but one entrance to the treasure chamber, and there was none other until my grandfather swore his vow of vengeance. But vast treasure is power to its possessor, and the province in whose keeping it was could dictate to all, for gold is the currency of the nation, and although none here

are poor, yet all long to possess great wealth. Uncoined gold is of trifling value, but in the treasure chamber beyond are sums of coin whose value no man can tell—whose vastness is beyond count. Yet there is there something of far more worth at this time than all the wealth of gold and jewels, for it is a talisman handed down from sovereign to sovereign for centuries. Its possession assures absolute power over men, which accounts for the undisturbed serenity of the throne for these hundreds of generations. But it was missed shortly after my grandfather's death, and it was he who told me where he had hidden it. With that talisman in my hand I can command obedience, but I shall deliver it over to Eurydice, that she may sway her power and retain the throne. Let us lose no time, for even now men are drinking each other's blood."

She rose and crossed the room. Drawing aside a heavy curtain, she placed the lamp upon a heavy bracket, then took from her tunic a small golden tablet, and held it before my eyes.

"This tablet contains every direction for finding the treasure and the talisman," she said; "it is to be held as far beneath, before, and to the right of the lamp as I stand facing it as it now rests, as my arm at full growth measures from elbow to tip of the middle finger; where the shadow falls, there will I find a secret spring."

She held the tablet as directed while I put my finger on the shadow which was clearly outlined in about the center of a quarter section of the room. She then came over, and drawing her sword, pressed the

point hard upon the spot, when my astonishment may be imagined as I began to sink through the floor. The stone upon which I stood was tipping in the middle and letting me down!

I jumped off, and it paused in an oblique position and revealed to us a narrow flight of stairs. Taking up her lamp, she led the way down, and I remember counting the steps—twenty-four. They ended in a chamber forty feet square, and I at once observed a golden light coming from overhead. The roof was an immense dome of yellow glass, and the sun's rays were filtering through it.

"We are directly beneath the great fountain in the palace garden," she said, "and the light comes through the water first, which subdues it, as you see. I have never before been here, but my grandfather told me. We will now hurry and secure the talisman."

While she was consulting her tablet I had an opportunity to inspect this treasure chamber. The walls were lined with marble shelves filled with chests and jars, while one entire end, from floor almost to dome, and ten feet wide, contained a solid pile of gold ingots each about two inches by four square. My mathematical mind set itself to work, and I took my stylus and tablet and computed that the pile was worth the inconceivable sum of more than three thousand millions of dollars! I lifted the lid of a golden chest—and it is well that the maker had the foresight to put a heavy spring upon it, else a dozen men could not have budged it—and found it filled to the brim with the gold coin of the country. A score of others gave a like result. I opened a golden jar, and putting in

my hand, drew it forth filled with magnificent diamonds. Another contained rubies, while one was filled with the largest and finest pearls I had ever seen. The chamber would have paid the combined debt of the powers of the world, and was worth no more to me than so much junk! I sighed, and turned to Cleo. She was feeling with her hands against the wall in the corner furthest from me, and as I turned, cried out in delight, and came running to me with something in her hand:

"The talisman! The talisman!" she cried.

I took it from her and looked at it. It was a small gold image of the Greek god Zeus, but colored in a fashion long since lost to art. I was inclined to smile at her folly, but her sincerity forbade it.

"Now we will hasten to Eurydice!" she said, leading the way toward the stairs.

I following, we mounted them quickly, and I noticed that it was dark above, and thought the lamp we carried had burned low, but she called to me that the stone had closed and I hastened to open it. My strength availed nothing; it was as solid as a mountain.

We were imprisoned in the treasure chamber!

Strong as I was I turned cold and sick at the thought, but Cleo could not observe it in the darkness.

"What are we to do?" I asked, as calmly as I could.

A door closing in the room above checked her answer, and she grasped my hand and hurried me down the stairs, where we stood awaiting developments.

"Some one is in the chamber above," she whis-

pered, her hand upon her sword, her eyes flashing with excitement.

"Listen, Cleo," I said; "I must now assume command. Go stand on the other side of the stairway, and make no sound whatever you see; it means death to be found here; we must protect our lives at any cost; draw your sword."

"You are the master, Robert," she said, crossing over and stationing herself opposite me.

Cautiously I peered around. The secret door above was opening, and I held my weapon at my thigh, ready for a deadly thrust. The opening above and the stairway would not admit of two abreast, and I felt that we were safe. I looked again and saw that a man was slowly descending. I waited. I heard his careful footsteps on the marble. I counted them. Twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three—He was now within one step of the bottom. In an instant he appeared, and in another my hand was closed about his windpipe and my sword had cut his throat. I could give no quarter, and I looked for none; the life of one dearer to me than honor was at stake, and I had resolved to fight without rule. I had scarce dragged him aside when a second appeared. He followed his companion. So quickly had they died they could give no outcry. Another came; the perspiration stood on my forehead from the subdued excitement. I longed to spring out and cry to them to come on and I would give them fair battle, for this was nothing short of murder, but I thought of Cleo and held my peace if I did stain my soul. Another, and yet another came to his death down that flight of

stone steps, and every man wore the flaming kerchief of the rebels. Then I heard a lighter step, and listened carefully, my dripping sword in my blood-stained hand. Presently others followed and the first appeared. I had his throat in my fingers, but then strength fled, for I looked into the pale face of none other than Eurydice.

But my senses had not quite deserted me, and hearing another step behind her, I quickly gave her the sign of silence and put her behind me, where she stood trembling while I caught her follower by the throat and ran my sword through his heart. The queen stood in an inclosure of dead men while I slaughtered every soul that came down those steps.

There was a pause and I peered out. The stone had closed and all was silence. I turned to the queen.

"Your majesty will pardon your humble worshiper, but it was necessary," I said; "I see that you have been in danger."

"How came you here—and this youth?" she asked, and it flashed upon me that she who should have had most reason to know my companion had mistaken her for a boy.

I glanced at Cleo, and saw that she wished her secret kept.

"We came to restore to your majesty the sacred image of Zeus, that your enemies might be driven from the city and the throne preserved to you," said the girl, stepping forward and handing her the talisman, Eurydice taking it with a look of the greatest wonder on her face.

"A vision came to me in my sleep," said Cleo,

anticipating the question and telling a falsehood to protect the name of her grandfather; "and I led my friend to this place and found the long-lost image."

"It is for this image that I should have died," said the queen, "these men who are dead were sent with me to this treasure chamber to secure it; failing, I should have died by their swords within these walls; you have saved the life of Eurydice; command her when you will."

"It is your majesty's only to command," I said.

She gave me a regal inclination of the head, replying; "Let us depart."

"Alas, the way is closed," I responded.

"Then we are indeed lost!" she cried, "for none others know the secret. We shall die within this tomb."

"Not so, your majesty," I replied, "the dome can be broken."

She smiled. "There is enough water in the fountain above to flood a score of such rooms; it is useless."

I was chagrined, and kept silence.

"There is another exit," said Cleo, while the queen looked at her doubtingly.

Instead of wasting time and words, the heroic girl went to the far wall and made some careful measurements. She then took her sword and touched its point against a block. The result caused the queen to start back in amazement, for the stone gave way before the pressure, and turning, revealed a narrow passageway which admitted a current of icy air.

"This leads beneath the palace to the aqueduct," said Cleo, "and there is a boat within."

We followed her along the tunnel for several hundred feet, when she came to a pause, and I saw that we had ended against a blank wall. This fact caused me considerable astonishment, for I could not account for the cold air that had rushed into the chamber when the first door had been opened. But our guide threw her light against the floor, and the mystery was explained. A small grating was set in the wall facing us. Once more she turned to the side wall, and consulting her tablet, found the disguised spring and touched it. Within a large recess which opened before us, was a small boat, and while I, acting under her orders, drew it out, she caused the end of the passage to open and we stood gazing upon the swiftly flowing black water.

I launched the boat, and seating the queen, who held closely to her cherished image as if to secure safety from its occult influence, followed Cleo, who pushed off, the door swung to, and once more we were floating along on the bosom of the murky stream like three spirits from a nether world.

CHAPTER X.

THE SACRED TALISMAN.

EURYDICE, hugging close her precious talisman so long lost to her royal predecessors, sat beside Cleo, who steered the boat, while I stood in the bow with the lighted brazier peering into the darkness. We were not long in coming to the end of our journey by water, and soon saw light ahead, a moment later gliding forth into the blinding glare of the sun, where the river, freed from its confinement, widened and flowed peacefully across the lovely valley. Cleo guided the boat to shore, and we turned and looked toward the nearby city. It seemed strangely quiet; all sounds of strife had ceased, and for all evidence there was to the contrary, it might have been a city of the dead.

"Your majesty's pardon," said Cleo, "but it will not be safe to venture into the city thus; I will procure a disguise."

Without waiting for a reply she ran away like a deer and disappeared into the nearest street. In a few moments she reappeared with a small bag, and proceeded to "make up," or alter the features of the queen by a use of the pigments it contained. Her work was both rapid and clever, and would have

done credit to a professional actress, and when it was finished her most intimate friend would never have known Eurydice, and feeling the perfection of safety, we at once took up our way.

This portion of the city was deserted, but we presently came upon some people who told us that the rebels had been driven away, but that there was great sorrow, for they had either killed or captured the queen. Eurydice's gown was similar to those we met on the way to the palace, and her disguise was perfect, though she now seemed to have small use for it, although I was not fully inclined to credit the report that the enemy had all been driven off. I was anxious about Rex, but the queen could only tell me what I already knew, and as for the whereabouts of the others, she knew even less than myself. We soon arrived at the palace, where we found the people gathered by thousands. They had come for news of the queen, and as soon as I could I cried at the top of my voice for Prince Kalma. When the crowd made way for him, I whispered in his ear, and he fell on his knees and touched with his lips the queen's skirt. He then cleared the road for us, and when she had reached the palace steps, Eurydice held aloft the golden image, and facing the people, cried: "Your queen still lives, and she has found the sacred talisman of her forefathers!"

The enthusiasm was modified by her disguise, whereupon she stepped within the portal, presently reappearing with the pigment removed, when the cheers of the multitude resounded again and again. Her restoration was perfected, and we of her party

retired within the palace. Cleo insisted that I had saved her life in the treasure chamber, and would not listen to my suggestion that she impart to the queen the secret of her sex. She told her instead that she was from Ilyssus, but no rebel, and that she loved and would fight for her. The queen was deeply touched, and to my delight and the other's chagrin, made the handsome *boy* her personal messenger in place of Herxes, who had been killed in the race. This would bring us near each other, and I was happy, though at the same time sorry for Cleo, whose ideas of the association of the sexes were radically different from mine, and which I was not then in a position to explain to her.

The palace was carefully guarded, for the enemy were still about, and friends from foes were hard to distinguish. I had presently retired for a much needed rest, and had slept several hours, when I was aroused, and looking up saw that it was Cleo, an indescribable expression in her eyes.

"We are lost!" she cried.

"What is it?" I demanded, jumping to my feet.

"The talisman! It has been stolen while the queen rested! Hurry; summon the guard!"

I was thoroughly disgusted, and sleepily rubbed my eyes.

"Oh, why do you not act? The enemy will be upon us; we are in their power!" she cried, the tears for the first time in her eyes in the intensity of her agitation.

I took her gently by the hand and drew her to a seat. "Sit here with me, my poor girl," I said, "and

let me talk to you. Of what use is that worthless thing you worship, when the treasure chamber is filled to o'erflowing? We are safe. Calm your fears and trust in my protection. Is the queen resting?"

"Oh, how can you speak so, Robert? The talisman is sacred; for thousands of years it has been our strength, ever since the days in Greece of old when Mars himself came down from Olympus and gave it into our keeping. It was its loss that brought on the revolt, and those who have stolen it will soon hold our dear queen's throne, and consign her to death on the pyre."

Her agitation was intense; no modern argument could avail with a child-woman in her condition of mind—a beautiful pagan reared on the superstition of centuries; her Mars and her Zeus were as real to her as her queen or her own individuality; her Venus was a friend in whom she confided her heart's dearest secrets, and I knew that that little golden image must be recovered if it had to be at the cost of my life, for if I failed, I lost her, while if I regained it, her gratitude would strengthen the growing love I thought she already felt for me.

"You are right, Cleo the divine," I said; "I will summon the guard; the talisman must be recovered."

As first of rank then in the palace, I soon had the officers around me, and gave them brief instructions. I then turned to Cleo. The men had hastily departed, and she took my hand and pressed it to her lips. In a sudden ecstasy of maddening passion, I snatched it away and threw my arms about her, drawing her close to me. She looked at me with an expression of won-

der in her beautiful eyes, and before I knew it I had bent my head and pressed my lips lovingly upon hers. She smiled the happiest of smiles as she looked up into my face, her own rosy. Again and yet again, I kissed her, then blind with the fires that were coursing through my veins, and realizing that this was the hour for the supremacy of Mars, not Venus, I put her from me, looked once into her eyes, whispered in a husky voice: "My God; how I love you, Cleo!" and flew from the room into the fresh air.

As I stood upon the palace steps a messenger came running up and informed me that Kent, Ruggles, and Bangs, had been captured and carried off by the enemy, but that Rex and O'Rourke had been found, and by the command of the queen, the former was to have full command of the soldiers sent after the stolen image. Even as he was speaking, Rex, leading a body of splendid soldiers a thousand strong, came running up the broad walk from the avenue before us, while O'Rourke followed in his wake with another command.

Eager to escape from the scene of my temporary weakness, I placed myself at the disposal of the queen's favorite, and followed his command. A heavy guard was left at the palace, and after mobilizing ten thousand warriors, we left Athenia and marched out across the valley toward Ilyssus, and I shall never forget the sight of that splendid body, their swords and gold shields flashing in the spectral sunlight that poured down upon them, the hills echoing their soul-stirring war chant in which every voice was raised, as we marched to victory or to death. And I fell to thinking of the trifling causes which impel men to

take each other's lives, and of the absurd thing that was taking us upon this sanguinary mission, and I reflected that it was all a part of the grand scheme of nature, and that war was probably the safety valve of the great machine—a means toward an end, and that end, overpopulation.

As we drew nearer to the mountains of ice the vegetation grew stunted and the atmosphere colder, but while I, in a costume scant for me, felt it severely, these hardy Greeks did not give evidence that they observed any change. On our left was a precipice a sheer three thousand feet from base to summit, and all of glittering green and opalescent ice. Straight toward it we took our course; and when near I saw the leading company disappear from view. As my men reached the spot we entered a tunnel in the wall of ice, and the command was given for lights. In a moment a thousand torches flared up, and the march was increased to double time. This was necessary to keep from freezing, for the air was arctic and an icy blast blew through the tunnel. As we ran along the exercise warmed me up, and I began to enjoy the remarkable scene. For half a mile ahead and to the rear could be seen the torches, and the running men in this marvelous cavern. It was not more than eight feet high and twelve or fifteen in width, and the men ran ten abreast in perfect formation. The course varied, sometimes being straight for a mile or more, and then turning, and the walls of dark green sparkled as might a million refracting mirrors under like conditions. The scene was the weirdest imagination can conceive. We made no pause, but ran the entire dis-

tance. I judged that the entire length of this wonderful piece of work was about six miles, and I was badly winded by the unusual exertion. We emerged upon a shelf of ground at the base of the mountain through which we had come, and moved quickly toward the valley beyond, which was much smaller than Athenia, being not more than thirty miles in diameter, while a great smoking volcano stood in its very center, alone, the majestic monarch of the whole valley. A river of lava flowed down one side, and sank from view in a deep basin some five miles from the base of the peak, and the surrounding country was covered with a vegetation similar to that in Athenia.

About five miles to our left could be seen the city of Ilyssus, and as we looked, a great body of men appeared and moved toward us. Rex gave orders to advance, and our guides led the way down a narrow path and out on to the plain. These men knew not the meaning of fear or strategy; they were bound upon a mission for their beloved queen, and in a short time I found myself in the very midst of the fiercest of conflicts. Our strength of numbers was superior, and we drove the enemy before us into the city. In the very center was a large building used as a sort of public warehouse and exchange, and it was around this that the rebels took their final stand and fought to the death.

The scenes of the fighting in Athenia were repeated, and above the din of the clashing swords I could hear the frequent crack of firearms and knew that my countrymen were still alive. As for myself,

I was here, there, everywhere. For an hour we fought, when the last remnants were either destroyed or captured, or had taken to retreat, and with our prisoners we marched to the temple in search of the hidden talisman. It had been given into the keeping of a priest, and he had to be killed to secure it to us.

Our mission now turned to the rescue of our friends. Spies were sent out to mingle with the people whom we had paroled upon their word of honor—a bond never by them broken—and our entire army encamped in the ample space about the temple, there to await news of our comrades. Within an hour they had been found chained beneath an altar in the temple and liberated.

I was reclining against a pillar talking to Rex and O'Rourke, when two young messengers approached, and I saw that one was the disguised Cleo. Instantly my thoughts reverted to our parting, and they must have shone in my eyes, for she blushed beneath the false color on her cheeks as I regarded her. Her companion was a youth of about her own age and figure, though rather more lightly framed; his long, wavy hair was securely bound, and his costume a creamy white. He wore white sandals, and carried a small bag slung from his shoulders, while a belt of gold, set with various gems, encircled his waist, and the head of Medusa was embossed upon a heart-shaped golden ægis which hung by a chain and covered his breast. He bowed before Rex, and taking from his bag a wax tablet, handed it to him. Rex read aloud:

"The bearer, my beloved messenger, Cyrillus, comes to Prince Rex for his service. He is swift, strong and eager, and can be trusted unto death. His companion I send to Robert, our loyal friend. May the gods protect you and your brave men, and return you to us in safety. EURYDICE."

The young man was extremely handsome, his blonde hair showing in striking contrast to the jetty locks of Cleo as she stood beside him. He looked more like a king than a mere messenger, and the queen's affection for Rex was shown by her sending him. I mentally compared the man I thought she loved with the young Greek. Rex was a young giant, four inches taller than the boy and forty pounds heavier, his muscles standing out like those of the soldiers he commanded, his neck supporting Apollo's head, his arms bands of steel. Cyrillus was rather slender, his limbs as graceful as those of an Arabian horse, his chest rather deep, broad shoulders and a handsome head, with deep blue eyes and arching brows. His gaze was fearless, and he looked as if he could outrun a deer. The one was a perfect picture of youthful beauty, the other the ideal of the young athlete.

Rex bade the two to be seated, then turning to me said: "Did you ever see such a handsome pair, 'Bardy'?"

"Never in my life," I admitted, glad that he had not guessed Cleo's secret, and not daring to look at her just now.

"Those two young fellows would cut a swath in New York, be Jinks!" said O'Rourke; "there's none o' them little dudes there could show as clean cut a

leg as aither wan o' them; sure it does a man good to look at a young fellow that never heard of a bicycle, a hat or a shoe, they're in small danger of havin' their feet hurt 'em with the free and aisy style o' that footgear, an' when I get back I'm goin' to open a shop for the sale o' sandals exclusively be Jinks!"

Rex and I laughed aloud at the jolly captain who had delivered his remarks while enjoying to the full the picture of the two messengers as they lay on the ground beneath a tree. They both observed him, and being not twenty feet away heard every word he said, but it being in an unknown tongue they were unconscious of the compliments he had paid them, and accustomed as they were to the costume worn by their ancestors for centuries, they were oblivious of the fact that they were the objects of comment.

"I believe I'll give him a speed trial," said Rex, then calling to him.

The young man approached.

"Are you a fast runner?" he asked him.

"None are swifter," was the ready reply.

"Then bear this message to the queen, that I thank her for her graciousness in sending me so good a messenger, and that we are returning with our rescued comrades and small loss, and that we bear the sacred talisman with us. Meet us as we return, and be quick."

He bowed, and was off across the square and disappeared down the street leading to the plain and the ice tunnel. After a little we took up our return march and had proceeded slowly as far as the mouth of the tunnel, when we met Cyrillus returning.

"What! Not back so soon!" cried Rex.

The boy produced a golden tablet. "It is from the queen," he said.

It was, and bore her signature in the soft metal. We were amazed at his speed, and showered praise upon his modest head. Again we entered the ice and hastened through it, grateful for the warmth when we emerged into Athenia, and hurried toward the city. Cleo remained near me, and Cyrillus was ever by the side of Rex, ready for instant service. We drew up before the palace and the young runner was despatched to announce our presence to the queen. We left the soldiery standing without, and entered the great throne room. Seated before us was Eurydice in all the barbaric splendor of gold and flashing gems, a magnificent diadem upon her head, a scepter in her right hand. The left she gave to Rex as he knelt before her and placed the sacred symbol of power once more in her keeping.

"Arise, Prince Rex," she said, a light that was not all gratitude shining from her lustrous blue eyes, "you and your brave companions and soldiers are indeed thrice welcome; you have earned the everlasting gratitude of Eurydice. A feast in honor of the great victory will be given in the palace garden at the hour of the evening sun; go forth and prepare to give thanks to the great Minerva and the glorious Mars."

We left her presence and went to our apartments. Cleo I dispatched to the queen while I secured a short sleep, while Cyrillus had disappeared somewhere, but Rex, having no use for him at the moment, gave it little heed, and we threw ourselves upon couches and were soon lost in slumber.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FEAST OF MINERVA.

AFTER several hours of most refreshing sleep, I arose and arrayed myself in a costume of state. I could in no way so please the queen as my doing honor to her feast, and when Rex had completed his toilet and deigned to show himself, he was actually dazzling in a costume of royal blue and covered with jewels.

"Great Jupiter!" I cried, "where did you get them?"

"Presents from the queen in recognition of my valuable services in restoring the sacred image," he said, looking very solemn and giving me a wink that made me laugh.

At that very moment Cleo appeared in the doorway and we both turned toward her. She was a vision of such loveliness that I almost gasped for breath, but in an instant's glance from her to Rex I saw that he had not been so affected, and argued with myself that it must be because of my knowledge of her sex and my overpowering love.

She was clad in a tunic of deep yellow, with a magnificent gold sword set with gems until it flashed a thousand fires, stuck through a broad blue sash that encircled her waist and fell at her side, while the thongs of her yellow sandals were embroidered with

rare pearls and her arms from shoulder to elbow covered with golden serpents, the head of everyone of which was an immense diamond. Her raven hair, arranged in billowy clouds and confined by the inevitable ampyx, crowned a beauty that was positively bewildering in its barbaric splendor. The jewels she wore were worth millions.

She advanced directly to me, and smilingly handed me a magnificent sword and a golden casket, saying: "The queen begs you to accept these in honor of the occasion and in acknowledgment of her gratitude."

I thanked her and opened the casket while she and Rex looked on. It was filled with gems, and with her assistance I put them on. There was a collar of opals that she fastened about my neck—Rex wore a broad one of diamonds—and a belt comprised of eight rows of diamonds for my crimson tunic. In addition, there was a handful of rings, and when I had acceded to Rex and my messenger and put everything on without regard to harmony or wish of my own, I felt like a savage ready for some terrible sacrifice.

Cleo then turned to Rex: "Cyrillus, the queen commands me to say, has been by her majesty dispatched upon an important errand; should you require a special messenger, you are to summon any you choose."

"I shall not want any messenger, but if I should, will you not act for me, my handsome boy?" replied Rex, putting his finger playfully under Cleo's chin.

"I am the messenger of your friend; should he command me I obey in all things," she rejoined, with dignity and stepping back from him.

"Ah, 'Bardy,' " said Rex in English, "there's fealty for you, and dignity, by Jove! You are lucky to possess such a messenger; one would almost think from that display of devotion that he were a woman, and in love with you to boot. Cæsar! Wouldn't he make a stunning one!"

I started at the words, but he was looking at Cleo, and before he made further remark, I led the way to the garden and the *fête*. The trees had been strung with festoons of flowers, and hundreds of people in brilliant costumes were strolling, laughing, drinking and singing. The rarest of fruits and wines were served by beautiful girls, and the fine statue of Minerva near the queen's doorway was buried in a mound of floral offerings cast by the happy people. I was conscious of a sensation of pain that the woman I loved should be behind me in the capacity of an inferior in rank, when I knew that she was more fit to be my queen, but it was her own wish and therefore my law. We paused near the statue and were served with refreshments, and I insisted that Cleo should conduct herself as my aid and join us. After we had both brought our insistence to play upon her, we overcame her scruples and she took a seat at my side on the marble bench, and with her golden goblet raised on high, pledged Minerva, Mars, and then ourselves, after which we drank to all the gods and goddesses made famous by the Greeks, and from the rare bouquet of the strange wine, I heartily wished there were a few more of them. Presently there came to our ears the strains of music from the palace portals, and the maids of the queen appeared a hundred strong and

playing the weirdest of music upon lyres, while another section followed and accompanied them upon the classic tibia. The effect was enchanting, and when Eurydice stepped forth she was literally buried in flowers thrown by little children, while the odor of the roses was heavy on the air.

The queen, her costume set off to great advantage against the pure white of her maids', was most regal. She wore a gown of cloth of gold, her sandals being of the same delicate material, a diadem blazing with jewels crowned her yellow hair, her arms bore each a single gold and green enameled serpent, and a broad belt of splendid emeralds held the folds of gold at the waist. Such a vision, such a scene in its entirety, is vouchsafed to few men in their lives, and I was glad it had been my lot to witness it. A chair of state had been reserved for her majesty, and Rex went forward and conducted her to it, when the revelry began where it had for the moment left off. The people crowded around to do homage to their fair young sovereign, and all was merry, when Cleo stepped to Eurydice's side and whispered something in her ear that caused her cheek to pale, and on the instant my herald had sped away toward the palace; while the queen sat like a statue, the most anxious look I had ever seen on mortal face changing her whole appearance. Rex, his love alarmed, stepped near, and she bent and spoke to him.

"It is the talisman again!" he said, turning to me; "be careful and don't let the people know, or there will be trouble. The queen left it in her chamber, and your messenger has gone to bring it; if it should

happen that it is gone, we must not let it be known, but we three and my fleet-footed Cyrillus go in search of it. The thieves will carry it to Ilyssus to provoke another rebellion, and we must head them off. Confound their infernal brass god!"

We turned, and I saw Cleo hurrying back with some trifling ornament in her hand, which she gave to the queen as a ruse to delude those watching eyes, and then spoke a word to her which, if such a thing were possible, lessened the scant color in her cheeks.

Then Rex, realizing that instant action was demanded of us, said to those near: "The queen feels the fatigue and the heavy odor of the flowers, and wishes to retire for a time; she bids you all make merry, and gives you her royal blessing;" with which he handed her down from the chair of state and escorted her to the Palace, Cleo and I following close behind.

Within the portals he turned to Eurydice and said: "Be calm and have hope; your talisman shall be recovered; where is Cyrillus?"

"He will be back in a short time," she replied, her natural manner in a measure returned; "where can he meet you?"

"I suspect the thieves, your majesty, and know where they would first go; tell him to meet us at the abandoned house of Orianus, in the Street of the Aqueduct."

It was Cleo who spoke, and as she finished she led us down the long corridor, leaving the queen standing there. Down the street we went, while Cleo spoke under her breath to me: "It is the house where first

we met. Robert, have a care and do not betray me to any one; we will find the thieves there if we are soon enough."

"Why, 'Bardy,' this is the house where Dick had the big fight, and where you so mysteriously disappeared and showed up hours after with the queen and that boy; if these rows are ever settled, I want you to tell me all about that."

I assured Rex that I would, and Cleo led the way straight into the peristyle, where I had stood at the fountain when she captured me, and even in this time of anxiety I smiled at the memory. She passed on and through the same door where she had secured the brazier. All was silent; the place was evidently deserted. She dove into a closet and found a lamp and a flint and in a moment we had light.

"Have your weapons ready," she said, drawing her own splendid sword; "we may find instant use for them. The thieves have passed through; we will here await Cyrillus."

She set the lamp on the floor and stepped back into the shadow of the wall. We both followed. Presently our ears caught the sound of sandaled feet in the courtyard and I took a fresh grip on my weapon and touched its keen edge with my thumb, and I recall in that brief and exciting space of time, when I expected at any moment to bury that blade in a human body, that the thought came to me of the wonderful art these people had preserved of hardening gold to the consistency of the finest Damascus, for as I drew my thumb across its edge, it cut in with even that slight pressure, and though heavy, when I pressed it

on the floor, it proved as pliant as the most perfect Toledo.

The footsteps came nearer and paused beyond the door. Cleo stepped boldly out, and guarding her body, cried: "Who's there?"

Instantly a figure appeared before us, and we looked upon the errant Cyrillus, clad in his tunic of white and gold as he had appeared when he presented himself to Rex in Ilyssus.

"The queen sent me," he said.

"Yes, come with us quickly," said Cleo promptly, leading us directly into the other room and pausing before the blank wall that I knew contained the secret door. She placed her fingers gently upon it, and as it responded and swung, held it on a crack, and bending her face against the opening, listened. Hearing nothing suspicious, she allowed the slab to open, and the black void and rushing water were before us. She had not herself carried the lamp, but left it to me, and turning, said: "We cannot take a light, extinguish it, but bring the lamp."

As I obeyed her orders she stepped within the darkness and Rex followed, while Cyrillus preceded me. The ledge was too narrow to admit of more than one person at a time, and so quietly did my three companions creep along its dark surface that I had a feeling of being alone in another world. We had proceeded for what I judged to be a hundred feet, the river rushing ominously beneath, when I came up against Cyrillus, and found that for some reason best known to our guide the column had halted, and as the darkness seemed to grow even more intense I heard a

sound far ahead as of a body moving softly along the ledge. I listened with bursting ears; it came nearer. Oh, if I had only the power to spring to the front and defend Cleo. My heart seemed bursting from the anguish of my powerlessness; I felt, as I heard the stealthy step approach, that in another instant I should go mad and fight my way to the front, when there was a sudden blow struck against a soft body, and a heavy splash in the river beneath, a shriek from Cyrillus that nearly split my ear drums, and Rex's voice crying: "It is Cleo!"

In the next instant I was head first into the river, swimming with the current, suffering a thousand tortures of an exaggerated hell, while the crash of swords came to me from the darkness above.

"Cleo! Cleo!" I called; "answer me."

A gurgling sound came to me from my left and I put out one hand. I shall never forget that sensation if I live until the earth crumbles to dust beneath me; the awful darkness all about me; people in deadly combat above me on a narrow ledge; for the fairest light of heaven seemed cast over my torture-racked soul as my hand fell upon the thick curls of her I loved alone in all this world. I drew the head to my shoulder, and swimming with one hand, brought up against the wall, but it was smooth and slimy and the current carried me down. Still, I instinctively kept my hand against it for what trifling support it offered. Then, far upstream I heard three bodies splash in quick succession, and Rex's voice again cry out:

"'Bardy,' oh, 'Bardy,' " he called; "are you there?"

With my teeth chattering from the icy bath I managed to answer.

"Robert," said the dear, weak voice of the woman on my arm, "call to him to go to the left at the first turning and he will find a boat."

She could speak no more, and was silent from pain and exhaustion.

I called as she had bidden me and begged him to hurry, but he was in darkness, for I had held the lamp in my hand when I had sprung into the river. After what seemed an hour he called again, and then I heard him drag the boat down the steps and launch it. Down toward us they came, calling constantly to avoid accident, when presently the prow came in contact with my extended arm and I held on with a grip of death while they drew first Cleo in, then me. We were still in darkness, and depended upon Cleo to guide us, else there was nothing to do but drift with the current into the open air. She had not been seriously hurt; the man had simply struck her and knocked her breath out with the force of the blow that sent her into the river, and once in the boat she was able to talk.

"How many were there?" she inquired of Rex.

"I killed three," he replied.

"That was all there were," she said with conviction. "Are you injured?" she added.

"Only a trifle—in my left arm," he replied.

"Let me bandage it for you," spoke up Cyrillus; "I can do it in the dark if you will show me where it is;" and I heard a sudden tearing of linen.

"That's splendidly done, thank you," he said after a

moment; "it seems to have bled a good deal, but there's very little pain."

He was steering, and in the utter darkness I drew Cleo close against me and she laid her head on my shoulder with the confidence of a child. I could not resist the temptation, and bent my face to her's until I could feel her warm breath on my cheek, when she turned her face and laid her soft lips long and lingeringly upon mine. At last! I was in doubt no more, but knew that she loved me, and that I had received a maiden's first kiss, and even in the danger and darkness, and cold and wet as we were, was happier than I had ever before been in all my life.

"Are you certain we are on the right track?" I asked Rex.

"Our coming against the men in that place is proof," answered Cleo; "I overheard the plot to murder the queen and steal the talisman; I heard the plotters make their arrangements to meet at the house of Orianus, and I was ever at the queen's side after, save for a few moments after she came into the garden. The talisman was on the person of one of those men, and the body is even now whirling along in the depths of the river on its way to the Great Pit where it is lost; we shall never see the sacred image more."

"Then the throne is in peril," spoke up Cyrillus, "for the people, now that they know the talisman to have been restored, will demand that it be displayed on every public occasion, and its loss a second time will mean strife and a dissolution of the empire."

"Yes, it will mean all that," replied Cleo; "and the queen's life will be in constant danger from the

restless ones; it will not be safe for her in the palace save under constant guard, and even then she cannot distinguish her enemies from her friends. But I have a plan: let us secure the treasure from the chamber and leave an empty treasury for the change of rulers. We can then command the throne."

Her plan was certainly unique, and well worth considering.

"Let us first abduct the queen, and then remove the treasure," I said; "for by this we can save her life."

"I had not an idea of leaving her to a cruel fate," said Cleo, in hurt tones; "it is for her sake that I would undertake it—and for yours, Robert," she whispered in my ear, thrilling me with happiness.

"Forgive my bluntness, my young friend," I said, constrainedly.

"Let us go at once and secure the queen before she is endangered," said Rex; "we can bring her with us, and then secure the treasure; and we ought to tell the boys about the plan, too," he added generously.

"Her majesty is in no danger," said Cyrillus; "she is perfectly safe, and if I may be permitted the suggestion, it would not do to arouse the populace."

"You are right, young man, if she is safe," answered Rex; "then let us get that treasure, for I am hungry for treasure, but hungrier for peace; I've had all the blood I crave for awhile."

"I fear I cannot find the secret entrance to the palace in the darkness," said Cleo, "we shall have to go to the end of the aqueduct."

A thought struck me, illustrating the unusual expedients resorted to in extreme cases, and I asked: "Has any one a flint?"

"I have," answered Cleo.

"Then I think I can make a light, but it will not last long. Rex, steer the boat until we are in what our guide judges to be the neighborhood of the entrance, and then I will produce the light."

"We must be nearing it now," said Cleo, "the current is very rapid."

"Tell me when," I answered.

"In a moment," she replied.

My plan was simple, and brought about by the accident to Cleo. The minutest details of that terrible moment now recurred to me, and I remembered that when I sprang after her I had tossed the unlighted lamp away and it had struck Cyrillus. There must be oil on his tunic, I reasoned, and therefore the garment would readily burn. I took a cartridge from my belt and began opening it as best I could in the dark, at the same time telling them my plan, and instructing the herald to tear from his tunic the oil-soaked portion.

"But I cannot spare it," he cried, in tones of dismay.

"Tear it off!" cried Rex; "it's dark, and we are all men; what's the difference?"

I felt confused, but Cleo gave no sign, and I heard an ominous rip and held in my hand the piece of tunic. I had extracted the powder, and pouring it on to the cloth, bent over it and struck the flint. After a succession of trials a spark fell in the powder and it ignited and caught the cloth, which burned slowly and threw a weird light all about us.

"Fortune is with us!" cried Cleo; "we are near the spot; it is but a few boats' lengths ahead."

"How can you tell?" I asked, for the whole place looked alike to me.

"By the marks on the walls," she answered; and I then saw that there were peculiar figures cut in the stone at intervals, though their meaning was a mystery to me.

But true to her assertion, we quickly came opposite a tunnel, and she called to Rex to guide the boat into it. It was the same one she and I had entered before, and in five minutes we four were reclining in the chamber of the palace prisons next to the entrance to the treasure room, recuperating from the excitement and fatigue. We lighted lamps, and I observed that Cyrillus was holding his torn garments together. I ripped a curtain from its place, and would have helped him repair the rent, which was trifling, but he insisted so strenuously upon doing it himself that I gave in and threw myself upon a couch.

After a short rest we repaired into the next chamber and Cleo began a search for the secret spring. This time I propped the stone up with a large gold vase, and we all entered the house of the vast treasure. The bodies of the men I had slain lay there in ghastly piles, and we dragged them all into the tunnel and threw them into the river. We then began transporting the jars of jewels into the tunnel, where Cleo found in the wall the secret vault of her grandfather, in which we deposited them. The vault was large, and we had hidden fifty or more large jars of jewels in its depths, and one of rare old Greek coins that I had fallen upon with the delight of the numismatist, when a sound caused me to turn my head, and I beheld four

men with drawn swords standing at the foot of the stairs, their intentions palpable. At the same moment Cyrillus and Cleo turned, and the former gave a slight cry, when Rex came rushing past me, sword in hand, and threw himself headlong upon the intruders.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIGHT FOR THE TREASURE.

THE foolhardiness of that rush upon four men with ready swords was characteristic of Rex, and so amazed the intruders that before they had time or thought for action he had run one through, and was in fierce combat with the remaining three. By this time I had gathered my wits, and sprang to his assistance, and we fought cautiously around the room, each fearful of making the attack or leaving an opening. I saw Cleo draw her sword and run to me, but I cried to her to stand back. One man only stood before me, the other two being against Rex, but he was alone but an instant, for his brave young messenger sprang at his enemies and engaged one while his master fought the other. But Cyrillus was too light for his burly antagonist, and fell with a thrust through the side. With a cry of rage, Cleo sprang at the man, and before he could regain his guard had run her sword through his throat to the hilt and slashed the quickly withdrawn weapon at my man. It struck him on the sword arm, cutting it to the bone, and the weapon fell. Before he could regain it I had ended his career, but my young Amazon had already turned to Rex. She fought with the ferocity of a tigress, her inky

eyes flashing like flame in the yellow light, and so swiftly did the swords play that I could not bring mine to bear. The Greek fought splendidly, and with a guard and action that made me stand in admiration.

"Damn you! You're too many for me!"

The words caused consternation. They were good old English and came from the lips of the big Greek. Swords dropped and the combatants stood for a moment gazing at each other. Then Rex gave vent to a laugh.

"Dick, is it you?" he cried.

The other's weapon dropped to the pavement and his chest rose and fell with the exertion of the duel as he said: "Yes, it's I, who the devil are you?"

Rex made the place ring with his hearty laugh, and Dick Murdock grasped his hand and mine.

"Why, Bob, I didn't even see you; I'd have known those whiskers in the other world—and you came near sending me there, Rex," he ended.

"But Cyrillus; is he dead?" asked Rex, going to the still body on the floor, and stooping over it. "No," he said, answering his own question, "it's a straight wound through the side; get some water."

Cleo caught up a jar of coins, and pouring them out on the floor, sped into the tunnel, the lighted brazier in her hand making her look in the strange place, like an imp of darkness. Rex took the water which she brought and bathed the face of the messenger. The wound bled little, but Rex himself was covered with blood from the one in his arm received during his lone fight on the ledge in the aqueduct. Presently he

stopped for a moment, and bending nearer, peered into the face of his faithful follower. Then he looked at his hand that had applied the water.

"What is it?" I asked, curious at his actions.

"The boy had stained his face, and I have washed it off," he said.

The patient opened his eyes and looked languidly about him.

"Are you easier?" Rex asked.

"Have I been hurt?" inquired the other.

"A sword thrust through the side," replied Rex.

"There is no pain," said Cyrillus.

"The floor is cold; let me hold his head in my lap," spoke up Cleo, and dropping to the floor, she lifted him and laid the curly head in her lap, while the eyes closed as if in slumber. He had lost blood, and the shock must have been severe.

Rex, rising said to me, "Your messenger is as tender as a woman, 'Bardy.' "

"Tell us about your being here, Dick," I said, too fearful, lest our secret be discovered, to permit Rex to dwell upon Cleo and the wounded boy.

"Well," answered Murdock, seating himself upon a chest, while Rex and I took others; "it is not a long story. I saved that fellow's life whom Bob just finished—it was before you boys came to my aid in that vacant house—and he was grateful. When he came to me at the *fête* and made a proposition to rob the treasure house, I took him up without any delay. He said he had discovered its location, and we could dig into it. I was tired of fighting, and when he told me that he knew where there was a boat in which

we could escape, I began to think of home. He said he had two brothers with whom we must share the treasure, and as there must be enough for all, we didn't haggle. We were to come here, dig through the stone floor, secure the treasure and carry it away; then he was to return and get all you fellows and the whole crowd would get away from this part of the earth. That would save you all the trouble, and beside, he wouldn't hear of letting any one else into the scheme until we got hold of the treasure. Well, we came here, and found that some one had been kind enough to open the way for us, so down we came, and the consequence is before us—three dead men, and one badly sprained."

Rex arose and went to the side of the messenger.

"Poor chap," he said, "that was an ugly cut he gave you; a little more to the left, and you'd not be here; we'll soon have you in bed; you need rest."

He bent over the boy and touched the wound. A spasm of pain crossed the sufferer's face, but he uttered no sound—he would not have made an outcry if you had run a sword through him—but Rex saw that he had hurt him, and I heard him make use of some good strong English in describing the particular brand of fool he considered himself. In moments of excitement, Rex forgot his Ionic tongue and surroundings.

"We must get out of here at once," he said, turning to me, "the boy is more seriously hurt than we thought."

"By the sacred Jupiter!" cried Dick from behind me, "the stone has fallen!"

But at his words, and as I turned to look, there came a rush of feet, and Dick went flying across the room followed by two Greeks who had tumbled over him, while several more charged headlong into the chamber. In an instant we three men had engaged the intruders, and before they could draw their weapons there were three less to fight. We had had ample practice of late in the use of the sword, and I think I fought better with the knowledge that Cleo needed my protection than if I had been alone. Each man knew that a meeting with a stranger in that place meant a survival of the fittest, and no time was lost. Cleo sat on the floor in the middle of the room holding Cyrillus' head in her lap, while the battle raged about them. I fought cautiously, yet it was soon over. The heroic Rex again had odds to contend with, but downed both his men, while Dick and I came out with honor. When all was over I flew to the stairway and rushing up, closed the door.

"Venus be merciful!" cried Cleo, "you have imprisoned us."

"There is the tunnel and the river," I said, in astonishment at her words.

"There is no boat," was her reply.

The perspiration from the fight turned cold on my forehead at the thought. Our new dilemma was the worst of all. I dropped on to a chest and tried to grasp the situation. Here were we five—and one a woman in disguise—in a vault many feet beneath the surface of the ground, the door above closed, the only exit leading through a narrow tunnel to a subterranean river, and no boat; dead men strewn around

us, and Rex and Cyrillus both wounded. Clearly, the position was not an enviable one, and for a quick solution I would cheerfully have handed over the entire contents of the chamber. I looked upon my own costume, and on my friends' and gave expression to a grim smile at the mockery of our splendor, while Cleo, deep in thought, sat supporting Cyrillus.

"There must be some means of opening that slab," said Rex, breaking in upon my thoughts; "else how would the queen get out? If it closes automatically, there is certainly a spring on this side by which it can be opened, and I am going to find it. It is clearly evident that we five men cannot swim down that black river to the light, for you have told me it is several miles, therefore the door above is our only hope unless we run the risk of drowning, and break the dome."

"There would be no risk in that," I ventured, "the queen herself, whom I met in this very chamber, told me that the fountain above us would flood this room many times over."

"Why not open the tunnel door to the river and let the water escape slowly by that way," asked Dick.

"Useless work; the people above would have our lives the instant we showed ourselves," I answered, "we can escape by but one way—the river."

"And that is suicide," said Rex decidedly; "I am going to find the spring that raises the stone above."

He went to the foot of the steps and carefully examined every inch of the walls on the four sides, then ascended and tried the stone. It was down as hard and fast as its half ton of weight could hold it,

and he came back and started around the walls again. The quest was futile.

"Perhaps I can find it," said Cyrillus quietly, "I have a very delicate sense of touch."

He rose slowly, and Cleo supported him to the steps, where he began feeling carefully along the wall near the floor. Presently his hand sank into the wall, and we saw that he had pushed in a small block of marble, while at the same time Cleo cried, "The stone is raised!"

It was true; the boy had actually found the mysterious spring and opened the door of our prison. Now that we were practically free once more, I ran back into the tunnel and closed the vault, hiding the jewels we had removed. Rejoining my comrades, we all left the chamber and once more stood in the windowless room above, thankful to be above ground, even if it were within a dungeon.

"How is your wound, my boy?" was the first question Rex asked, ignoring his own damaged arm.

"It is not a bad one;" he replied "only a trifle; the exertion was more the cause of my quietness;" but I believed him shamming, for there was a look in his eyes that strong men do not have.

"It must be dressed the moment we get out of here," said Rex, leading the way through the door into the corridor, "who knows the way?"

"I do," replied Cleo.

"Then lead, we follow," he said.

Down the gloomy passage we filed, I following Cleo, while Dick brought up the rear. At the end our leader opened a door, and we found ourselves upon the

portico of the palace facing the quadrangular garden. The area was filled with men in what seemed a state of wild excitement, and the instant we appeared no less than a hundred rushed upon us, and before a weapon could be drawn we were prisoners.

"They have [stolen the queen!" they cried; "Kill them! Kill them!"

Stolen the queen! The accusation seemed to me the veriest farce, but it was evident that they were in deadly earnest, and we were all bound in ready chains and rushed back into the dungeons we had so recently vacated. Not a word of protest would they heed, and I found myself with Cyrillus locked behind heavily barred doors and left to my own thoughts. The others were nearby, but whether together or separate I had no means of knowing.

I turned to my companion in misery. "What does it mean?" I asked.

"It means that we are to die for the queen's disappearance," he said, "unless we escape or she returns."

"But why should we be imprisoned because the queen is missing?" I indignantly asked.

"She was seen last when leaving the garden with my master and yourself and messenger," said the boy.

"How do you know this?" I asked him sharply, for I had heard no one say as much, in fact, we had simply been accused and thrown into prison without a word of explanation being accorded us.

"I suspected so from what I heard," he replied, "you said as much yourself while we were in the treasure chamber."

"Well, be that as it may, the fact remains that we

are all in prison, and very likely to be murdered for a crime we never committed, and there is furthermore not one in the party who would not give his life for Eurydice."

"I am sure there is not, but since she was last seen with you and Prince Rex, the evidence is against you, although none know better than I that you are the last who would injure her. We must plan an escape and ourselves go in search of her."

"Easily suggested, young man; let's see you get out first, and I will cheerfully follow," I said in ironical tones.

At the moment a guard passed the door and Cyrillus called to him; he paused at the door, the herald whispered to him and he hurried away.

"What did you say to him?" I queried.

"I told him to say to Prince Kalma that if I were given my parole for one hour, I would produce the queen or forfeit my life and all here imprisoned."

"You did?" I cried; "you are going to run away and leave us four to die! I'll throttle you as you stand!" I fairly shrieked, rushing upon him to choke out his traitorous life.

"Stop!"

Quick as a flash he had drawn his sword, and its point pressed my chest as I looked into his pale face and flashing blue eyes that seemed fairly piercing me.

"You forget, friend, a Greek never yet broke a parole!"

Shamefacedly I dropped my eyes against that fearless gaze; he had taught me a lesson in honor, and I humbly apologized. He put up his sword and extended his hand.

"Do you trust me?" he asked.

"With my life," I answered with readiness.

"You shall never regret it, for I am your friend."

The guard returned with two others, the lock turned and Cyrillus walked forth, leaving us alone. No sound could I hear; I may as well have been in the center of the earth. But the agony of solitude was brief, and I was released, and guarded before and behind, marched down the corridor and into the quadrangular garden where Dick, Rex and Cleo stood, and we were all taken into the Palace and conducted to the throne room. As I looked, I could scarcely realize that my eyes told me truly, for before us sat Eurydice, smiling on us all.

We were ordered set free at once, the queen assuring her minister Kalma, that Cyrillus the messenger had delivered her to them, and that we had nothing whatever to do with her absence. She said nothing more, and even Kalma dared not question her.

But Cyrillus had not returned, and when the hour had expired, soldiers were sent out to look for him. Hours passed, and he did not appear, and my faith and anxiety were sorely tried. He had saved our lives by producing the queen, but he himself had disappeared, and I feared had met with foul play. Unable to stand the strain, and feeling an unusual affection for the plucky youth, I spoke to Rex, and eluding Cleo and Eurydice, we went forth into the city in search of him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CRYPT OF THE TEMPLE.

THINKING that Cyrillus might have, for some reason, gone back to the house of Orianus, in the Street of the Aqueduct, Rex and I made that our first objective point. Entering cautiously, we went through the chamber in which Dick had made his stand, and into the courtyard containing the fountain. As yet no indication of his having been there was noticed, and I suggested that we enter the secret door opening on the river. There was no particular reason why we should expect to find him here, and there were a thousand chances to one that he was not, yet the scene of our last adventures having a fascination for us, we argued that similar reasons may have governed the movements of the recreant messenger. At all events, there was no other definite place to look for him, so I tried my skill upon the stone as I had seen Cleo do.

My first efforts were successful: the door opened and the cold air from the river blew into our faces. Searching about, Rex found a lamp, and lighting it, we stepped out upon the ledge. I turned to see to the door, but it was slowly closing—of its own volition, it seemed. Instantly I drew the conclusion that the stone upon which I stood had something to do

with the phenomenon, and wishing to test the accuracy of the inference, quickly stepped back to the right as I had entered. I was correct; the action of the door was instantly arrested, then it returned to its place and stood open before me, for I was alone, Rex having gone ahead while I was making the experiment of which he was unaware. He was some distance down the ledge, holding the lamp above him to cast the light ahead, and I followed some sixty feet behind. Then he suddenly began to descend, and I knew he had come to the stairway leading to the river. I soon reached him, and he was looking up at me, excitement in his face.

"Look," he whispered, "a boat!"

I followed the direction of his extended arm and saw the prow of a large boat projecting beyond the wall at the foot of the steps.

"Some one has been here since we left," he said; "it may have been Cyrillus."

"Then he is not alone," I said, for upon coming to the water's edge I saw that there were three pairs of oars, and the boat was far too heavy for one man to row against the swift current.

"Shall we take it and go down to the tunnel that leads to the palace dungeons?" he asked.

"Unguided, we could never find the entrance," I replied, "and beside, I have another plan. When I was here once before, after I left you and the fellows in the house above, I learned of another room down here; let us explore here awhile; I am interested in this."

He came up the steps cautiously, and we moved

further along the ledge. It shortly turned at a right angle, and we crossed the river on a single unsupported slab of marble, and immediately descended a flight of steps that were so long that I thought we were considerably lower than the surface of the river, though I was at the time unaware of the depth of the water at any point. Though puzzled to know what manner of place we had now got into, we kept on down a low-roofed corridor that every few paces showed others leading off from it. We had gone ahead in a straight line for several hundred feet when the passage opened into a large chamber, and we paused and looked around. In the very center was a life-sized statue of Minerva, while one entire end was occupied with an elaborate altar of marble and gold, an heroic marble bust of the goddess crowning it. We were in some sort of a religious chamber, but its character we were unable to determine. The walls were a series of regular sized blocks of marble, everyone of which bore an ornament of wrought gold resembling a door-knocker. I stepped to one and gave it a vigorous pull that brought out a long drawer, and Rex came over with the lamp.

"Good Lord!" he ejaculated, while I started back, for before us lay the dead body of a woman wrapped in its grave clothes.

We were in the catacombs, and I now recalled that I had seen no burial ground about the city, and that all the bodies of those slain in the battle had been carried to the Temple of Minerva. They had probably been entombed in these vaults. We were not eager to remain here long, and hurried down the passage

toward the river. We did not reach that point, however, but came instead against a blank wall. We had taken the wrong passage; so we turned, and believing I had hit it right, we entered the first one on our left and proceeded along it. Once more our journey ended against a blank wall, and I was puzzled. Of course sooner or later we could find our way out, but we should probably have to traverse every passage, and of these there seemed to be scores. The longer we walked the more numerous they seemed to grow; they crossed each other every few paces, and everyone ended in a solid wall. We were in a bad plight, and I wondered how long we might have to stay in that clammy vault before a funeral and our deliverance came. Tired out, we sat down to rest and discuss the grim situation.

"We're a fine pair of fools!" exclaimed Rex.

"I don't know who's the bigger," I said moodily.

"My sentiments, shake," he replied, extending his hand which I looked at for a moment and then turned away, for I was in no mood for jest.

"Well," said he, rising, "since I don't think I'm dead yet, I don't propose to stay in this place; I'm going home, are you coming?"

"Oh, certainly; when you find the way. For the present I shall remain here. Take a look around and call me when you have found out how to get out," I replied, sudden fierce and unreasonable anger taking possession of me.

He went down the passage and turned to the right several yards away, the lamplight casting ghoulis shadows on the floor and walls and then leaving me in

complete darkness and a condition of mind eminently in keeping with the gloom of the vaults. I finally lost sound of his sandaled feet, and silence was added to increase my loneliness. In the midst of it I was startled by what I thought to be the unearthly screams of ten thousand ghosts, and sprang to my feet in an alarm no power on earth could have made me feel in the open air, while the cries echoed and reverberated in and out among all those countless passages of the dead. A fear I can never find language to describe took possession of me, and I shook from head to foot, while my body grew damp from that horrible perspiration produced by fright alone at the supernatural. The horrid echoes had scarcely died away when they were intensified by another yell that made me jump from the place and run blindly along the passage toward—I knew not what or where. The utter absurdity of this act soon occurred to me, and I paused, breathing heavily, and listened, and as I stood among those tombs I fancied I heard the awful sounds take the form of my name!

The ghastly thought made me laugh outright, and the echoes of my own voice but served to increase my horror. I had gone mad! I knew it now, and the sounds were only the hallucinations of my shattered intellect. I could see myself slowly dying in that awful charnel house, or in my maniacal despair beating my head against the unresponsive stones. Again I heard the sound, but it was not so loud, and this time I plainly distinguished my name. I had never known that an insane man realizes his condition, and marveled at the new light thrown on science by my

experience. I listened intently, yet fearful of my agony being repeated. Again it came: "'Bardy,' oh, 'Bardy,' " it said, "the lamp is out; where are you?"

"Here," I cried incoherently, and sank to the floor in a semi-faint at the revulsion that took possession of me upon recognizing Rex's voice and realizing that I was sane.

"Where are you?" he again called, the voice roaring in and out among the passages.

"Here I am," I answered; "here by the wall." Then the absurdity of the answer occurred to me, and I again burst out laughing.

"Well, what are you laughing about?" he cried, his voice coming from every direction at once, and slowly dying away in the several distances.

"At my telling you where I was," I shouted, without ceasing.

"Well, I can't find you; why the devil don't you come here?" he cried angrily, and then, his own ludicrous speech affecting him, he changed his tone, and we both laughed together until the very dead themselves must have sat up and listened to our uncanny desecration of their eternal home.

The silence that followed was more terrible than before, and we began our efforts to meet in the dark, every few feet calling each to the other, but the voice I heard seemed like a hundred, and came from every possible direction, even from the floor beneath my feet, and from the low roof that I could reach with my hand. Occasionally I could hear my friend's footsteps, and asked him if he could hear mine.

"Yes," he answered.

"Then let us walk about and try and come together by that sound," I said; "it is more likely to be effective."

We must have walked miles around those damp walls, feeling with our hands and yet never coming in contact. Sometimes I nearly lost the sound of his feet, and then would pause, fearful to move either way. Finally I confessed defeat, and telling him he could keep on moving while I sat still, dropped on to the floor with my back against the narrow home of some fellow creature gone before, and dreamed. Suddenly there came a horrible cry that I knew was not from Rex, and then the sounds of a fierce struggle. I sprang to my feet and ran down the passage, while the sounds grew more confused, and in their midst I heard Rex's voice in a cry whose tones were fraught with more than mortal terror, and which nearly drove me mad at the thought of my uselessness in the dark maze.

"'Bardy!' " he cried, "hurry! there's some horrible thing at my throat trying to kill me!"

I cursed aloud in my helpless rage, and there immediately came to my ears a confused rush of feet, and a body hurled itself against me with such force as to send me sprawling. I arose in an instant, and we came together in a deadly grip, fighting like demons.

"Is it you, Rex?" I gasped, before striking.

No answer came from the other, who was writhing in my grip and making frantic efforts to get at my throat. He tore my beard out by the roots, but I finally got my hand on his windpipe and breathed through my teeth: "Answer, or I'll kill you!"

He wrenched himself loose, and in an instant my eyes bulged from their sockets in the terrible clutch he had secured on my throat, while my head beat like a thousand anvils. I was losing strength and consciousness, when I slipped my hand to my side for my pistol, pressed its muzzle against his chest and pulled the trigger.

There was a dull report and a flash of flame, by the light of which I saw the dying agony of an immense Greek, and my antagonist fell to the floor without a groan. The echoes of the shot still reverberated from wall to wall when there came two more in rapid succession, and then another rush of feet. Knowing not what I was doing, I tried to follow the sound, and had run along the wall a few feet, when a light flashed upon me from two score torches, and I stopped, dazed and panic stricken, in the presence of a funeral procession.

I was in the large chamber, and the priest who led the mourners and the bearers of the body stood and looked at me in amazement for a moment, then four men rushed upon me, and I was a prisoner. Instantly realizing that death would be the probable penalty of such a desecration as my presence there indicated, I concocted an elaborate lie by telling them that Prince Rex, from whom I had become separated, and myself, had overheard a plot to rob the dead of their jewels, and we had followed the thieves through the aqueduct, and then secreting our own boat, had cut theirs adrift and engaged them in these vaults. I said I knew I had killed one man, and I thought my companion had done as well; they would learn by looking him up.

Taking torches, several of the men, compelling me to lead the way, entered the first corridor, calling to Rex to come to the light. We were soon together, when I quickly and softly told him in English what I had told them in Greek.

Where I had shot my antagonist we found the floor strewn with rings, and two bodies lay where Rex had fought, diamonds and other gems covering the floor. The fight had been so fierce and brief that the thieves had been unable to use the daggers they carried. My falsehood was verified, but our captors compelled us to strengthen it by showing them the boat, which we did. They then commanded us to enter it and go whence we came, and never, under pain of death, to repeat our visit to the Temple of Minerva by that entrance, a way made sacred by its use as an exit for those of their dead whom they deposited on the placid bosom of the underground stream to float in peace to their final resting-place in the foaming waters of the Great Pit.

We got into the boat and floated down the stream, eventually coming out as before when the queen and Cleo had been my companions, and from thence made our way back to the Palace.

"Well," said Rex, on the way back through the city, "it don't take much to start a row in this country; wherever you see a head, hit it, Donnybrook Fair style. I wonder what we'll run into next? We've had pretty nearly everything from chariot races and fights for brass gods, to a mill with three ghosts in a graveyard; I'm looking for some fellow to drop on me from a balloon next with a ton of dynamite in his arms."

CHAPTER XIV.

CLEO CONFESSES.

WE returned to the palace and found the people in a state of great excitement. Cyrillus had been caught in the act of entering the queen's private apartments, and upon his exit was seized and thrown into a dungeon, while Phryne, the queen's personal maid, declared that her majesty had been spirited away, and that she herself had seen Cyrillus enter the apartment where she had a moment before been in attendance upon Eurydice, and that although search had been made in every quarter of the palace, the queen's whereabouts was a mystery. Upon being questioned, the young messenger admitted that the queen was in the apartment when he entered, and that he was in attendance upon her at the time, but that her present absence was a secret she desired kept, and he would guard it with his life. He refused to state what had kept him from returning from his parole within the hour, but said that he had kept his word and produced the queen, and that further he refused to speak.

Notwithstanding his production of the queen, he had broken his parole, and the stern laws of the people demanded his life. Kalma, just but inexorable, sentenced the young hero—he was to be beheaded at

noon of the morrow before the Temple of Minerva, and his body cast into the Great Pit where the stream was lost, and where all malefactors were sent. We gathered around in sad conclave. We had learned to love the brave young Greek, and could not bear to see him die for what we considered a virtue rather than a fault—a loyalty to his queen that even death could not shake.

"Surely, gentlemen," quoth the good Kent, "we can devise some means for saving this young man's life. Can we not have the hour of execution postponed? The queen may in the meantime return."

"Shure it's the breakin' of the parole they're goin' to murder him for, and not the queen's absence," interrupted O'Rourke.

"Exactly," said Bangs, "and our interference at this time when the people are in such a state of excitement, would not only do no good, but very likely endanger our own scalps; if he is to be saved, it is only to be effected by strategy."

"Strategy be hanged!" cried the excitable Rex, "they shall not murder that boy unless they do it after they've finished me; he saved my life a little while ago, and it belongs to him. The first man that lays a hand on him is going to answer to me!"

"My young friend's words are well spoken, but ill chosen," said Kent; "that course would mean but the useless sacrifice of additional lives."

"Then they are welcome to mine," replied Rex in surly tones. "Let me tell you all something; I don't mind it now, and I feel it is a sort of *ante-mortem* statement, for I am going to kill the man who raises

his hand against Cyrillus. None of you have guessed it, but I tell you now that I am in love, and the object is unattainable. I love a woman whom I can never have for my wife; I have worshiped her as a thing far above me, an example of God's perfect handiwork. My friends, that woman is the queen—Eurydice."

It was out, and they all looked at him in astonishment—all save I. I knew it long ago, but seeing with unprejudiced eyes I could not agree with him that it was hopeless, but firmly believed that if he but spoke, or gave her the least hint, that she would lay down the imperial scepter for his love.

"I think I can speak for every man here," said Captain Ruggles, "and say that the rare woman for whom you feel this love possesses our esteem above the ordinary, and that there is not a man here who would not sacrifice his life in her defense."

"You young divil!" cried O'Rourke, "I was on the point av fallin' in love with her meself, but you got ahead of me, so good luck to you."

"If you are determined to risk your life, Rex," I said, "let us make some definite plan—perhaps we can outwit them. There are seven of us, and we each are armed with pistols and swords, we can at least make a showing."

"Are you all with me?" asked Rex.

Every voice was raised in hearty affirmation.

"Well, then, I'll suggest a little football plan. We will all gather near the spot where they intend he shall die, and at the preconcerted signal let every man shoot his immediate guard. I will free him and run, while you fellows surround me and keep off the

crowd. There are thirty-six shots in your six pistols, and I will only fire when necessary; we will carry him to the house of Orianus and thence into the aqueduct, escaping down the stream into the open country. Do you like the plan? You see, Cyrillus will play the part of the ball; Bob Bardwell had better play fullback; Dick and I will be the quarters, while Professor Kent and O'Rourke, Ruggles and Bangs finish up the team with rushes and halfbacks; we can run a flying wedge and break through their lines like a mowing machine," he ended in enthusiastic accents, recalling the battlefields of the gridiron at Springfield.

"But there is no boat there, Rex," I said.

"There will be," he answered significantly.

"Then call the game," said Dick, who had not before spoken, "I'm not particularly anxious to die for awhile yet, but a fellow might as well have it over with as to be afraid to go to sleep for fear he'll wake up and find he's been killed."

Even the solemnity of the meeting did not keep back the laugh that this bull caused, but Dick was not dull, though we were never able to guess whether he said these things by accident or purposely—he was always so very solemn when cracking a joke. Rex arose and left the room, and I sauntered into the garden, thinking of the sad termination of my acquaintance with the young messenger, and hoping that fate might bring the queen back in time to give him a full pardon, as she alone could do.

"Robert," said a soft voice at my back.

I turned and saw Cleo standing before me. She

was still disguised as my messenger, but had temporarily discarded her crimson tunic for one of pure white, and wore no ornament or jewel of any kind, a broad white sash girdling her waist and bearing the ever present sword, but upon this occasion even the weapon was an unornamented one of plain gold. She was a beautiful vision, but I loved her, and I could not help feeling how much better I liked to see her in the costume of her sex as she had been at the games in the arena. I looked at her with my heart in my eyes, for she colored as she met my gaze, and then smiled as she had before when I kissed her. I looked at her soft, rounded arms; the full throat; her graceful limbs, the muscles faintly showing through the translucent flesh; her fine shoulders and rounded bosom, and admitted that she was a beautiful animal. I wondered if she were more, and I thought what a sin it would be to take that pure creature into modern civilization and there let her learn that this costume chaste would be considered immodest. And then I answered my question if she were more than a beautiful animal by answering that her very unconsciousness of her boy's dress, displaying as it did her splendid figure, was assurance made doubly sure that her intellectual mind performed its functions on a plane whose level I could never, with my modern training, hope to reach; she was the production of a race of men whose ancestors had laid the foundation stones of classic literature; who had known such art as the moderns were powerless to imitate; whose statues and buildings were our study, and the source of unending praise and wonderment; whose intellectual

development at a remote period of history, had made them the masters of the world. And she was one of these—her mind as finely poised, her thought as pure; she *was* a beautiful animal, but she was also a beautiful woman, with a fine brain exquisitely adjusted, and I felt that I must shield her always against that contamination which is an unquestionable adjunct of modern civilization.

My thoughts had occupied but an instant. There was no one near, and a hedge screened us from the Palace windows. I held out my arms, and she came to me and drew one about her neck, while the other mechanically encircled her waist. I tenderly kissed her.

"I like you better, Robert, since you cut the beard," she said naïvely.

I smiled at her ingenuousness as I recalled that I had been obliged to shave since my encounter with the thief in the crypt.

"Why do you continue to wear this disguise, Cleo?" I asked her.

"To be near you, Robert," she said, to my utter astonishment, and I wondered what the modern coquette would think of that speech.

"I should have to return to Ilyssus if I exposed my sex," she added, "my uncle, with whom I have my home, thinks me a victim of the rebellion, and I am here safe from discovery."

"You like me then so well, Cleo?" I asked gently.

"Better than my life, Robert," was the quiet reply.

There could be but one ending to a romance like this in my own land, and I fancied that as hearts

were probably made on very much the same general plan in this romantic country, there could be but one ending here.

"Would you like to live with me always, Cleo; to be my wife?" I asked.

"Yes, Robert," was the softly spoken answer to this momentous question as she stood with downcast, dreamy eyes.

I had asked the question and it had been answered.

"Then we shall be made man and wife, Cleo?" I asked again.

"If you wish it so," was her reply.

"I do wish it, you beautiful, pure minded woman," I cried in my ecstasy. "I wish it with all my heart," I said, bending and kissing the soft lips again, while her smile of happy contentment was a vision of heaven itself.

"Then we will confess to Venus, and then to the queen upon her return," said my promised bride.

"But the queen may not return, she may be dead," I said.

"She is not dead, yes, she will return," she replied with decision, "now let us go to Venus."

We entered the palace and she led me to the shrine of the goddess, and I, an American, reared among a Christian people, found myself, for love of a woman, making a genuflection before the marble image of a pagan idol. But her prayer was beautiful; so pure and faithful that no follower of a savior, be he Christ, Mohamet, Bhudda or Confucius, could have, knowing her ignorance of other beliefs, called her a lost idolater in her sublime faith in the senseless

image she worshiped. Religion being a matter of faith, hers was the best, and the golden rule being the groundwork of all creeds worth man's attention, she was spotless.

"I have important work before me, Cleo," I told her upon leaving the Palace and going again into the garden. "If I survive it, meet me on the south portico of the Palace six hours after the time set for the execution of Cyrillus, I will be there."

"And I will not fail thee, my Robert," were her parting words as I left her and rejoined my comrades.

I found them elaborating the plan Rex had originated, while the latter and Dick were absent. Thinking it best not to divulge my intended marriage, since Cleo was to retain her secret until the queen returned, or at least until I came for her if I ever got through alive, I entered into their discussion, and we had ere long framed as fine a plan of action as seven men could well invent and carry out.

"Well, fellows," said Rex, as he and Dick entered; "we've had the devil's own time, but we got a boat and rowed her up there, and its at the foot of the steps where we had the fight on the ledge."

"Do you know you landed it at the right place?" I inquired.

"Well, I didn't think I'd forget that place," he rejoined sarcastically, "but since I expected some one to ask me that question, I took the precaution to land, and even went so far as to cross the bridge leading into the crypt under the temple; and if no one goes and gets it in the meantime, that boat, big enough to accommodate ten men if necessary, will be found

awaiting us, or what remains of us, for I don't think we'll all get that far."

The plan, as finally understood, was that Rex and Dick were to get as close to Cyrillus as the guards would permit, while the rest were to form nearby. At a signal from Rex, he was to rush in and cut the boy loose under cover of our fire at six chosen men, when Dick would cover the other side of the rescued one and we all surrounded them and made a bold dash through the lines and up the street to the House of Orianus. Once within the aqueduct, we would have utterly vanished and left the impression on the superstitious minds of our pursuers that some preternatural power had aided us in our escape.

"Are you all sure that you want to do this thing?" said Rex, looking around the circle.

"As a certain statesman once said, 'Phwat are we here for?'" said O'Rourke in tones that provoked a laugh even in the solemnity of the occasion.

"I assure you," said Professor Kent, "that every man can be depended upon, and I shall not hesitate to shoot the man who raises his hand against my friends, or to fight to the death to save an innocent life."

A smile went round, and then we all solemnly shook hands, for none of us expected to see the unbroken circle gathered together again, and I for one, wondered which would go, and how many.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RESCUE.

As the hour of execution drew near, our party had separated and devoted themselves to various occupations to allay any possible suspicion of our intentions. Rex had gone to Prince Kalma and begged for the life of his young messenger, but while the minister was kind in his manner and in deep and sincere sorrow at the course he must pursue, he was obliged to be firm, and assured Rex that the queen herself would not interfere in the case of a broken parole unless some valid excuse were offered. In the present case the prisoner defied his superiors, and refused to speak or in any manner explain his absence, or his entrance to the queen's chambers and her subsequent disappearance. There was nothing to be done but proceed with the execution, and Rex returned to us with jaw set and fire in his eye, though he had controlled his feelings in the presence of the prince.

I had gone into the garden for what I felt would be my last look at the fountain, for even if we were successful in our plan of rescuing Cyrillus, our path could never again lie in this direction, and we should have to escape from the country in the boat mentioned to Dick by his companions whom we had killed in the

treasure chamber, or hide ourselves among the forests until we could construct a vessel to bear us away. I was full of meditation anent the life we had led in this isolated garden spot, of the kind treatment we had received at the hands of the people whose ideas of justice we had planned to thwart, and of Rex's love for the fair Eurydice, when a hand was laid upon my arm, and I turned and looked into the face of the woman I loved.

"Robert," she said, a tremulousness in her rich voice, "I have overheard your plan to rescue Cyrillus; you are about to risk the life you have already given to me, and are going to leave me to become a widow while even still a maid; but we are one, Robert, and where you go I follow; I must go with you, for if you die, it were better I had never seen the light than be left without my lover."

"But, Cleo," I urged, dismayed at the thought of sacrificing her in our scheme, "you will be killed, you cannot——"

"Then I die with you, Robert," she quickly interrupted; "I will be at your side, clad in the amber tunic of state, for if we die in this worthy cause, let us die in fine raiment."

I realized that her will was set, and that it were folly to attempt to alter her decision.

"Then we will each fight for the other's life, Cleo mine," I said, taking her hand and touching my lips reverently to her forehead.

"On my lips, my lover," she said, raising her face; "it may be for the last time."

I kissed her again and again. I had found true

womanhood in this child of a noble race, and she had won my heart's purest emotions; she had taught me that I possessed an immortal soul that communed with her own pure spirit in a holy, sexless love. Then we parted, for but a short time remained before the tragic hour.

A trumpet called the guards, and Cyrillus, smiling as if he were going to a festival appeared, his arms bound behind him at the elbow, his head erect, his manner actually jaunty, while the procession took up its way to the temple. A great concourse of people had gathered in the square before the building, and upon the appearance of the young messenger there was a vast murmur of voices that smote my ears with some sense of hope that we seven and Cleo were not the boy's only friends, and that we might not find the opposition to the rescue a unit among the multitude.

Immediately before the statue of the goddess at the entrance of the Temple, was an immense block of marble approached by long flights of steps from three sides, the one next the Temple being a vertical rise to the top of the block. This stone was used as the altar for sacrifices, and for the rare executions that had taken place. In parenthesis it may be said that these sacrifices were never human.

Cyrillus was led up the steps opposite the Temple, and stood erect and haughty twenty feet above the immense crowd, while a guard was stationed at each corner of the block, the executioner, bearing an immense sword, posed before the stone on the step below.

A procession of priests started up the steps to give

the prisoner final courage, but the young hero needed not their rites, he was the impersonation of a young lion who knows not fear. Some one plucked me by the arm, and I turned quickly to see Cleo beside me. She was clad in her yellow court dress, and seemed to have outdone herself in embellishing her costume with jewels, for she wore more than at the *fête*. Beside the splendid sword with its flashing hilt of gems, she had stuck two large, bejeweled daggers crosswise in her sash and bound her hair with a golden ampyx. She was perfectly gorgeous, but I absorbed these details in an instant, for the priests were mounting the steps at the foot of which we stood, and I heard a shrill whistle from the left, and at the same instant saw Dick dash to the rear of the block while Rex flew up the steps. I drew my pistol, and with its crack heard a volley, and the executioner and four guards fell dead, two of the latter falling over the altar, while Rex had reached the top, cut the thongs binding the prisoner, and fairly pushed him over the edge of the stone, himself following in a flying leap.

The shock was so startling that the people stood as if dazed, while I, with Cleo at my side, and Kent, Ruggles, Bangs and O'Rourke in a bunch behind me, made a rush for the point behind the altar. Rex had made a slight alteration in the plan, and Dick had run behind the stone and actually caught the boy as he had jumped down those twenty feet, for he and Rex were waiting for us, and forming our flying wedge as arranged, and with swords slashing the air, we made a rush across the plaza, the crowd falling away from us, and had gained a hundred yards without having to kill

another man. But by this time the plan had dawned upon the soldiers, and they came rushing after us like greyhounds, catching up at the beginning of the Street of the Aqueduct, and obliging us to turn and fire upon them. Cleo was forced into Rex's place and personally conducted Cyrillus, while he and Dick turned and faced the enemy with us, all the while retreating as fast as possible. At every volley we fired from five to seven men fell, and we had so timed our fire that some were reloading while others emptied their weapons. But the enemy increased as we proceeded, and ere we had covered half the distance to the House of Orianus, we were fighting a hand to hand battle against heavy odds while guarding every opening to our charges. Down the street we fought, our pistols checking the horde of bloodthirsty men, while the ringing blows as swords clashed together made a most martial music. So fast did our swords fly, so steady was the crack of the pistols and the accompanying death rate of the enemy, that they began to show signs of weakening. I judged that more than a hundred men had fallen and we had none of us received more than a few scratches.

One fellow came near to making an end of me while I was reloading, the point of his sword striking me in the left temple and cutting straight down past my eye and through my cheek and jaw, but he never again raised his weapon, for my sword happened just at that moment to run through his heart, and the fellow who sprang into his place received a bullet between the eyes through the courtesy of the good Kent, who was fighting as earnestly and coolly as if he had done

nothing else all his life long. Ruggles, with his flowing beard and shaggy head, looked like a viking as he slashed down the enemy, while O'Rourke, never so happy as when in the element of his race, was yelling like a demon and hurling anathemas at the foe in the richest of brogues.

"Come on, ye divils!" he cried, making a vicious cut at a bold leader and nearly beheading him; "come on, an' we'll show ye the stuff they make men out av! Ye could do betther fightin' with a pair av breeches on than in thim petticoats!"

He utterly ignored the fact that he was himself clad in the common costume of the country, and that his bare bald head and hairy legs made a spectacle as he danced, shouted and fought, that were ludicrous even in the presence of death, and I could not help smiling at his antics, even as the fiends fought us down the street. Ruggles and Bangs fought in grim silence, and made every shot and stroke count. The enemy were thickest at their quarter, and Bangs suddenly jumped forward and struck right and left among them. He had cut down three men, and missing a fourth, fell forward with the force of the blow. In an instant a sword descended directly for his neck and his head would have fallen, but Ruggles' own sword interposed and saved him. Both were by this move placed at the enemy's mercy, and several rushed upon them.

Then followed an act of bravery I can never forget. O'Rourke, still yelling like a wild man, rushed into the breach, and so violent was his onslaught that he completely stampeded them, but not without a bad thrust that went clear through the thick of his shoul-

der, and from which the blood poured in torrents, drenching his tunic and the street, but I had the satisfaction of ending the career of the man who gave the blow. His wound seemed but to make him fight the harder, and the battle was carried down the street as fast as we could retreat.

"We are nearly there," called Cleo, and the glad tidings came none too soon, for the hard fighting was telling upon us all, and I began to feel a dizziness from my wound and the violence of our defense, while there was no perceptible diminution in our enemy's strength or determination to annihilate us.

"Here is the place," cried Rex, and at the cry stopped before a door into which Cleo and Cyrillus had retreated.

We backed in as fast as possible, contending every inch of the way, and when all were in, turned and ran into the peristyle. Once inside, we stood on each side of the doorway, and as the pursuers came rushing through, cut them down until dead men were piled to the doortop, completely choking the entrance. It was a repetition of Horatius at the Bridge, and while their fellows were dragging them away we again turned and followed Cleo and the boy into the chamber off the court. In an instant she had opened the secret door, and we filed rapidly through into the tunnel even as the mob of bloodthirsty men poured through the cleared doorway, the slab swung shut, and as the last crack closed we heard loud exclamations of mingled amazement and rage as they found that their quarry had vanished into thin air. Then came silence, and then a subdued murmur through the thick walls of our

haven, and we knew that this murmur meant a storm of demoniac rage from our pursuers, while we moved along the ledge, guided by a lamp which Cleo had hastily caught up in the outer chamber, and was now holding above her head as she led the way.

The sounds grew fainter and fainter as we proceeded, and when we had reached the water's edge there was naught that broke the eternal silence of the gloomy place save the rush of the river within the marble walls.

"I think there are a surprised lot of men out there," said Rex.

"Is it possible that no one knows of this place?" inquired Kent.

"The secret of its existence died with the father of the—the—the young man who guided us here," I answered, very nearly using the feminine gender in speaking of Cleo.

"And what is the next move?" asked Major Bangs; "are any of you wounded?"

Neither O'Rourke nor myself was so seriously hurt but that we could proceed, and Rex suggested that we take to the boat without delay. We had been speaking in English, and Cleo here called to know what we were saying, whereupon I made profuse apologies for our unintentional rudeness, and explained to her all that had been said:

"I think I can suggest a better plan for the present," she said, when I had finished; "we are all fatigued from the work of the past hour, and nothing can be gained by hurrying, for if we remain in hiding for a time we will be given up, while we can at any

time escape by way of the river. Let us hide the boat and rest for a time. I know of a chamber wherein the rites of a secret organization used to be held, and we can rest there in safety as long as we wish."

We agreed that rest would not come amiss, and dragging the boat ashore, we carried it along the ledge, following Cleo, until stopped by a blank wall. Here she went through a mysterious pressing of various stones until one turned, and we entered a commodious chamber, bringing in the boat.

The room was comfortably furnished with a large table over which swung a lamp, and a broad divan running around the four sides, with rugs and pillows in profusion. There was not a window anywhere, but I presently discovered the scheme of ventilation by looking beneath the divan, for at every two feet on one side was a broad grating leading to the channel of the river.

"When we need food it can easily be secured by entering the city in disguise," said Cleo.

"And I must beg that I be allowed to take that task upon myself," spoke up Cyrillus; "you have all risked your lives a hundred times for me, and I owe you this much."

"Just so, my young friend," answered Rex; "we have all risked our lives for yours, and we don't propose to have you go right out and throw it away, if you go, you shall not go alone—I'll go with you. I have some business out there myself as soon as the excitement dies down a little."

The others were too fatigued to enter into the argument; beside, food was not necessary for awhile.

After I had insisted that O'Rourke's wound be dressed first, Cleo came with a jar of water, and while bathing and binding the ugly gash in my cheek with her soft, cool fingers, spoke to me in those loving tones and endearing terms known to and held so precious by lovers the world over. Gradually, one by one stretched himself out, and a chorus of regular breathing from all save Cleo and Cyrillus, assured me, as I lost consciousness, that the weary warriors had fallen asleep.

CHAPTER XVI.

MISFORTUNE AGAIN.

SEVERAL hours must have elapsed while we slept, but events had passed in such rapid succession that I had not looked at my watch upon entering the chamber, and now had no means of determining with any degree of exactness how long we had been there. My watch simply informed me that it was six o'clock, but whether that would mean six o'clock in the morning at home, or six o'clock in the evening, I did not know. In fact, it made no difference, for the sun had been shining constantly while we had been here, and I merely wound the watch in order to note the general flight of time. It served no other purpose; we ate when we were hungry, and slept when we were tired. At all events it was six o'clock, and my companions were all awake and sitting around talking. Rex wanted to go out for food, and was so insistent in wishing to go with Cyrillus, that I at once divined that the heart of the young lover was pining for the queen, and that a search for her was a part of his object. Cyrillus said that he could readily secure food, and that he could so disguise himself that he would never be detected.

"Then listen to this plan," I said, "let Rex and

Cyrillus go into the city on their errand, and since the main object now is the treasure, I suggest that the rest of us go and remove it from the secret vault into the tunnel at the water's edge, so that there will be no delay in loading it into the boat when we are finally ready to take it with us. Murdock and all the others save my messenger and myself can be taken there to move it, while we two continue on down the river to the open country and reconnoiter. When we have seen how things look on the outside world, Cleo and I will return for the others and all will meet here upon the return of Rex and Cyrillus."

The suggestion met with approval, and we at once began making preparations for our departure. Cleo assisted Cyrillus in making a disguise, and when she had finished with his face his dearest friend would never have known him. She then went to Rex, and in three minutes he had grown twenty years older and was tanned as dark as a Mexican *peon*. The change in his appearance actually startled me, and the longer I looked at him in an endeavor to recognize him, the less I found myself able to recall his real features, until it was as if another person had appeared and taken his place. She then redressed my wound, and under her guidance, Rex and his companion started for the door leading to the House of Orianus. I followed them, a feeling of anxiety for her safety leading me on, and it was I who opened the door, and with ready pistol stepped through first. The room was quite vacant, and we crossed it to the court and then saw them safely on the street and making toward the Palace. Cleo and I then returned to

the others, and carrying the boat to the river, launched it, and all jumping in, we pushed off and plied the oars with the current, for time was now an object, and the stream not rapid enough for our purpose. The three pairs of oars soon pulled us to the entrance to the dungeons, and Cleo opened the way while we moored the boat and jumped ashore.

"Every man have a weapon ready," I said, "we have had trouble before in this place."

Cleo endeavored to lead the way, but I drew her back and placed myself at the head of the column as we filed along the gloomy corridor. I breathed easier when we all stood in the chamber over the treasure room, and Cleo opened the way for our descent, for the corridor through which we had come was free of access to any who had occasion to enter the dungeons, and I more than half expected that we should have another fight on our hands before reaching our destination. But we all filed down without incident, and leaving Murdock, who had helped us secrete the jewels, in charge of operations, and not waiting to hear the last of the exclamations of wonder that burst from our friends at their first sight of the immense pile of gold bricks, Cleo and I at once took our departure for the boat and river. Just as we were about to push off she sprang up and jumped ashore.

"We did not give them the secret for the opening of the door from the inside," she said, "I will run and tell them;" and before I could object, or offer to go in her stead, she was off, and I had nothing to do but sit in the boat and await her return.

I sat for some minutes and she did not come. I

began to grow anxious, and fearful lest she had met with some mishap, sprang ashore and hurried along the tunnel. I did not meet her on the way back as I had more than half-expected and hoped, and with a thumping heart, burst into the last chamber, when a sight met my eyes that made a madman of me for the time.

Lying prone upon the floor were two bleeding bodies, and one was my beloved Cleo, while standing above them were two of the palace guards. Their backs were toward me, and without a sound I ran my sword clear through the body of one, who fell directly across Cleo, and at once gave combat to the other. The assault took him completely off his guard and the fight was brief. Then I stooped and dragged the fellow off my darling and fell on my knees beside her. A great gash had opened her scalp from forehead nearly to crown, and the glorious black hair was soaked with her life's blood. I put my face against hers and could feel that she had not yet grown cold in death. With one bound I had reached the secret spring and opened the door. Calling to the others, I ran back and picking her up in my arms, flew down the steps into the treasure room, crying to Dick to go up and bring down the three bodies and throw them into the river. In a trice I had secured a jug of water, and was bathing the cruel wound and talking to her who could not hear me.

"Is the young man badly injured?" asked Kent.

I turned upon him like a lion.

"Young man?" I fairly shrieked; "Badly injured? You fool! Can't you see it's a woman, and she is

probably dead; yes, a woman, and the woman I love. My God!"

I can remember to this day that scene in all its awfulness. The last words came from me in a moan, and I threw myself across her bosom in a wild, uncontrollable paroxysm of grief. She was the only thing I had in all the world, and that she should be taken from me by murder drove me insane.

"Where are they?" I cried, springing up and with drawn sword rushing up the steps. I could have fought the whole city, and wanted to. Finally they had to control me by force, and though I remember every detail yet I know I was for the time being a raving maniac, utterly irresponsible. But my ravings eventually exhausted me and I became more reasonable. Kent, with two or three of the others, came over to where I sat, and tried to calm me.

"She is not dead," I heard him say; "but merely stunned from the force of the blow and weak from loss of blood. The wound is merely a bad scalp one and she will soon recover, even now she is conscious."

The words came to me from out of a hell of dark despair like a shaft of light from heaven, and restored my sanity. I rose very quietly and they led me to her side. She smiled feebly and I dropped beside her and took her hand.

"Cleo," I said, "your secret is out—I told them."

"As you wish, Robert mine," she said softly.

I turned to them. "My friends," I said, speaking in Greek so she could understand, "the woman before us is Cleo Andromeda, my promised wife. She was the one chosen by the rebels to become their queen,

and for that purpose attended the games in Athenia. But when she had seen our beloved Eurydice, her heart went out to the gentle queen, and she resolved to desert her fellows in their error. When Murdock had the fight in the House of Orianus, and we came to his aid, she was in the court and made me her prisoner. She then swore to me eternal fidelity, and I to her. She assumed the disguise of a boy as you see her, that she might better aid the queen, and she chose me as her companion, probably for the same reason that I preferred her. She gave us the secret of this treasure chamber. I professed a love I had felt since I first saw her at the games, and we are promised man and wife. Our marriage will take place as soon as we can see the queen and obtain the sanction she is certain to give."

When I had finished, I stooped, and before all of them, kissed her. She had recovered from the shock of the blow, and sitting up, told her story.

"I was returning, as Robert knows, to acquaint my friends here with the secret of the stone from the inside, and had entered the chamber above and stood on the stone itself, when a terrible blow fell on my head, knocking me down. I had just bent forward at the time or it would have cloven my head, but as it was, I did not at once lose consciousness, but sprang to my feet and found three men confronting me. In the unequal fight that followed I killed one, but dizziness overcame me in time to save my life, and I fainted, I suppose they judged me dead, for Robert says he found them standing above and gloating over me. Then my champion killed the other two," she ended,

smiling sweetly and extending to me her hand. Her head bandaged with the white scarf I had had bound about my waist, made her look more than ever like an Amazon, her richly jewelled amber tunic heightening the effect.

We were overwhelmed with congratulations from the staunch friends of both, who renewed their pledges on the spot. Cleo's wound was giving her great pain, and we all began on the jars of jewels, and soon had them ranged against the wall at the river end of the tunnel, ready to be placed in the boat the moment we were in readiness for them. Coming out we swung the door into place, and each taking a pocketful of gold coin for use in an emergency, ascended the steps, closed the slab, and were at once on our way down the corridor to the river. So many unforeseen things had occurred that I felt rather surprised than otherwise when I saw the boat still where we had left it. I placed the wounded girl among a pile of cushions which I had caught up in a chamber off the corridor, and we pushed off and began our weary pull against the current. After half an hour's work I could appreciate Rex's remark about having "the devil's own time" getting the boat there originally, for it was a hard pull for three men, and he and Dick had done it alone. But there is an end to all things, and we finally had the satisfaction of arriving at the spot that, even in this place of monotonous sameness, had grown familiar, and lifting the craft from the water, we carried it and Cleo up the steps and into the secret chamber, she protesting, but we hanging on notwithstanding.

Rex and Cyrillus had not returned, but since the accident to Cleo had hastened us, we were not alarmed as yet. First making her comfortable, I went forth to take an observation, passing along the ledge until I reached the door, opening this and entering the room in the House of Orianus. A faint light came from the courtyard, and I reasoned that it must be the evening hour and the sun have passed halfway around since we had entered after the running fight, for at that time the light had been strong enough to see clearly into every corner, while now merely a pathway was distinguishable. I quickly crossed the room and courtyard and crept down the passage leading to the street. I peered around the edge of the doorway, and was almost knocked down by three men, one of whom rushed past me, while the others would have followed, had not a sword which flashed over my shoulder, and pointed at their breasts, barred them.

"Get back, Bob!" cried a familiar voice, and I had not otherwise have known who the man behind me was, so perfect had been Rex's disguise, and so quickly had he gone past me.

Two swords in front of me accelerated my speed, and I followed his advice with alacrity, at the same time drawing my own blade.

"Now retreat," said Rex, "there are a hundred more close behind these; they have captured Cyrillus, and taken him to the Palace."

We retreated before the two men, who were none too eager to follow, and soon the door of the aqueduct closed upon us and we were safe. In the chamber Rex hurriedly told us the details.

"Cyrillus and I went up the street toward the palace, stopping to buy fruit and bread, and were pretty well loaded down, when some one cried out that Cyrillus was the messenger who had escaped execution, and before I knew it we were both seized and bound. Then they hurried us along toward the palace, but presently released me as having nothing to do with the boy. You did a good piece of work, Master Cleo, when you made my face up with your paints."

There was an audible smile at this, and we had to interrupt him long enough to explain that Cleo was not a boy, and gave him an account of her fight.

"Well, I'll be eternally hanged!" he cried. "So you're a girl, are you? *Miss Cleo*, soon to become *Mrs. Robert Bardwell*? Well, shoot me for a dodo, but I'd sooner have believed Cyrillus was a girl than *you*! He looks more like one. Say, don't you know I'm awfully sorry about your head, *Miss Cleo*, but if girls will be boys, why their troubles begin, you know. And, by Jove!" he added, reflectively, "what a lot of fools we are! *Cleo* is a feminine name and we never thought of it!" Then he said; "I wish I could congratulate you upon your approaching marriage but you see I've known *Bob Bardwell* for years and I'm a conscientious man."

"None o' your chaffin' there now me boy; go on with your own tale," cried O'Rourke, while we all, including Cleo, who gathered nearly all his rather tangled Greek, laughed at the boy who would have given his head for any one of us at the moment, and who was specially fond of me.

"Well," he began again, "when they set me loose I followed the crowd, and they simply turned the poor little chap over to the guards, who chucked him into that dungeon and came away and left him. I had a pocketful of gold, and I bribed a guard to let me speak to him for a moment. If the queen had been there I'd have gone straight to her, but she hasn't been found yet."

He said these last words in such a tone that I knew it hurt him more than he cared to pretend.

"So the sentry gobbled the gold, and I went into the dungeon to hunt up Cyrillus. He was standing in a cell, and I threw the light of the torch that had been given me upon him. Well, sir, he actually grinned when he saw me. I never saw such nerve! You couldn't scare that boy with anything on earth. He knew his time had come, and still he smiled. The bars of his cell are gold, and just for the fun of the thing I took hold of one to see how solid it was. I nearly fainted with delight at what followed. The bar bent, and I pulled it out. You see, they must have forgotten to harden them, or had put wrong ones there, and they were as soft as pewter, so I just pulled out the whole batch and Cyrillus and I started home. We got across the garden and halfway here before we were noticed, and then they came down on us like a nest of hornets. We nearly got here, but Cyrillus fell and they caught him, and knowing I could not whip a hundred men, I was coming back here and get the crowd, when I ran into Bob at the door. That's the whole story, and now whenever you are ready we will go back and get the boy. I lost all the stuff I

had to eat, and you must be a pretty hungry lot. I'm going out for some fruit for Miss Cleo."

He said this as if there was not a doubt of our springing to the rescue on the instant, and indeed there was not, though we were all pretty badly used up; and he mentioned going for fruit for Cleo, as if it were a stroll down Fifth Avenue on a pleasant afternoon. But then, that was Rex. When he was at Yale he used to spend his last cent for crysanthemums for the girls, at a dollar apiece, and then smoke his room-mate's tobacco, and when the same room-mate—who was not as well off in this world's goods as Rex—needed anything very much that he could not afford, that very thing would come from some mysterious friend, and Rex would declare that ale and tobacco always did effect his studying, and the crowd would not see him downtown for two weeks. That again was Rex.

But Cyrillus must be saved if it took every man of us. Only, I did not propose to allow Cleo to leave her couch, and since she knew the place like a book, and could not hold her head up, she made a very feeble show of resistance at the edict. I resolved to secure her some fruit to guard against fever, and went boldly out into the street and mingled with the people. Several, overcurious, looked at my bandaged head, but I met others in like condition and was probably taken as they were to be one of the soldiers who had been engaged a few hours before in the running fight against the rescuers of Cyrillus. I got an armful of fruit and a jug of wine and returned laden to my loved one. She gave me a smile of welcome,

and I reported the streets rather quiet. We took an extra hitch in our belts, saw to our hidden pistols, felt of our swords and then held a council of war.

We decided to leave Kent, Ruggles and O'Rourke at the rendezvous with Cleo while Dick, Rex, Bangs and I in the best disguises we could assume went after the boy. Four men would not be apt to create suspicion while seven might. A hearty farewell all around and our party started on the perilous journey. I lagged behind for a moment, stepped to the couch of the courageous sufferer, whispered in her ear a word of love pressed my lips to hers and we parted.

I heard the door close behind me; we were once more about to face death for the sake of our beloved young comrade.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE QUEEN'S GARDEN.

UPON mingling with the people in the city, we found the belief generally prevalent that our escape had been effected through the assistance of the gods, for no one knew of any exit from the long deserted House of Orianus save the open one into the street, and there were crowds of people coming and going to and from the temple, and offering up sacrifices to propitiate the inexplicable anger of the deities. That their prayer had in a measure been effective, they were convinced, else the herald Cyrillus would not have been delivered over to them. Yet they feared to execute him, the priests having gone so far as to forbid it until they were more reasonably certain that the gods justified the act. Some had gone so far as to affirm that the strangers were accompanied by several of the gods incognito, and that the youth in yellow who had borne away the condemned man was Hermes, the messenger of the gods, for no man could have done the like, nor could mere men have fought as had the rescuers. There was no doubt that they were in a state of much perturbation over the affair, and our final disappearance in an unoccupied house had created a solemn impression on their minds. I believe now,

although I did not possess the courage for the experiment then, that if we had suddenly appeared and announced ourselves gods in disguise, we would have so terrified them that we would have had the whole city at our feet on the instant.

Our object was to repair directly to the palace and if the queen had reappeared, to present our case to her, for I believed that her regard for Rex would save us all and release Cyrillus, and with that end in view we proceeded leisurely along the way, stopping occasionally where a throng of people had gathered, and mingling with them in the boldest fashion. At one place near the Palace a very large crowd had collected, and more were being added to it every moment, while the murmur of voices that we heard at first, soon assumed another tone, and they began shouting for joy. The rhythm was that the queen had returned, and that instead of having been spirited away she had been at her private shrine giving thanks for the blessings that had been bestowed upon her people. She did not know that she had been missed, and had forthwith given orders that her faithful messenger be released and pardoned. Hearing these things, we hurried to the palace, where we further learned that the queen was highly indignant that her Minister Kalma should insist upon her messenger making public what she would not have known, and had commanded that the faithful boy be molested no further. We were overjoyed at the news, and when we heard that she had praised his rescuers, our delight was unbounded. But we were not ready to disclose ourselves until her mood had been finally tested

under the magic spell of love, and with this in view, we entered the palace grounds and bade the guards inform her majesty that four friends from Ilyssus had come to speak with her whom they all loved to call queen. Word came to admit us at once, and we were conducted into her presence in the smaller of the two state reception rooms.

She was seated in a large chair facing the open doorway and the inner garden, a cool fountain throwing its spray high among the tree ferns, while silver fishes sported in its crystal depths. Her reception of us was most cordial, and I observed that she regarded us intently as I made our speech, which I concocted on the spur of the moment, and which was merely an assurance that Ilyssus deplored the rebelliousness of its people, and that they were now more loyal than ever before to their queen. She was a very superior woman, and I half-believed she had penetrated our disguise. When, therefore, we were given the liberty of the palace, and she stated that she wished to hold a further interview with Rex in private, I did not wander far, but kept my eyes open for any treacherous move.

Dick and Bangs threw themselves on the grass near the fountain, while I moved about, ever on the alert, and finding a quiet nook where I could command a full view of that part of the palace where Eurydice sat with Rex, sat down and awaited his coming. A single heavy shrub screened me on the one side, while the other was entirely open, the lawn sloping gently to a miniature lake in the center of which was a fairy-like island approached by a graceful marble bridge.

Fancying this latter to be a better point of view, I strolled carelessly over there and was soon reassured by the extremely friendly manner of the queen toward Rex that my suspicions were unwarranted, whereupon I became deeply interested in the aquatic birds that swam about at the edge of the island. My mind was, however, busy with her whom I had left wounded in our subterranean stronghold, and at such times the flight of time is not recognized. I was presently startled from my preoccupation by the sound of voices, and glancing hastily up, saw none other than Rex and the queen strolling side by side, and I had barely time to spring behind a tree fern when they stepped upon the bridge leading to the island. There was but the one approach, and I could not escape. It may have been that my own secret thoughts were so intense that I fancied them being intruded upon, and it may have been one of those strange fatalities for which there is no solution, but the fact remains that I was hidden behind a fern-tree not ten feet away from the seat which they came directly to and took, while their lowest conversational tones were clearly audible to me. His first words told me that her keen eyes had penetrated our secret.

"It may be that we shall not meet again," Rex was saying, "and it is that that gives me the courage that I have not until now possessed. We came into your fair land strangers, and were received as friends. We have repaid your friendship, your majesty, by killing your soldiers and by breaking your laws. We offered but the one excuse that our ideas of justice differed from yours, yet for this offense you magnanimously

forgave us. There is not a man among my friends who would not at any time lay down his life in defense of yours; there never will come the time when my life is not yours upon demand; I shall never go to rest that my last thoughts are not of the woman whose queenliness rises above the throne upon which she sits; there will never be an hour that I do not think of the fairest blossom that has ever been wafted across the pathway of my life. And yet—and yet—yet, your majesty, there will never come the hour when I cease to regret that fate brought me to your doors.”

Eurydice started and looked strangely at him.

“Your words are strange, my friend Rex;” she said, in accents as silvery as the plash of the fountain.

“Yes, strange;” he answered, in tones subdued, “I am but a young man beginning life; reared among a people who are two thousand years in advance of you here, and I cannot speak in the tongue my heart prompts me to use with you, but my temerity is not sufficient to tempt me to tell you all.”

He seemed to be unable to proceed, and she said; “I wish to know your whole heart, friend Rex; tell me why it is that if you care so much for me that you should wish to leave me.”

I was amused. In two thousand years women had not made the slightest progress in the one great art common to all nature, all races, all climes, and this representative of the nation of Homer was leading him on in the same fashion one would expect at Newport or on Murray Hill.

“You would know why I wish to leave you?” he asked, as if to gain time.

"Yes; why do you not end your days here in Athenia?" she queried.

"Because—because I love a woman whom I dare not approach with the question whose answer would mean my lifelong happiness or despair," he said.

"You love, and dare not speak!" she cried.

"I dare not because of her rank;" he said.

"Love is the great leveler," she returned, "man honors a woman in confessing his love."

"Your majesty has probably never loved," he replied, "else she would not be still a maid."

"Loved I, or loved I not, I still should be a maid," she replied, "the queens of Athenia are sworn to a life of celibacy. The penalty is death by fire; to show the slightest preference for one man above another is held equivalent to the breaking of the coronation vow. It is a cruel law; ah, none know it better than I," she ended, as if speaking to herself, while now it was revealed to me why she had exercised so much caution.

"If *that* is the law, then I shall hurry my departure," cried Rex, "for my love means death to the woman who has won it!"

"What do you mean, Prince Rex?" she cried, in frightened tones, and starting in alarm from her seat beside him.

He put out a hand, and I could see her place her own in it, while she looked cautiously around, and then he said; "I *must* tell you. I mean that the woman I love is yourself, Eurydice."

"Hush!" she cried in actual alarm.

"I will not risk thy life my queen; try again to forgive the most grievous wrong I have yet done you."

I drew my pistol and quickly covered the space before them; if any prying eye interrupted this love scene I should be a murderer.

"You have done no wrong; it is right that I should hear this highest honor you can confer because it is tribute paid to the woman, not homage done the queen," she said.

"Then you are not angry?" he cried.

"No, I am happy;" she said, looking straight at him, and braving detection for the look.

"You are happy because I love you?" he asked in a strange tone.

"Yes," was her only response.

"Then you—then—oh, Eurydice, is it true?"

"Yes," she said, so quietly that I scarcely caught the words.

"True that—that—that you love me?" he asked, trembling with emotion.

"Yes, true, my prince," were her words.

"Oh, Eurydice!" he cried, dropping to one knee beside her and looking up into her face, his own so enraptured that he looked a young god before her.

She gently raised him, and then his arms opened and the young queen lay against his broad chest, and he bent his head in that ecstasy that is alone known to lovers, while I cursed my luck for bringing me there, and looked in the other direction.

"This is dangerous," he said, after a long pause.

"It does not matter; I am willing to die—now," she said, in a voice I would not have known, so changed was it, so vibrant with the emotion of loving.

"But now is the time you shall not die!" he cried.

"Then I cannot remain here," she said, "but death is welcome when this is the end, for the days have been long, my Rex, and now at last has happiness come, welcome then, O death!"

"Listen, Eurydice, would you give up all these for love and me?" he asked, describing an arc with his free arm.

"A thousand times, my Rex," she answered.

"Then will you fly with me?"

"Yes;" was all she said.

"And have you loved me long, Eurydice?" he asked, eager to hear the words again.

"Since the day when first we looked into each other's eyes, my love."

"And dared not betray it?"

"No."

"And I would have gone away without you," he said.

"No, I should have gone, or had you detained; we Greeks are not easily thwarted," she replied, smiling up at him from her place on his shoulder.

"Do you know the city well?" he asked, thinking of the elopement.

"Perfectly," she answered.

"Then meet me in three hours from this at the lower end of the aqueduct; no one would venture to suspect the queen, and we will fly together, I know a secret way."

"I will come in disguise," she said, "and when we meet will say 'the queen's garden,' you will then know 'tis I."

"My queen always," he said, fervently; "and now I

must go and make ready. You have changed the whole color of my life, Eurydice, may every blessing be ours!"

He stooped and kissed her, then leaving her, crossed the bridge and walked rapidly away. In a moment she arose and followed his example, and I was left alone with my thoughts. Presently I escaped from the island, and not finding my comrades in the grounds, struck out for the rendezvous, for I wanted to see Rex, but more than this, I wanted to see Cleo.

Arriving at the house, I found that Rex and the others had thought that I must have come on ahead. Rex was telling them about the scene in the garden—though suppressing details—and wanted to rush right off and capture his love now and not await the tedious flight of time. I did not acquaint him with the fact that I had heard it all before; some things are better left untold. Cleo was improving, and so was my own wound. The air possessed a wonderful effect as a restorative, and we began to make final and definite plans for our escape from the country. Dick produced his piece of papyrus, and Cleo soon deciphered it and decided that the plan and writing affirmed that a large vessel was lying somewhere near the Falls of the Gods, and we concluded to strike for that point and endeavor to find it. If this proved fortunate, we would make straight for the current between the walls of ice and head for Cape Horn.

We possessed a compass, and knew the direction, while Ruggles was a master navigator. We would carry as much of the treasure as possible, and it must be remembered that every jar was a splendid

fortune. Every detail of our moves having been laid out, we awaited with impatience the signal. Cyrillus had not yet returned, but now that the queen had pardoned him, we looked for him momentarily. Our party, including Cleo and Eurydice, would make ten people, and we made our commissary calculations in accordance. There was no better way to kill the intervening time than in sleep, and with that end in view, I lay down near enough to be of service to Cleo, and closed my eyes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CYRILLUS LOST FOREVER.

THE unusual fatigue, the almost constant excitement, the fighting, anxiety for Cleo, and a hundred other things had thrown me into a deep sleep, and it was not until Cleo came and touched me that I awoke and found that little more than an hour remained before the time Rex had set for meeting Eurydice at the mouth of the tunnel.

"He cannot still be imprisoned," I said, "for the queen ordered him released hours ago; some misfortune must have befallen him, or he would have joined us."

"That's the very thing I was thinkin', Bardwell," said O'Rourke, from where he sat on the other side of the room with a pipe between his teeth, pouring clouds of strong tobacco smoke toward the ceiling, "and that boy has got to be found if it takes the lasht leg of P. O'Rourke, Captain and Brevet Major U. S. A. late of Dublin, be Jinks!"

"Good boy!" cried Rex; "but only hang on to your determination for an hour or two longer and you may have a chance to lose that leg for I'm going back after him, and I should like your company captain."

"You shall have it me boy; for I can't stand losin'

that handsome chap, be Jinks!" answered O'Rourke. He had made a feeble effort out of courtesy toward Cleo, to speak in Greek as much as possible, but in moments of extreme interest he found it impossible to use a single word of her tongue, and confined himself to a rich Celto-English. This he was now using, and he went on, following up the trend of thought; "I'll never to me dyin' day get over the day I first saw that boy, and oh, the beautiful shape av him! Do you mind the time, 'Bardy'?"

"Yes, I do indeed," I answered, laughing at the memory.

"Well, boys; the two o' them came over to where we were all lyin' around the temple in the valley over beyond that they call Ilyssus, and when they stretched themselves out on the grass I couldn't take me eyes off them an' I says quiet like to Rex an' 'Bardy,' 'here boys' I says 'there's two pair o' clean cut legs for you; ain't they beautiful?' An' now it's turned out that one o' them—beggin' 'Bardy's' pardon for mentionin' it, but it's too good to keep—its turned out that one o' them was a girl. Small wonder they made me stare me eyes out be Jinks!"

I joined the others in the merriment the speech elicited, and Cleo looked at me inquiringly.

"He was speaking of how you deceived him on the day you came to us in Ilyssus, dear," I explained, and she smiled at the recollection, and at the success with which she had continued the deception.

It was time we took our departure, but before leaving our secret resting-place for what we supposed would be the last time, we all went out with Rex and

O'Rourke, intending to see them safely started on their hazardous undertaking. Opening the door leading into the chamber from the ledge, we stepped into the room one at a time. It was vacant, and bidding them godspeed, we tarried for a moment while they went forth. When they had gone from sight in the atrium, we turned toward the door once more, leaving them to meet us at the opening of the aqueduct, and trusting to their disguises to see them safely through. We were just closing the door when a shout came to our ears, we heard rapid footsteps, and our two friends came running back, Cyrillus between them.

It was now with gladdened hearts that we started forth, the boy having come to us the moment he had been released, which, he said, was but a short time before.

Our personal effects consisted of the scant, though rich, wardrobe upon our backs, and our rifles at the house of Kalma; but a considerable quantity of clothing had been saved from the *Polaris*, and was at our boat in the suddenly abandoned camp which we had now begun to think of as a last stopping-place in the country. We knew we should have no difficulty in locating the spot, and with many a grunt from O'Rourke over his wound, at which times he indulged in lurid pryotechnics of language relative to Greeks in general and these in particular, we began our trip through the aqueduct, and each bade a silent farewell to the house that had been our fortress. We were not long in coming to the passage leading to the treasure room, and I steered the boat against the wall.

"We cannot enter here," said Cleo.

"You said this was the place," I replied.

"Yes, it is the place, and beyond this wall is the tunnel to the chamber, but there is to me no way known to open it from this side; we shall have to go through the main corridor, and then into the chamber itself before we can reach the jars."

I allowed the boat to drift with the current, and held it when we reached the branch waterway a short distance further down, when Cleo attempted to spring ashore, but I detained her until the men had disembarked. She favored me with an odd look at this first assumption of authority, and then smiled as she submitted. Now that we all knew that she was a woman, they would none of them permit her to endanger her life a second time by forging ahead into unknown peril. Kent and O'Rourke had been left with the boat, and Rex was in the lead as we entered the corridor and started for the treasure room.

In the antechamber he came to a pause while Cleo opened the way leading to the depths below, when we all filed down into the vault. The door of the secret tunnel was opened, and I leaned out and signaled with the lamp for the boat to come. In five minutes we had filled it with the golden jars of jewels, and closing the way once more, we bade farewell to the chamber, and with a feeling of relief that we had met with no further trouble, glided down the murky stream.

Now that it seemed as if we were about to safely quit the land of Athenia, Cleo was strangely silent, and I asked her the cause.

"We are to become husband and wife, Robert,"

she said, "and I would that the ceremony might be performed in the temple ere we depart forever."

"But, dear one;" I replied, "when the queen comes to meet her lover can she not give us the royal blessing and thus make us one?"

"Only in the presence of the goddess," she replied, "and who is there to unite the queen and Prince Rex?"

I paused in thought over the complication. Her religion was uncompromising in its demands, and a marriage called for certain rites which could not be overlooked.

"I have an idea by which all can be arranged," she said, after a moment, "my brother Cadius—he who fought in the arena and lost—has since joined the priesthood, and I have seen him in the Temple of Minerva. He loves his sister, and for her sake would unite her to the man of her choice. If we can find him he can be trusted, and the queen and Prince Rex can be married at the same time. We must find him or part, my Robert, and parting means death to me."

"We shall not be parted, sweet one," I answered her, "if thy brother is in the temple, he shall be found and petitioned to unite us. We can enter the building through the crypt, and when Eurydice has joined us at the mouth of the aqueduct, we will take our way back."

The grateful pressure of her hand was enough for my reward, after which I communicated the plan to the others.

"Of course we'll go back with you!" cried O'Rourke; "before we start on our way across the

valley to our old camp, we want to see both you and Rex married men; you've had plenty of trouble already, but some men never know when they've got enough, and I, for one, am not the man to put a hair in the way av a man when he's set on a girl, an' that girl as fine a wan as the both av these beauties, be Jinks!"

I translated the speech for Cleo, who laughed heartily at it, and then gave my arm a squeeze under cover that made me doubly anxious to plunge into the new "trouble." Thus we journeyed down the river, silence for the most part marking the company. Cyrillus sat in the bow with Rex, with whom he conversed in low tones, and O'Rourke occasionally enlivened us with a pertinent observation.

"When we get back," said he, "I'm going to resign from the United States army, be Jinks! I never thought when I took the oath, that it was on an arctic expedition they'd send me and I'd land in Greece. Divil the wanst did I think I'd be fightin' a lot av petticoats, an' chasin' through mountains av ice afther a little brass god; an' neither did I think I'd be the wan to find a jug full o' diamonds; I've had many an experience since we escaped from the ship, but none o' the beauties down here has shown any startlin' inclination to become Mrs. P. O'Rourke, U. S. A., be Jinks! So, I'm goin' to take me little jug av diamonds and open that sandal factory in New York. I'll have me money a longer time than 'Bardy' there will. Shure a young lady that can rig up in all the jewels Miss Cleo has on at the present speakin', would make a big hole in a man's bank account when

she learns the meanin' av sealskins and laces, to say nothin' av operas and parties, and horses, and carriages. But I don't know's I wouldn't trade places with ye, 'Bardy.' "

He gave expression to such a comical sigh as brought a roar from us all that started the echoes of the tunnel, and just then Rex cried: "There's light!" and we could all see that the journey had almost been completed.

In five minutes we had disembarked to await the arrival of Eurydice. I turned to Cleo and asked her if I had not better go and get her some gowns, now that there was no longer any reason for her disguise.

"In the secret chamber we have left are many gowns," she answered, "we will procure them when we return to the temple."

The land sloped upward from the river, and we lay on the grassy banks and waited for a few minutes, when Rex said: "I can't stand this! I'm going back for the queen; something has detained her or she would have been here by this time."

He actually started up the slope, none of us having had time to offer our services, when Cyrillus called after him, and he paused on the hill above us.

"You will not have to go for the queen," he cried, "she is here!"

"She is here? Where?" he called.

Cyrillus ran to the water's edge, then turned toward us who watched him in mingled perplexity and astonishment, crying: "At last the hour has come when all can be revealed!"

He stooped to the water and briskly rubbed his face until it glowed, then springing up and facing us again, he suddenly snatched the ampyx from his head, letting loose a golden cloud that tumbled far below his waist, and throwing wide his arms, cried: "Behold Eurydice!"

A cry of wonder broke from us all, for Cyrillus had vanished, and before us stood the queen, her face rosy with the washing, her eyes laughing, her whole figure trembling with happy excitement. Rex gathered his wits together and flew down the slope, while she, her arms open, awaited him. He paused before her for an instant, peering into her face, then, certain of the miraculous change, caught her to his breast with the single word, "Eurydice!"

"My Rex!" she said, as her head sank to his shoulder, her royalty submerged by the torrent of human love that flooded her soul.

Presently he held her from him, looking into her smiling, happy face. "Then there is no Cyrillus?" he asked, queerly.

"There is no Cyrillus now," she replied.

"Cyrillus and Eurydice were one?" he said, doubt still regnant in his tones.

"Yes, they were one," she answered.

Cleo stepped forward and dropped to one knee before Eurydice, saying, "My queen!"

"Your queen no longer, my brave boy; your friend always, the queen died when the pigment was washed from the face of Cyrillus, and before you stands your simple friend—Eurydice."

She raised the kneeling girl, and Cleo held back

from her, and with the look of wonder on the other's face, said: "Ah, your majesty does not know; I, too, am a woman!"

"A woman?" cried Eurydice.

"Yes, Cleo Andromeda, your one time rival for the throne of Athenia."

"And you renounced this for——?"

"Renounced it for love of the woman above the queen," said Cleo.

"Why have you been in disguise?"

"It were simpler thus to aid your majesty to recover the sacred talisman and thwart your enemies."

"But when the talisman was lost in the aqueduct?" continued the queen.

"I retained the garments of a man to be with one I loved," answered Cleo, coloring.

Eurydice looked from one to the other of those gathered before her.

"I am that favored man, your majesty," I said.

The queen held out a hand to each.

"The blessing of Eurydice be thine" she said, then drawing Cleo to her, she pressed upon her lips the kiss of a friendship that naught but death could interrupt.

"Well, my friends," spoke up Kent, "it seems that developments have reached such a stage that only the marriage ceremony remains to be performed in order to insure the happiness of four people; and I would suggest that we proceed in search of the priest Cadius."

There was no opposition to this suggestion, and we

were soon in the boat again pulling upstream for the temple.

"Did you know this before?" I asked Cleo.

"I never even suspected," she answered.

"I should like to hear the whole story from her own lips;" said Dick.

"You shall hear it all, my kind friends," said Eurydice, so aptly that one would have thought that she understood English, "when we have arrived at the secret chamber."

After a stout pull we reached the foot of the steps, and drawing up the boat, took our way to the old rendezvous we thought never to have seen again. Settling ourselves comfortably for a brief rest, Cleo and Eurydice began conversing together in low, earnest tones, when presently the former stepped to a curtained way and drew forth an armful of gowns of many hues, and tossed them to the floor in the middle of the room. Then stepping to them, she claimed our attention.

"There, good friends, are gowns for the queen and myself; but we have decided that since we are not yet free from all danger, and that there may be more fighting before Eurydice escapes from the people who even now seek her life, we should still wear the garb of men, to aid where we can while there may be need of us. I ask your advice."

She stood proudly before us, her head thrown back, the very picture of beautiful womanhood, and the unanimity with which her decision was approved was actually startling; neither Rex nor myself had time for reflection on the subject. So the gowns were tied

up, and we composed ourselves before taking up the search for the priest, to listen to Eurydice. We were lying around in unconsciously picturesque groups, Eurydice and Cleo side by side, their arms about each other's waists in most sisterly affection, the men looking at them in unfeigned admiration.

CHAPTER XIX

THE DOUBLE MARRIAGE.

“EVENTS have so arranged themselves,” she began, in a low voice, “that I am proud to confess a love that I have felt since first he came into my presence when I sat upon the throne of Athenia. The queens of our land are sworn to a life of celibacy, and none may even so far descend from the royal dignity as to show the least preference for any man other than by reason of heroic deeds that make the whole people proud of him. Death on the pyre is the penalty, and for this reason I saw fit to disguise myself as a herald and attend my lover. When he sent me on the errand from Ilyssus to Athenia, I merely ran out of the city and wrote the answer from the queen, when Cyrillus obtained his parole of course the queen could return and Cyrillus must be lost. When the messenger was condemned to death, and stood upon the stone, it was my intention at the last moment to proclaim my love and then to slay myself ere they could reach me. My friends here saved my life, and I should have done my best to reward them. When Robert and Rex came before me I recognized the latter at once, for love was in my heart. I could not come to you as Cyrillus when I was at the palace the queen, and my

last act was done as a final test of your loyalty to the faithful messenger. Little did I think that my dear sister here was bent upon a mission like in character to my own; little did I know when wounded in the treasure chamber, that my head lay in a woman's lap, else at that time I had confessed to her the truth. I did not confess my knowledge of the secret for opening the stone of the chamber from the inside, because I wished to learn if there were another exit known; when it became necessary, Cyrillus found the secret and opened the way to freedom. I was obliged to use the greatest caution in guarding my secret at all times, and my maid Phryne is convinced that her queen is in league with Pluto, else she could not so often have vanished as she did; she is a good girl, and now I long to have her with me."

"Then you shall have her, be Jinks!" cried O'Rourke gallantly, and springing to his feet.

"Stay, my friend," said the queen, "ere now my absence will have become occasion for alarm, and it will mean death to you to be seen in the city; we shall have to go without her."

"Beggin' your majesty's pardon, it may mean death to a few o' thim intherposin' beggars beyant, but not to P. O'Rourke, U. S. A., be Jinks!"

"Well, captain," interjected Rex, "if you are aching for more trouble, I'll go with you, but we shall have to disguise ourselves——"

"Disguise the divil!" cried O'Rourke, "there's none o' them jabberin' Greeks I fear; come along!"

He was making for the door when I interposed: "Look here, O'Rourke, don't be foolhardy; there are

a thousand men out there who would take your life on sight; if you *must* go, listen to reason, and not only disguise yourself well, but let several of us go with you; I for one, am ready."

"I'm another victim," said Dick, laconically.

"Here too!" cried Bangs and Ruggles in a breath.

"I am sure," said Kent, in calm and deliberate tones, "that we can all be relied upon to assist Captain O'Rourke in his commendable desire to serve her majesty, and——"

"I pray you, my friend, to refrain from the title of royalty," spoke up Eurydice, "I am a queen no longer; I have abdicated the throne in favor of the shrine of Venus, and am henceforth your friend Eurydice."

The good Professor bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment paid us all, and sat down, while Rex suggested that he and O'Rourke be suffered to go together, leaving the rest at the rendezvous, and while the proposition was greeted with a vigorous protest of disapproval, both he and the gallant officer were so insistent that two men could act with more caution than a larger body, that, as usually happened, he finally had his way and they prepared for departure. I confess that I felt no little anxiety about the affair, for delivery from our unenviable, not to say perilous position, seemed an event of such propinquity, that I dreaded another delay and the possibility of accident or capture. Eurydice added her voice to the protest, and declared that she had spoken without any idea of imperiling life for the sake of what was a mere whim, but the gallant O'Rourke would have none of it, and Rex declared that a maid for a lady being of

as much importance as the air she breathed, Phryne should become one of our party as soon as she could be found. They were soon ready, and as they took their departure I am fain to confess that their disguise was perfect. Even O'Rourke would never have been recognized in the veiled widow who went forth with the elderly man who may have been her brother, and Rex's assumed age sat well upon him.

"You must take some token from me, else she will not come," said Eurydice when they were about to go forth. "Here is a ring she will know, and give her this golden tablet; I have written upon it to tell her to follow you to me, and to bring me some things, she will obey; you will find her near my apartments, waiting for me to return; now go, and may the gods protect you!"

The parting between the lovers was brief, but tender, and I saw the door leading from the ledge close upon them. While they had been making ready, I had planned that during their absence I would myself go in search of Cadius, that there might be no delay in the double marriage upon their return, and with that object now in view, I returned and acquainted Cleo with it. She affirmed that it would require the personal petitions of both herself and Eurydice to sway her brother to perform an act that was tantamount to the death of Athenia's queen, and since there seemed good reason to admit the wisdom of this assertion, it was decided that we all repair to the crypt and thence make our way to the temple in search of the young priest.

We must have been a weird-looking company as we

filed out of the chamber and along the narrow passage to the bridge over the river, I leading, followed by Cleo bearing aloft a light, and then the mighty Rugles and the doughty Dick, with Eurydice behind him, and in front of Bangs and the serious philosopher, Kent, and our simple appearance in that silent, noisome place, taking our serpentine way across the dark river and thence down into the passages of the dead, our sandaled tread making uncanny echoes, would have been enough to frighten the poor priest half to death had he come suddenly and unexpectedly upon us. The memory of another time in that dismal place came full upon me, and I drew my sword as we entered the corridor whose walls bore countless golden handles, behind each one of which reposed a dead body, and I could not control a creepy sensation as I thought of how Rex and I had lost each other there; of the awful moment when the sepulchral cries rang out and nearly drove me mad; of the terrible time when I hung in the grip of the thief who came near to ending my career, and then the flash of torches in my blinded eyes. I had had some exciting experiences in this strange land, but I would willingly have had them all repeated—even to the agony I suffered when I found Cleo wounded—if that single hour in this dungeon could be eliminated, for a repetition would have driven me quite insane, I am sure.

Upon reaching the large chamber wherein were performed the last funeral rites, a halt was made and a council held. Our further procedure being judged dangerous, since we might at any moment come face to face with some one in the temple, we decided that

it would not be wise to risk the lives of Eurydice and Cleo by secret maneuvering, since the former, having partially undisguised, would be instantly recognized, but that it would be our best course to surprise the priest and forcibly abduct him for our purpose. Acting on this decision, we formed a phalanx before our precious charges, and with drawn swords—even Eurydice and Cleo bearing weapons ready—started directly up the stone steps which we knew must lead to the temple. The stairway being long, the rise was very gradual, while at distances of about a dozen steps there was a landing with a door on each side.

“These are the chambers occupied by the priests,” said Cleo in a low tone. I instantly paused, saying: “Had we not better try them and ascertain if your brother is here?”

“His name will be upon the door,” she said, and I looked at the one on my right.

Her keen eyes and wonderfully acute senses had detected what I should have repeatedly passed by, for upon the door at about the level of my eyes was a single Greek character which I knew must be the synonym of the occupant.

“Do you know the mark we must find?” I asked her, after my inspection of the door.

“His symbol is the name of the sacred Hera, Goddess of Marriage, graven within a delta.”

“Then here it is!” I cried, for such was the mystic sign before my eyes.

We were standing upon the third landing from the bottom, and about midway up the stairs, and they all crowded around to look at the sign.

"Yes, it is his; my brother may be within; let us enter."

I pushed upon the door, but it refused to move. I threw my shoulder against it and bore my whole strength upon the stone, when it slowly and noiselessly opened inward and we looked into a small chamber, dimly lighted by a swinging lamp, while upon a couch at the further side lay a man fast asleep. He was clad in the long robes of the priesthood and while I should not have known him, Cleo instantly whispered to me that it was her brother. A hasty survey of the room having assured me that no weapons were at hand, I stepped to the side of the unconscious man and laid my hand gently upon his shoulder. He awoke with a start, and seeing our party before him, sprang to his feet, and like a flash drew a dagger from his girdle.

"Peace; we are friends!" cried Cleo.

"What is your mission," he asked, still with upraised blade.

"We crave your offices and the blessing of the good Hera," said Cleo.

"A marriage?" he asked.

"A double marriage," she answered.

"Where are the women?"

"Thy sister, Cleo Andromeda, is one; the other will be revealed to you in time," replied the girl who had well assumed the place of spokesman.

"My sister?" he exclaimed; "and where is my dear sister?"

"Then you do not know me? Come nearer, Cadius, my brother, and look upon thy sister," she said.

He gazed at her strangely for a moment, then came nearer, looking into the smiling face before him.

"It is indeed my sister Cleo," he said, "but why this disguise; these garments of a man?"

"That I might fly with the lord of my heart," she said, "and serve him in the hour of need; danger has been with us constantly since the revolt in the arena, and even now thou must know, my brother, that the enemy seek our lives."

"Even so," he said sadly.

"And you will marry us, my brother?"

"Your wishes are my guide, sister dear; where is the man?"

She drew me to her side and placed my hand within that of the young gladiator-priest. I was some inches the taller of the two, and he seemed to survey my whole frame before replying.

The dagger fell from his hand.

"You have chosen well, my sister; I will perform the rites; but show me the other."

She turned, and taking the hand of Eurydice, led her before him. He gazed at her face for an instant, at the long hair of shimmering gold gleaming beneath the dim light, and gave a cry of astonishment.

"My queen!" he exclaimed, dropping to his knee before the stately presence.

"Thy friend," she answered, "arise, Cadius."

"And thou wouldst break thy coronation vows?" rising at her bidding, and regarding her closely.

"I have chosen," was all she said.

"And the man?"

"Prince Rex," she replied, a ring of seeming triumph in her tones.

"A worthy mate for my queen," he said, "go bring the man; I cannot deny the queen I love and live to serve, though I break the sacred coronation vow in obeying her."

I spoke to Dick and Bangs, who at once left the chamber, and even while Cadius was trying to accustom himself to the amazing fact of his queen in man's guise coming to him to be united in marriage, the doorway was darkened, and Rex and O'Rourke, Dick and Bangs, followed the graceful Phryne into the chamber. The girl fell upon her knees before Eurydice, while tears of happiness streamed from her eyes as she kissed the hem of the flowing tunic that fell from the waist of the woman she so loved. But Eurydice had forsaken royalty altogether and absolutely, and drawing her cousin to her arms, gently kissed her and told her that she herself was now, by every right, queen of Athenia, being next in line.

"I would forsake it a thousand times to be with thee;" cried the loyal girl.

Rex came over beside Eurydice.

"This is the man," she said to Cadius.

"I saw him rescue the messenger Cyrillus," he said, "he is a brave man."

"The messenger and I were one," said Eurydice.

This so amazed him that a full explanation had to be entered into, and when Eurydice had finished, her devotion to her lover so impressed the young priest that he was in haste to unite them.

"Come into the temple," he said, "we will go by a secret way, that none may witness us; follow me."

He stepped to the side of the chamber, and as Kent

closed the door by which we had entered, the priest opened another, and we followed him into a dark passage, the lamp in Cleo's hand casting ghostly shadows as we filed along. A dozen paces brought us into a large apartment, and when Cadius had lighted several lamps that swung from the roof, I saw that we were in an ornate section of the temple, and judging from its fixtures, one set apart for the use of the priests in their devotions. A score of magnificent statues of their deities lined the walls of three sides, the fourth being given up entirely to one of Minerva seated in a splendid chair. Two other doors opened into passages which he at once explained were used by the priests.

"We are in the private shrine of Minerva," said Cadius, "and never before has it been put to such use; it is therefore meet that the initial honor be done it by no less a person than Eurydice, Queen of Athenia."

Acting under his instructions our party knelt with their backs against the wall and facing the patron goddess, while Rex and Eurydice, Cleo and I, bowed before the feet of the statue, and facing the priest. He took a golden censor, and as he swung it to and fro before us, making a prayer the while, I felt that I was a participant in a ceremony so old and hallowed by time that it were by that alone, if nothing else, sanctified. I knew that very soon the fair girl by my side would be my wife, and I knew that even though made so by a ceremony to which I was an utter stranger, in the sight of Heaven she would be my wife as firmly as if bound to me by the priests of every

Christian church extant. And with these thoughts in my mind, I made a fervent vow to be to her what God must mean man to be toward the trusting woman who gives her life into his keeping. The ceremony was lost to me in the whirl of thoughts that filled my mind, and I can only recollect a prayer to the goddess, and an exhortation to us to remain faithful unto the vows we had solemnly spoken before the sacred statue, and we were rising amid a volley of good wishes from the dear friends who had been witnesses to the strange rites that had bound two couples together for life. Then Cleo bade her brother an affectionate farewell, while we all crowded gold upon him until he could carry no more, and then took our way back to the river and the boat.

This time Rex and Eurydice sat with Cleo and I in the stern, while the gowns that Phryne had brought filled half the boat as we floated forth upon the bosom of the stream that seemed so typical of that uncertain River of Life upon which two craft had been just launched.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FLIGHT.

THE dazzling sun shining against the marble and onyx palace of Prince Kalma as it lay on the rising ground in the distance, embowered in its nest of trees and bright-hued flowers, marked the spot toward which we were first to bend our way. Upon our original entry into the city, we had left our rifles at the mansion, and now intended to secure them if possible before the queen's real whereabouts became known and the certain alarm and pursuit followed. Ammunition for these larger arms we had none save what was contained in each magazine, but quite a supply had been saved from the *Polaris*, and lay at our temporary camp beneath the overturned boat. From the mouth of the aqueduct the mansion lay in a direct line with the smoking summit which the people, in accordance with their belief in the various gods, had aptly named Hephaestos, and the latter being in reality the actual South Pole, we were readily able to determine the points of the compass. A little to the west of the volcano, and some thirty miles away, the river disappeared within the breast of a precipice, and we had learned that within the mountains it fell into the Great Pit and was lost.

Having thus the advantage of the waterway to carry us close upon the mansion, we clung to the boat, and while rowing with energy down the current, packed the gowns and jars of jewels into small bundles, that they might the more readily be transported when we should have to pursue our way on foot. We had taken but thirty of the jars, leaving nearly that many in the vault, the door of which we had left open, and each one of these represented an immense fortune if we should ever get them into a land of modern civilization. More we could not have carried, even had our cupidity tempted us, which, in the presence of such vast riches as were contained in the royal treasure chamber, it did not. We were fortunate in not coming upon any one during the first hour of our progress, and where the course of the river brought us nearest to the house of Prince Kalma, we moored the boat beneath the overhanging bank and leaving Kent and Bangs with the women to guard our hard earned treasure, the remaining five started for the house, which was about a mile distant. We moved rapidly and soon came within the gardens. No living thing was in sight as we crossed the lawns and stepped upon the portico, and I boldly entered the apartments where we had left our weapons. They were lying just where we had placed them on a divan, and in an instant we had them and were on our way out, when a great cry arose from the side of the house, and twenty men with drawn swords charged upon us, crying: "There are the murderers of the queen! Kill them! Kill them! Vengeance!"

We wheeled and covered them with our rifles, while

I cried to them to stop. But the words had no effect, and I was obliged, much as I dreaded it, to give the command to fire. The effect was electrical. Five men dropped dead, while the others stopped as if petrified by the miracle, and the thought at once flashed across me that they were some who had not before witnessed the power of gunpowder, and in their astonishment I cried that we were no murderers, hoping to gain time by this, but mortal speech had the effect of re-emboldening them, and those brave men charged straight into the jaws of certain death as the flame a second time leaped from our rifles and mowed them down.

It was cruel slaughter, but self-preservation demanded it. It was no worse than an infantry charge against artillery for the empty glory of capturing a torn flag from the enemy; in fact, the good sense of the two acts was decidedly in favor of these men who sought the lives of those they thought the murderers of their queen. After the second fire we turned and beat a precipitate retreat to avoid killing more, but they came on like a pack of bloodhounds, and were rapidly overtaking us when I heard a cheer and saw our comrades, whom we had left at the boat, running to our succor, while in their rear and not more than a mile away, a great stream of people was coming rapidly out the road, their voices raised in cries that augured ill for our safety.

The flight had been discovered, and we were closely pursued. It became a necessity to sacrifice the remainder of those nearest, and when they were not more than twenty yards away I again gave a reluctant

order, and we had diminished their number by half. The death of their comrades did not deter the remaining four or five, and they dropped even as their gleaming swords were raised for the stroke. Our friends had by this reached us, and we all ran toward the river to the boat, the crowd from the city pouring after us by hundreds. Into the boat we sprang and three pairs of oars plied the water as we began the race downstream. With yells of rage our pursuers increased their speed, and it now became a test of endurance, for neither side seemed to gain on the other. The heavy boat soon tired the oarsmen, and one at a time we exchanged places, while the steady trot of the enemy never slackened for a moment, and after several miles had been covered they began slowly but surely to gain upon us, while far away could be seen a large body of horsemen following, their rapid course marked by a cloud of dust. The precipice into which the river found its way was now so near that we could see the shrubbery on its sides, and the giant pines crowning its summit seemed almost to topple over upon us, while the nearest body of the enemy was less than a quarter of a mile behind, their speed seemingly as great, and their strength as fresh as an hour before. Still we toiled on, the green walls of what we hoped might prove our haven appearing to recede as we advanced, and it was nearly an hour, and both banks were lined with fierce faces as the opening gateway closed behind us and we sailed serenely into the narrow cañon whose rocky walls rose abruptly from the water and towered a mile into the turquoise sky, leaving a narrow line of pale blue straight over our upturned faces.

"To the island! To the island!"

The cry rent the air from a hundred throats, and reverberated from side to side of the cañon, when those fearless men began plunging into the water and swimming toward our flying boat. It must be, I thought, that the island to which they referred was but a short distance further along, where they hoped to overtake us, and the oars were plied with all the energy at our command. As I supposed to be the case, the river emerged from its confinement as abruptly as it had entered, and we glided into a park than which there can be no lovelier on all the surface of this earth. It was about a mile in diameter, the river flowing through the middle and separated into two channels near the far side by a large island, heavily wooded, while the mountains rose a mile high on every side, completely walling it in. No ice or snow was visible save on the very summits, and every spot that offered a foothold was covered with vegetation, from luxuriant grass in the park itself to great forests on the acute slopes. No sooner was this park reached than every man following us sprang ashore and tore along the river bank toward the island to seize us upon our landing. We all realized that the situation was becoming serious; they were swarming along both banks, and if we should dare to make a landing we would be instantly cut to pieces. We allowed the boat to drift along, whereby the horde soon passed us and springing again into the water opposite the island, they soon formed a living wall across the shallow stream, completely shutting off our further flight by water.

"We shall have to pass that line," said Rex, grimly; "there is no hope by landing."

"Reserve fire until nearly upon them and we can get through with the smallest possible sacrifice," I said.

Cleo took the tiller. Every man chose his living target, and sat with ready rifle while the boat drifted on. It was clearly evident that the rifles in our hands conveyed no impression of danger to the waiting foe, our pistols being the only weapons they had any of them hitherto seen us use, and as we approached the line they shouted in their joy at the coming vengeance.

"After we fire, pull for your lives," I said; "we shall have to reach cover before we can make a stand."

Closer, closer we drew; but ten yards separated us from the death line of gleaming swords, when the volley rang out, awakening the echoes from the guardian peaks, and seven men sank into the rushing water, when the oars were instantly grasped and the boat shot through the broken line amid the cries of consternation from the companions of the dead men, and we drove downstream at top speed. They seemed completely paralyzed by the shock, and remained perfectly still, watching us as we cut through the water. We had left them behind a quarter of a mile, and I began to feel as if the case were not yet hopeless, when my reflections were interrupted by a deep toned noise that I could not fully identify, and which at every yard was growing more penetrating, while the current had now increased to the speed of a millrace, and the water surged and leaped over underlying

rocks and shoals, making navigation extremely difficult and dangerous.

Suddenly a thought that turned my blood to ice flashed across me, and I shook with a nameless terror to which I was an utter stranger.

"The Pit! The Great Pit!" I managed to half articulate.

"My God! We are lost!" cried Rex, dropping his oars and letting them slide over the side, while the others backed water with the strength born of despair.

Their efforts to check the momentum of the boat availed as might the first puffs of a tiny tug to move the giant hull of a man-o'-war, and as the roar grew louder, I recollect thinking of two poor men whom I had once seen go to their deaths over the awful precipice of Niagara. While the river upon which we sailed was less than a fiftieth part of the volume of that world-famed cataract, yet it had at this point widened to more than a hundred yards and rushed toward its end in great foaming leaps. Before us we could see nothing save a sudden ending of the stream two hundred yards below us, and we all instinctively knew that that line marked our lives. A single rock divided the waters in the very center, and their fall must have been very great, for no mist arose above the edge. I turned to Cleo, and for a single moment took her in my arms, but thinking that the act might rob her of that superb courage that even in this time of horror merely paled her cheeks, I put her from me and grasped an oar to try and guide the boat toward the rock. I had no purpose in doing so, save to divert my whole thoughts from the awful end so soon in

store for us all. We were almost upon the edge when with a cry of love, the girl who had been my wife for but a few hours, threw her arms about my neck and pressed her lips on mine. Rex and Eurydice were in each other's arms, and in that sublime moment I saw O'Rourke reach out and take the hand of the lovely Phryne.

"Good-by, boys," he said, "I'm glad the blackguards behind there didn't have the satisfaction o' carvin' us up into bits."

The roar drowned his voice, and in silence we awaited the end. The great mountains seemed to look down on the scene in pitying helplessness as the floating catafalque gilded to its eternal tomb. The rapids and eddies swung us from side to side; sometimes we faced the abyss, while again we were turned completely around. There was nothing beyond the falls save an unscalable precipice nearly a mile high that seemed to actually overhang our doomed shell. I was neither sad nor frightened now; Cleo was in my arms, her soft, warm bosom throbbing against me, her dear face pressing mine, and I felt that we should be thus united through all eternity. Within a single boat's length of the edge I wrapped my arms more tightly about her, kissed her fondly, the boat was whirled round and round like a top, it struck with a crash against the rock and we were whirled forth into space!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GREAT PIT.

As we shot out into the air and plunged over the foaming cataract, the seething water filled my eyes, my ears, my lungs, and my last conscious thoughts were of the loved form in my arms with whom I was on the very brink of that mysterious eternity whose secrets would in a single second be revealed to us both, and which no man ever returned to unveil. The thought ended in a blank of dark, unfathomable depth that I knew was death, and I recall the impression uppermost in my mind at the time that the end of life was attended with no more suffering than birth. As soon as the fear of the unknown has given place to resignation, mental and physical anguish alike depart, and the change is welcomely awaited. After a time which must always remain indefinite, a tiny spark of ruby light appeared afar off, and I regarded it with languid curiosity. It increased in size until the whole universe was flooded with a soft crimson glow, and I suddenly discovered myself wandering idly among verdant, fragrant fields, and in balmy groves with Cleo by my side, who stooped ever and anon and plucked a delicate blossom with which to deck herself. She wore a ruby gown of shimmering, gossamer

material that swayed in the gentlest of breezes as her graceful figure glided among the flowers, and chains of loveliest roses garlanded her entire body, and trailed behind her as she moved. My spirit soared in a sea of the greatest elation; I had never before known such perfect happiness—such idle content. But even in the midst of this realm of bliss a serpent crawled. I was dimly conscious of an inexplicable unrest, and then of a pain I could not locate, and yet which disturbed the delight and marred the happiness. The pain seemed general, and more spiritual than material, but with each moment it grew more decided, and my whole body ached, while intense pains shot through my feverish head. Cleo and the Elysian Fields had utterly vanished, and I lay on the ground, alone in my misery. Out of the pain there grew a confused murmur of sounds which presently took the form of booming artillery, until I thought my head would burst with the thunderous discharges, and unable longer to endure the torture, I sprang to my feet, but as quickly sank back with a cry of real agony and opened my eyes.

Beside me lay the real Cleo of my recent dream, while near by were the bodies of all the other late occupants of the ill-fated boat. We had been thrown upon a ledge of the rock which extended from the edge of the falls into the abyss, and lay a full twenty-five feet below the upper river, while, as I cautiously peered over the edge of the chasm, the mist rose in clouds a thousand feet beneath me like steam from a boiling caldron. The ledge was in the shape of a rough equilateral triangle some thirty feet on each

side, and the countless centuries had covered it with a soil and a thick emerald moss which was wet and spongy from the flying spray. To this carpet alone did we owe our lives, for I soon discovered that all were alive, though none had escaped without injury of some character, from bad contusions to fractures. When I first regained consciousness I found that Cleo was lying partly upon my chest, and it was in falling beneath her that I had sustained my most severe injury, which was confined to my head and chest, although every inch of my body ached with a thousand racking pains. She had had a bad shaking up, and the wound on her head had been reopened by the fall. But a merciful providence had seen fit to spare our lives even though we were hung in midair after the fabled fashion of Mahomet's coffin, and there was a prayer of gratitude in every heart as each looked upon the other and found none missing or dead. Poor Kent had a broken leg, while the gallant Irishman had a left arm fractured twice above the elbow where it had doubled under him. This ended the list of fractures, though my whole body ached so that I believe to this day that a piece of broken rib is sticking in my left lung. Though alive, our situation was indeed hopeless and were it not for the undeniable fact that "hope springs eternal in the human breast," we had surrendered to fate's decree and died upon that barren rock.

Our boat was gone—dashed to fragments in the mighty whirl of waters beneath—and with it the thirty precious jars for which we had fought, toiled, and taken human life, and not a thing that it con-

tained, save its human occupants, had found a resting place upon the ledge. There was not a piece of wood nor a blade of grass—nothing but rock and water-soaked moss, and two broken limbs to attend to. Ever since coming ashore from the *Polaris* I had assumed a sort of leadership, and it was with this feeling of responsibility full upon and actuating me, that I managed to crawl to my feet and take a careful survey of our environment, while the others gradually came to themselves and gazed in solemn ruefulness about them. My first glance at the rock above convinced me that escape in that direction was impossible, for even had we stood upon the upper rock itself, no power within the scope of human comprehension could have reached us. It was therefore evident that we must either find some means of descending into the pit or perish miserably upon our eyrie, and death in the gorge were better than its grim alternative. I crept to the edge and leaned over the chasm. Beneath me was a wall of perpendicular rock offering small foothold for a fly, much less a two hundred pound man, and I drew myself back and stood in the center of the platform gazing about me, when, without a note of warning, the projecting ledge upon which I had but a second since lain, broke from the main body and dropped silently into the void, the plash of its fall never reaching our ears already filled with the musical monotone of the torrent, while every cheek paled at the thought of my narrow escape, though I confess that my sensibilities had become so calloused by the events of the past few days that each new danger and escape had for me small meaning

beyond the barren fact, and I treated this latest one with a feeling of indifference. But even as I allowed my eyes to rest upon the broken ledge, expecting at any moment to feel the remaining portion of the rock sink and cast us into eternity, a ray of hope shot athwart the field of my sharpened intellect, for in the jagged crags I fancied I saw a stairway opened for our escape. At any rate, death in any form was preferable to slow starvation succeeding inevitable madness if we remained in our present position, and, grasping Cleo by the hand, I stepped to the edge and down on to the first narrow platform.

From here the face of the cliff was deeply serrated, and foothold was in various places attainable, and though the descent was perilous in the extreme, we had no other recourse, and calling to Kent and O'Rourke that we would return and rescue them or remain and die with them, the rest of the party followed me down the precipice. In places there was scarce a foothold for one, and at such times each clung to the rock like a chameleon, and the superior sureness of foot of women over men was practically tested in that hazardous descent. Whenever I paused, Cleo was right above me, ready to take my place the moment I left it, and her dauntless courage never for a moment forsook her. We had left the platform holding the two remaining men five hundred feet above us, when beneath our feet was a ledge large enough to hold us all in comfort, and here we paused. Beneath was a sheer descent, while the rock upon which we had gathered was isolated from the main wall by a narrow fissure which seemed bottomless.

The slab of rock was set up against the cliff like a piece of cake. Upon closer inspection the crack was found choked with the *débris* of broken, moss-covered rock, and I stepped within it and led the way carefully down. The slab was pierced by many crevices of various widths through which the light filtered, giving to the fissure, which broadened as we descended, an effect of clouded moonlight by which we readily found our way. The bottom was reached after an hour's hard work, and we stood upon a narrow beach of pure white sand and looked against the dense veil of the falls, and the tremendous clouds of mist that arose from the seething waters, while at our backs the wall was broken by innumerable openings leading to unknown depths beyond. After a brief breathing spell we entered one of these caverns, following its course by the light that came through a perfect maze of openings, and realized that we were in a grand natural cave. The roof, in places so high that it was in pitch darkness, was supported by crystal pillars in weirdly graceful shapes, while exquisite stalactites depended like enormous icicles. The passage by which we had entered led in a tortuous way for about a quarter of a mile, when the roof seemed to part, and we emerged into the open air on a beach less than fifty yards wide, with the pit on one side and a perpendicular wall on the other, whose precipitous sides rose to a level with the valley above. More than half the ground was covered with grass, while a tree ever and anon reared its crown toward the dizzy heights, accentuating their majestic proportions, and climbing vines wound their way up the wall in interlaced profusion.

With the sight of wood I saw aid for the poor sufferers above, and put my knowledge of surgery—which I had not practiced since my graduation—to immediate use. With my dagger I fashioned from some flexible bark some very fair splints, while stout vines served the purpose of cords, and saved my gridle. With these I was on the point of ascending with Dick and Rex, when I paused to overcome a serious difficulty. Kent's leg being broken, he could not climb down the precipice even with the limb bandaged, and it was certainly beyond our power to carry him. O'Rourke could, I was sure, make his way down with one arm, but it could never be done with one leg. Despair stared us in the face and I wandered away from the rest, overcome with perplexity, when my foot caught in a vine, and I fell flat on my face. The fall hurt and irritated me, and I caught hold of the offending creeper to tear it up, but it proved to be a species of wild grape, and although less than half an inch in diameter, resisted all my strength. With a sudden cry of delight I sprang to my feet, and whipping out my razor-edged dagger, cut the vine.

The problem was solved! The vine was the same that scaled the cañon's wall, and grew in rank profusion all about us. In a few minutes we had gathered and knotted enough to reach from the top of the cliff to the lower ledge, testing every foot of its length, and with hope in our hearts we three younger men began the climb to the rescue of the heroes on the shelf so far above. Passing through the cavern, we toiled up the incline between the cliff and the slab, and after an hour's heart-breaking work, stood on the

ledge midway between top and bottom, where we could look down, and as the clouds of mist from time to time parted see our comrades and wives like ants upon the white beach, the steaming pit on one side, the vine-covered wall on the other. Here we left a portion of the vine, and then began the hardest part of the ascent. In places we were forced to stand upon each other's shoulders to reach the next foothold, and when two had gained it, the third would be pulled up by the aid of the vines. This improvised rope proved a burden of lead ere we had a gone half-way up, but the mission was to save life; and in no other way could it be done. Our progress was necessarily slow, since the least misstep meant a horrible death, but at last we crawled upon the mossy rock and sat beside the wounded men. From this point the steaming pit entirely obscured the beach upon which we had left our companions, and our energies were at once bent toward the mending of the broken limbs.

The descent was awful! We were forced to tie the vine about Kent and lower him from step to step, and when we had reached the middle ledge, we all sank down in complete exhaustion, the perspiration rolling in streams from us. From this point began the greatest difficulty, for while the way was comparatively simple for one with the full use of his limbs, the climb over the broken rock was impossible to Kent, and scarcely less so to O'Rourke. The incline was not steep enough to lower them by rope, and too steep to carry them, but having foreseen this before coming up, I had anticipated it. We tied a guy to

the end of the vine, and swung it over the edge. When it had disappeared into the mist I began a pendulum-like motion that swung the attached rope from side to side until it landed on the beach, and a shout from below told me that they had secured it. It required the united strength of we three men to haul that vine back again, those below paying out and lengthening the guy as we pulled it up. We then tied the end of the main rope to the two men and lowered them over the edge of the rock, the roaring falls soon obscuring them. The vine held perfectly as it slid over the stone, and we let them down as fast as possible, that they might reach bottom before our strength failed us.

A shout from below told us to hold, and then the heavy weight moved slowly to one side. They were being drawn to shore. Then, with our combined senses on the alert for the signal, we hung on to that vine like bulldogs.

With the suddenness of a thunderbolt we fell flat on the ground, while thirty feet of vine came whirling and hissing like an angry serpent into the air above us. It had broken, and the two men were plunged into the awful depths of the Great Pit!

CHAPTER XXII.

BENEATH THE MOUNTAIN.

WE were overcome by the suddenness of the horrible catastrophe just as we were at the end of our task and poor Kent and O'Rourke about to be delivered into the arms of their waiting friends; fatigue, our wounds, and the anxiety of the past few hours all combined in their might, and weakened nature succumbed at the final stroke of fate that had hurled our friends to a frightful death, and we three men sat on that ledge in midair, while tears of deepest sorrow welled from our eyes.

The shock had been too great for words; we were too feeble for aught but tears. But after a few minutes, nature having relieved us of our pent up feelings, we felt again strong enough to make the remainder of the descent, and with saddened hearts once more took up our way.

Upon arriving at the edge of the pit we learned that the vine swinging against the rocks, had broken far above the water, and just as the living freight was almost ashore they had plunged thirty feet down into the boiling bowl. The pit must have been very deep, for it was not above a hundred yards in diameter, the river pouring into it in the shape of a convex

crescent, and there was no visible outlet. But we could not remain where we were, and once more I took up the lead of our diminished company, following the beach around. When we had come directly opposite the center of the falls, the outlet of the water became apparent to us. In the breast of the cliff was an opening some forty feet in height above the water, and a hundred broad, and into this the river poured its volume. On the side nearest us the bank within the cavern sloped at a sharp angle, leaving some dozen feet of sandy beach between the wall and the rushing water. Common sense would have told a child that where water constantly entered there must be an outlet, and since there was no other recourse, I led the way into the forbidding hole. At first it seemed pitch dark, but after a short time we found that the eye could follow the course of the stream for a considerable distance. I forged ahead for a few paces, when an ejaculation from Rex caused me to turn my head, and I saw him excitedly pointing into the cavern ahead. I followed the direction, and saw a dam of jagged, shelving rocks partially shutting off the stream, while cast broadside upon the reef was our own boat!

The surprise that this caused may better be imagined than described, and we hurried along to the object that was dearer to us at that moment than anything in this world. But this initial surprise was as nothing to the consternation that followed, for lying upon the rocks beyond, and nearer the shore than the boat, were the bodies of Kent and O'Rourke and three of the men we had killed!

The long vine was entangled about them all, and springing out on to the rocks, we lifted them ashore and bent over them to discover any sign of life, doing all in our power for their resuscitation. They had ten minutes ago been hanging by the vine over the cliff. It was a forlorn hope yet barely possible that they were not dead. It was the work of half an hour before we gave up, but even as we sadly abandoned them no power could drag the faithful Phryne away from the body of O'Rourke, and with her tears falling fast upon the sand, she continued the movement of artificial respiration, Eurydice and Cleo aiding her. The sight was more than we could bear, and Dick and I once more fell to on the Professor. We had scarcely made a dozen moves when the man I would have sworn was as dead as he ever would be, opened his eyes and breathed naturally. At the same moment a joyful cry, choked with sobs, broke from Phryne, and her efforts were rewarded. It was scarcely less than a miracle, and in a few minutes both our friends whom we had mourned as dead, were sitting up and talking with us. We then examined the boat, and to our delight found that it was not badly damaged, and would probably still float. I sat down and tried to fathom the mystery. How a boat could fall a thousand feet and not be smashed to smallest bits I could explain in no other way than that the water in the pit was like a great bowl of lather, densest toward the bottom, and when the boat fell into it, it had, by the natural action of the escaping water, been cast out, followed by the bodies of our friends, the rocks below the mouth serving the purpose of a catch-all and retaining them. I arose and

began an examination of this geological formation, and something drawing my eye, stooped and drew it forth. The pale light revealed it to be one of the ladies' gowns, tied in a bundle as it had been fastened and thrown into the boat, and I opened it.

One of the golden jars of jewels lay before my bulging eyes!

Amid the cries of astonishment from all, I ran to the dam in further search, and Dick and Rex assisting me, we secured seven jars with their contents and the gowns in which they had been wrapped. This was all: nothing else of value was to be found, and our rifles lay at the bottom of the Great Pit. Depositing the precious jars once more in the boat, we carried it below the ledge, and launching it, got aboard and started on a journey which I felt to be my last. Yet even so, there was no fear in my heart; merely a terrible weariness and great bodily pain. It was many hours since we had eaten, and hunger added to our pangs, while the prospects of satisfying it were as remote as the inaccessible stars. We all sat in moody, painful silence as the boat glided along on the bosom of the rushing stream into the bowels of the earth. No smallest ray of light penetrated the darkness, no man who has not experienced it can understand, and in my forlorn misery I sought the only comfort for a tortured heart—woman's love and sympathy—and put out my hand for Cleo. She sat next me in the stern, and though there was no use for a rudder, I held one hand on the tiller as we floated along. When I touched her she crept over to me, and clinging to my arm, lay her head on my breast while she shook with

convulsive sobs, the first to which I had ever known her to give way. Her nerves, keyed to the highest pitch for days, had at last given way and she sobbed like a weary child, while I comforted her as best I could. An occasional word from one or the other was all that broke the silence of our passage. From time to time we were washed against the sides of the channel, and from this I concluded that the course was winding. There was no method of calculating time in the inky darkness, but when we touched the walls I put my hand against them, and from the motion judged that we were proceeding at the rate of six or eight miles an hour, and it may have been ten minutes or an hour before we again saw the light of day, when it grew as rapidly as it had faded, and we glided from beneath the mountain into a green valley. The boat was guided to shore at once, and we stretched our weary bodies on the emerald sward in a happiness as complete as if we had been set down amid all the comforts of life in our distant homes. The valley was about three miles by ten in extent, and beyond the lower end rose the flaming summit of Mount Hephaestos.

Towering peaks, their heights ice-crowned, walled in this green jewel, while groves dotted its fair surface, and the atmosphere was almost sultry, producing a semitropic vegetation, and most grateful to us after the chill of the subterranean river. Rex gathered himself together and wandered away, and in a few minutes we were startled from our reveries by the sharp crack of his pistol. But there proved to be no cause for alarm, but rather for gratitude, for he came

running out of a grove a short distance down the stream, crying that he had killed a deer. We took to the boat once more, and landing at the edge of the grove, established a temporary camp until we could regain our strength for further exploration, and in a trice Cleo had struck a fire from the flint hanging at her girdle, as readily as I could have used a match, and delicious steaks were soon roasting before the blaze. There was very little of that deer left when our ravenous appetites had been appeased, and we began to feel ready for more adventure. Kent and O'Rourke were as comfortable as could be expected, but the former's broken leg would prevent him from walking for a couple of months, and accepting the inevitable, we concluded to build a temporary shelter, and recuperate.

"Well," said O'Rourke, feeling better after his meal, "av all the adventures that could fall to the lot o' man, I think we can win the prize. When the boat took that flyin' leap into the air like a hunter goin' at a six foot stone wall with a ditch beyond, I shut me eyes an' says, 'Good-by, O'Rourke,' I says, 'the divil has ye at last, an' there's small use in makin' a row about it; sure he'll make fine soup out av your carcass in the pit below,' I says to meself, an' then he just up an' threw a bushel o' soapsuds in me face an' choked me to death. An' then he delegated forty small, young divils to pull me arms out be the roots an' feed 'em to a big striped dragon with headlights for eyes an' flames shootin' out av his mouth, an' while I was layin' there quiet like, I says to meself, says I, 'Sure this can't be P. O'Rourke, U. S. A., late

av Dublin, to be never raisin' a hand to help himself,' an' with that I opened me eyes to see which one to hit first, an' looked into the face av an angel, for shure it was Phryne there bendin' over me, an' the other ladies playin' the part av the divils I thought had me, instead o' which it was beautiful angels, be Jinks!"

"You ought to pay your compliments in Greek, captain, so the 'angels' could understand you," said Rex, with a smile at the way O'Rourke looked at the girls who sat near by listening to him, but utterly at a loss to comprehend a single word.

"Never you mind there now; I'm not going to bother my head with that stuff, but you can ate me if I don't spend all me spare time teachin' the little one me own tongue; sure it's a pity a swate young thing like that can spake nothin' but that haythen lingo."

"The Greek tongue spoken by these people," said Kent, "is not only one of the oldest known to history, but decidedly the most classic and beautiful, captain, and I assure you the inhabitants are very far from being heathen."

"O'Rourke was joking, Professor," I explained, "and I really think he is rather 'spooney' on Phryne and hasn't the courage to tell her so; you know those bravest on the field of battle are not always good soldiers of Cupid."

"'Spooney,' is it? Now I don't mind sayin' to her face that there's the bonniest bit av a maid in all the land, be Jinks!"

"Why don't you tell her in her own language?" cried Rex, while we all burst into such hearty laughter as we had not indulged in for months,

"I'll tell her in plenty o' time;" said O'Rourke.

And then I deliberately told Cleo, whose hearty peals of laughter made the echoes ring, while O'Rourke turned a deep red beneath the tan of his cheek, and declared that he had one good arm left, and that he was going to use it to bring a deer into camp. He sauntered off, and several others went in various directions for food. Strolling down the stream I found it swarming with fish, and it was the simplest of tricks to stop at a shallow place, and with a dozen willows woven into the shape of a crude tennis racket, scoop as many as I cared for out on to the bank. They made little effort to escape, showing not the least fear as I waded in the water among them, and it must have been their first sight of man. During my sport with the fish, which seemed to be a species of trout, though far more brilliant in coloring, I heard pistol shots from various quarters, and looking down the river could see one of our party about a mile away, having sport with some sort of game. Upon returning to the boat I found O'Rourke back with the carcass of a young deer, while Major Bangs and Dick came in with several grouse such as we had killed upon first entering the valley of Athenia, and Rex had already arrived with an enormous bunch of bananas and the report that grapes and oranges, as well as cocoanuts, could be secured in abundance. We had indeed come upon a land literally "flowing with milk and honey," and after another hearty meal and a rest, we sat to work on a cabin, hewing small bamboo with our heavy swords. Until then I had never appreciated the wonderful utility of this wood, but now I am an earnest

advocate of its cultivation wherever the soil and climate are adapted. In a surprisingly brief time we had constructed a double roomed dwelling of space ample for all, and made seats, shelves and tables without those absolutely indispensable adjuncts of the carpenter—nails and hammer. The heavy leaves served as a thatch, and small cane split and interwoven, made windows. One room we fitted up for the women, and when we had it in readiness for their occupancy we had really reason to feel a pride in our work. Before the door we dug, with spades fashioned from the bamboo stalk, a pit for our cooking fire, laying some flat pieces of lava across it to hold the meat. Thus, with food and drink at our very threshold, a clear sky and warm atmosphere, we were in a way to feel ourselves blessed beyond measure after the dark outlook that had confronted us from the moment we plunged over the cataract. Our pursuers had of course known of our proximity to the cataract when we cut our way through their line at the island, and had given us up as lost. There can be no question of the wisdom of their conclusions, for there was not one chance in a million of our being thrown on the ledge that saved us, even had the boat struck the dividing line of rock, and my guiding it in that direction was more a matter of accident than design, for hope had utterly fled. We had therefore nothing to fear from further pursuit, and our energies must be spent in escaping from the land of paradoxes and making our way toward the coast of Australia or Cape Horn.

Dick had fortunately retained the piece of parchment containing the plan of the land where the men

we had killed had averred there was a boat, and getting it out, we began, with the aid of Cleo and Eurydice, who were carefully educated in the hieroglyphic writing employed, to decipher the secret. Without their aid we should never have made a thing out of the confusing mass of lines and characters beside which the famous cipher of Poe was as clear as English print. Phryne was devoting herself to O'Rourke while the rest of us sat on the ground with Cleo and Eurydice leaning over our shoulders making clear the mystery, and once or twice I caught the sound of an English word coming from her lips, and was amused at her ingenuous simplicity, for her actions at the supposedly dead body of O'Rourke had betrayed her and she did not know it. The chivalrous officer was a patient teacher, too, and refused to laugh at her mistakes which nearly convulsed me.

The plan, as finally deciphered, informed us that a vessel of considerable size was lying near the foot of Mount Hephaestos, and a carefully drawn route pointed out the way from the point in the valley of Athenia where the river entered the mountain side, but since we did not know in which direction that point was from where we were now located, we should be obliged to find some means of crossing from this park to that one—the general direction of which we thought we knew—or search blindly from this side. We chose the former, and leaving the two wounded men and the women with Ruggles, whose bruises were more severe than ours, we four struck out for the edge of the valley nearest us in hopes of finding some way of crossing the range, although the hope was faint,

for if there had been any such natural egress, the valley into which we had come by way of the river would have been settled, and Eurydice had told us that we were in a land unknown to her people. Even the men who drew the chart made no mention of this valley, but it must have been equally unknown to them. But it was absolutely necessary that we have some known point from which to start, for the only prominent landmark was the mountain from which there was but one direction, while most minute directions as to the course to be taken from the starting point named, were embodied in the plan. We must at least attain a position in the immediate neighborhood of the river's entrance to the cañon in order to follow out these directions. There was a unanimity of opinion on that point, and we proceeded accordingly, striking up the slope of the mountain after half an hour's walk, and climbing in and out among forests, the character of which took on a more temperate tone as the altitude increased. It was hard work for our sore bodies, but the line of vegetable growth ceased almost abruptly about two thousand feet above the valley, and shortly above began the cap of perpetual snow and ice.

Here our way grew more difficult with each foot; the air was exceedingly keen, crevasses were numerous and dangerous, and to add to our discomfort a hurricane blew across the barren surface. After an hour's hard work I announced it as my opinion that our deviations around the cracks had been so numerous that while at times we had gained in altitude, we were at the moment no nearer the summit than an

hour before, while the nearest depression between the towering peaks was a good mile above us. We could not make headway from this side, and yet I instinctively felt that this was the only direction we should take. It was therefore not a little disheartening to turn our backs upon the unattainable and prepare for a venture elsewhere along the snow line. Nearly half a mile below us lay the valley—an emerald gem in a lap of ermine—the snowy peaks shutting it in on every side; the fiery funnel of Hephaestos belching forth a steady stream of smoke and liquid fire accompanied by a dull roar that mingled with the mighty music made by the Falls of the Gods as they plunged into the sea on the other side of the mountain and beyond the range of our vision. Our camp seemed almost directly beneath us as we paused and contemplated this grand picture, and I know but one artist in the world who could do justice to that heroic scenery, and if he ever makes the pilgrimage I shall like to see the result on his canvas.

We proceeded along the line of snow toward the mouth of the tunnel, looking carefully for any chance that offered a reasonable hope of ascending, and had covered half a mile when we came to a deep gulch, half filled with the accumulated snows of unnumbered centuries, and resembling an elongated punch bowl half a mile in its greatest diameter. Along the side of this depression we took our way, rising with each step until we stood at its upper end and paused for breath. Above us was an icy incline too steep to climb, and on every other side no hope of gaining our end. We were chilled by the cutting wind, and con-

cluded to return to camp and later proceed by another way. Getting down was decidedly more risky work than coming up, and for smoother walking we chose the very edge of the craterlike hollow. Mounds of ice and snow confronted us at every step, and we picked our way carefully among them.

We had gone halfway down the slope, Rex leading, when Dick gave a cry as I passed behind a hummock of ice and I heard a falling body. Springing to the front, I was horrified to see that Rex had slipped and fallen into the bowl, and as I looked, his body shot down the side like a cannon ball and was buried from our sight in the snow on the bottom a thousand feet below!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE IMPRISONED SHIP.

PETRIFIED by the shock and the suddenness of the accident, we stood for a moment rooted to the spot. It was clearly evident that poor Rex had been killed by the fall, or at best smothered in the snow at the bottom, and from the shape of the bowl in to which he had fallen it was next to impossible for us to enter it with any hope of getting out again, even if by going down we could be of any service to him. We had not had more than three minutes for these and kindred reflections, our eyes on the snowy grave of the brave Rex, when a dark object emerged from the white mass, shook itself free of the clinging blanket and gave such a hearty shout that our previous sadness gave place to uncontrollable laughter, and the mountain side rang with the music.

"It's all right!" he cried, "only soft snow down here; try a slide yourself!"

"Why don't you slide back again?" called Dick.

"I'll come out at the lower end," was the response, as he started through the waist deep snow in that direction, we following along the rim.

But his reckoning had been premature, for to climb up the glassy surface was beyond his power. Some-

times he would make a dozen successful steps, when a slip would land him in the snow at the bottom again. It was forcibly remindful to me of a time when I had imprisoned a chameleon in a china bowl, and the poor little thing nearly ran itself to death in trying to escape.

"Why don't you come up?" again called Dick, "we want to go back to camp."

"When I do get out I'll throw you down here!" cried Rex.

"You'll be too old to fight by that time," responded the teaser.

"It's cold down here," said Rex.

"You're having enough exercise to keep from freezing; keep it up, its good for you; here, catch this!" said Dick, throwing a snowball at his unfortunate friend, which failed, however, to cover half the distance. This brought us to a realization that something must be done to aid him at once, and I called to him to dig steps with his sword and we would dig our way down and meet him.

"Lost my sword in the snow," he called.

"All right; we'll dig you out," I answered, and suiting the action to the word, I began hewing my way down the slope. In an hour we all stood safely on the top once more, and took our way back to camp, and I shall not soon forget the zest with which we greeted the delicious fish and birds that Cleo had cooked and had in readiness for us. To Eurydice, cooking was an unfathomed mystery, while Phryne, having been reared at the palace, knew quite as little, but the girl whom I could scarce realize was my wife,

was an artist, as shown by what she did with no appliances whatever that usually mark a kitchen. The birds she had stuffed with bananas, giving to the game a flavor I can in fancy taste yet, while the fish were served as pieces of baked clay, which when broken apart, revealed the luscious, smoking meat, and wild oranges gave us dessert. Salt we had none; but I had grow accustomed to the lack of this, for it was not used in Athenia save in the most homeopathic quantities, the cooks holding that one never knew the true flavor of a dish unless partaking of it as nature gave it to us, and I am not prepared to offer a flat contradiction to this. At all events we got on well enough without it, though I rebegan its use the moment I found an opportunity. Our precious keg of tobacco had been forsaken when we left the palace, and now that we were permanently encamped to await the mending of broken bones, we missed the luxury of a smoke. But experience proves that man can dispense with more articles to which he has been accustomed than any other animal, and it did not prove such a serious loss to me as I should have imagined had the subject been brought to my notice when I was in a land where it could be procured for a trifle. Instead of smoking, we discussed plans for getting away from the neighborhood, for we none of us cared to spend the remainder of our lives in the limited space of that valley, however delightful it might be as a temporary place of sojourn. We could not return to Athenia, nor did we care to. What we most wanted was to secure the boat, if there be one, and make an effort to row it up the current toward the

cape. The project was certainly a stupendous one, but there was no other mode of escape. There might be clothing aboard ship, and if we were to undertake a journey through the ice, we sadly needed more covering than now adorned our persons, for however graceful the classic tunic of Greece; it was never intended for polar exploration. We had no means of determining the size of this vessel—that seemed rather mythical to me—for no further mention was made of it than that it was capable of bearing a few men. It might prove to be a rotten log canoe, or a derelict, but we did not intend to leave the locality without a sight of it if such a thing could be accomplished. Accordingly, we four who had been chosen as the exploring party once more set out, going this time directly toward the volcano whose summit towered far above the range walling in the valley. It was a brisk walk of two hours across the park, and the hills were rough climbing, but we finally stood upon their crest and looked upon a grand picture. The great mountain of flame frowned above us and the heat was almost scorching at a distance of about five miles, while the slopes in every direction were barren and rocky. The sentinel peak seemed to stand in the center of a valley, the surface of which was a shining bed of hardened lava, while guarding it on three sides were ranges of hills. On the fourth the great river of fire poured across the plateau and fell into the sea. That the lava had flowed down other portions of the mountain we had tangible evidence, but since the Falls of the Gods had been in existence for at least two thousand years, there was no occasion

for alarm that they might suddenly cease to be the outlet for the torrent. It must have been that the lava that fell into the sea was carried underground, and passed again into the raging fires within Hephaestus, else the sea would have been filled with the tremendous amount of molten rock.

As we stood there viewing the grand display, I picked up a piece of lava and was astonished at its great weight. I turned it over in my hand and gave a cry of amazement. It was almost pure gold mixed with lava, and when the others had seen it we gathered several more specimens. Everyone of them was at least fifty per centum gold, and for the first time I saw how the Athenians secured the metal that was used with such lavishness. The mountain side was covered with it, and a man could have gathered a fortune in a single day, but with our wealth in jewels we were rich beyond avarice, and so turned from the vast fortune that lay at our feet—taking but a few small samples—and allowed our eyes to search the landscape for some way of reaching the point from which our directions began.

“Look!” cried Dick, pointing to the range of small hills on our left.

I could see nothing unusual, and said so.

“Beyond the range,” he said, “a little nearer the falls than we landed; don’t you see the ship?”

He was greatly excited, and in a moment more we all shared it, for looking over the top of the range we could see down into a small pocket between it and the green border wall of Athenia, and floating serenely upon a miniature lake that filled this depression and

had no apparent outlet, was a quaint vessel of antique pattern. The location of the lake from where we stood may be represented by a corner of an equilateral triangle about three miles on a side, of which the volcano stood at the southern tip and we at the remaining one, and since we were so near what seemed likely was the object of our journey from camp, we started at once for it, taking advantage of all elevations to shield us from the direct glare and almost unbearable heat of the volcano and the falls, for as we came more fully into view of the latter, their heat, even at the distance of four or five miles, was terrific. We were a full two hours in covering the distance, owing to the rough ground and devious course, but when we stood on the side of the rocky valley within a quarter of a mile of the silent lake, and looked upon the tiny ship floating upon its bosom, our exertions were rewarded by the picture. Sheltered from the fierce heat of the lava, the atmosphere of the tiny valley was delightful. The pocket was entirely barren of vegetation, for nothing but rock and lava covered the land. We were now assured that our first impression of the lake having no outlet was correct, for great mounds of rock of volcanic origin hemmed it in on every side, that nearest the sea, however, being a mere wall a few yards in thickness and sloping to the main body of water beyond. In a few moments we stood upon the shore and surveyed the vessel from the distance of a scant hundred yards.

It was a typical Corinthian galley of not more than one hundred and ten feet keel, although being nearly or quite thirty beam; the bow and stern rose high in

the air, and on the prow was a fine figurehead of Neptune. There had once been oars, but they had vanished, the ports through which they had extended lining the side in two banks. The single mast and sail had gone, and the deck was bare. How this strange craft came there, imprisoned in the landlocked lake, was a mystery too deep for speculation. Although having fallen into desuetude but a comparatively short time after the fall of the Roman Empire, it were palpably absurd to conclude that it was one of the original fleet that had brought hither the ancestors of Eurydice and Cleo, for no wooden vessel could have existed for any such tremendous period. It had probably been built by the men—and accomplices—who would have escaped in it with the stolen treasure, and they had evidently walled it in themselves, though I could see no reason for this, since a simple anchor would have sufficed to retain it.

Thus we reasoned as we stood upon the shore, while the idea of a toy like that weathering the storms of the terrible Horn was highly amusing. We did not frame any explanation for the missing mast, oars, or sail—they could be accounted for later. Our present desire was to board her, and I stooped and felt the temperature of the water. It was delightfully warm, and without a word to the others, I hurriedly threw off my tunic, plunged in and struck out for the galley, reaching and boarding it before any of them followed. But they did not long hesitate; and when they had all climbed aboard we proceeded to investigate our prize, if such it should prove. Going forward, I saw that the mast had been broken off about

two feet above the deck, and to test the condition of the timber, the species of which I could not judge, I struck it with my sword, when to my astonishment the weapon rebounded as if it had been struck against metal, and upon looking at the edge I saw that it had been slightly indented. Truly, thought I, this is hard wood, and stooped closer, touching it. Instantly was the circumstance explained—the wood had petrified! There was nothing very remarkable about this; similar things had been accomplished in many other parts of the world, notably in the Western United States, where whole forests had fallen and petrified in the open air, and the coal of commerce was nothing else than the petrification of a certain class of vegetation. But it was not the fact of the petrification that now set us to thinking, but its startling succession of certainties regarding the ancient ship, for that she was very old there was no longer any room for doubt.

“Let’s go below,” suggested Rex, “and see what we can find.”

We did so, and upon entering the waist and opening the cabin door, discovered that that too was solid stone, though it struck me as being rather porous than dense. I ran back on deck, and leaning over the side, struck the flat edge of my sword against the vessel. The blade rang like a bell!

“Boys,” I cried, “the whole ship is petrified!”

The cabin had the appearance of having been hurriedly vacated, and several gold coins lay on the floor which at once convinced us that the thieves had not set foot on it but had merely viewed it from the shore. There were shelves for sleeping and a large bronze

brazier for cooking. Several handsome gowns lay on a locker and I picked one up.

It crumbled to pieces in my hands!

And this while retaining the bright hues of its original dyes. Had we been sceptics up to this point we were sceptics no longer.

"Why of course it's one of the original fleet!" cried Rex when he in turn held the dust of a crimson gown in his fingers.

"It is almost incredible" said Major Bangs "but I can't see any other explanation of the gowns rotting like that; it only happens in an extremely dry atmosphere that they are apparently preserved while actually undergoing a dry rot."

"But just think, major," said Dick; "two thousand years; that's a fearful time!"

"Yes, but Pompeii is nearly that old, too, and wonderful preservations have been found there."

"Oh, hang your theories!" cried Rex; "here are evidences in a dozen shapes that prove that it has been that long since this boat came here; why, the whole ship is petrified, and look at the money there on the floor!"

He pointed dramatically to the gold that we had not touched, as conclusive proof of his belief, and we were silent. He began rummaging in a corner and presently drew out a small cask. It was stone, and so perfect had been the transformation that but for feeling it we would have believed it. The staves and rude hoops were as perfect and apparently fresh as if just made.

"It's wine!" cried Dick. "Great Cæsar's ghost!"

Wine two thousand years old! It makes me mad with joy to think of the contents of that cask. Open it, Rex."

"If it ever contained wine, it probably evaporated about the time of the Crucifixion," I said dryly.

"Not in stone;" said Rex, looking for the original bung.

"Oh, let 'Bardy' talk to himself, Rex; for Heaven's sake pull the plug or I'll go mad with ungratified anticipation; think of it, man, just think of it!"

"Well, I can't open it; here, try it yourself, and don't drink it all, either."

Dick took the cask, and raising his eyes, said: "Aid me, O Bacchus!" in such comical tones that we burst out laughing, while he set to work on the stone, and soon succeeded in opening the plug, put his nose to the hole.

"Oh, ye Gods!" he cried; "nectar straight from Olympus; what ho, slave! Give me yon flagon!"

He pointed in a tragic manner to a crystal mug and Rex handed it to him. He poured from the cask a dark liquor that ran into the mug thickly, and raising the filled vessel to his lips, said: "To the flower and beauty of ancient Greece! May thy spirits live through all eternity!"

The wine gurgled pleasantly down his throat, and when the last drop had gone he lay his head back, rolled his eyes and heaved a contented sigh.

"Was it good?" asked Rex.

Dick looked at him reproachfully from where he lay against the locker.

"Don't disturb me with your modern babble; I am

in Heaven with Homer and Sophocles and the rest of the 'push;' " he said, closing his eyes, while we made the little cabin ring with laughter.

Rex caught up the cask, and filling the cup, drank it without a word. Then, looking at us; "Dick was right," he said, "I join him in heaven;" and lay down on the floor beside the other devotee of the God of Wine.

Although shaking with laughter, I poured a cup and handed it to Bangs.

"By Jove; what wine!" he cried, while I again filled the cup and held it up to the light. It was darker than sherry and possessed a subdued sparkle as if gold in suspension were incorporated with it, and I tasted it.

The sensation that began at my palate, passed to my head, permeated my whole system and settled in my legs as that heaven-sent blessing trickled down my throat, can never be known to mortal man beyond those who shared it. I simply knew that I had drunk wine that was made before the star hovered over Bethlehem, and that man in his most fantastic dreams had never conceived the like. The effect was not intoxicating; it was exhilarating in the extreme—but I shall not attempt to describe it. We did not crave more just then but preferred to save the precious liquor for later lingering dreams of bliss.

By the use of two girdles we slung the cask carefully, and picking up the gold from the floor, left the cabin and the galley, Rex and I towing our treasure between us.

After a tedious journey we once more came to our

camp, and throwing ourselves down, I began the relation of our experiences, checking their curiosity and reserving for the last their introduction to the divine nectar. When they had tasted it, all were in the same state as we who had found it, and with one more sip we lay down in the shade of the cabin, and were soon in the land of shadows and most heavenly dreams.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM.

THE greatest curiosity manifested itself among the entire party, and poor Kent bewailed the fate that kept him a prisoner while we were able to make such glorious discoveries. We all visited the galley again, and were busy on plans to free her from her rock bound prison. To dig her out would be a tremendous task, but there was no other way, and the rocks that walled her in being free, we began the work, having first moved our camp to the lower end of the valley and within three miles of the lake. There were only five available men, but while we labored, the work made the time pass less tediously and Kent and O'Rourke were rapidly convalescing. We toiled constantly for a month before we were rewarded by any appreciable diminution of the barrier, and had gone to sleep one evening, when we were startled by violent rumblings in the earth, and Hephaestos burst forth into a torrent of flame a hundred times its ordinary volume, while the increased heat was almost unbearable. The earth rocked, and great seams from which issued smoke and flames, opened in the hillsides. We were badly frightened, and the disturbances continued incessantly for about seventy hours. When it

had grown quiet again we went to the ship to continue our work, but upon looking down from the hillside we saw that what we should have been another month in doing had been effected for us by nature in a trice. The land had been torn asunder, and the stone ship lay at the end of the channel that extended away from us on the north for several miles, and opened into the sea, while the galley moved about strangely, as if by some force within the ancient hull. I felt the water. It was warmer than before, and a stick I was carrying, floated away up the channel when I threw it out toward the vessel. We swam out and boarded her. The rudder had vanished ages ago, but an oar could be made and devised to guide her in quiet waters. It was our only hope.

While we were on board the vessel began floating toward the channel, and we saw that if not anchored it would drift away from us, for the warm water was flowing north through the new way opened by the convulsions, and the way of at least partial escape lay open before us. Those Grecian girls swam like seals, and while we men were discussing the means of escape, they three were in the warm water swimming about the ship, their loosened hair moving rhythmically with their draperies as they glided through the water like mermaids. They dived off the deck and under the hull, and chased each other from side to side of the beautiful pool, the hills echoing their silvery peals of laughter. They were only simple children, these beautiful women who in times of danger and trouble could be so helpful and encouraging to us all.

There was nothing of value to us on board the gal-

ley. The centuries had done well their work, but every article that had been originally wood was now turned to stone, and on the bottom of the lake we found several of the original oars. One of these we secured and placed for use as a tiller, and for another month we busied ourselves in securing and smoking meat and fish for our final journey. Ammunition had become a precious article, and we were forced to devise traps. Fish were easily caught, and we had built a "pound" from which we scooped them by thousands, smoking and storing them in bamboo casks in the construction of which we had become expert through the suggestions of Ruggles.

The valley was swarming with life, and many animals supposed to be extinct came into our traps. The groves were inhabited by an odd species of monkey with ludicrously long tails, though in contradistinction to the common animal of this class these caudal appendages were not prehensile, and Kent was delighted at securing several fine specimens, though we did not kill any for food. He said that they were the relics of vast tribes that inhabited the Antarctic Continent when the land here enjoyed a tropic climate ages before man was evolved. It was a source of the keenest satisfaction to us all when the Professor was able, with some assistance from us and a crutch, to climb the hills and for the first time inspect the wonderful relic of that civilization of which he was such an ardent student, and when he once stood upon the deck of the ancient vessel, we made it our permanent headquarters. The cabin was ample in size for our accommodation, and by transporting bamboo across

the divide we were able to fit up a section for the ladies, where they could secure privacy as complete as in a sleeping car and in the comfortable arranging of which they took much pride and displayed great taste.

There was one thing lacking which caused me great uneasiness—fuel and a place for fire. The original mariners who had manned the craft had been satisfied with a tiny brazier but for us who were about to brave the rigors of the ice something more substantial would, I knew have to be devised. We were fortunate in one thing—fire could be built anywhere about the galley—it was stone—and this fact gave me the idea for what followed. Taking a six inch stalk of bamboo of proper length I split it in halves and plastered the inside with a mixture of clay and the fibres of the cane lashing the two halves together when complete. I then constructed a fireplace of lava and stones on the floor of the cabin set up my novel pipe through a hole cut in the deck above, and we were in a small measure prepared for the ice. Cutting the pipehole occupied two entire days, and wore out many sharp pieces of lava, but the false stone being porous from the excessive dryness of the original wood, the task was eventually accomplished. Our cabin was then made as nearly air-tight as plaster could make it, and we proceeded with the loading of fuel. We were obliged to hoist anchor and proceed down the channel toward Athenia, or carry the wood several miles across the mountains, and preferred the risk incurred in the former course. The boat glided down the stream in the opposite direction to that in which the *Polaris* had carried us, and we landed near

the very point at which we had dragged the small boat ashore after seeing our ship go to her glorious end. O'Rourke proved that he had one good arm by assisting in the storing of wood, and a portion of the party was engaged in this task while the rest went inland to secure the boat. This we found as we had left it, and with a little of our warm clothing when we should need it, we were prepared for escape from the land.

Dry wood in great quantities was at hand, and we piled the deck with it, lashing it in place with vines until it was as rigid as it could be made, and as firm as rope would have secured it. We had sufficient food for a six months' voyage if necessary, but I hoped that we would be picked up long before such a weary age should have seen us quartered on the stone ship, which floated rather too low in the water to suit me as a home for any great length of time on an open sea. We were all in readiness for departure and intended leaving at once, when O'Rourke came to me with an odd expression on his jolly face.

"'Bardy,'" he said, "I was goin' to make it a surprise for you all when we landed on our own soil once more, but there's an obstructionist element in the camp, an' the bill has got to be modified to suit the existin' contingencies."

"What the deuce are you talking about?" I asked, puzzled.

"I was merely sayin' that the passage of the bill authorizin' the vessel to depart in p'ace, could not be accomplished owin' to a defect in her clearance papers."

I looked at him sharply, but his expression was inscrutable. He took me by the arm, and drawing me mysteriously aside—although there was no one within earshot—said with a twinkle in his eye and in an impressive whisper: “‘Bardy,’ me boy; bein’ as you’re a married man an’ ought to know the whims an’ caprices av the gentle sex, could you do me a favor?”

I laughed at the idea of my being a married man who could be of service in such a case, since my wife was as much a stranger to me as she had been before the ceremony was performed, but he pretended such seriousness that I told him to go ahead.

“If a woman sets her mind on a thing, is it best to give in at once an’ let her have her way, or argue the p’int in question?” he asked, looking over his shoulder.

“There’s a popular impression prevailing among married men that argument in such a case is a waste of breath,” I responded, “and if my memory serves me, there is also a time-honored axiom about a woman convinced against her will; did you never hear it?”

“I have, ‘Bardy,’ me boy, but is it true av all o’ them?”

“I should think the safer course would be to presume that it was,” I replied.

He heaved a sigh, and said: “Then the ship can’t sail.”

“What on earth are you driving at?” I cried.

“I’m not drivin’; I’m bein’ driven,” he answered.

“What’s up?” cried Rex, coming up; “You fellows act as if some deep conspiracy were being hatched.”

"O'Rourke has taken too much of that old wine, I fancy," I answered.

"Now, 'Bardy,' you don't believe that, do you?"

"You act it;" I said, laughing at the comical expression on his face.

"Well, to disabuse your mind o' that impression, I'll tell you what ails me. I'm going to be married," he said solemnly.

"Going to be married!" cried Rex and I in a breath.

"You have good ears," he answered.

"Married to whom?" asked Rex.

"She's in the cabin beyond," he said.

"Phryne?" we cried together.

"Phryne," he briefly replied.

"But who's going to marry you?" I asked.

"That's the p'int I'm gettin' at."

"You kept your courting mighty quiet," was Rex's comment while O'Rourke winked knowingly.

"I knew it was coming but didn't expect it so soon;" I said "but who is going to marry you?"

"The stone god" he answered.

"The stone god!" I cried.

"Sure! The one that married you boys."

"No 'stone god' married me!" cried Rex.

"Nor me; it was a priest," I added.

"It was the marble Vanus; Phryne said so, an' Phryne knows; the praste only did the talkin' for the stone god."

"I guess that's so," said Rex thoughtfully.

"But the temple is in Athenia; we can't go there," said I.

"Then Phryne and P. O'Rourke, U. S. A., will go alone, be Jinks!"

"No you won't!" said Rex. "If marriage with Phryne will make you a happy pair, you can count on every man here seeing you through, but I can't see why you must go there to be married; why not be married right here, or wait until we get home?"

"Phryne says Vanus has got to boss the ceremony, an' 'Bardy', speakin' from the standp'int av a married man, says I'd waste me breath tryin' to talk her out av it."

"If she says that, 'Bardy' is right," said Rex, with decision.

"Let's go and tell the rest at once," I said.

The prospective marriage was hailed with delight by all, and the jolly officer and his lovely mate were showered with good wishes. No amount of argument would convince Phryne that any ceremony unblessed by Venus would amount to anything. Her faith in her own religion could not be shaken, and it was either a marriage in the temple, or O'Rourke would remain a bachelor. Since he said he preferred death at the hands of the Greeks; we could do nothing but return to the city at once, and in an hour we were away over the hills, leaving only Kent and Ruggles with the ship. Eurydice and Cléo would not be left behind, and wearing tunics, and with hair done up in close coils, came with us.

Our plan was to go to the upper end of the valley at the beginning of the aqueduct and secure the boat that Eurydice said was used by a guard who patrolled the underground river, and with this float down to

the temple and enter it by way of the crypt, leaving the water at the lower end, and hastening across the valley, and acting upon this decision, we made our way by a circuitous route along the edge of the oasis. The city lay in peace under the bright blue sky, its golden roofs gleaming in the sunshine, and giving no hint of the revolution that must have been created in so peaceful a community by the flight of their queen. That remarkable young woman looked at the handsome husband who strode at her side, and as I watched her narrowly, I am of the opinion that she considered the exchange of a despotic throne for his name and love decidedly favorable to herself. For the better use of her limbs in the journey, Phryne had adopted the masculine garb, and being but a trifle shorter than Eurydice, the three made as pretty a picture as artist could crave; Cleo, tall, athletic, yet womanly withal, her glorious black hair tumbling in masses about her neck and shoulders, her step as graceful as the motion of a leopard; Eurydice, but an inch less in height, slender, yet beautifully rounded in every contour, her lithe limbs spurning the earth she trod, her head carried with the grace of the queen born, her golden-blond hair reflecting the rays of the sun; and the dainty, yet active Phryne, looking like a boy of eighteen in the fullness of perfect training, ready for a contest of strength and endurance they were a perfect, beautiful trio.

After a march of six hours we reached the bank of the river where it foamed down the mountain side, and keeping ourselves well within the screen of the forest, prepared to rest for a few hours, and then

enter the valley prepared for whatever might befall us. From this point we should be exposed to view, and while the distance from the city was too great for us to be seen, there was no telling when some one might show himself, while from the beginning of the aqueduct proper we would be within pistol shot of the arena and plainly discernible from the city. Had we had the kindly cover of night to aid us we would have experienced no difficulty in reaching the tunnel, but there was no night, and the sun was never obscured by the smallest cloud. A repast of smoked meat and a drink from the icy spring were our sole nourishment, but our bodies were long since inured to deprivations and hardships, and beneath the shade of the thick forest we slept like weary children. My watch was of small service to me, yet I had clung to it through every vicissitude. It had once been an excellent timepiece, but some magnetic influence had disarranged its delicate mechanism and its movements were distressingly eccentric. We probably slept four hours before making ready for the final move, and with a piece of smoked venison each, we tightened our girdles, saw to our swords, and the men to their pistols, and cautiously yet rapidly left the forest and moved down the bank of the river. It was a long walk to the aqueduct, but we met with no accident and saw not a sign of human life until we reached the approach, when we beheld the boat of which Eurydice had spoken, and in it, sound asleep in the full glare of the sun, two men.

Instantly I dropped on my face and the others followed my action. By motions I made them under-

stand that Rex, Bangs and I would secure the men while the others lay quiet. Silently we crept down the slope to within a few feet of the unconscious forms, when we sprang upon them, disarmed them, and before they could realize that they were not dreaming, they were bound hand and foot and were lying upon the grass, while I told them in a tone they quite understood that an outcry meant instant death. For the first time since entering this land I saw the hue of fear on men's faces, and for a moment could not comprehend it. But it came to me, and I asked them where Eurydice was.

"The gods spare us!" said one; "Ye are spirits; the fair queen and those who stole her were hurled to death in the Great Pit, and here ye appear before us; are ye, then, gods?"

"We are;" I answered, at once seeing a way out of the trouble by playing upon their superstition. "We come not in anger, but bring your queen to you, she was carried over the falls into the Great Pit, and now dwells with we of Olympus."

The men listened in awe, and I then called to Dick in English, telling him what I had done and for him to tell Eurydice and the others in Greek, and low, so that the men could not hear him. When he had had ample time, I called to Eurydice in Greek to come to me, and she arose and walked down the sloping bank to the river. When the prisoners saw her they burst forth into prayers to the gods for the safety and happiness of their beloved queen, and I saw that they were sincerely affected by the miracle, for which they can scarcely be blamed, for our escape from the terri-

ble fall was little less. But however much they were impressed by my unique falsehood, I did not feel that it were best to release them, and assuring them that they would be freed in a short time—though I did not tell them by whom—we borrowed their boat and swords and set forth upon the stream, entering the tunnel with their lamp blazing upon the bow. We reached the familiar bridge leading to the crypt, and securing the boat where we could quickly board it, went ashore and followed the corridor into the underground sanctuary, thence up the steps and paused at the door with the symbol of Hera carved upon its surface. In a body we entered, but found ourselves alone in the room where before Cadius had lain asleep.

“He is probably at the shrine,” spoke up Cleo.

We took up the way through the small door and passed on into the chamber where the former double marriage had been solemnized. Our entrance had been so silent that we came upon the young priest unawares, and when he looked up and saw who were before him he started back in genuine alarm. But I could see that he was not a man to be imposed upon, and relying upon his honor to his sister and Eurydice, I briefly told him how we had escaped from the pit, saying that the proof of the friendliness of the gods lay in that fact. This so impressed him that he believed he had performed an act looked with favor upon by the gods, and the marriage of Phryne before her precious goddess took place without delay.

“An’ are we now man an’ wife, Misther Cadius?” asked O’Rourke of the priest.

I translated, and the happy man threw his arms

around his bride, crying; "Sure you're Mrs. P. O'Rourke, U. S. A., you little darlin'," and gave her a rousing kiss that almost made us desecrate the chapel with a laugh.

Cadius bade us farewell, and we left the temple. But our way was not to be so peaceful as our coming, for in the main chamber of the crypt we came upon a funeral cortege. At least fifty men were lined about the body, and the moment we came in sight they threw themselves upon us like demons. But fortunately they were armed with daggers only, and before our drawn swords they paused, while we backed away down the corridor leading to the river, they following as closely as safety permitted, and watching for an opening to rush in upon us. At the bridge we turned and ran up the flight of steps, when a half dozen, bolder than their companions, followed us so quickly that I was taken off my guard, and had it not been that Cleo would not leave my side, should have lost my life.

A sharp cry from her as she turned toward the enemy, and I saw a man right upon me, his gleaming dagger descending upon my back. I could do nothing to save myself, and felt the hand of death already upon me, when the brave girl's sword shot out and buried itself in the broad chest, while the man fell heavily and knocked me down. Before I could regain my feet a fierce hand-to-hand conflict was raging above me; swords sank with a sickening sound into bodies and crashed through skulls, until I was beneath a mass of dead men, frantically struggling to rise. My friends, Cleo and Dick side by side above

me, were fighting valiantly, even the newly made bride wielding her sword, while Eurydice, looked in the glare of the torches like a veritable "Brunnhilde" as she helped to stem the terrible tide of murderous men. Rex saw that I was alive, and with a strength at which I even then marveled, and which nearly cost me an arm, pulled me from beneath the pile, and once more we retreated across the bridge, contesting every inch of the way to the boat.

Quickly we sprang aboard, and with a parting cheer of defiance, pushed into the current, leaving the shrieking mob of bloodthirsty maniacs swarming along the bridge and down the steps to the water's edge. It was impossible for them to follow us by this way, and grasping the oars we pulled for life through the tunnel, to reach the end and daylight before they could give the alarm and rush overland to intercept us.

When we came out no one was in sight, and I believe to this day that their utter defeat was laid at the door of our fancied supernatural power. We had not received a scratch, and after a hard journey, more than half of which was made running, we once more came out of the valley, crossed the wooded hills and saw our ship before us. This time we lost not a moment, but weighing anchor, bade a final farewell to the land, gazed upon the fiery falls and the smoking summit of Hephaestos, and with a deep thankfulness that we were all still together, glided into the channel on our way toward the walls of ice and freedom beyond.

CHAPTER XXV.

CRUSHED IN THE ICE.

PEN cannot convey our feelings of relief as the queer vessel—which in honor of the ladies, we had named the *Eurycleph*—moved from the shore and we knew that our faces were finally set toward that land which to us men was home, while to the brave women who had cast in their lots with ours and made at least three of us happy, it was a country of shadows and dreams. From time to time we had told them of the cities that had been born since their civilization came to an abrupt pause; of the great nations of Europe, and of the glorious land over which waved the banner of freedom; of railways and steamships; of the use of electricity, and the tremendous buildings. But they listened as might a child to a fairy tale, and the stories were even less real to them. They did not doubt, else they would not have trusted us, but it was simply beyond their comprehension. Progress had with them stopped when their ancestors left Greece two thousand years before, and though they had created a perfect physical race, they were otherwise no further advanced than when the philosophy of Socrates was fresh from the sage's lips. The world they knew was encompassed by the ice mountains

within range of their vision; that they knew but vaguely from their scant knowledge of their own history, was a mythical country far over a great sea, from which their ancestors had migrated long ages ago. They spoke their own classic tongue in its perfect purity; they could read the writings of their philosophers and write their own thoughts. Their purity of mind was as a baby's, and their bodies the splendid result of twenty centuries devoted to the eradication of every physical weakness. I dwell upon this last fact for the reason that no such creatures in human shape had I ever dreamed of, and it seemed impossible for a Creator to improve them. They had never known what illness meant, and to lie in a bed of sickness was beyond their understanding. Headaches were no more to be conveyed to their comprehension than the mechanism of a phonograph, and the teeth of the aged were as sound as their children's. Death came when the body was worn out with age—not before, unless in conflict—and centenarians were as common as babies.

As we entered the main channel through which we had come on the *Polaris*, we encountered a current even stronger than the newly created one, and through some influence of the falls and the heat, it was flowing north. I could not solve the riddle, and the best Kent could do was to advance the theory that this influence was exerted negatively and positively, with the Pole as the center, intermittently, and that in rounding the Horn and going after the school of whales, we had come within its scope when it was flowing south. He said that this current now moving

north was nothing unusual to navigators, in which he was upheld by Captain Ruggles, but that our meeting it when it was in motion in the opposite direction was because of our having been driven from our course when the machinery was broken in the storm and we had pursued the whales. At that time we had gone far south of the usual path of whalers, and our broken machinery prevented us from escaping from the ocean river that then flowed toward the falls to replace the waste caused by the great heat. The heated waters were now pouring north into the cold Pacific, and it was more than probable that a similar current was at the same time flowing toward the Pole from the eastern Atlantic and Indian oceans. The theory was sound, though we could not prove its correctness at this time.

Within an hour we were between the walls of eternal ice, and the climate had changed to one in which heavier clothing became necessary, though the warm current served to moderate what would otherwise have been an arctic temperature, and a fog bank began to rise from the water, growing more decided as we moved onward. An experimental fire was started in the cabin and proved a great success at heating the apartment as well as we could wish, and assuring us that we should not suffer from the cold as long as fuel lasted, and our store we considered ample for many months. The small boat, which we had provisioned, hung from the stern, and could readily be made use of in case of danger to the *Eurycleph*. The season had advanced to such an extent that for the first time in three months the sun sank for some little time be-

low the horizon before again rising, and we were once more able to define night and day. The fog grew denser as we continued north, and amid such enormous quantities of perpetual ice the warm current had little effect on the atmosphere, and exposure to the outer air was fraught with much suffering, clad as we were in the scant garments of Athenia, with but a trifle of our clothing saved from the ship. We were obliged to keep to the cabin as much as possible, and to this end one man was detailed to go on deck and remain there for ten minutes in each half-hour. This gave us ample time for sleep and involved no hardship on any one of us. The current was very rapid between the walls of ice, and during the first forty-eight hours we must have covered at least five hundred miles. It did not seem of any great importance to us whether the prow or stern of our vessel pointed ahead, or whether she floated broadside on, and since she could go but in the one direction, the rudder was abandoned until we should come into the open sea. I dreaded the thought of leaving the protecting ice for the fearful storms we were sure to encounter in those tempestuous waters, and could only hope that fortune would quickly cast us in the track of some whaler or merchantman, for in our helpless condition without sail or steering gear, life would be but a question of a few moments in any but a gentle sea. We spent the time languidly, sleeping a great deal, but many an hour I improved in teaching English to Cleo. She was an apt pupil, and since I began by teaching her nouns and then entire sentences, she was very soon able to use the common expressions in vogue, and to me

would strive to talk and think in my language entirely. A class was formed, and not an unnecessary word of Greek was permitted for an hour at a time. I would speak to some one, using an ordinary phrase and then translating it, and then repeat it several times, the others imitating me until the sound of the phrase conveyed its meaning to our fair scholars and they would speak it as readily as if it were a familiar friend. And an expression once learned was never forgotten, and a lesson never had to be repeated, save that the phrases previously learned were used whenever it was possible, thus keeping them fresh in their minds. Thus the days merged into a week and the walls of ice still hemmed us in. Although we had no means of measuring distance, or determining direction or location, it was the general opinion that on the eighth day after leaving Athenia we were in the neighborhood of sixty degrees south latitude and eighty degrees west longitude, or close upon the group of barren islands known as the South Shetland. The days were regularly marked by sunrise and sunset, and we had retired on the evening of the eighth day, leaving Dick and O'Rourke as alternate watches, and were in deep sleep when there was a rude shock and terrible crash that threw us all together in a heap, smashing the partition in the cabin and spilling the fire over the floor. The smoke filled the narrow quarters, when Dick rushed in, followed by O'Rourke.

"We're between the bergs! Hurry out for your lives!" cried the latter before Dick could speak.

But that young man made a dive for the corner, and by the light of the fire on the floor hauled out the jars

of jewels and grasping one under each arm, shot out on deck. The noise of the collision ceased with the one crash, and we ran out to note the amount of the damage, when Dick rushed past us and again appeared with two more jars. The night was brilliant starlight, the bergs towering above us like spirit mountains. We had been cast upon the edge of an enormous one, and were lying heeled over until the firewood on the deck overhung the water, while the vessel itself was ground to pieces for at least a third of its forward length. I ran back and calmed the ladies, telling them to gather all their belongings, for the wreck was complete, the giant berg that had done the damage now floating away with the rebound, while we lay high and dry on the other, its pinnacles and peaks towering above us into the dark-blue sky. Even though spared instant death, our position was desperate. The stove was wrecked and we had before us but the one alternative—we must put to sea in the small boat and trust to be picked up by some passing vessel. The wind was sharp, and beyond the limits of the group of bergs, the number of which we could not judge, there was probably a gale blowing. Yet we must be near the islands mentioned, and if so, had a chance of meeting a whaler within a few days. Could we have got nearer the Cape, our chances would have seen immense improvement, for we should then have been in the track of regular traders, while here we were many leagues to the south. While we were on the ice the cabin could be used for shelter from the bitter cold, and we at once built a huge fire before the sloping deck which threw a grateful warmth into the

wreck of our home. Dick had deposited the jewels in the boat.

"I don't propose to lose those unless I go with them to the bottom," he said with decision; "I've fought and bled for them for months, and if we ever reach New York again I'm going to have them with me "

"Sure they'll come handy," was O'Rourke's sole comment.

We hunted up every article of clothing in our possession, and I gave expression to a prayer of gratitude for the spirit that actuated the poor sailor who went to his death in the Falls of the Gods, as I saw the three girls wrapped deep in those great, shaggy bear skins, their dear faces alone showing in the glare and waving shadows cast by our bivouac fire. There are queer things happen to every man, but when we went ashore after escaping from the *Polaris*, little did any of us foresee such a use of the skins that then seemed such a mockery to us. We passed the remaining few hours of darkness in keeping warm, and when morning dawned, prepared to leave the berg. The rough ice sloped to the water which lapped against its sides, and to launch the boat was no great task. As many provisions as we could carry would keep us alive for a month, and two of our casks of water were stowed away as carefully as these life-preservers demanded. We stepped the mast and rigged the sail, and with the three bear-skin-clad girls securely ensconced in the depths while the men arranged themselves as suited them, Captain Ruggles was delegated the tiller, and with hearts far from merry we glided out among the bergs.

All day long a steady breeze carried us through them, and when night again fell we had not parted company with the great field of ice. When the stars appeared, never did my eyes linger so fondly and hopefully upon them as when I followed Ruggles' finger and saw, low down on the horizon, the pale gleam of the North Star.

"Pretty low down from these latitudes," he said quietly, "but I like to sail by her; she's certain; some use the cross, but Polaris suits me; that's why I named my ship after her; never had any trouble till I forgot her and went to chasing those whales, and if she hasn't gone back on me for the slight, we'll pull out of this yet."

His words were as if some living creature were his guide, and his voice was tender when he spoke of the tiny speck so illimitably distant.

"Now there's the Cross off there; don't think so much of it; 't isn't half what I used to think it was before I saw it, and nothing could make me go back on the North Star; no sir."

We were the only ones awake. Cleo lay with her head against my knees, sound asleep, while Phryne and Eurydice were nestled amidships with their lovers, and we spoke in undertones as we glided over the swelling sea under the eyes of the silent guardians of the night.

"Let's see: what month is this?" he asked, breaking in upon my reflections.

I had to think for a moment before replying. "We sighted the Horn in the middle of January, and were a week before landing in Athenia; why, by Jove! this must be late in May!"

"I believe you are a couple of weeks short; it is more likely June; about the first week."

"Do you think it is so late as that?" I asked.

"Yes, and I'm pretty certain of it. You see that group of stars off there over the port 'midship?"

"Those with the bright one at the top?"

"Yes; well, we're sailing northeast by east, quarter north, and that cluster is northwest."

"Yes," I said, interested.

"Well, of course you know they change their positions, and we sailors have to know them. Beside, on many a night a man hasn't any other company, and he gets acquainted with the peaceful stars that sail along so far above the stormy seas. Now, that group in January had the bright star on the side, and they move around gradually from month to month, so that I can calculate pretty closely to the present month being June, and if luck is with us and we meet up with a ship, we'll all be home again sometime in July."

At this moment Bangs and Dick came aft to take their watch, and with careful instructions from Ruggles to keep the North Star over their port bow, we went forward and dropped into the bottom. Sleep came soon, and the land of dreams was shattered by a rousing cheer in our ears. I sat up and looked about me.

"A sail! a sail!" cried Dick, while the others waved their hands and shouted in delirium.

The dawn was just breaking, the sea was clear of ice, and directly ahead and bearing down upon us not a mile away, was the black hull of a steamer. It was the gladdest sight that ever greeted my eyes and I shouted for joy. Cleo clung close against me and

asked what awful thing it was with smoke pouring from it as it rushed through the water. I explained to her that it was a steamship such as I had told her of, and that we were saved, but she was not altogether satisfied, and her look of fear was reflected on the face of Eurydice and Phryne to whom Rex was explaining the—to them—wonderful sight. In a few minutes a voice bawled through a trumpet to lower sail, and this we did, while the steamer slowed down and came on toward us. Within a couple of hundred yards a boat was lowered and four men pulled toward us while we grasped our oars and pulled to meet them.

"Who are you?" they called.

"Survivors of the *Polaris*, Captain Ruggles, from New York in January," promptly answered Ruggles.

"We are the *City of Galveston*, excursion from New York to Hong Kong," said the man, turning his oars and starting back. "Come aboard, sir."

In ten minutes we all stood upon the deck, surrounded by scores of passengers eager for our story, but the kindly Captain Brown piloted us away after promising them that later they should be gratified. Warm food was given us, and the ladies were turned over to the care of the stewardess, while the captain came along with us to get the particulars of our wreck. I told him the tale from where Ruggles left off with his nautical account, and for proof of our truthfulness we wore the garments of a people inhabiting a warm climate, and beside possessed the gold swords the jars of precious stones, and above all, our three wives from the wonderful land. Amazement but mildly conveys his condition of mind when our story

was ended, and I had to promise him to give the whole of the passengers and crew a minute narration of our experiences in the evening. I kept the promise, and after dinner had been dispatched, began the pleasant task. Our party was grouped at one end of the great saloon, garbed as was our wont in Athenia, the ladies wearing their richest gowns and blazing with jewels. Cleo was in crimson, her beautiful hair held in place by an ampyx of gold braid; Eurydice wore a yellow gown, its soft folds outlining her queenly figure, and Phryne chose an immaculate white. Beside their wondrous beauty the fairest blossom among that aristocratic company looked commonplace. The women went into raptures over our wives, and the men were stricken dumb.

I began our story from the loss of the *Polaris* in the fiery falls; took my hearers with us to the Golden City, and when the introduction to the queen came, handed Eurydice up by my side for their approval. I introduced them to the queen's cousin, and called Phryne beside her beautiful mistress. I took them to the arena and showed them the chariot race, the combats and the peerless Cleo Andromeda in her crimson gown as she held sway over her people who would have placed her on the throne of Eurydice. I carried them with me through the treasure chamber, into the temple's crypt, and made their blood run cold with the description I gave them of our fight in the dark; to the execution block we went with Cyrillus, and through the subterranean river; to Ilyssus, where the messengers followed us, and back to the marriage in the vault of the temple. Once more we fought our

way down the river; again we plunged over the falls into the Great Pit; through the outlet into the sequestered valley, and over the mountains to the petrified ship. On our life in the valley I dwelt, and thence back to our original landing-place, and then the marriage of Phryne and the final fight for freedom. Again we came through the walls of ice; our ship was crushed between the giants; we took to the sea and were rescued by those before us.

My tale was ended, and they fell upon us with congratulations on our good fortune withal and final escape. We were the lions of the ship, and a vote to carry us to San Francisco and set us ashore so that we might reach our homes earlier, was carried by acclamation. Nothing was good enough for us, and our wives were deluged with all sorts of presents from the ladies, while a wardrobe was found for each of us men from among the passengers. Until we left them at the dock in the California metropolis, we were kings and queens, and before bidding them farewell, our three wives went among them with jewels and gave to each a single stone worth a small fortune. From my private jar I gave the captain a ruby as clear as a drop of crystallized blood, and as large as a hazel nut. I am certain he cannot match it for ten thousand dollars, if at all. They waved us a final good-by and we took carriages for the Palace Hotel, where we wished to remain until some of the stones could be sold and suitable clothing purchased. When at last we were shown to our rooms, I felt that peace had come, for within the hour a clergyman had united three couples in marriage by a service in conformity with the laws of our country.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOME AGAIN.

For some years previous to my adventures in the Antarctic I had had my eye on a country place, coveting it for my home, and determining if the day ever came when I could command the means to buy it, that I would purchase it, marry, and settle down there. It is within two hours sail of the city of New York, and the grounds slope from the house to the beautiful waters of Long Island Sound. Groves and lawns rest the eye, and a fine conservatory contains the rarest of flowers and fruits, while the stable is an equine palace. The study has a bow window, and from either side of the fireplace one can look down upon the inland sea, animated with steam and sailing craft. A comfortable desk stands against the south wall, and divans and easy chairs make it an ideal lounging place and workshop. At present an immense white bearskin covers a full quarter of the floor before the fire, and when I looked over my shoulder a moment ago I witnessed a scene that made my heart thrill with a joy unspeakable. Seated on the great skin are two little children—a boy of three and a girl just able to toddle—and their beautiful mother between them with an arm about each, was telling them how the skin saved her from freezing to death on the

bosom of an arctic sea. The mother wears a Grecian gown of pure white, and her splendid black hair falls over her shoulders to the floor, mingling with the white fur. The children are miniatures of her, and I am the richest man in the world, because—they are all mine. They do not comprehend her when she speaks of death from cold, but they listen as to some wonderful fairy tale. She is speaking to them in Greek, that they may not forget their mother's liquid tongue, but in their childish lisp the baby Cleo uses sweet sounding English words, while Master Robert astonishes the scholars who visit me by talking with them in the tongue of ancient Athens. A steam yacht and a sloop lay at anchor at the foot of the hill, and we all take frequent cruises. For some time past I have been busy with this history, but now that it is drawing to a close, we are preparing for a journey over the ocean to show Cleo the country and the people from which she sprung. She is delighted beyond measure by the new world into which she has come, and while domestic in her tastes, she performs her part toward our friends, and wherever she appears, is still the queenliest of her sex and the acknowledged belle. Every day she finds some new delight in her surroundings, but she is never so happy as when playing with our children on the great rug in my study while I perform my labor of love, and write the story of how I won her. She can read English as well as I, and hers has been the hand that has culled from my lines many a compliment which she thinks best left to the sanctity of our own fireside. I frequently tease her about the way in which she captured me at the point

of the sword, and she laughs and retorts that I was a willing captive, a bit of repartee which I cannot gainsay. Above the mantel are the two swords we used with such effectiveness in the land of Athenia, and what jewels were not disposed of in exchange for our home, I have had set in various fashions for her. One string of great rubies is her favorite, and when it is wound six times about her throat, it gleams against the pure whiteness of her flesh with the dull red fires of the Falls of the Gods.

On the opposite shore we can see the gables and trees of "Hillcrest," the home of Rex and Eurydice, and we are almost daily visitors.

O'Rourke and Phryne, wishing to be near at hand, secured, upon his resignation from the army, a neat place an hours drive beyond Rex on the island, so that the coterie are at all times within easy reach of each other. Both couples have been blessed with one child each, and Eurydice and Phryne are the aunts of promising boys.

O'Rourke did not open his sandal factory, but I have observed in our visits to them that at home Phryne invariably wears that form of footgear upon her bare, pink feet, while he says his boy shall never know the feeling of a stocking or shoe while he can prevent it.

"Cover up those feet? Never!" he cried, when some one mentioned it. "I never knew a foot could be a thing worth lookin' at until I saw the wans in the counthry of his mother, an' I'll not be the one to deform the boy, be Jinks! He can have gold sandals set with diamonds if he wants 'em, but divil a shoe or a stockin', be Jinks!"

Ruggles has continued to follow the sea, and Bangs returned to his post of duty and the bosom of his family. He comes to see each of us from time to time, but the good captain of the ill-starred *Polaris* has for several years been away on the China trade.

Dick is still single, and I have frequently thought that there was a deeper feeling than friendship in his heart for Eurydice. He seldom visits Rex save when there is a gathering of our forces there, though he frequently runs up here for a day or two at a time, and seems specially happy when out on the shady lawn with the babies.

Professor Kent is still deep in an exhaustive treatise of the land we discovered, and brings his manuscript over from New Haven to read and revise in my study. A beautiful pair of Shetlands and a tiny cart were his gift to my children last Christmas and he ruins their appetites for sound food by filling his pockets with bonbons whenever he comes this way. He is their perpetual Santa Claus, and they repay his friendliness by climbing all over him and pulling his hair and beard.

As I write these closing lines of the events of those few months in the South Polar regions I am conscious of a deep thankfulness for the many good fortunes which befell us but as I realize who sits on the rug behind me the deepest prayer of gratitude wells from my heart for the great blessing that has been granted me, for neither gold nor jewels could ever take the place of the mother of my children the peerless Cleo, the real Treasure of the Ice.

THE END.

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