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THE BROKEN TRAIL

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS

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THE BROKEN TRAIL

I

SHADOW LAKE

A puff of wind touched the dark pines and the branches gently shook. Blue ripples trailed across the water; and then all was quiet and the lake shone like glass. Where the trees rolled down the bank the broken reflections joined, and one saw, as in a mirror, straight trunks, rigid branches, and worn, round-backed rocks. For long only the Indians and *Metis* trappers knew Shadow Lake, but since the railroad pierced the woods, tourists and fishing-parties paddled up its lonely reaches and pitched their camp in the Ontario wilds.

The sun was low, supper was over, and a noisy group occupied the flat in front of the big double tent. For the most part they were young, but two or three whose youth was past had left their stores and offices at the little town near the lake's end to share the campers' holiday. Three or four young men and women were from Winnipeg offices, but where they were not relations all were friends. In summer the quiet woods called, and by Shadow Lake the tangled pines rolled across the rocks as they had done from the beginning.

A little apart from the noisy group, two young men, lying in the warm gravel, smoked and talked with languid satisfaction. Keith Harden was soon to be married, and in a few days Garnet Emerson would start for the Old Country on the first holiday he had taken since he was a boy. Their friendship had begun some time since in the far Northwest. Harden now was agent for an important Montreal bank; Emerson was a contractor, and had prospered when the wooden settlement at Miscana Forks grew to a small town.

"I wrote my folks that you would look them up, and they hope you'll stop for some time," Harden remarked. "I believe you don't know the Old Country?"

Emerson smiled. He was tall and thin, and although he carried himself like a soldier, his poise and the firmness of his shoulders indicated that he had used the ax. His skin was brown and his laugh was frank, but he was not a boy. When he was quiet, one remarked his steady thoughtful look and the lines on his face. Garnet Emerson had known hardship and adventure.

"For all our independence and commercialism, we're a sentimental lot, and England's yet the Old Country. My father was an American and my mother emigrated when she was a girl. She married in Dakota, and is long since dead. All the same, now I can take a holiday, I feel I'm *going back*."

"It is queer," Harden agreed. "Although we are frankly North American, and Washington, D.C., is rather our model than Westminster, Britain's home. Well, it's not important, and I have some grounds to be satisfied where I am——But do you remember your people?"

"The picture's indistinct. I think the old man was a typical pioneer: quiet, pretty grim, and, in a sense, indomitable. Anyhow, I seem to remember his laboring fourteen hours a day on the barren preëmpted farm. Sometimes I see my mother: a thin, tired woman, but gentler than our roughneck neighbors' wives. Well, I think the hard job and the bad years broke them, and when they were gone their creditors seized the farm. A queer old fellow from St. Louis, a bit of a crank and something of a scholar, took me to his home. His farming was not high grade, but he gave me books I would not have got at a settlement school——However, since I'm going to stop with them, I want to know about your folks."

Harden thoughtfully filled his pipe. A phrase of Garnet's stuck——his mother was gentler than her neighbors. Perhaps it accounted for something; perhaps the St. Louis crank, who was also a scholar, had influenced the boy. Anyhow, Garnet Emerson was not the rude plainsman type. Although he had known poverty, one remarked a touch of cultivation and a sort of fastidiousness. His driving force and shrewdness was perhaps his father's legacy; Garnet's inheritance, so to speak, was mixed. It persuaded Harden to a frankness he had not altogether thought to use.

"Oh, well," he said, "until the sun is lower, there's not much use in fishing, and I don't want to leave camp before the launch arrives. Besides, now I'm soon to be married, I sometimes look back and try to recapture my boyhood and picture the relations I haven't seen for long. At all events, I'll risk your getting bored——"

"My folks are Borderers, and Copshope's in the bleak hills where Scotland and England join. In a way, perhaps, it's important, because the Scottish Borderer inherits two rather conflicting veins. His ancestors were swashbuckling cattle-

thieves; and grim Covenanters, not unlike the New England Puritans about whom Hawthorne wrote. Afterwards they were hard-drinking, reckless sportsmen and poachers; and sober, parsimonious supporters of the Presbyterian kirk. You see, the jarring veins survive, and sometimes the Borderer doesn't know for which type he stands. My mother was sternly religious and she declared the old warning stood: *The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are on edge.*

"Copshope is old, but the Hardens are not properly lairds; the house is small and the estate is but a strip of barren moor. We were merchants, stockbrokers, and so forth. All the same, we held Copshope for longer than we know; when a Harden prospered *he went home*. As a rule, the bogs absorbed his fortune and his son or nephew returned to the exchange. For the most part, our interest and speculations were Canadian; one or two of us were officers of the Hudson's Bay Company."

"Until Riel's rebellion, the Hudson's Bay ruled the Northwest and their chiefs were Scots," Emerson remarked. "But go on. I'm not at all bored."

"My father was a Glasgow merchant," Harden resumed. "When my grandfather died he was able to take Copshope, but I don't think he's rich. I never knew him rash or extravagant; he's just and kind, and as a rule marked by traditional Scottish calm. In fact, he's a pretty good example of the old-fashioned kirk elder——"

He stopped to get a light and smiled when he went on: "All the same, I doubt if the old man was always like that; his brothers certainly are not, and I've known his eyes sparkle at their jokes about some youthful exploit. In fact, sometimes one vaguely senses the old moss-trooper vein. Anyhow, you'll like him. For my sake, he'll give you a Borderer's welcome, and he'll urge you to stop, for your own sake."

"Perhaps the portrait's not very accurate, for I was not at Copshope much. As soon as I was old enough, they sent me to Loretto—a Scottish public school—and then I went to Montreal. I rather think my stepmother could account for it, but I was willing, and our Canadian interest got me a post at the bank."

"I had hoped *your* mother would be my host," Emerson remarked. "For one thing, I haven't yet met a lady of Mrs. Harden's sort. But what is she like?"

Harden's look got reflective; Emerson thought he frowned.

"To draw my stepmother is hard. On the whole, she was kind, and when Anne and I were boy and girl she indulged us. I hardly knew my mother, and for a time I was Madam's champion. You see, my father soon remarried; I think when Anne was but twelve months old."

"Then Anne is your own sister? Mr. Harden maybe felt that to bring up a girl was a woman's job."

"His sister was keen to take us both," Harden replied, and Emerson saw his frown was distinct. Keith perhaps had felt the old man was, in a sense, not loyal to his first wife.

"We'll let it go," Harden resumed. "The second Mrs. Harden has some useful qualities, and Copshope has prospered by her firm rule. In fact, I admit she's all a good Scottish housewife ought to be. She's a loyal supporter of the established church; her friends are sober, locally-important folk. You feel she'd have nothing to do with the other sort. Although Mrs. Harden likes to be the laird's lady, she uses the proper rules. I'm not ironical."

"It looks as if you tried to be just," Emerson rejoined.

"Oh, well," said Harden, "I feel Mrs. Harden is not altogether my mother's type, and sometimes when I was back for holidays, I sensed a sort of antagonism; jealousy is perhaps the proper word. Yet I could not bother her, and she was kind to Anne, whom she had perhaps some ground to think an obstacle, because the old man is not at all the sort to indulge his fresh wife at his daughter's expense. Anyhow, it's done with, and when my house is fixed Anne is coming out to stay with me."

He put up his pipe, and by and by a strange wild call like mocking laughter pierced the creeping shadow. Emerson turned his head and saw a ripple trail behind a small dark object in a quiet bay. For a moment or two the ripple stopped; and then a splash broke the surface and the bird was gone.

"A loon!" said Harden. "Something scared the bird. I thought a branch shook by the point."

"I did not. Besides, if a branch did shake, I doubt if you could see."

"It's queer, but when I was at Pierced Rock in the morning I thought somebody lurked about in the underbrush. In fact, I crept round through the trees, but saw no marks. Then, two days since, I found a pretty good new pipe on the rocks behind our tent. None of our friends claim the pipe."

Emerson thought it strange. Keith was not the man to imagine somebody had stolen after him when he went fishing. Anyhow, he had not imagined he found the pipe. But there was no use in bothering about it, and another party was camped by the lake.

"If somebody meant to rob you, he'd watch out for you in town," he said. "A bank manager does not carry his keys and wallet about the woods."

"That is so," Harden agreed. "Besides, now I've built my house, I'm nearly broke. Well, the sun will soon be off the water and the trout ought to feed, but I mustn't start until the launch arrives. You see, unless Walthew is satisfied he can carry on, I must pull out in the morning. We expect to put across a big transaction for the Brockenhurst Company."

Walthew was his cashier, and the Brockenhurst Company was the main support of the little town. Their wood-working mills down the river were large, but they were planning to build a new factory, and Emerson, to some extent by Harden's help, had secured a valuable contract.

"There's the launch!" he said.

An engine throbbed behind the trees and a boat swung round a point. Foam curled about her bows, and where, but a few years since, only the half-breeds' paddles disturbed the shadows, her propeller churned a long white wake. She stopped near the camp, and the party by the tent climbed across the rocks.

"A box of groceries, and a letter for Mr. Harden; that's all tonight," said a young fellow on board, and started his engine.

Harden tore the envelope. "All's right and I have got two more days. Looks as if Walthew is glad for me to stay. The boy's ambitious, and when I am not about he likes to take control. Anyhow, I'm off up the lake. The trout are rising and I haven't yet got a good fish."

"Won't you wait and try at sun-up, Keith?" said a girl. "Bob is going to play the banjo and we want you to sing."

Harden hesitated. He was going to marry Margaret Forbes, but he was a fisherman and his luck had not been good.

"I'll be back in an hour, and we don't start our concerts until it's dark. So far, Bob and Jake have got the laugh on me, but I mean to beat them both."

"Then you have got some job!" said a young man. "Where are you going?"

Harden laughed. "I'm sure an angler, Tom. When I'm not broke, my wallet is my friend's, and if he wants my canoe, it's his; but I will not put him wise where the big trout feed. Your job's to help me pack the fish up the beach, and I'll soon be back with a load."

He pushed a canoe into the water and with a long, easy stroke drove her across the lake. For a few minutes his braced figure and the swift canoe cut the sunset, and then they melted in the shadows by the rocks. Harden was singing a song of the old French *voyageurs*, and when the words and the paddle's measured splash died away Emerson and Miss Forbes sat down among the stones. Emerson acknowledged Margaret Forbes' charm. He liked her modern frankness and touch of humor, and he knew she was not a fool.

"Keith is as keen as a boy for fishing, and Walthew's note has made him happy," she remarked.

"Perhaps it's not strange," said Emerson. "He gets two more days in camp, but I expect the chance to go fishing does not account for all."

Margaret gave him a smile, but the smile vanished and she knitted her brows.

"I like him to be happy. At the bank he's sternly sober and stays with his job. For all that, I'd sooner he hadn't gone."

Emerson said nothing. Miss Forbes was not the sort to be jealous of her lover's amusements, and after a few moments she looked up with a twinkle.

"I believe I'm a good Presbyterian and in some respects I am up to date; but, after all, my name is Forbes and the Highlanders are a superstitious lot. Keith's boyish joyousness is not usual. In Scotland they might think him *fey*."

"My history is not first-class; but I imagine the old-time Presbyterians believed in witchcraft and burned the witches," Emerson remarked. "Anyhow, you are a modern Canadian and have nothing to do with spooks and spells."

"I wonder——" said Margaret. "My grandfather was a Highland man. When the Red River half-breeds rebelled he joined Wolseley's force and died on the westward march. Before the lists were sent back, my grandmother knew. However, the fey superstition is not altogether Scotch; it was known long since in Greece and Rome."

"For example?" said Emerson. "I'm a roughneck plainsman and I don't know the word."

Margaret gave him a quiet glance. He certainly was not a roughneck, and although he was the plainsman type—hard, brown-skinned, and athletic—his Western accent was not marked. Moreover, he had qualities she approved, and her lover trusted him.

"Oh, well," she said, "I expect it implies a sort of instinctive feeling that man's part is to sweat and labor, and for him to be extravagantly happy is a challenge to the unseen powers. The old gods are jealous, and when all looks as if it went well they strike. However, one mustn't be ridiculous and we have a nobler philosophy."

"Man yet must sweat?" said Emerson. "Sometimes he must fight——"

A banjo began to tinkle, somebody got a light, and the big tent glimmered like a Chinese lantern in the trees. The shadows had crept across the lake and the rocky islands got indistinct. Emerson rolled a cigarette and mused.

He had fought for all he got, but now things went well for him, and Harden was going to marry the finest girl Garnet knew. At an important bank one did not progress fast, but Keith had built up a large business for the company in the wooden town. His pay had gone up, and he reckoned by and by to get a good post at Montreal. Emerson himself had taken a profitable contract for the Brockenhurst factory.

Then Miss Forbes turned to him.

"Sometimes one meets Pearls and Rubies, but Garnet is perhaps not a common name."

Emerson laughed. "I don't claim to sparkle much and am not in the jewel class. The fact is, I was called for a settlement where your grandfather's commander once pitched his camp. You see, had not Colonel Garnet Wolseley hustled West, Manitoba might now be a half-breeds' republic."

"It might have been Red River *state*," said Margaret. "I think you first met Keith in the Northwest?"

"In the Alberta foothills. He had taken a mountaineering holiday late in the fall. I was on a R.N.W.P. patrol."

"Then you were a Royal Northwest trooper?"

"A mounted police constable," Emerson agreed, smiling. "When I hit Keith's camp, however, I was on foot, and I and Cartwright hauled an empty sled. The snow had come soon and Keith had fallen down a rock. His guide had gone a hundred miles for help."

"Ah," said Margaret, "I knew he hurt his leg in the mountains and he will always carry the mark. But go on, please. You saw him to the settlements?"

"The trip was a sort of mutual accommodation," Emerson replied. "Keith could not use his leg; Cartwright and I had nothing to eat. To shove through the foothills timber was awkward, but at length we made a ranch."

Margaret noted his modesty: Keith had talked about the march through the snowy tangled woods, but she supposed she had forgotten the leader's name.

"You left the police. What did you do afterwards?"

"When we broke a raw cayuse I took a nasty kick, and when I got out of the hospital the doctor reckoned I might ask for my discharge. Well, I thought I'd had enough, and I was ambitious. I quit, and graded a road to a little mine; then I took a contract to cut telephone poles, and so forth. Sometimes I was nearly broke, and sometimes I owned four or five hundred dollars. Then Keith was sent to Miscana and wrote me that the town might boom. I put up my shingle and he helped me make good."

"But Keith does not give contracts. He could not help you much."

Emerson smiled. "My capital was a thousand dollars, and a bank manager is a useful friend. When I got jobs I couldn't finance, he saw me out, and I reckon he took chances the Montreal directors would not approve. Keith Harden is a first-class pal."

Margaret agreed. She knew his remark sincere, but she said: "Now you feel justified to take an expensive holiday?"

"That is so," Emerson replied modestly. "Until I start on the Brockenhurst job not much is doing, and my new partner is an engineering college kid. He reckons he can hold the fort, and when he joined me his father put up a useful sum. Anyhow, I'm going to England and I expect to have a bully time."

A loon called across the dark lake, and somehow the high, hoarse note was disturbing. It sounded as if somebody laughed. Margaret shivered and got up.

"Perhaps your luck was good, but I expect one's luck depends upon one's temperament."

"Keith's luck was better," Emerson remarked.

"You play up and you're really rather nice," said Margaret. "Well, one mustn't be superstitious, but I wish he was back."



II

HARDEN GOES FISHING

The tents by the beach got indistinct, the trembling reflections lost their sharpness, and Harden's paddle slowed. The water was smooth as glass, and an easy stroke sent the light canoe along. Now he thought about it, he was persuaded a branch by the point did shake, and when he was fishing at Pierced Rock somebody lurked about the spot. It looked as if his movements interested the fellow, but Harden could not account for his curiosity. He was not remarkably important, and to see the stranger's object for following him was hard.

Harden resolved he would not bother about it, and he mused happily about his approaching marriage. Margaret was altogether the proper wife for him. She was kind and stanch; *leal* was the good Scottish word. He loved her quiet humor and her thoughtful calm. Then he knew her pluck; if forced, she would front trouble nobly, and he knew she loved him, although she was not a sentimentalist. Well, he himself was a sober Scot and had not much use for hectic romance. In some of his relations the reckless vein a Borderer now and then inherited was rather marked, but Keith imagined he, so to speak, was his staid Presbyterian mother's son.

Margaret, however, had ordered him not to stay long, and since he wanted to catch a big trout, he resumed his paddling. Across the quiet reach, a river the lake fed plunged down a valley, and when the swift current hurried the canoe along Harden glanced ahead. The light was going, and vague, crossed branches and dim, straight trunks bordered the high bank. In the background, white foam glimmered and angry water throbbed. Keith knew he must not go down the rapid. When the water was low, rocks broke the channel and savage whirlpools revolved.

The stream went faster, and when Harden saw the head of a rocky island he backed his paddle and got his breath. He dared not take the west fork, down which the greater part of the water plunged, and the other was awkward, but he was a good river man, and when he was level with the first pines on the island he let the canoe go. She leaped ahead like a toboggan; rocks and trees sped by; and then a swift stroke carried her to an eddy running back the other way. Harden had marked the landing, and a few more strokes drove her bow on to a gravel bank. Keith thought he had made it neatly, but the exploit was not really hard. If one studied the slacks, and hit the backwash at the proper spot, one might, perhaps, swim across. The light, however, was nearly gone, and seizing his rod he pushed through the brushwood under the trees.

On the other side of the island, the current was deflected by a ledge, and, swinging across, revolved about a dark, foam-streaked pool. Where the ripples marked the edge of deep water one ought to find a good trout, and Harden got to work. For some time, however, the large, light-colored fly floated undisturbed across the slack, and Keith frowned and lighted his pipe. The mosquitoes had got busy, and where the pests were numerous one could not concentrate. He thought he knew where the trout were, but one must steer the fly, as if the current carried it, to the proper spot. Nothing but the ripples broke the surface and he turned his head.

Small slanted pines grew in the rocks, and one, broken by a storm, was in the water. He could see for a few yards across the island; and then the dark, tangled branches cut his view. In the gloom downstream, where the forking channels reunited, the main rapid crashed on the ledges; and one heard mosquitoes——

The rod jerked. Things happened like that; when one watched one's line the trout did not rise. Then Harden thrilled. The trout was not gone, and he knew it was large. The reel clicked, and, holding down the rod's butt, he let the fish run. Until it was beaten, he could not use the net, and to get down to the water was awkward.

The tense line sped across the pool; and then Harden began to wind. The trout was turning and the trace must not get slack. He ought to pull the fish downstream, but he could not scramble along the precipitous bank, and not far off the broken pine was in the water. He must not risk an entanglement. After all, he might use the net; the trout was going upstream and would soon be at his feet. For a moment he looked about. A branch dropped to the pool, and a crack in the smooth slabs would support his foot. If he used some caution, he might reach a mossy shelf——

The rod quivered and he knew the line had stopped. It was under the broken tree, and it all at once went slack. The jar had cut the trace, and the trout was gone. Harden swore, and then, reeling up the line, savagely rubbed his face and neck. Had the blamed mosquitoes left him alone, he might not have lost the trout! Now there was no use in fishing. Dark had fallen, and when the venomous insects swarmed about one's head one could not steer the line. Besides, he had stayed

longer than he ought and Margaret waited for him at the camp.

Keith put up his rod, crossed the island, and when he stopped at the other side clenched his fist. The landing was two or three yards below him; he knew where he had climbed the rocks, but the canoe was not about. Moreover, there was no use in his searching the bank: when she floated off the gravel the eddy had swept her into the main stream and she had gone down the rapid. Harden experimented with a dead branch he broke. Where the branch went the canoe had gone; his supposition was accurate.

Sitting on the stones, he reloaded his pipe. To smoke might drive off the mosquitoes and help him see a plan. It certainly was awkward! If Margaret were not disturbed, she had, at all events, some grounds to be annoyed, and the others did not know where he had meant to fish. There was the trouble, since the lake was large and the woods along its shore were thick. In fact, Harden wondered whether he ought not to swim across.

Keith's nerve was good, but his habit was to weigh things, and he pondered. In order to get across, one must watch for the slacks and backwash, and use all one's strength at exactly the proper spot. So long as one could see, the turmoil was perhaps not dangerous; in the dark, however, to plunge into the angry flood might be very rash. There was another thing: when he fell down the rocks in Alberta he hurt his leg. The injury did not bother him much, but when he walked fast his step was slightly uneven, and the muscles would not bear a violent strain.

In the circumstances, Keith resolved to wait for morning. Day broke about three o'clock, and although he must for some distance push through tangled forest and stumble along stony beaches where the driftwood was piled, he ought to reach camp for breakfast. In the meantime, the mosquitoes swarmed about his face, and he must make a smudge fire. To gather dead branches and throw green twigs on the snapping flame was some relief. The pungent smoke drove back the pests, the night was not cold, and Harden on a mossy shelf rested his back comfortably against a trunk. After a time, however, he got restless and put up his pipe.

A flame pierced the smoke, and for a few moments flickering light touched the stiff branches and smooth-topped rocks; then the beam faded and the gloom crept back. But for the river's turmoil and the snapping fire, all was very quiet. Harden frowned. Margaret certainly would be disturbed; perhaps it was strange, but somehow he felt she wanted him to risk the crossing, and he wanted to go. In fact, to conquer the rash impulse was hard. He was young, and but for his leg, athletic. In some respects, to take the plunge was easier than to wait.

All the same, Keith refused to allow his imagination to carry him away. Moreover, to think Margaret would like him to risk it was ridiculous; her pluck was good, but it was not the pluck that fronts a hazard carelessly. Harden argued like a logical Scot and thought his reasoning sound.

A fresh noise pierced the turmoil, and far off across the woods, he thought he heard a train. The train would make Miscana in half an hour, and had Keith not got Walthew's note, he might have stopped her at the flag station down the lake. He began to wonder whether he ought to have taken the two extra days. Walthew was young, and the Brockenhurst Company was the bank's chief customer. The new factory would cost a large sum, and the treasurer had engaged to send across some valuable stock certificates, on which the bank would negotiate a loan. The documents must go to Montreal, and when they arrived Harden would sooner be at the office. All the same, it was not important; the bank's safe was good and Walthew would express the packet by the first train.

Harden speculated about the canoe. He had thought he pulled her bow up the bank, but the sand-flies bothered him and he was keen to start fishing. Perhaps he had not used proper caution, and if the current swung her stern against the stones, the jar might help her slide back into the pool. As a rule, he was not careless, and his slackness puzzled him, but he must have been slack. To imagine somebody had swum the rapid in order to steal an old canoe was absurd. He stretched his legs and rested his back farther down the trunk. His chin sank to his chest, the curling smoke got indistinct, and he was asleep.

When he looked up the smoke was gone and feathery ashes marked the spot the fire had occupied. Day was breaking and the morning was cold. Harden shivered, but he jumped up and pulled off his coat. Since he must follow rough beaches and smash through underbrush, he would need his thick hiking boots. His summer clothes ought not to embarrass him much, and pulling his belt tight, he scrambled down the bank. Now his trying to cross was justified, he did not loiter.

For a few moments the cold cut his breath and the eddy, running upstream, carried him along. It looked as if the dark rocks sped the other way, but Harden fixed his glance in front. Seven or eight yards off, the eddy joined the main current,

and a savage turmoil marked the confluence. Keith swam slowly and got his breath.

He was pulled under, as if somebody had seized his legs. When he came up he went downstream horribly fast, and angry white waves broke against his head. He, however, had reckoned on something like that and had marked a big rock in the channel. The rock sped by, and using his fastest stroke, he plunged into a swirling, foaming belt. His weak leg hurt, his side hurt, his head was covered, and he could not breathe or see. Then the confused tumult stopped and he was in the slack behind the rock. With something of an effort, he reached the mass and rested his arms on a shelf. He had covered half the distance and he imagined the other half looked worse than it was.

The channel in front was deep; a long, smooth slide of water, running ominously fast to the spray that leaped about the rapid's top. All, however, did not reach the daunting spot, for a backwash, marked by revolving eddies, broke the main stream and followed the hollow bank. If one could reach the junction, to land ought not to be difficult; but one must not be carried past.

Keith pushed off and was swept downstream like a cork, although he headed obliquely the other way. Speed was now indicated, and he used all the strength he had; his head for the most part under water and his arms beating the flood. He dared not for a moment ease his stroke in order to look about. When he reached the slack he would know, but if he were carried past, his strongest swimming would not help him much.

A wave flung him sideways. He went down and was violently tossed about; and then he was on the surface and going the other way. Two or three yards off, he saw steep, smooth rocks, and he got his breath and swam easily. Not far in front, a broken pine had fallen across the stones, and when the stream swept him by he seized a branch.

Crawling along the trunk, he reached the bank and stopped for a minute or two to rub his leg. The effort he had used had hurt the strained muscles, and when he started for the camp he limped. The stiffness, however, wore off, and when a bright sunbeam pierced the woods his speed was good. On the whole, to cross the rapid was easier than he had thought, but he was glad he had not tried it in the dark. Yet he admitted he came near to going. Now the sun shone and the morning was fresh, he knew the queer romantic impulse was ridiculous. One must be logical, and Harden smiled. The boys would banter him about the trout he did not catch, and after breakfast he must take Bob's canoe and go back for his coat and fishing-rod.

III

WALTHER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Supper was over, and Stephen Walthew, bank clerk, smoked a cigarette on the veranda of the Miscana hotel. He occupied a good room on the wooden building's first floor, but tonight he was going to use Harden's at the office across the street. He had planned to go fishing when the bank was shut, but he had telephoned his friend, rather importantly, that he was putting across a big deal for a customer and must stay with his job. Walthew reckoned he played a good billiard game, but since he got his post at Miscana he left the cue alone. The pool-room was not the spot for an aspiring bank clerk to haunt. Anyhow, after a scorching day, the evening was cool, and Walthew was satisfied to smoke on the hotel veranda, which commanded the bank office.

Although Miscana as yet was small, it was a thriving town, and pleasant shade-trees bordered the wide street. Behind the trees, on one side, were unfenced garden lots, and automatic sprinklers threw sparkling showers across the thirsty grass. On the stoops of the frame-houses friendly groups engaged in cheerful talk. Walthew heard a piano and one or two gramophones. In the background, the river throbbed, and sometimes the deep-toned hum of the turbines at the Brockenhurst power-house stole across the woods. One smelt locomotive smoke, creosoted railroad ties, and resinous pines.

Walthew reflected that Western Canada was a land of contrasts. One used up-to-date inventions in the primeval wilds. A mile from the steel road and telephone poles, civilization stopped, and the tangled woods rolled back to the Arctic barrens, as they had done since the world was young.

On the whole, Walthew liked his job. He had recently graduated at Toronto, and now he had got a post at a famous bank, he meant to make good. In fact, he thought he made some progress, and he was willing for Harden to leave him at the office. When Keith got back he must admit that the business Walthew had transacted was properly carried out. In particular, he had got the securities on which the Brockenhurst Company wanted the bank to negotiate a loan. The treasurer himself had brought the packet, and when he took a receipt commented on Walthew's accuracy and his acquaintance with the rules about negotiating the different sorts of documents. Stephen was flattered; he liked to feel he deserved Harden's confidence.

The Brockenhurst people were using their reserve fund to build the new factory, and Walthew approved the way in which the fund was invested. The bank would hold some securities against a loan; others would be sold by Montreal stockbrokers, and Walthew thought some would be offered on the exchanges in London and Paris. Part must be formally transferred and could not be stolen, except, perhaps, by a clever forger; but a sum was in foreign bearer bonds, which could be used in Europe like dollar bills.

Walthew had carefully registered the documents and the sealed packet was in the safe. He would sooner it was on its way to Montreal, but the Atlantic express did not arrive until morning and he was going to the bank for the night. The locks were good and only he and Harden knew the combination, but he admitted he would be happier when he got the express clerk's receipt.

Dusk began to fall and Walthew got up. For the most part, the hotel boarders were at a club meeting; there was nobody to whom he could talk, and he thought he would go to the station and see the local train arrive. At a small Western town one likes to know all that is doing.

On one side, dark pine forest bordered the track, but by and by a fan-shaped beam pierced the gloom and a locomotive and two cars rolled into the station. Two or three commercial travelers, and a group of young men and women, got down. Their baskets and fishing-rods indicated that they were from the lake and Walthew knew them, but when he was going to ask if they had met Harden, a customer of the bank's came up and began to talk. The bell tolled, the cars rolled away, and Walthew thought he would walk along the street before he went to bed.

He passed the bank. The small frame-house was dark, for Harden took his meals at the hotel, and a woman cleaned his rooms in the morning. A little farther on, the board sidewalk ended and the row of houses was broken by unoccupied lots where willows and small pines grew. The road was soft; thick dust covered the gravel, and in some places the branches spread across. People had begun to go to bed, for the lights in the scattered houses burned behind the upper windows and

some were dark.

Walthew thought he heard steps in front, but an automobile advanced noisily. The reflections from the headlamps touched the road and trees with silver light, and Walthew looked up in surprise. A man's dark figure cut the strong illumination and he thought it was Harden. The man went fast, but if Keith had arrived by the train, he would have stopped at the bank, and the road went only to a small sawmill in the woods. Then the big lamps dazzled Walthew and he jumped aside. A wave of hot dust rolled about him and the car sped by. When the dust subsided he frowned. Although he certainly had seen a man in front, nobody was about.

Fifty yards farther on, three or four houses stood beside a short side road, but when Walthew reached the corner the windows were dark and he did not hear a door open. The occupants, moreover, were not friends of Harden's. Walthew turned, and going back uptown, stopped at a house. The fishing-party he had seen at the station was yet on the porch.

"Did you see my boss at the lake?" he asked.

"Now you talk about it, I did think I saw Harden at the depot," one replied. "The train was pulling out and he ran along by the wheels. In fact, I waved to him, but it looked as if he didn't know me and he jumped on the next car. Since I did not see him get down, maybe it was somebody else."

"Keith hates to run," said another. "When he hurries he goes with a sort of limp."

"The fellow I saw did not limp," the first rejoined.

Walthew was nearly persuaded that the man in the road was Harden, but, now he reflected, although the other went fast, his step was even.

"Oh, well, Keith reckoned to stop for another day or two," he said. "I expect you spotted somebody like him."

"Who is like Keith Harden?" a girl inquired.

After pondering for a moment, Walthew admitted he did not know, and he started for the bank. Finding nobody there, he went to the station, but the agent had not seen Harden. When the train arrived, however, he was called to the baggage-car and did not notice who got down.

Walthew returned to the bank. Opening the safe, he saw the packet of securities was on a shelf, and he went upstairs to bed. The combination that worked the lock was intricate, the house was small, and a noise carried well. If a thief tried to break the safe, he must first knock out Walthew, and Harden's automatic pistol was in the bureau. At twenty yards, Walthew could hit a fruit-can, almost every time.

He got to bed, but daybreak was about three o'clock and he resolved he would not go to sleep. Although he had not much grounds to be anxious, now all was quiet, his responsibility weighed, and he went for Harden's reading-lamp. He had brought across a book about banking and a classical poet's famous epic. His choice, perhaps, was strange. Stephen was a muscular young fellow and could handle a canoe in a rapid and throw a trout-fly, but his main ambition was not to have a bully time. In order to make progress, he must know all about his job, and when he got where he wanted he must be able to talk like a cultivated gentleman. With youthful optimism he believed that if one labored honestly one got one's reward.

Propping up the banking book, he began to study a chapter about the creation of credits. The argument, however, was intricate, and by and by he admitted that he was puzzled; besides, he was getting drowsy. He glanced at his watch and opened the other book.

Somehow the throb of the Brockenhurst turbines and the rapid's measured clamor harmonized with the famous epic; Walthew read it in the original. The old Greeks were virile, red-blooded folk, willing to fight and wise to plan. Well, vigor of brain and muscle, was the quality one needed in modern Canada. The rivers that pierced the trackless wilds must drive factories; man must carry the Rockies' snow across the dry Western plains. The job was a job for resolute men who could look ahead, but the great banks must supply the capital. In the meantime, Walthew's particular business was to keep awake until dawn, and to do so got hard.

An automobile, firing explosively, rattled up the street and stopped at a garage and livery-stable near the hotel. Somebody beat on the big door, but the noisy engine continued to run. Walthew thought it strange, for cars were not yet

numerous at Miscana. The dirt roads, so to speak, went nowhere and petered out in rough bush tracks. To go thirty miles east was something of an adventure, and then Walthew imagined one must use an ax. However, to see what the fellow wanted would help him keep awake, and he went to the window.

By and by the garage man came down and it looked as if he were annoyed, because he ordered the automobilist to stop his blasted machine and state the trouble. When the other did so they disputed, and the garage man called his assistant, who supported his argument. Another automobilist joined, and advancing a fresh explanation, restarted the engine. Then one went for tools, and when they got noisily to work the landlord threw up a window at the hotel. As a rule, an angry Canadian is not polite, and the altercation nearly drowned the crash of the hammer somebody used. In fact, it began to look as if all were bent on making as much noise as possible, and by and by a disturbed citizen swore impartially at the group. Walthew, however, was philosophical. The car was not his, and the disturbance banished his drowsiness.

He imagined the men were occupied for half an hour; and then the engine rattled and the car rolled up the street. Walthew doubted if it was much quieter, but it was gone, and the rapid's hoarse uproar stole across the woods. The light wind was keen, he smelt sweet resinous scents, and noticed that the black pines behind the roofs began to get distinct. Day was breaking; his watch was over, and he went back to bed and was soon asleep.

In the morning he saw the bulky packet was where it ought to be; but when he opened the office three or four customers arrived and kept him until the eastbound train was nearly due. Then he seized the packet, locked the door, and ran for the station. The express was not on time and after he got his breath he examined the packet. The bank kept a stock of strong cloth-lined covers, one of which he had taken from a shelf, and the seal was the office seal, but when Stephen glanced at the address his mouth went tight. The hand was something like his, but that was all.

Walthew leaned against a baggage-truck. His heart beat and his fingers were not steady. To get his knife was awkward, but he cut the wrapping and pulled out two Montreal newspapers. The bonds had vanished, and it looked as if the thieves had thought him duller than he was; they had not reckoned on his reexamining the parcel. Their plan was obvious. While one or two noisily mended the car, an accomplice stole into the office and opened the safe. He perhaps was occupied for the time the others stopped; and Walthew was at the window in the room above. Stephen frankly did not expect the Montreal directors to think it a plausible tale.

Then there was the difficulty about the combination, which he and Harden knew, and although his innocence might be admitted, he certainly could not claim an heroic part. When he was awake and watching out, somebody under the thin floor had opened the safe, abstracted the documents, and made up a fresh parcel.

Walthew's dreams of promotion vanished, but with something of an effort he pulled himself together. The thieves were yet in the woods and might try to get on board the train at a station farther along the line. Walthew heard the locomotive whistle, and he ran for the telegraph office.

IV

FRIENDSHIP'S CALL

The bank house, at the block corner, fronted Main Street, but at one side a small garden lot bordered a short avenue, and Emerson, arriving after the office was shut, saw Harden and Miss Forbes on a bench under a shade-tree. Although the avenue was quiet and led only to the woods, her light-colored summer clothes were conspicuous, and since Margaret Forbes was not at all a fool, Emerson imagined she knew her being there might excite some remark. In fact, he wondered whether it was not a sort of challenge to all who might be interested.

Margaret, so to speak, declared herself her lover's champion, and Emerson had grounds to imagine Keith needed some support. When he hesitated in the path she got up. Her color came and went; Harden's look was fixed.

"I am going, but Keith would like you to stop," she said. "You are his pal and I dare say you can guess what we talked about. Keith is rather noble. He sticks to conventions that I suppose were used in the Old Country, some time since."

"In the circumstances, I took the proper line," Harden rejoined with a touch of embarrassment.

"He wanted to break our engagement, and although I refused, I doubt if he is quite resigned," Margaret resumed. "Keith certainly is not selfish, but I expect scruples like his are an awkward load. However, your coming along was lucky. I want all his friends to know the engagement stands."

Emerson smiled. Margaret Forbes, moved by mixed emotions, was remarkably attractive. Her eyes sparkled, she carried herself finely, and her look was proud. Garnet thought an artist might use her for a model of fearless youth.

"Something of the sort was obvious, and I like your grit," he replied. "I suppose the implication is, the bank has no more use for Keith. Well, it's not very important and promotion's slow. He will soon get a better post."

Margaret colored. "Then, you don't yet know——Keith, of course, dared not resign. He's sentenced to polite imprisonment at the directors' pleasure."

Emerson's look was puzzled, and she resumed: "He must take a routine job at the Winnipeg office, where he will have no responsibility and, I suppose, he can be watched. The directors do not mean to run another risk. Besides, if they find out something fresh to implicate him, they will know where he is; but Keith will give you particulars. If I were rich and influential, I'd spend all I had and would not rest until I broke their bank. Well, I'm not rich, and there's not much use in storming. Sometimes one must be practical and, if you like, you may go with me to the post-office."

Harden signed Emerson and he went, but at the corner of the block Margaret stopped.

"Keith needs all his friends, and now is the time for them to prove how much their friendship's worth."

"He can reckon on mine," Emerson replied. "All the same, it's perhaps not valuable, and I had fixed to start for the Old Country in a few days. Do you think I ought to stop?"

"Not at all. You are going to visit with Keith's relations and he is horribly sensitive. To feel that some might doubt him is not the least of his trouble."

"But he ought not to need a champion at home. His father and sister know he had nothing to do with the robbery."

"I was thinking about his stepmother," Margaret rejoined. "She has no son, and it's possible she is jealous——"

Emerson reflected that Harden had said something like that, but Margaret went on: "Since I have not met Mrs. Harden, I may be unjust, but to study her might be useful. At all events, Keith imagines your firm conviction that he is innocent will be some comfort to his father. There's your line; you're the leading witness for the defense. Then it's possible the thieves will try to negotiate some of the foreign bonds in London or Paris. The robbery was cleverly planned, and the crooks might have accomplices in Europe. Well, you will be in the Old Country."

"I am not a banker," Emerson remarked. "The chance of my finding a clue is small."

"I suppose that is so," Margaret agreed. "However, to be willing is the important thing, and sometimes one's luck is better than one thinks. Well, you do not boast, but Keith trusts you, and if you can help, we know you will."

She let him go, and Emerson turned back thoughtfully. The girl's passionate indignation, and perhaps her trust, moved him; he had not thought to see Miss Forbes carried away. After all, to know people properly was hard. For example, Keith was a first-class sort; but Emerson had not thought him the man to inspire a girl, whose calm reserve was known, to romantic ardor. When he reached the bench Harden gave him a cigarette.

"Margaret is generous and stanch as steel," he said in a quiet voice, as if he apologized for allowing her to persuade him. "However, I see you are puzzled. You don't get things yet?"

"The bank suspects you! Are your Montreal bosses dippy?"

"Oh, well, their doubts are not very strange. To begin with, the safe was not broken, and only I and Walthew could work the lock. Steve is young, and clever crooks would hesitate to use a raw lad. Then, you see, I asked for the extra two days. I was away from camp all night, and when I started I refused to state where I was going. In the morning I told the boys a romantic tale. All know I'm a pretty good river-Jack, and only a beginner leaves his canoe where she might drift away. In fact, I don't yet see how she did float off the bank."

"It certainly is awkward," Emerson agreed.

"I'm arguing like a bank president, and I want you to weigh the evidence as if you did not know me. Since the securities were stolen I have tried to do so and I'm not much encouraged. Had I paddled hard down the lake, I might have got the local train for Miscana, and Walthew thought he saw me in town; then Marshall declares somebody very like me stole on board the cars. You see, if I'd driven an automobile over the old bush trail and swum the river, I might have made camp for breakfast. A strange car was in town, and when I got back I had rather obviously been in the water."

"But I imagine the bank's inspector knows you are soon to be married and have built an expensive house. It does not look as if you had meant to light out."

"When I built the house I did not know I might handle a very large sum, part of which was in bonds that a crook with foreign confederates might negotiate," Harden rejoined. "So far, my employers have good grounds for suspicion, and although that's all, suspicion is fatal to a man who handles others' cash. Well, unless the directors are forced, I don't suppose they will allow the police to get after me; a bank hates to admit it could be robbed by its servants. They will keep me in Winnipeg for perhaps twelve months; and then, if nothing fresh transpires, politely indicate that I ought to look for another job. When I went I would, of course, be done for. And I'm engaged to marry Margaret, who will not let me go."

Emerson frowned. Keith's argument was logical, and nothing was to be gained by pretending it did not carry weight.

"Very well. Our plan's to spot the thief, and I allow it's hard——" said Garnet, and stopping for a moment, as if he saw a light, resumed: "I guess I've got it! You thought somebody lurked about the camp. Suppose he studied up all you did and got to know you were not going back to the office on the day you fixed? Then he might arrange for a confederate to be seen in town when the safe was opened. One could copy your clothes. The obstacle is, I haven't yet met anybody folks might think was you."

"All the same, I have done so," said Harden, and knitted his brows. "When I took my holiday in the West, I stopped for a week at Vancouver, and an American and I one evening thought we'd look about Chinatown and the red-light district. You see, we were tourists, and the hotel clerk declared we ought to go——"

"Exactly!" said Emerson, smiling. "You don't boast about the excursion, but we know your soberness and you can shove ahead."

"We stopped for about ten minutes at a shabby gambling-joint and paid a long price for two or three poisonous drinks. Then, in order to carry out the tourist's program, my partner chipped in at a card-game and staked a few small bills. By and by he touched me, and I saw the banker looked at me hard. I thought it strange, but the fellow was like me."

"The likeness was marked?"

For a moment or two Harden tried to reconstruct the picture. He saw the stained, dirty floor, the cracked boards, and the big kerosene lamps. One was just above his head and the light was good. The fellow who stacked the shining cards fronted him and his surprise was obvious.

"Well, no——" he replied in a thoughtful voice. "The likeness was a sort of *family* likeness; I feel it's the proper word. One knows one's relations, each has individuality and you note the difference; but another might take John for James, although he knew he was a Jardine. There's the queer thing, because I have no brother or cousin, and the fellow was a common tinhorn. For all that, he was puzzled, and the American was intrigued. Well, nothing was said, the gambler cut a fresh deck of cards, and when my friend lost his money we pulled out for a safer spot."

Emerson nodded. A red-light district is a modern Alsatia which the police, as a rule, leave alone. The lights are conspicuous and warn sober citizens to go the other way.

"A tinhorn is generally a crook. Do you think he inquired about you and afterwards used the likeness to help him rob the bank?"

Harden thought not. Vancouver was two thousand miles off, and he had not met the gambler since. Anyhow, there was no use in trying to find a fellow like that, and the theft was probably the work of an expert gang.

"Their solving the combination is the awkward thing," Garnet agreed. "In the meantime, what about the stolen securities?"

"Some might be sold in New York, if the gang got there soon, but I expect a number will go to Europe. The bank, of course, would telegraph its American agent. I cannot state if they got much news. To negotiate stolen bonds is, however, not as difficult as some people think, and expert crooks work on international lines. They have, no doubt, agents at London, Paris, and Brussels, and to copy stamps and forge transfers might not bother them. Besides, a number of the bonds are bearer bonds."

"I shall be in London," Emerson remarked.

Harden smiled. "You are a good sort, Garnet, but, talking like a banker I'd value your chance of helping at about ten cents ——" He stopped and his smile vanished when he resumed: "It looks as if I must pay for my carelessness, and your part is to see my folks and as much as possible soften the jar. The old man and my sister have got a nasty knock——"

He brooded quietly, and after a minute or two Emerson got up.

"I can't help at Miscana, and if I pull out in the morning, I might get the *Turanian*. There's not much use in talking, Keith; but if by some lucky chance I do hit a clue, you can reckon on my not letting go. That is all, I guess."

Harden gave him his hand, and when Emerson went down the path his look was rather grim. He was not remarkably hopeful, but his habit was to trust his luck. Besides, he was not long since a police trooper, and when the Royal North-West undertook an awkward job they held on stubbornly.

ANNE HARDEN

Cool shadows trembled on the sunny grass in a checkered pattern of gold and green. The turf at Copshope was old and very smooth. Bees haunted the massed flowers at the bottom of the terrace wall, and their tranquil humming harmonized with the splash of a burn. In the background, behind the shining beech-wood, the Border hills were serenely blue. Emerson, in a big basket-chair, felt that all struck a note of deep, and rather strange, tranquillity.

Canada was not tranquil. One was forced to hustle, and where cultivation went one remarked a sort of utilitarian harshness. Boisterous winds swept the plains, and in summer thunderstorms rolled across the woods. Angry rivers throbbed in the tangled pines. Nature, so to speak, was dynamic, and she and man were locked in stubborn conflict. Axes crashed in the woods, and along the rapids clanging turbines revolved. Where one got one's food—anyhow at the restaurants Garnet used—electric organs blared. As a rule, the North American frankly likes a noise.

At Copshope one obviously did not, and sitting under a spreading beech, Garnet sensed the spot's calm beauty and felt himself exotic. When he looked out from the shady corner, he thought the sunshine lovingly touched the old house's front. Copshope was rather small and not at all ambitious. The soft stone was checkered brown and yellow, and the main lines were horizontal. A sort of weathered cornice went along the top, and a broken molding about half-way up. The casement windows were low and wide. Behind the beech wood, light clouds floated horizontally. The level lines and soft color were soothing. In Canada the clouds were round; they rolled across the sky. On the plains the grass rippled; in the woods the dark pines tossed.

In a sense, perhaps, Emerson was exotic, although he was not at all remarkable and his type is common in springing Western towns. His clothes were good, his tall figure was rather firmly than strongly built, and his glance was quick. One sensed alertness and driving force. He might not keep the path cautious people used; one felt his habit was to shove ahead. Moreover, he had not cultivated the superficial carelessness that sometimes masks British energy. At the Scottish country house he was not altogether raw, but his rather obvious sincerity and keen interest marked him a stranger. He had arrived an hour or two since, and now the formalities of his welcome were over, he studied his hosts.

Harden's hair was white and his face was lined. Keith had said he was for some time a Glasgow merchant, but Emerson felt the old house and the blue hills were his proper background. Garnet remarked his rather formal, old-fashioned politeness and queer touch of dignity. His talk was quiet, as if he weighed words and hated to exaggerate. Sometimes he used a Scottish idiom that was like an epigram. Emerson thought him shrewd and kind, and he was rather a handsome old fellow. His step was not quick, but he carried himself well.

Garnet did not know about Mrs. Harden. Her clothes were fashionable and one felt her important; Mrs. Harden was rather obviously the laird's lady. Her figure was short, and as round as fashion allowed; her color was yet white and pink, and Emerson imagined at one time her physical charm was marked. He did not know much about Old Country ladies, but somehow he felt her languidness was cultivated. Harden's queer judicial calm was not. Yet she was a polite hostess and he felt he interested her. In a way, perhaps, his doing so was strange.

For a time their talk was careless, but Emerson imagined the others waited for him to satisfy their curiosity, and at length Mrs. Harden inquired for Keith.

"We got his letter, but it was not long. He stated you would soon arrive and give us full particulars," she said.

Emerson began to narrate Keith's fishing excursion; but after a few minutes a small car sped across a break in the trees and a girl crossed the lawn. Her white clothes seemed to indicate that she had been playing tennis, and her lines were boyishly straight, but a filmy motor veil flowed about her slender figure in an attractive curve. Emerson got an impression of lightness and grace, but when he was presented to Anne Harden he noted that her glance was searching and her mouth was firm. Although Mrs. Harden gave her a meaning look, she smiled.

"You were talking about Keith," she said. "Well, I'm interested and I am going to stop."

Emerson was rather embarrassed. Harden was entitled to know all he knew, but his narrative might puzzle the girl and she perhaps did not yet realize her brother's misfortune. He, however, went on as if he did not know she was about, and

somehow he thought she approved. The others were very quiet, but when he stopped Harden looked up.

"You imply that somebody *personated* my son. To cheat his friends and his clerk would be difficult."

"Although the summer night was clear, they saw him in the dark," Emerson replied. "Then sometimes one does meet a man strangely like another whom one knows. For example, Keith himself——"

He began to talk about Keith's meeting the gambler, and Harden's chair cracked, as if he had suddenly moved. Emerson thought Mrs. Harden's mouth was tight. She glanced at her husband, who looked straight in front. Garnet got a hint of disturbed surprise, but the incident he narrated was perhaps remarkable. All the same, he thought her relations' disturbance puzzled Anne.

"The fellow was banker at a red-light saloon card-table?" said Harden in a quiet voice.

"Keith thought him a tinhorn, sir. A common adventurer whose play is not always straight."

"But why was Keith at a place like that?" Mrs. Harden inquired.

"It is not important; he no doubt indulged his tourist's curiosity," Harden replied. "I have known your friends boast about adventures of the sort at Paris and Cairo; but on the Pacific Slope the performance is not staged for excursionists. Did Keith think the likeness distinct, Mr. Emerson?"

"His companion, the gambler himself, and one or two more noticed it. I believe he said there were differences, but a stranger might take the fellow for his relation."

Mrs. Harden said nothing; Harden smiled.

"Oh, well, sometimes one remarks a puzzling resemblance, as if Nature had used the same mold more than once. But go on. Do you think the tinhorn afterwards used the queer similarity in order to rob the bank?"

"It's possible, sir; I feel that is all. Vancouver is a long distance from Miscana and some years had gone."

Emerson thought his reply satisfied his hosts and he resumed his tale. When he stopped, Harden gave him a grateful look.

"Thank you, Mr. Emerson! I like your loyalty, and I think my son has got a trusty friend."

"All Keith's friends are loyal. Nobody who knows him imagines he was in any way accountable for the bonds' vanishing. The thing is altogether ridiculous."

"Very well; we must wait for some fresh light. In the meantime, the suspense is hard to bear and you may find us dull. We would like you to be happy at Copshope, and Anne, no doubt, can fix for a few tennis matches and picnics at romantic spots. Now I dare say she will show you the gardens and all that might interest you in the house."

Anne got up and they went off across the grass. Emerson imagined his hosts would sooner be alone, and so long as Anne was content to be his guide he was willing to indulge them. He saw roses and massed tall delphiniums, tinting the changing blue of the sky, and water-lilies floating in rock-pools; but he knew Anne's object was not altogether to show him the flowers. Although her talk, so far, was careless, he felt as if she weighed him.

By and by they went to the house and up the stairs at the side of the big square hall to a gallery at the top. Two or three crossed lances, a battered steel cap, and a few pictures occupied the paneled wall, and Anne, sitting down on a carved oak bench, signed Emerson to an old chair opposite. Her clothes were white and creamy yellow; her slender figure and delicately tinted skin were distinct against the dark wood. She was light and finely drawn, and somehow thoroughbred, but Emerson got a sense of nervous strength. He imagined Anne's eyes sometimes sparkled and the red blood stained her skin.

"You can smoke. I myself do not, but I'd sooner you did, because we must talk," she said. "Perhaps I'm not grammatical, and you needn't bother to be polite. Since you mean to stick to Keith and I'm his sister, the main thing is to be frank."

Emerson imagined Anne did not always talk like that. Her object perhaps was to help him out, but he did not know—— He rather thought Anne would not use a plan that he might see.

"All who properly know your brother mean to stick to him——" he said, and stopped, for Anne smiled.

"I wonder," she remarked. "Well, modesty is attractive, but you said something like that before, and you mustn't exaggerate. You see, Keith's friends are at Miscana, but you're at Copshope——In the Old Country we are not rashly trustful; we reserve our judgment. Well, my father is a Scot and tries to hide his hurt, although he has got a cruel knock. Your believing in Keith is some comfort, particularly since one knows you are sincere."

Emerson said nothing, but he was flattered. He thought Anne's trust was not careless; Miss Harden was keen. After a moment or two she resumed:

"Perhaps you felt a remark of Madam's jarred? At all events, you noted my father's impatience?"

"Mrs. Harden's remark? Now I recollect, Keith called her *Madam*."

"Mrs. Harden is rather formal, but she is not our mother, and the title is an acknowledgement of her authority. The Borderers are a clannish lot and she belongs to us."

It looked as if Miss Harden's loyalty sometimes was strained; but she went on: "When you talked about Keith's visiting the red-light saloon I, at all events, did not wonder why he went. Father's explanation, so to speak, was superfluous."

Emerson looked up. His movement was mechanical, and when he met Anne's rather amused glance he stopped. He had not reckoned on her admitting she knew what the red lights implied.

"You see, I know Keith's soberness," she said, and indicated a portrait on the wall. "His mother and mine! Her people were for long stern supporters of the Scottish kirk, and we believe she sprang from Cameronian stock. The Cameronians were the Covenanters' fanatical left wing."

Studying the picture, Emerson thought it possible. The first Mrs. Harden was a handsome woman. Her brow was wide and her eyes were calm, but their calm was austere and her mouth was thin. One could not doubt her sincerity; one felt she must be just. All the same, her justice might be merciless. In fact, Mrs. Harden was the sort of woman one would rather respect than love.

"Keith is hardly his mother's stamp and I think you are not at all," he said.

"One inherits inherited qualities," Anne remarked, and getting up stopped in front of another picture. "I am a Harden, and although father's doubtful, we like to believe the old fellow on the wall was an ancestor of ours."

The picture interested Emerson. A moss-trooper on a shaggy pony held up a hooped wooden cup. His steel cap shone, as if in torchlight, and red reflections touched his lined face and slanted lance. His look was grimly humorous.

"I like him!" said Emerson. "His blood was red; you feel he could take hard knocks and use his long spear, but I think he loved a joke. Well, it looks as if there were two sorts of Scots."

Anne laughed, a frank, musical laugh.

"I begin to think you keen; but he's rather theatrical, and I expect he was not our relation. Perhaps all he really stands for is the spirit of his time. We were merchant adventurers and mended our fortunes on the exchanges at London and Montreal. Since I think none got very rich, the queer thing is, there was always a Harden at Copshope——"

She hesitated, and then went on as if she resolved to give Emerson her confidence:

"Well, I mustn't bore you. At one time, we were freebooters, and perhaps the virile, lawless strain is not yet run out. When father got Keith's letter he was strangely disturbed and I almost think he doubted——Then, of course, the bleak suspicion went; he knew Keith, in a sense, was our mother's son. Now there is but one thing to be said: you are my brother's champion, and if you see a useful plan, all the help I'm able to give is yours."

She gave Emerson a smile that moved him, and began to talk about something else; but soon afterwards a bell called them to tea in the shade on the lawn.

VI

MOONLIGHT AND SHADOW

Pale-yellow reflections lingered in the west, where the plain ran to the sea. The east was dusky blue, and the half-moon rose behind a sharp black hill. Soft darkness crept down the curving glen, but in some places a faint silver beam pierced the Scots firs' branches and touched the hazel thickets by the stony path. Emerson smelt honeysuckle, and a burn splashed in the gloom.

The glen was famous long since, when the moss-troopers followed the burn across the waste to raid Northumberland; but Emerson was not thinking about historical romance. After dinner Anne and he had crossed the hill and he was satisfied to be with her in the summer dusk. Although he had but recently arrived, and her cultivation was higher than his, Anne and he were friends. She was frank and up-to-date, and he imagined her brother's trusting him was something of a bond.

Anne's speculations, when she did speculate about Emerson, were mixed. He was athletic and carried himself like a soldier. Then he was a fresh type and stood for independence and effort. The young men she knew were mainly occupied by sport, and rather laboriously copied their jazzing friends in town. In fact, all, so to speak, used one model. The Canadian modestly but firmly asserted his individuality. Moreover, in the bleak hills, young men were not numerous. Anne knew she was attractive, and rather liked to use her charm.

Where a gate broke a dry-stone wall she stopped. A Scots fir spread its branches across the mossy stones and the spot commanded a noble view. The deep river valley was blurred and indistinct, but where it opened to the plain the moon was on the marshes, and the Solway pierced the misty levels like a shining blade.

"All is very calm and perhaps you are lucky, because on the Border it is not often like that," said Anne. "Our hills are torn by storms, and floods carve deep gullies in the moors. Well, I suppose storm is bracing, and at all events, a Solway gale breaks the sort of narcotic quiet that rules at Copshope."

Emerson saw the old house's lights glimmer in the trees. An owl called behind the beech wood and light mist floated about the fields. He felt the spot was marked by a soothing, homelike charm.

"I'd begun to think it was always summer at Copshope," he said. "But don't you like quiet?"

"One can have enough," Anne replied, and laughed. "A month at Edinburgh, and sometimes two or three weeks in town, is all the change I get, and it makes me long for more. One is very quiet when one is doped. However, I mustn't grumble, and I don't suppose you know much about being bored."

"Well, I've loafed for three weeks, and I feel I want to keep it up. You see, I have not taken a holiday before. Once or twice I tried, but I got up against obstacles that forced me back to work. Now I think about it, the thing was queer."

"I wonder——" said Anne, with a smile. "Something, of course, depends upon one's seeing the obstacles, and to picture your loafing is hard."

"Then, if you're interested, you can watch me," Emerson rejoined. "At length, nothing's doing and my partner holds the fort. The Old Country's a bully country, and I mean to take a rest——"

Anne turned her head, and signing him to be quiet, stepped back into the gloom. Stones rattled on the path, as if somebody came down the glen. Emerson imagined it looked as if they were lovers and Anne would sooner not attract the stranger's notice. The supposition was humorous, but he admitted the joke had some charm.

The stranger went fast. His step was not a plowman's step and his boots were not the boots the dalesfolk used. Emerson noted things like that. When the other crossed a spot where the moonbeams pierced the trees he thought he knew somebody whose figure and carriage resembled the fellow's. The man passed the spot, and stopping about fifty yards farther on, looked about. Anne touched Emerson, and for a few moments they were very quiet. Then the fellow began to push through a broken hedge, and when he plunged down the bank on the other side he swore.

Emerson started. Since the dalesfolk mended hedges with barbed wire, the fellow's swearing was perhaps not remarkable. The strange thing was, his accent and expletives were Western.

"Has one of your neighbors spent some time in Canada or the United States?" he asked.

"I think not; besides, the man is not a neighbor," Anne replied.

She moved back from the wall, and when her face was in the moonlight Emerson saw she cogitated.

"All the same, I thought I knew his walk," she resumed in a hesitating voice.

"Somehow I imagined I had seen him before," said Emerson. "He's steering across the field. Where do you think he'll go?"

"A path to the house runs along the other side, and a lane behind the garden joins the valley road," said Anne; and then, as if she obeyed an impulse, pushed Emerson. "Follow him!"

Emerson shoved through the broken hedge and kept the gloom of another across the field. His steps were nearly noiseless and light mist floated about. Moreover, he was at one time a mounted policeman, and the Royal North-West are first-class scouts. To some extent, however, the mist was a drawback. The man he followed was but a minute in front, and if he stopped, Emerson might run up against him, and an explanation would be awkward. Anyhow, the other would know he was watched, and Emerson wanted to find out why he took the field path to the house. Anne did not know him, and Emerson was satisfied he was not a countryman.

Where the path went round a clump of larches he halted. A burn splashed behind the trees, and he thought the noise would drown the other's steps; so far as he could see, nobody was about. Two hundred yards off, the Copshope windows shone; the lights were on the ground floor and some were dim, as if the shades obscured the glass.

Then a gate creaked, and Emerson crossed a plank that spanned the burn. The path he took curved along by the beeches at one side of the lawn, and under the spreading branches all was dark. Garnet heard nothing, although he knew the gravel was freshly raked. Yet he thought somebody was in front and, like himself, kept the grass border in order to go noiselessly.

Stopping behind the last trunk, he got his breath and looked about. The moon was higher and the dewy lawn sparkled in silver light. A trail of mist shimmered about the bushes on the other side. The front of the house was yet in gloom, but after a few moments a dark object crossed an illuminated window. Although the terrace was flagged, Emerson heard nothing. The dark object vanished like a ghost.

A minute or two afterwards he stole up the shallow terrace steps. Nobody was on the flagged walk, and had the door opened, he would have seen the reflection from the hall. Garnet knitted his brows. The fellow was not Harden's servant; Anne did not know him, and a servant would not steal into the house. To steer for the corner where he vanished would occupy some moments and Garnet's boots might jar on the flags. Emerson resolved to go the other way, round the house, and meet the fellow.

He started. But for the kitchen and the housekeeper's room, the windows at the back were dark. Emerson crept round the garage and stable and the gardener's potting sheds, but all was quiet. Yet somebody had gone round the corner. In fact, he rather thought the fellow was still lurking by the wall. Anyhow, Emerson was satisfied the other had not heard him. He had hunted the shy prairie antelope, and where silence is indicated the Royal North-West troopers do not make much noise. Then his foot struck a bucket and the iron rang like a bell. Garnet frowned and clenched his fist. The noise would carry; there was now no use in his waiting in the courtyard, particularly since the outbuildings cut his view. Since he had, no doubt, alarmed the other, he ought perhaps to watch the lane that joined the road.

The lane followed the edge of a beech wood, and Emerson waited under a tree. He was on the grassy border and knew himself indistinguishable a yard or two off. On the other side the hedge was low, and the sky behind it was clear. Garnet thought he had fixed on the proper spot.

By and by somebody came along the lane and he felt he ought to know the step. The other was going briskly, but not very fast, as if he did not want his speed to excite curiosity. Then a tall figure cut the sky behind the hedge and Garnet knew the sharp, dark outline. The man who had passed him in the glen was making for the road.

Emerson had no grounds to stop him, and since he did not mean to do so, he would sooner the fellow did not imagine he was watched. To some extent his caution was mechanical; he took the line he would have taken were he a police

trooper.

The indistinct figure melted, the quick steps died away, and Emerson started for the house. He calculated it was about ten minutes since he climbed the terrace steps. The stranger had not gone to the hall door and certainly was not in the courtyard at the back. Emerson wondered where he was while the ten minutes went.

Anne met him on the terrace. The moonlight had reached the house and he thought she looked bothered.

"Well?" she said.

Emerson narrated his search and she nodded.

"You were not justified to meddle and I am glad you did not. Perhaps I ought not to have sent you—but I thought him like Keith."

"He was like Keith," Emerson agreed.

"But Keith's at Winnipeg, and if somebody copied his walk and clothes in order to rob the bank, he would not come to Scotland and lurk about our house."

"It's strange. In a way, to suspect the fellow Keith met at Vancouver would be ridiculous. There's another thing: when Keith goes fast, his step is rather uneven. The other's was not."

"He did not go to the kitchen; I know our neighbors' servants and gamekeepers. You are satisfied he was not about the yard?"

"That is so," said Emerson, smiling. "One mustn't boast, and when I crept along the wall I knocked over a bucket; but I was a mounted policeman."

Anne looked up with surprise. She had remarked that he carried himself like a soldier and moved with a sort of rhythmical precision, but she had not pictured him a constable.

"The Royal North-West, I suppose?" she said. "Cowboy frontier cavalry?"

"I reckon not," Emerson replied with a twinkle. "The force is drilled and disciplined like a regiment of British line. Then the boys are not swashbuckling ruffians. On the whole, they're steady, resolute young fellows who try to carry out an awkward job. In the back blocks the R.N.W.M.P. stand for right and law. However, the important thing is, they taught me still-hunting."

Anne played up. He did not want to talk about his adventures, and somehow she would sooner they did not talk about the man who passed them in the glen.

"Oh, well, we have been out for some time. Perhaps you ought to say nothing to my father. We haven't much to go upon and mustn't be romantic. Besides, I think Keith's misfortune hurts him more than he is willing for us to know."

They went to the house. Mrs. Harden had recently gone to bed: a sudden neuralgic headache, Harden thought. Anne went off, and Harden took Emerson to the smoking-room. For some time he talked with old-fashioned politeness, but Emerson imagined it cost him an effort, and at length he said:

"Brooding will not help, but I am anxious for my son. Keith has pluck, but he has got a nasty knock, and when one is young to wait is hard. Yet, until the directors admit he had nothing to do with the robbery, he must stop at the bank."

"Keith certainly had nothing to do with it," Emerson remarked.

"For Keith to steal is unthinkable," Harden agreed. "He is, of course, my son, but if he were not, I'd still be satisfied the directors' suspecting him was altogether extravagant."

He went off soon afterwards, but Emerson smoked out his pipe. When he pondered his host's remarks, it looked as if Harden had grounds for his confidence that Garnet did not know.

VII

THE SIGNAL

A shower rolled up the valley, and Emerson, plowing through drenched meadowsweet, steered for a broken wall under the trees by the quiet road. The afternoon was sultry, and thunder rumbled in the hills. Emerson's long fishing-stockings and nailed brogues embarrassed him, and although he had floundered about the stony river since lunch he had caught but two or three small trout.

In the meantime, he had had enough. Under the spreading beech the ground was clear of undergrowth and the wall was dry. Resting his back against the stones, he lighted his pipe and looked about. Behind the tangled grass and meadowsweet, swallows skimmed a calm river-pool. Overhead big drops splashed on trembling leaves, and where the thick branches opened he saw the moor's broken, purple ridge. Although the flies were numerous, Garnet was content to smoke and muse.

He had thought to start for Edinburgh and he must do so soon, but in summer Copshope was a charming spot, and Anne Harden was a remarkably attractive girl. Perhaps for her brother's sake, she was kind; in Scotland the word carried a significance it did not in Canada. To some extent, Anne was frankly modern, but Emerson sensed a touch of the old Borderers' fire and pride. In fact, he imagined Anne Harden's blood was red. All the same, for him to dwell upon her charm was foolish.

Mrs. Harden puzzled him. He thought her talents were domestic and she was satisfied to rule her husband's house. Her rule was firm; the servants were model servants, and on Sundays were sent off to the Established Church, although it entailed a frugal lunch and cold dinner. Mrs. Harden was a stanch Presbyterian and used the capitals. Her friends were sober and locally important; Emerson thought some dull. Perhaps it was strange, but he felt her conventional propriety was rather exaggerated. Somehow he wondered whether Mrs. Harden was always like that.

There was another queer thing: Harden indulged his wife and it looked as if she got all she wanted, but Emerson did not think her happy. A sort of nervous moodiness seemed to imply that she bore some strain, and since Emerson thought Anne was puzzled, it looked as if the strain were recent. He did not imagine she bothered about Keith. Keith had stated he was not much at Copshope, and after all he was not her son. Well, it had nothing to do with Garnet, and he would soon be gone.

He turned his head. The rain had not stopped and a walking tourist came along the road. Copshope was not on the beaten track, but in summer holiday-makers invaded the lonely hills. The fellow was young, and obviously a city man, for his skin was white and his knickerbockers and shooting-coat were new. Emerson thought him much like other British excursionists who sometimes disturbed his fishing. Pulling off his rucksack, the stranger sat down on the wall and lighted a cigarette.

"The showers are heavy and the afternoon is hot," he said. "However, when I left King's Cross the fog in town was worse."

Emerson had not heard the word before and he said nothing. The other gave him a careless glance and resumed: "Perhaps you don't know London; but sometimes Montreal is pretty hot."

"That is so," Emerson agreed, and studied the other.

The fellow was not a Canadian, and Garnet meditated about his surmising that he knew Montreal. His fishing-stockings were Harden's and his clothes were made by a Glasgow tailor.

"Were you at Montreal?" he inquired.

"For two or three days, in August, and I had enough. Then I joined a Canadian friend on the Taminisqua. A noble trout river, but when we were out we got more mosquito bites than fish."

Emerson remarked that the fellow shifted the accent from the proper syllable, which, if he had camped by the river, was perhaps strange.

"I believe the Taminisqua trout are good," he said, placing the accent where the tourist placed it.

"Big yellow fish, two or three pounds weight. Perhaps you know my pal, Johnny Oakshot? *Taminisqua* Johnny! He boasts about his river."

As a rule, a Canadian talks about gray trout: in Scotland, yellow implies the red-spotted, freshwater kind. The tourist was not a Scot, and it looked as if he had an object for using the river's name. Emerson imagined he rather stressed the word, and although he did not know Oakshot, his curiosity was excited and he was willing to give him a lead.

"On our side, he's Taminisqua *Jake*."

"Why, of course," said the tourist carelessly. "I suppose you are stopping at the house across the fields?"

Emerson thought it rather obvious. One saw Copshope in the trees, and he was fishing where strangers dared not fish; a notice by the road warned off trespassers. When one wears wading-stockings and thick brogues one does not walk far. Yet he saw the other wanted to know.

"Yes," he said. "I am at Copshope. I may not stop for long."

The tourist got up. The shower was passing, but for a few moments he hesitated.

"Well, I must shove on for Greensyke Inn. If you'd like to see Johnny Oakshot, he might be at Hexham. I'm Tom Basset, and I've got a room at the inn for a day or two."

Emerson let him go and lighted a fresh pipe. He did not want to see Oakshot, but he pondered.

It looked as if the fellow's talking about Oakshot and the Taminisqua was an experiment, perhaps a signal. But if that were so, who did Basset think he was? Keith was at Winnipeg, and if the men who robbed the bank had sent across a confederate, he would not fix the rendezvous in the Border hills. For all that, Basset had stated he would be at the Greensyke Inn for a few days, and it looked as if he meant to indicate that Emerson would find him there if he were wanted. On the whole, his doing so implied that Keith was, after all, the gang's accomplice, and although the supposition was ridiculous, Emerson resolved he would say nothing to Harden. After a time he admitted that he was baffled. Basset was perhaps but a tourist who wanted to boast about his fishing in Canada, and Garnet put up his rod and took a field path to Copshope.

Harden was on the terrace, and Emerson, joining him, presently inquired:

"What is a *fug*, sir?"

"Close heat; perhaps stuffiness is the colloquial word," Harden replied, smiling. "The term is not Scottish, but when an English public schoolboy warmed up his study I believe he talked about a fug. In some circles, to use the slang of our famous schools is rather fashionable."

"Then if one did not know the word, it would indicate that one had not gone to a first-class English school? In fact, it might indicate that one was a foreigner?"

"On the whole, I think it might do so," Harden agreed.

Soon afterwards a shower drove them from the terrace and Garnet found Anne in a corner of the library. She signed him to stop and indicated a big leather chair. Rain beat the windows, the house was drearily quiet, and Garnet saw she was willing to talk. He knew her keenness and imagined that one could trust her pluck. Moreover, in a sense she was his confederate and he did not want to bother Harden. The old fellow already had enough trouble.

"When you came in you frowned," she said.

"I was trying to weigh something and found the proposition tough. Maybe you can help."

"Then you think I may solve a puzzle that baffles you?"

"It's possible," Garnet agreed with a laugh, and narrated his meeting the tourist.

For a few moments Anne said nothing. When she smiled her smile was attractive, but Emerson liked to see her knit her brows and concentrate. Her glance got fixed and her eyes shone softly, as a river-pool shines in the shade; her mouth got firm and her pressed lips curved in a charming bow. Although she was young and keen, her habit was to ponder, but when she saw her line Emerson imagined she would not stop for obstacles.

"I think Basset's talking about the river and his friend *was* a signal," she remarked. "You see, he had experimented and found out you were Canadian."

"But why did he signal?"

"The bank thieves have perhaps confederates in this country. Did not Keith think some of the bonds might be negotiated at London and in France? If they meant to risk it, somebody must carry the documents across."

"Suppose somebody did so? The gang would not reckon on the messenger's going to Copshope. They would fix it to meet him at Southampton or Liverpool. Besides, he'd have come across some time since."

Anne looked up, rather sharply, as if she were disturbed.

"It is very strange, and I am glad Father does not know. You see, if Keith had taken the bonds——"

"We know, and Mr. Harden knows, he did not!" Garnet rejoined. "Then had Keith undertaken a job like that, he certainly would not have stopped at your house. He is not the sort to entangle his relations and he dared not have faced you. But there's no use in talking. The thing's absurd!"

"All the same, you must say nothing to Father and Madam. He is embarrassed and anxious, and I think she is ill. At all events, when he is not about she is nervous and moody. Well, if I thought I could help Keith, I would not stop for old-fashioned scruples. Suppose we take it for granted Basset did signal you? He would feel he must use some caution; and you did not play up. It's possible he'll wait and try another time. If he does so, what are you going to do about it?"

Emerson smiled and looked about. He saw old massive oak and rows of books about sport and agriculture. The big leather chairs were comfortable; the dark table-top was marked, as if it had some time carried glasses of hot liquor. Old sporting prints occupied one wall. The spacious room was not at all austere; one felt it was rather used by country sportsmen than by scholars. In fact, all at Copshope struck a note of tranquil and rather conventional calm.

"I expect we're romantic," Emerson replied. "Somehow one feels that nothing strange and disturbing ought to touch a house like yours. At Copshope one cannot be theatrical."

"But we are disturbed," said Anne, and gave him a searching glance. "Keith is not romantic, but he might have gone to jail. In the circumstances, your soberness is perhaps an embarrassment."

"For example?"

"If Basset looks you up again, it might indicate he's satisfied you are the man he thought to meet. At all events, it would imply he's willing to run some risk and, so to speak, to bet on the chance. Are you willing?"

Garnet colored and his eyes sparkled.

"You are pretty frank, Miss Harden, but I guess you ought to know. If I see a plan to vindicate my pal, why I'll bet all I've got."

"Ah," said Anne, "now you are very nice, and you mustn't be afraid I'll think you theatrical. Perhaps some Scots are cautious, but the Borderers are another sort. However, let's be practical. Suppose Basset leaves you alone?"

"Then I guess I'll wait. If he reckons he's mistaken, he'll pull out. When I plunge ahead, I like to see where I go."

Anne laughed, a frank, girlish laugh. Emerson's look was alert and ominously resolute. When she gave the signal, she imagined he would front the plunge.

"You stick to your rules, but when you do start I expect your progress will be fast," she said. "But perhaps we are extravagant and Basset is, after all, a tourist. In a day or two I think we'll find out. Let's talk about something else."

VIII

EMERSON TAKES A PLUNGE

Although the road was narrow and stony, Anne's small car sped down the hill. At the bottom of the steep bank, four or five yards off, an angry burn, stained purple-red like claret, brawled in the rocks, and the alders' shadows checkered foaming water and wet, shining moss. On the other side, dark gullies broke the moor's steep front. Silver sand and gravel marked the spots where floods had swept the road.

Emerson was happily satisfied to study Anne at the wheel, and sometimes when she took an awkward curve she gave him a smile. Anne, in her white tennis clothes, steering the speeding car, was an attractive picture and Garnet admitted that he had spent a glorious afternoon. The old house behind the oak trees in the folded hills was marked by a tranquil charm, and he had not yet seen grass like the smooth tennis greens. He supposed the turf was mown, by scythes, when the stately oaks were young.

Then the young men and women he met were sports; Garnet was almost persuaded they did not remark his awkwardness, and when he was lucky his antagonists applauded. They certainly could play tennis, and he admitted he could not, but Anne had claimed him for her partner and nobly saw him out. He knew before the game began she would not let him down.

Now speed and the wind that swept the moors had brought the blood to her skin. Her eyes sparkled and her slender figure was alertly posed. Emerson pictured her running like a prairie antelope and leaping for a ball. Although she was swift, she was graceful and somehow resolute. Anne had meant to win, and but for him she might have done so. Yet, when they were beaten she laughed and her remarks were generous. Where victory was impossible, Anne knew how to front defeat. In fact, Garnet acknowledged her all a charming young woman ought to be.

He liked Copshope and the one or two houses at which he had visited. Although not large and ambitious, they were beautiful; one sensed old cultivation and, by contrast with Canada, a sort of ancient calm. Except when one played tennis, nobody hustled, and it looked as if nothing ever jarred. Garnet unconsciously frowned. Harden and Anne had got a jar, although their pride helped them hide their hurt. Moreover, the serenity he had begun to like was not for him. Soon he must pull out for Edinburgh, and in the meantime he ought perhaps to get on Basset's trail. He did not yet know, and he looked in front.

"Watch out for the gate!" he said. "If you slow up, I'll jump and run ahead."

"I think not," Anne rejoined with a laugh. "You might, however, hold on and not swing against my arm. Unless you jolt me, I expect to get through."

Emerson doubted. The gate in the big, loose wall was but three parts open, and where a risk was not justified he hated to be rash. Then on one side of the road the rocky bank fell precipitously to the burn. Anne, however, let the car go and he said nothing. In the meantime, his business was to see he did not touch her steering arm.

They sped through the gate. Garnet thought the guards hardly cleared the post; and then a sheep behind the wall leaped into the road. Anne's color melted; her face was white but her look was fixed and stern. The car swerved and tilted, and wet peat tossed about the wheels. Emerson held on grimly. So far, he must not meddle, but when the crash was certain he meant to seize Anne and jump.

The crash, however, did not arrive. Suddenly the screen was level and all the wheels were in the road. Anne smiled and Garnet lighted a cigarette. The girl who steered the car past the sheep was not the girl he had thought he knew. She was sterner stuff, but he did not like her less.

"Although you said nothing, I expect you did not approve," she said.

"The car is yours, Miss Harden. I'm a passenger."

"Your neck is yours, and perhaps you risked it. Well, I knew I could steer through the gate; but I did not reckon on the sheep."

"Sometimes the thing you do not reckon on makes trouble," Garnet remarked. "To look in front before you plunge is a useful plan."

"I suppose that is so," Anne agreed. "Keith and you, no doubt, would adopt that plan; but I am not altogether like my brother."

"When Keith is up against it, his nerve is good."

"Of course," said Anne, with a touch of haughtiness.

"All the same, he weighs things and often I do not. In fact, I think I inherited something from the Hardens who were not stockbrokers. But we mustn't philosophize. What about Basset?"

"He's yet at the inn, and I begin to think he really may be a messenger from the bank thieves' British accomplices, and imagines I was sent across by the Canadian gang. If I could persuade him that is so, I might get on their track; but I must wait for a fresh signal."

"Yes," said Anne thoughtfully, "perhaps you ought to wait. You must not alarm him, but if he does signal we will know our surmise is right."

She concentrated on her driving, for the curves were sharp and the hills were steep. Emerson mused and looked about. If his supposition about Basset were accurate, he ought to inform Harden and the police. In a way, Anne's imagining they themselves might follow the clue was absurd. Anne, however, thought not. She was young and romantic, but he knew her cleverness and so long as she was resolved to meddle he must indulge her. Then she had perhaps good grounds for thinking Harden must not be bothered, and if Basset got to know the police inquired about him, he would at once take flight. Well, Garnet had argued it out before——

Now they sped down from the moors, smooth pastures spread across the valley. Yellow light touched the quiet fields, and where the hills rolled back, Copshope stood amidst its sheltering woods. The summer evening was serene, and the bleating of sheep harmonized with the sleepy calm. All was peaceful, but Garnet began to think one might get tired——

When they reached the house Harden and Mrs. Harden were in the hall. Harden's look was grave and his wife's disturbed. When Emerson came in she pushed back a book and he thought her movements abrupt and nervous. For some days he had felt that Mrs. Harden was queer.

"I have some news I much dislike to give you," Harden remarked. "But you might first read a letter that arrived soon after you went off. The stamp is a Canadian stamp——"

Emerson had not yet sat down and he leaned against the table and tore the envelope. For a few moments he said nothing and looked straight in front. Anne saw he frowned, and since the letter was from Canada, she meant to remain. She rather thought Mrs. Harden had not remarked that she was about. Then Emerson turned to his host.

"The letter is from my partner, Cartwright, sir. Walthew, Keith's clerk, was moved to another office, and it looks as if somebody at the bank was indiscreet, for he found out that one of the stolen bonds was offered for sale in London. Perhaps he risked his post, but since he did not know where I was and Keith must not be implicated, he wrote to Cartwright. Cartwright imagines the bank at once got busy, for the police began to make cautious inquiries about my movements. People know I was Keith's pal and soon after the bonds vanished I started for England. Cartwright thought I ought to know and he urges me to come back."

"Your partner's advice is good. Are you going?"

"On the whole, I think not," Emerson answered quietly.

Harden gave him a keen glance and Mrs. Harden looked up. Somehow her manner indicated that she had expected the reply. Anne waited. She knew why Emerson was not going, but he would not enlighten her father. She had ordered him to say nothing about Basset.

"Very well," said Harden. "I'll give you my news. Two hours since a police sergeant arrived and asked about you. He was rather apologetic, but he stated he was informed I had a Canadian guest, and he wanted some particulars. There was no use in trying to baffle the fellow, and I imagine he has returned to the office at Hawick to make a report. Although I

felt that my replies were not altogether the replies he expected, the Scottish police have obviously been ordered to watch you."

"It looks like that," Emerson agreed. "For me to stop might be embarrassing. I think I'll start as soon as possible."

He saw Mrs. Harden was willing to let him go, but Harden knitted his brows, as if he were puzzled.

"So long as you start for Canada, I approve. But to run away would be to admit you dared not face an inquiry."

"I see the drawback, sir. Still, Keith had nothing to do with the robbery, and unless I was his accomplice I could not have got the bond somebody tried to sell. A number of people know I was at the fishing camp when the safe was opened. Then, my business at Miscana prospers, and the police will soon find out my record's good."

"So far, the argument is for your going back."

For a few moments Emerson was quiet, and Anne studied the group. She could not account for Mrs. Harden's rather obvious suspense, but Madam's moods had puzzled her. Her father's embarrassment was comprehensible; his part was to urge his guest to go. All the same, he was not selfish; so far as he knew, he tried to think for the other. Emerson seemed to ponder, and then he faced his host.

"I came across for a holiday; but, if the thieves had English accomplices, I thought I might somehow find a clue. Well, although the thing looked extravagant I begin to see a plan. You certainly would not approve; in fact, since the plan implies my vanishing, your objecting would be logical. Anyhow, you mustn't be entangled, and since speed's important, I'll shove off in half an hour."

He started for his room. Harden frowned and began to walk about.

"The young fellow is generous, but he's doing a foolish thing."

"It is possible he is implicated," Mrs. Harden remarked.

Harden turned to her sternly. "Not at all! If you assume his guilt, you must assume my son's."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Harden, "if you are satisfied with his grounds for stealing off, I am not. His vague statement about a plan is not very plausible."

She and Harden went out, but Anne stopped and cogitated. Garnet Emerson was stanch. Since he had engaged to say nothing, he was willing to bear his hosts' suspicions. His modest explanation certainly was not convincing. Had Anne not known all she did know, she might have doubted him. After a few minutes she got up.

Emerson, throwing his clothes into a bag, heard somebody call, and when he went to the door saw Anne in the passage. She signed and he followed her to the library.

"Nobody is about," she said. "Can you stop for two or three minutes?"

"If you are willing, I'll stop for an hour. I've been happy at Copshope, and now I must pull out I don't want to go."

"Ah," said Anne, "I ought to urge you to consider, but for Keith's sake I'm selfish! You see, if you vanish, the police will be justified in thinking you brought across the bonds."

"It's possible, Miss Harden; but the police have not found me yet, and if Basset is the man we think, I expect he'll cover our trail. If he's a tourist, I'll start for Liverpool and try to get on board a Canadian boat; but I admit I'd be sorry."

"Your pluck is good, Mr. Emerson, but my friends call me Anne. The strange thing is, you hesitated not long since."

"Oh, well, I'm a cautious fellow, and I wanted to wait for Basset's next move. Now, of course, I cannot wait; but I feel I've got a clue, and if I let it go I'd be shabby."

Anne smiled. "To picture your taking a shabby line is hard. Then, when one thinks about it coolly, perhaps our meddling *is* rash. After all, to follow the clue is the police's business."

"We resolved we would meddle," Emerson rejoined. "Anyhow, if we did put the police wise, my tale might not carry

much weight: a tourist joined me for a smoke and talked about a Canadian river! Besides, when the police get busy they won't find the fellow. Before the sergeant was at Copshope I guess he was at the inn, and Basset will quit. Then, since I was a boy I've played a lone hand. One gets independent, and I'd hate to feel I let another undertake my job."

"Your argument's rather labored," Anne remarked, but her voice struck an emotional note. "If you think you must apologize for your adventure, you are very modest. It really looks as if you did not know your pluck was splendid."

Emerson thrilled. Nobody was about and the light had begun to go. Anne was but a yard off, and he fought an extravagant impulse to take her in his arms. In a few minutes he must start, and when he had left her he would be lonely; in fact, he felt he would be lonely always afterwards. The impulse, however, was absurd, and he pictured Anne's horrified surprise.

"But I must know where you are and all you do," she resumed. "You will write——"

"Ought I, Anne? I mustn't entangle you."

"You said something like that to Father. I'd sooner you were selfish. Don't you want to write to me?"

"If I did all I wanted, I'd stop at Copshope."

Anne smiled, but pale color, like the wild rose's delicate pink, touched her face. Although she had not known Garnet Emerson for long, he was the sort one trusted, and to feel she could reckon on his support was some comfort. Perhaps he was rather slow to start on a strange path; her thoughts were swifter and more adventurous than his, but when he did start she knew he would stubbornly push ahead. In fact, he was the sort of confederate she wanted. Anne felt she must find some grounds for her reluctance to let him go.

"Nobody knows your hand and, as a rule, I open the post bag," she said. "Well, I'll be keenly interested and perhaps I might help. You see, I like to think I'm important, and I'm Keith's sister—Besides, I acknowledged myself your friend."

Emerson got up. Although control was getting hard, he must not be carried away.

"Thank you, Anne! However, I must look up Basset and I ought to get going. I don't know where I'll stop, and when you haul a trunk about you must hire porters and order cabs. You, so to speak, blaze your trail across the country. To pack my stuff in a knapsack might be useful. Since the hills are overrun by walking tourists, I'll be another——"

"Wait," said Anne, and went off. Although Emerson had undertaken a romantic job, he was typically practical.

When she returned she carried a rucksack, a short, mackintosh fishing-coat, and a small ivory-handled pistol.

"They were Keith's; he would be glad for you to have them. His uncle gave him the pistol when he was home from school. All our relations are not like Father and Madam."

"I haven't yet carried a gun," said Emerson humorously. "Canadians are not a remarkably blood-thirsty lot."

"You are going to meet dangerous men," Anne insisted. "If you are forced to fight, you fight for Keith, and, in a way, for me—I'd like to think I had armed you."

Emerson pushed the small pistol into his pocket and she gave him her hand.

"Madam may wonder where we are, and when you start I will not be about. Good luck, Garnet! Until I know you're safe, I'll be anxious!"

She went off, and Emerson carried the rucksack and mackintosh to his room. His emotions were very mixed, but he must dwell upon the moving interview another time. The light would soon go and he must push off.

IX

THE STRANGE PATH

Emerson refused Harden's car. He would sooner his hosts did not know where he went; his plan was to steal off, and, carrying Keith's rucksack, he started on his feet. When he took the valley road the sunset had melted and the woods and hills were dim. Sheep bleated on the long, steep slopes, mist floated about the trees, and the river throbbed in the gloom. In a way, Emerson felt it was symbolical. He had rashly left the plain, beaten path, and the trail he hit led into the dark. His adventure was fantastic, but he had embarked on it and he must trust his luck.

When he started Harden was obviously disturbed; Mrs. Harden was, at least, resigned. Emerson dared not yet speculate about Anne. She was romantic, and he knew she had, perhaps not altogether consciously, pushed him on; and then was sorry. Well, he did not want her to be logical. To go was hard, but he liked to feel he was Anne's servant and went on her errand. By and by he pulled out her present. The old-fashioned revolver was small, but the balance was good and when he ejected the cartridges the action was smooth. A useful little gun, but Emerson put it up. Were he forced to shoot, he would know himself beaten.

His business was to bluff a gang of supposititiously clever and well-organized crooks, and it implies one's using talents he doubted if he had. Moreover, he must baffle the police, but, to some extent, their searching for him was an advantage. It ought to persuade Basset he was the man the fellow imagined. The sergeant, no doubt, had inquired for him at the inn.

The inn was two or three miles off, at the bottom of a wooded hill. In front, a slender suspension bridge spanned the river, and when Emerson arrived Basset leaned against the iron lattice and smoked his pipe. Emerson noted that the spot commanded two roads.

"I reckoned you would look me up," Basset remarked in a meaning voice.

Emerson knew his supposition accurate. The other had given him his cue; the sergeant had visited at the inn.

"Sure thing," he said. "The police have hit my trail."

"What about your country-house friends? I expect they got a knock!"

"It's possible," Emerson agreed with a laugh. "I don't boast about my exploits and I left them guessing. Anyhow, they'd hate to be famous, and I reckon they did not help the sergeant much. Since they're rather important, he's gone off for fresh orders, and my notion is to beat it before he gets back."

The other deliberated and Emerson wondered who he thought he was. It certainly was not Keith, and for a crook to stop at a country house was queer. Yet the fellow had known he was at Copshope.

"Perhaps I'm not very humorous, but I don't see the joke," Basset remarked. "The police are not fools, and not long since an accident gave the C.I.D. a useful hint."

Emerson saw the fellow studied him and he experimented.

"The stopped bond? Well, somebody was not very bright, and by and by I want particulars. In the meantime, you can fix it for me to meet up with the boys?"

"Oakshot's in town; London's three hundred miles off. However, I wired Burke and Lang to look out for me at Hexham, and we must chance their being there."

"At Hexham?" said Emerson, for he understood the town was small.

Basset frowned impatiently. "It looked as if you meant to remain at Copshope and I must wait for you to move. Then the main rail and road lines to Scotland go by the west and the east coast. Hexham commands both; a loop line joins the Edinburgh railway, and Newcastle is not far off. Since the bond was stopped, we wanted a quick route to a port. Anyhow, the car I ordered is waiting and we ought to be off. Go ahead; I'll pick you up on the road."

When the lights of the inn vanished, Emerson sat down on a wall. His luck was better than he had had much grounds to

think. Basset took it for granted he was the man the gang expected, and Oakshot, who might know him for an imposter, was three hundred miles off. Moreover, Basset was obviously disturbed, and one might perhaps work on his fears. At Copshope, Emerson had torn a map from a railway time-table. The main lines and steamship routes were marked, and passenger boats went to Europe from the east coast ports. Since the gang's retreat was apparently to the Continent, Emerson thought, if he put across his bluff, he would start the other way.

A bright beam dazzled him and he jumped on board the slowing car. For some time they sped up a valley, by dark hills and glimmering river-pools. Mountain-ashes and silver birches shone in the swift illumination; dry-stone walls leaped up and melted, and startled sheep raced across the road. Then the hills vanished, and dreary moorland rolled in front. The road was stony and uneven. Sometimes water splashed about the wheels, and the car rocked. Emerson heard wings beat in the dark, and curlew and plover called.

Anne had talked about the moorlands, and Garnet knew he traveled romantic ground. In the old days, the moss-troopers had followed the stony track. They carried long spears and steel caps, and when the English watch-fires leaped up, trusted to their horses' speed. Some who crossed the Waste were perhaps Anne's ancestors, and Emerson thought she had inherited something of their reckless vein. He pictured her taking a steep chance and somehow making good.

In the meantime, he had taken a steep chance, and he saw all he was up against; but since Anne had inspired the adventure he did not grumble. Besides, in the circumstances, Basset had no grounds to doubt him; he had expected to meet a Canadian and the Canadian was there. Then the police had made inquiries at the inn. Garnet saw another thing: Basset would present him to the gang and, in a sense, be his guarantee. Until Oakshot arrived, he perhaps need not bother much.

They stopped at a number of gates, and for some time their progress was slow. Then the road began to run downhill, the fences and gates vanished, and vague moors enclosed the deepening valley. A river curved about the fields and soon got large; sometimes one saw a glimmering white farmstead, and cattle lowed. Trees bordered the ravines; they sped through a straggling village; and at length faint, clustered lights marked a little town.

The car took a trunk road and the lights got bright. Emerson saw noble trees, an abbey's dark walls, an old market-place, and a dim, massive tower. Basset stopped at a big white hotel. It looked as if the guests had gone to bed, but some lights were burning, and a porter directed Basset to the smoking-room. Emerson remarked that the furniture and decoration were good; the room was spacious, and but for two men at a corner table nobody was about. The men were not at all remarkable; in fact, had not Basset advanced to the table, Garnet admitted he might have thought them commercial travelers. After all, he reflected, a crook does not, as a rule, wear a distinguishing mark.

Emerson's heart beat. He had bet on the others' not having met the man they imagined him to be, but he did not know, and he was glad the rendezvous was not a thieves' kitchen. Trying for carelessness, he advanced.

The strangers looked up, and for a moment the suspense was intolerable; then one gave Basset a nod and the strain went. Garnet knew he must use caution, but they did not yet suspect he was an impostor and he began to think he might make good his bluff. Basset fetched two chairs and presented Emerson to Burke and Lang.

"Maine wanted to see Johnny, and I thought he had better meet you," he said. "We did not stop for dinner and I'd like some food. Can we get a drink?"

"You might get some sandwiches; I don't know about a drink," one replied. "Are you stopping for the night? Although we engaged rooms, I am not."

"Ah—" said Basset. "Well, I wait your news. I expect my telegram was a useful hint."

A yawning waiter brought them sandwiches and coffee. Emerson's appetite was keen and the coffee was good, but he watched the others, particularly when Basset took his cup. Although it looked as if none doubted him, he thought the group disturbed, and he must not be doped.

"We got your telegram. In fact, we got one or two more," said Burke. "But where's the trouble?"

Basset told him, and Emerson lighted a cigarette. He was glad his part, so far, was not a talking part. When Basset stopped, Lang rather noisily pushed back his cup.

"It's awkward! The Yard has rather obviously got to work. Oakshot ought to be in Paris, but he doesn't dare start. He reckons they won't spot him so long as he lies close in town."

"Who's the Yard?" Emerson inquired.

Burke frowned impatiently. "Don't you know? Although you're Canadian, I thought you'd have heard about our C.I.D.; Criminal Investigation Department—" He turned to Basset. "Since Moss's outside stock-jobbing pal bungled the transfer, nothing has gone as we planned. I was to start for Brussels, but Moreau has taken fright and refuses to handle the stuff."

"Where are the certificates?" Basset asked.

The other looked about the room, and when he pulled out a long envelope Emerson made an effort for calm. A number of the stolen bonds were on the table, hardly a yard off. His impulse was to seize the envelope. Anne's pistol was in his pocket, but the others were young and athletic, his chair was awkwardly placed, and he could not watch them all. Moreover, in the Old Country to pull a gun was a serious offense, and he reflected that the police already searched for him. The hotel was in the main street, and if there was trouble, the officers would arrive in a few minutes and arrest the lot. When they found out whom they had captured, they would think it a dispute between confederates. Emerson admitted his tale was not plausible.

"You can take the packet," Burke remarked to Basset. "For some time, at all events, the stuff cannot be negotiated, and I'm not keen to carry it about. The convention is, one must get a search warrant, but a few days since somebody ransacked my room."

"You have not much grounds to boast," said Emerson. "At Miscana we put across our job."

"And you thought it entitled you to loaf in Scotland?" Lang rejoined. "You forced Basset to wait until the police got on our track——"

"The police are on my track. Anyhow, you cannot put up the stock on a foreign exchange, and you're scared to hold the paper. What are you going to do about it? I must shove off soon, and I want to know."

Basset knitted his brows. It looked as if he were leader and by and by he turned to Lang.

"Oakshot may see a plan and ought to have the certificates. Will you carry them to him?"

"I will not," said Lang. "The Yard lot know me and I won't risk the trip."

The others were quiet, and Emerson saw neither was keen to go, but after a few moments Basset shrugged.

"I'm not as famous as our friends and I'll chance it," he said to Emerson. "Anyhow, Johnny ought to see you as soon as possible."

"If you will fix things, I'll start when you like," Emerson agreed, and lighted a cigarette.

He wondered whether the other noted that his hand rather shook. He certainly did not want to meet Oakshot, but since Basset declared he ought to do so, he dared not refuse. Moreover, he might perhaps by some means seize the bonds. Basset nodded and got up.

"We'll get a train at Carlisle, and I'll go for the car. Smoke out your cigarette. The coffee's not all gone."

He signed the others, who went off with him, and Emerson drained his cup. The coffee was nearly cold, but he felt he needed a drink. He had borne some strain and must brace up for a fresh exploit.

X

EMERSON DRIVES ON

Dawn broke calmly on the Pennine moors behind the wide trunk road. Gray walls and battered, slanted hedges melted in the low mist, moisture glistened on the white bent-grass, and Emerson shivered. He had no driving-coat, and his short mackintosh was wet by dew.

Basset stopped the car, and, pulling off his gloves, beat his hands. He looked about, but nothing moved on the straight, black road. Plover circled in the mist and a cock grouse called from a heathy slope.

"As a rule, I don't drive much, and my hands are cramped," he said. "I expect you can steer her, and I'll take a smoke. Our train does not go for two hours and I don't want to loaf about Carlisle. Jennings will call for the car."

The man who had driven them to Hexham was not on board, and when Garnet inquired why he had stopped, Basset hesitated.

"To some extent, I must trust the fellow, but I do so where I'm forced, and I've recently thought him inquisitive. Anyhow, you had better carry his licence."

He lighted his pipe and pulled out the licence and the large envelope he had got at Hexham.

"The blasted certificates are a dangerous load, and when I don't wear my thick coat my bulging pocket is conspicuous. Since I can't dump the stuff at a safe deposit, I must use my knapsack."

"It looks as if you trusted me," Garnet remarked.

"Oh, well, in the meantime, the documents cannot be negotiated, and for you or Jennings to double-cross us might be expensive. The C.I.D. people, of course, are not our friends, but I've known them take a useful hint from their antagonists. If you did get off with the packet, I rather think you'd find the roads were stopped."

"I won't experiment," said Emerson, laughing. "Besides, my habit is to stand by my pals. Anyhow, we'll shove off."

He started the car and they sped down rolling hills to the woods on the Cumberland plain. All the traffic on the road was a rattling milk lorry, and Emerson let the engine go. The job he had undertaken was awkward and his talents were not remarkable, but he had made good in Canada, and so far he had done so in the Old Country. Although luck, perhaps, accounted for much, one must know where to seize the favoring chance, and then hold on. However, to philosophize about it would not help. His business was to get the bonds.

By and by blue smoke, floating about the trees in a hollow, marked a little town, and Basset pulled out his watch.

"People are beginning to get up and I think we'll take the longer road to the right. I expect it's quiet, but don't drive fast."

They crossed a river, and rolling by a ruined abbey, climbed a long incline. Then the road curved about small folded hills, and from the top of one Garnet saw a city's smoke. The mills and railroad-yards were obviously at Carlisle.

"Now you can let her go," said Basset, and they plunged down the hill.

Where the road curved, somebody shouted, a dog barked, and sheep streamed out from a gate. The flock straggled across the road, and the hedge bank was high and steep. Garnet used the brakes, but the locked wheels skidded and the car swerved. A jolt threw him against the cushions, and when a fresh shock stopped the car he supposed a sheep was under the wheels. A red-faced, angry shepherd pushed through the struggling flock.

"Get doon and help me pull oot sheep," he said to Basset. "Maybe t'other can back t' blasted car."

Basset jumped down. Emerson imagined he dared not provoke a quarrel that might lead to the shepherd's going for the police. He reversed the engine and the others dragged the sheep from the wheels. The animal got up, as if it were not much hurt, but the flock had begun to scatter and Emerson steered for a gap. Then he saw Basset's knapsack on the seat beside him and knew the opportunity for which he waited had arrived.

The car leaped forward and Basset shouted. Garnet thought a stone brushed his cap, and the wind-screen smashed. He did not know who threw the stone, but the fellow's aim was good. The next, however, struck the road; the engine accelerated nobly, and he was round the curve and climbing a long hill. At the top he turned his head, but all he saw was tossing dust. He pictured Basset's trying to soothe the shepherd, but their dispute had nothing to do with him. They were half a mile off, he had the bonds, and all England was in front. The drawback was, he did not know where to go.

A lark began to sing, and in the distance yellow sunshine touched massed, broken mountain-tops. The rolling plain before him as yet was misty blue. Across the level Border marches, the Scottish hills folded in smooth, flowing lines, and he believed a glittering streak was the Solway.

Since Garnet dared not stop, he tried to visualize the railway map. It indicated where the towns were thickly grouped, but the Border was not much populated. On the whole, he thought he would keep to the open spaces; the trunk roads might be dangerous. Moreover, in Cumberland he would not be far from Copshope, and he might be justified to steal back and consult with Anne.

Before long Basset's lot would try to get on his track and he ought perhaps to carry the bonds to the police, but since they looked for him and his tale was hardly convincing, he thought he would not. Emerson was young and rather wanted to try his powers; besides, he had not yet got all the bonds. Steering for Carlisle, he admitted that his wanting Anne to acknowledge him a useful champion to some extent explained his foolhardiness.

The road went by Carlisle, but Emerson was not forced to enter the city. From the hill the first houses climbed he saw across the river an old castle, the smoke of early household fires, and a cathedral tower. A guide-post directed him to Scotland, and he went ahead. All the same, he did not mean to use the car for long.

Two lorries loaded with clanging milk-churns rolled by, and Garnet looked at his watch. So far, the big road was quiet, but he supposed the traffic would presently begin, and when he set off on foot he would sooner nobody saw him start. After a time, he remarked a small road, running north to the Scottish hills, and not far ahead, another going south across the Solway plain. Garnet took the north road and pulled up by a bridge, three or four hundred yards from the crossing. On one side, a steep bank sloped to a little stream and the fence rails were old.

For a minute or two he waited. Dust rolled about the main road hedge and an engine throbbed. When the car was gone Emerson heard an advancing motor-coach. It looked as if he must get busy, and, pushing back the door, he started the engine. Then he got on the running-board and steered for the fence-rails. The wheels took the grass border, and Garnet jumped.

The car went up a low bank, and a post crashed. Broken rails were thrown about, thorn branches bent, the car tilted and plunged into the field. Emerson picked up Basset's knapsack, pushed the bonds under his coat, and looked about. The motor-coach rolled past the crossing, and he thought nobody behind the hedge could see the wreck. Going back to the main road, he turned at the guide-post and started south.

In front, the plain was level like the sea, but a dark fir wood crossed the marshy fields and a peat moss where white wild cotton grew. A six-foot ditch followed the uneven road and the slow stream at the bottom was stained dark brown. Emerson threw Basset's knapsack into a clump of fern; he hoped nobody would find it until winter cut the foliage. All was very quiet. It looked as if the road went nowhere; but when he passed the wood a church-spire broke the level horizon and he pushed ahead. Now he thought about it, all he had eaten since he lunched at Copshope was two or three sandwiches.

He stopped at a village. Near the church, three or four white farmsteads and an inn bordered the road. House-leeks grew about the roofs, and noble beech-trees spread their branches across the massive flags. At the end of the road were low red cliffs, and a river sparkling in a belt of yellow sand. Garnet noted a ferry-boat at the water's edge, and went to the inn.

After breakfast he lighted his pipe under a spreading beech. A fresh sea breeze shook the leaves, the shade was pleasantly cool, and he thought he was entitled to rest and ponder. He was four or five miles from the spot where he ditched the car, and he doubted if Basset had reached Carlisle. Emerson wondered whether he was forced to pay for injuring the sheep; the shepherd was muscular and looked obstinate. In the meantime he himself had vanished, and he argued that the police and Basset would not search for him in the lonely Solway flats. They would rather watch the railways and the trunk roads; and Basset must use some caution.

Bees hummed and the patter of the leaves was soothing. Ten or twelve miles off, foothills cut the plain, and behind their rounded tops Garnet saw broken crags and a mountain peak. The distant heights were bluer than the sky, and he speculated drowsily—The deep blue was luminous, like the reflections on a river pool and the blue in Anne Harden's eyes. Now he thought about it, Anne's eyes did not sparkle; when she was moved they shone with a sort of steady light. But perhaps *steadfast* was the word. Anne was like that. She went where she meant to go, and if she must front trouble, she would not hesitate——

Emerson pictured her in the library when the light was going; her slender form outlined against the dusky panels and her look resolutely calm. She thought for him and weighed the risks, but she approved his plan. Had he been her lover, he knew she would have let him go. Well, he had not much grounds to think Anne would be satisfied with him for a lover; and a lonely mountain in the west fixed his glance. The sharp blue pyramid dominated the coast belt and seemed to call. Anyhow, it was a beacon in the wide flats, and he resolved to cross the river.

A sunbeam touched his bent head and he looked up. The shadow in which he had drowsed was gone, and the branches tossed in the wind. Strapping on his knapsack, he asked the landlord for some sandwiches, and went down to the sands. A ferryman rowed him across the river, and when the old fellow pushed off his boat Garnet hesitated for a few moments.

On one side, and not far off, was broken rolling ground. In front, a wide level marsh ran back to the west and the river vanished in shining sands. Where colors and outlines melted, the lonely mountain's top pierced soft fleecy clouds.

Garnet must choose his path, and he steered for the mountain. Sometimes he crossed muddy creeks, and sometimes he followed the straight marsh ditches where tall reeds bent in the wind. Plover circled overhead, and shining terns screamed, and splashed in the salt-water pools. Where the sheep and cattle fed he pulled off his boots; the smooth turf was soft and dotted by yellow treefoil. In the distance, the blue mountain glimmered, and, when the sun had passed the south, slowly got indistinct.

In the afternoon the sands encroached upon the narrowing marsh, and Garnet crossed a road and a railway. The track was a single track and pierced a big peat moss; the road climbed a hill and vanished behind a few white farmsteads. Garnet took the heather and went slowly west, past peat-hags, wastes of wild cotton, and scattered birch woods. Sometimes a flock of sheep broke across his path, sometimes a partridge covey rose on noisy wings; and then all he heard was rustling sedges and the wind in the heath. The mountain in front began to get sharp again, and its faint, ethereal blue went purple.

When the sun was low he followed a curving river to a small white village. Dark trees cut the yellow sky and cornfields sloped to the glimmering streak where wet sands pierced the marsh. Cottagers leaned against their gates, but so far as Emerson could see, nobody was interested by his arrival, and he went to an inn.

It looked as if walking tourists sometimes stopped there, and although Garnet's accent was not marked, the landlord thought him an Irishman. His supper was good, and when he had satisfied his appetite and engaged a room, he went to the porch and smoked his pipe.

He heard cattle and tossing branches; behind the dusky marshes the Solway tide throbbed like a drum. For a time, that was all, and Garnet was languidly content. Since sunrise nobody had bothered him, and he had got the bonds. He had not fixed where he ought to go, but it was not important. In the meantime, he was satisfied to roam the marshes on his feet

He looked up. An engine rattled and dust rolled across the road. A car leaped from the dust and swung round the curve by the inn. The driver's glance was fixed, but Emerson clenched his fist. Basset had soon got on his track and another was in the car. They steered furiously for the west, and it looked as if they reckoned him in front. In the circumstances, Garnet thought the proper plan was to let them go, and when his pipe was smoked out he went tranquilly to bed.

XI

HARDEN'S DOUBLE

The tide was full and the sandy water broke languidly against the concrete blocks. Emerson, his rucksack under his shoulders, lay in the stones behind the wall and smoked his pipe. The evening was hot, and for a time he was willing to loaf. He did not know if he ought to stop at the small sea-coast resort, but his English boots had begun to pinch his feet.

The mountain he had steered for was opposite him, across the sparkling firth, and when he looked the other way he saw a sweep of trampled, dusty grass, and tall houses bordering a long, one-sided street. Motor-coaches blocked a road by a church, and behind a clump of battered firs a crowd surrounded a pierrots' theater.

It looked as if the place had some attraction for excursionists and Garnet considered his stopping for the night. On the whole he imagined the police and Basset would not search for him at a small watering-place. Moreover, he had visited two garages and had not spotted the car Basset drove through the village when Garnet was at the inn. He believed he would know the car.

A yard or two off, a sunburned young fellow smoked a cigarette and studied a map. He had put a loaded bicycle in a garage where Emerson loafed about and they had begun to talk.

"Where do you start for in the morning?" Garnet inquired.

"For the Pennine moors," the bicyclist replied. "You see, I'm at a cotton mill and the office shakes with the rumble of engines. My lodging's in a street where tramcars and heavy lorries run for most of the night, and every evening they turn on a wireless loud-speaker in the next house. When I get a holiday I like space and quiet."

"But what about your lake country? It is not far off."

The tourist pushed across his map and laughed.

"The lakes are beautiful, but in summer they are not quiet. Motor-coaches roar along the roads, and, when it does not rain, you cannot see the water and mountains for dust. In the little towns the traffic's like the traffic in the Strand. Of course, if you take the high rocks, you leave the noisy crowd, but I'm a bicyclist. Like the rest, I suppose I'm a tripper, but I don't mark my track across the country by mangled fowls and slaughtered dogs."

Emerson meditated. Where excursionists were numerous another would not be remarked, and perhaps one hid most safely in a crowd. He rather thought he would see the English lakes, and if Basset got after him, he would take the rocks. At one time he had patrolled the lone Northwest, and in the mountains he ought to baffle a city crook.

"Yours is a bully map," he said. "Where'd you get it?"

The tourist imagined any bookseller would supply him and said he had noticed a shop by the church. He asked if Emerson were stopping.

"I might," said Garnet. "Do you know a quiet hotel?"

"Mine is not crowded, and I think you'd get a room. Dinner will not be served for some time, and if you like, we'll look round the bookshop."

Garnet agreed, and when they crossed the dusty grass the other remarked:

"You are American?"

"Remarkably American?" said Garnet, who had an object for inquiring.

"Oh, well," said the other, apologetically, "in our provincial towns all we see of Americans is on the film, and sometimes one wonders whether the portrait's accurate. Well, I suppose dissolute millionaires, crooks, and gunmen are picturesque, but the sober folk who run your big industries are not. If you judged us by some plays and novels, you'd think us a decadent crowd. However, I didn't spot you until you said *bully* and *pretty* good."

In the circumstances, that was something, for Garnet thought the young fellow keen; but when they reached the wide pavement he braced up. Two big policemen stopped at a corner, and it looked as if they waited for him to cross the street. Garnet, however, did not hesitate.

"I expect there's a bookshop in the town?" he said to one.

"Straight forra'd, fifty yards," the officer directed him.

The bicyclist's look was surprised, but Garnet said nothing. He had experimented, and if the police had been warned to watch out, they did not know him for a Canadian. At the hotel he put his rucksack in the office, and after dinner went to the smoking-room. Nobody was in the room, for the evening was hot and the other guests were on the porch and on the benches in the green across the street. The long windows fronted the sea, but the light had begun to fade. A motor-coach rolled noisily by, and Garnet heard people shout and laugh at the pierrots' theater.

He went to a writing-table. Anne had said she would expect his letter, and for her to know he had got a number of the bonds might be some comfort. He knew he must not boast, for Anne was fastidious, but to bluff the gang was something of an exploit, and she had ordered him to keep her informed. Anyhow, he was going to write, and he thrilled to picture her generous approval. His narrative was modest, but he signed himself her servant, and thought Anne would understand.

Garnet sealed the envelope and looked up. The room was on the first floor and he saw the dark-blue mountain against the saffron sunset. The smooth firth was a shimmering orange streak, and the wet sandbars shone fiery red. By contrast, the smoking-room was cool and shadowy.

A man crossed the floor to the window and leaned against the balcony rails. When he passed the writing-table his head was turned, but Garnet thought he had seen somebody like that before; he felt he ought to know the fellow's step and well-balanced figure. After a moment or two he pushed Anne's letter into his pocket and noiselessly moved his chair. He had got it; the stranger was the man he had followed across the fields at Copshope.

For a time the other leaned against the rails, his head bent, as if he watched the people in the street; but at length he turned, and Garnet tried to conquer his surprise. It looked as if Keith Harden faced him five or six yards off. He knew the thing impossible, but for a moment it was hard to persuade himself Keith was not really there. Then he saw the other did not know him, although his glance perhaps was interested. The fading light was on Garnet's face and he wondered whether he had started, but thought he had not. For one thing, the Royal North-West were taught to use control.

The stranger carelessly remarked that the evening was fine and went to the door. Garnet heard his step in the passage and tried to concentrate—The likeness, at first, was startling, but now he reflected, he saw differences. Well, when Keith narrated his meeting the gambler, he talked about a *family* likeness. To imagine the fellow was the Vancouver tinhorn was perhaps extravagant, but Garnet doubted if two or three men were made on his friend's model. Then, he had grounds to think somebody had personated Keith at Miscana.

But suppose the fellow was the gambler? Had he thought to see Garnet at the hotel? Nothing indicated that he knew him, but a tinhorn's business was to bluff. Anyhow, if he was the fellow, Basset was not far off, and Garnet ought not to stop. He got up, and, looking for the cycling tourist, gave him the letter to Anne.

"Perhaps you will mail this for me at any post-office you pass in the morning," he said, and held the envelope so that the address was visible. "I don't want to mail it here."

The young fellow saw the letter was for a lady, and smiled.

"Of course," he said. "If you like, I'll carry it for thirty or forty miles."

Emerson thanked him, and going carelessly up the street, inquired at a shop about the garages. He had searched two, but he found there was another he had not noticed. Emerson strolled into the garage, as if he looked for somebody, and spotted the car Basset drove through the village. In the circumstances, he thought he ought to start. Moreover, his departure must not be conspicuous, and, going to the hotel for his rucksack, he stole off by a quiet street.

For a time he followed the beach, but the sand was soft and by and by he crossed a field to the road along the coast. The road was narrow, and curved between high banks on which battered thorns slanted from the wind. The sun had set, the moon had not risen, and behind the hedges the gloom got thick. Across the fields, the ebb-tide brawled among the shoals.

A fresh wind had sprung up and Garnet could not hear his steps in the soft dust.

He met nobody, and it looked as if the traffic had stopped. One or two lights twinkled by a clump of trees, and sea-birds screamed; but that was all, and Garnet pushed ahead. Although he could not see his watch, he thought it was ten o'clock, and the inn where he hoped to stop was six or seven miles off.

Stones rattled in the gloom. He had a few moments since crossed a belt of fresh metal. A first-class modern car, running at half-speed, went almost noiselessly, but his not seeing the headlamps' reflections was ominous. The road was narrow and crooked, and the hedge-banks went up straight from the edge of the stones. One ought, however, to find a gate in the next field and Garnet began to run.

A dazzling beam enveloped him and he heard an engine's quickening throb. The light touched a gate and sped by, but he doubted if he could reach the spot. The engine was running at full speed and the flood of light swerved. Garnet jumped for the bank. Something touched his back, and although he was not conscious of much shock, he staggered and fell in the grass.

Dust rolled about him, and when he looked up the car was fifty yards off. He thought it slowed; at all events, it would not go far, and when it stopped he must not be in the road. The gate was rather obvious and Basset was keen. Emerson leaped up the opposite bank and plunged at the hedge.

Green branches bent and thorns seized his clothes; but speed helped him through, and he rolled down the bank on the other side. In front was a sandy common, with stones in the thick heather, for Garnet struck his foot. A ragged hedge went along one side, and dark bushes, four or five feet high, were scattered about.

Emerson imagined Basset would expect him to keep the hedge, but the bushes were numerous and he steered for one and got behind the sharp-spined branches. The stuff felt like the prickly Scottish whinn. His skin was wet by sweat and his heart beat, but when he got his breath he began to look about. The streaming light had vanished and the car had stopped. So far as he could see, the common was large, and if the gang followed the hedge, he might steal off. Emerson did not imagine Basset was alone.

He thought he heard another car, but the wind and the sea's turmoil drowned the noise. Anyhow, nobody could see him four or five yards off, and he pulled out Anne's pistol and turned the cylinder. All the chambers were loaded, and the Royal North-West used the revolver and the rifle. When they were forced to shoot, they shot straight. Garnet hoped he would not be forced; but he meant to keep the bonds.

Rails rattled. Basset had found a gate, but others were with him and one ran for the hedge. Emerson thought two more advanced, separately, across the common, but the gloom was puzzling and he did not know. If they meant to search all the gorse bushes, they might be occupied for some time, and since they could not do so noiselessly, he would know where they were and might steal across to a clump they had visited. Much, however, depended on their luck, and his.

One made for the spot Emerson occupied, and then stopped, as if he studied a larger bush. He went to the other bush, and Garnet felt about in the heather with his foot. A pistol shot would bring the fellow's companions; besides, if he shot the man, he must bear the consequences. The common was stony, and when his boot struck something, he stooped and picked up a round block. The block went neatly into his fist and he smiled with grim satisfaction, but his throat was parched.

After a few moments, the indistinct figure again advanced. It came towards Emerson's bush, and when it was three or four yards off Garnet stretched his arm and braced his muscles. He knew his reach, and where the stone ought to go, but his heart beat——

Light streamed along the hedge, heavy wheels rumbled, and a horn blew. The wheels stopped, but the horn did not, and the man for whom Emerson waited ran for the gate. Garnet followed, and when he was three or four yards off launched the heavy stone. The man in front swore and staggered. Garnet flung him against the hedge and leaped through the gate.

A large motor-coach had stopped; the driver perhaps had hesitated to steer his bulky vehicle past the standing car. He inquired angrily why the others blocked the narrow road. Then Basset's engine began to rattle and his lights sprang up. His companion and the motor-coachman disputed noisily, but Emerson did not see the fellow he had knocked into the hedge.

"They're drunk," he shouted. "Their lights were not going and they drove at full speed round the curve. Although I

jumped, the car threw me into the hedge."

"I know their number," the driver remarked. "If you'd like to see the police about it, we'll give you a lift. There's room on the back seat."

Emerson ran for the steps, the horn hooted, and the big coach rolled ahead; but when he lighted a cigarette his hand shook and to answer the excursionists' questions bothered him. Basset had rather obviously meant to run him down, and he had companions, one of whom, no doubt, was the fellow Garnet had thought was Keith. Anyhow, he must not risk a fresh encounter, and when the coach stopped at a garage he was the first to get down. Stealing off before the excursionists reached the pavement, he started for the dark beach. When Basset returned to search the town he must be as far off as possible.

XII

EMERSON TAKES COVER

There was no moon, but the night was not dark, and where a bay curved back into the marsh Emerson pushed across the sands. He carried his boots; the cool salt ooze was soothing to his galled feet, but he went slowly, for his back hurt. The car had not struck him squarely; he was almost clear and the blow was, no doubt, a glancing blow. When he jumped for the hedge his muscles were braced, and highly strung as he was, he had hardly felt the knock. Now he doubted if he could go much farther, but one could not sleep on the sands and the marsh was boggy and wet by dew.

Three or four miles off, across misty level fields, electric lights marked the town. Rows of glistening windows dotted a mill, and bright reflections played about a dock. In front all was dim but for a high, dark bank where a point broke the vague sweep of beach. Emerson heard a black-backed gull and the noise was like a hoarse laugh; oyster-catchers screamed, and water murmured in the gloom. Then a loud splash rolled across the flats, and he imagined the tide ran down a river channel and the current undermined the bank.

Crossing a spot where samphire and soft salt-grass grew, he saw the water. The channel was not wide, but little waves beat the sand, as if the stream went fast, and farther back, a lake melted in the dark. Garnet turned and headed for the land.

He now fronted the electric lights. They shone above a quiet town where coasting steamers loaded and holiday makers slept. In a sense, his roaming the wet sands at midnight was a romantic extravagance. He was not a Western swashbuckler, and since he quit the North-West police he had occupied himself soberly with his business. In fact, a moderately prosperous contractor had nothing to do with adventures like his. All the same, he carried a packet of stolen bonds and he imagined Basset searched the town for him. He, like Keith, had got entangled; his part was foreign to his character, but since it was forced on him, he must play up.

By and by he stopped where great blocks of slimy turf had fallen from the marsh. A curlew called on a shrill, warning note, and noisy plover wheeled above his head. It looked as if somebody had disturbed the birds and Garnet cautiously climbed the bank. At the top he lay in the grass. The night was not dark and he did not want to be conspicuous.

He heard a whistle, but the note was not a curlew's. He was obviously not alone on the marsh, and when, perhaps fifty yards off, a man's dark figure cut the sky he wondered whether the fellow knew he was about. On the whole, he thought not, and after a few moments the other vanished. Garnet lay still and pondered.

In the town the police had not seemed curious about him, the marsh was wide, and he imagined it was impossible for Basset to have hit his trail. All the same, he must not take chances, and when he started he kept the sands in the gloom of the high bank. He was tired, his back hurt, and he must find a spot where he could sleep.

For some time all he heard was the wildfowl. The big pool in the sands glimmered faintly and he smelt drying salt-grass and peat. He left the bank and pushed across the flats for another jutting point. At the point, the channel curved and followed the land and Garnet was forced back to the tumbled peat blocks under the steep bank. The stuff was slimy, to balance on the lumps was awkward and he concentrated on finding firm ground for his feet. Before he ventured to look about he had crept round the point.

Garnet stopped and clenched his fist. A narrow belt of muddy sand sloped to the water and at the edge of the channel three men waited. Their figures were indistinct, but he knew they had seen him and there was no use in running. The peat blocks were slippery and he was embarrassed by his knapsack and mackintosh. Between the group and him, a long dark object occupied the middle of the flat. Garnet waited, as calmly as possible.

If the men were Basset's lot, they knew he had the bonds and they knew him dangerous. He thought they would not be satisfied to seize his load and let him go. The spot was lonely and the ebb tide went down-channel. To feel Anne's pistol on his hip was some comfort, but he must not rashly use the gun. The strange thing was, he thought the others irresolute. It began to look as if they had not expected him, but after a moment or two one advanced.

"Launch punt," he ordered his companions. "I'se stop t' d—— watcher."

He was a big fellow, but Emerson now remarked his oilskin coat and long boots, and he laughed, a hoarse but joyous laugh, for the suspense was gone.

"Wait a moment!" he shouted. "I am not the watcher, but I can tell you where he is."

The others joined their comrade, and Garnet, sitting down on the punt, pulled out a cigarette and rubbed a match. He wanted them to see his rucksack and short fishing-coat.

"A laiker!" one remarked.

"If a *laiker* is a walking tourist, you have got it," Emerson agreed, and, looking about, noted a net in the channel. "I don't know your business, and it does not interest me, but if your fishing here is not allowed, I think you ought to quit. A man is watching by the point across the sands and I heard him call another."

"Pull oot net and let him be," said the first poacher and turned to Emerson. "Until we're ready to start, ye'll bide by punt."

Garnet was tired, but the spot where he had seen the watcher was not far off and he must not risk a fresh complication.

"Since I don't want to wait, I'd sooner help you with the net," he said. "Then you need not keep an eye on me. Let's get to work."

The other nodded, and when they launched the punt one brought the end of the net to land. Emerson imagined it was lowered when the tide was full, and now the water sank, it blocked the channel. The meshes were heavy with tangled weed and when the stuff was shaken out flounders splashed in the muddy sand. Garnet imagined his companions were not yet satisfied, and by and by, as the heavy folds came ashore, silvery gleams indicated nobler fish. The fish were shining sea-trout.

The poachers worked fast, and when the net was folded in the punt one pushed off and vanished in the dark. Somebody farther down the channel apparently heard the punt pole splash, for a shout rolled across the sands. The others were embarrassed by coiled ropes and the fish, and Garnet seized a basket with a broad web strap. He must find a lodging for the night and he thought he saw a plan.

They set off, and after a few minutes plunged into the mouth of a creek. Emerson's load was heavy and his feet sank in the mud. The bottom was two or three yards below the grass; fresh creeks branched off, and for a time the poachers threaded the intricate maze. Then they climbed a wet peat bank and Garnet sat down. His back hurt horribly, the strap galled his shoulder, and the water draining from the fish had soaked his clothes. The poachers threw off their loads and one inquired where he was for.

Emerson reflected. The fellows had rather obviously taken fish they were not allowed to catch, and had he not warned them, the officers might have seized their net and boat. To some extent, he thought he might be frank.

"I don't know," he replied. "Some folks I'd sooner not run up against arrived at my hotel. I'm willing to pay for a night's lodging, so long as the spot is quiet."

The poacher turned to the others and Garnet thought one smiled. Since there were, no doubt, people they did not want to meet, he imagined they sympathized.

"Varra weel," said the first. "If ye're not particular about your bed, ye can gan wi' me."

He turned his head and his glance searched the dark marsh. The rushes and long grass by a ditch bent in the wind. One heard the dry stalks rustle and wildfowl scream across the flats.

"Watchers are on t' sands, following Jim," he said. "He'll be up the Holm creek lang before they cross big dub."

They picked up their loads and started, but one turned at a plank bridge and followed the creek. Garnet and the other pushed ahead. The grass got longer and the ground was broken. They skirted little pools and clumps of reeds, and went up a bank where prickly whinn bushes grew. In the background, tall trees loomed behind a row of slanted thorns. All was blurred and dark; the sea-birds' faint calling hardly disturbed the calm, and when a distant motor's lights flickered across the sky, Garnet felt the dim illumination was exotic and strange.

A sheep coughed behind the thorns and a horse went with them for a hundred yards, as if it were unwilling to be alone. Then Garnet felt stones under his feet, and the poacher shoved back a rattling gate. The noise jarred, but in a moment it was gone and leaves pattered softly in the gloom.

The poacher stopped at a cottage, and, getting a light, guided Emerson to a tarred shed. Folded nets and bundles of dry rushes occupied most of the earth floor. Garnet remarked a rusty scythe, a hedge-slasher, and some draining tools. The poacher gave him the lantern and indicated the nets.

"Neabody will bodder you. You can sleep till sun is up."

He went off and Emerson pulled a net across the rushes. When he patrolled the lonely plains for the Royal North-West he had been content to use a much worse bed. The net, at all events, was warm and dry, and in ten minutes he was asleep.

When the first sunbeams sparkled on the wall he got up, and, finding a bucket, took the path to a well under the trees. Nobody was about and he pulled off his clothes. A red mark crossed his ribs and at one spot the skin was torn. Garnet imagined he had run some risk in the dark road, although when Basset's mud-guard struck him he had hardly felt the knock. Had he been a few inches farther off the hedge—There was, however, no use in speculating about things like that.

The cold water braced him, the morning was fresh, and by and by he climbed a steep bank. Level fields, crossed by tall hedgerows, went back to a little hill. Noble trees dotted the slope, but Garnet did not see a house. When he turned the other way, the sun was on the marsh, and shining blue channels curved about the yellow sands. In the background, the firth sparkled like a looking-glass. Well, the spot was lonely, his back hurt, and for a day or two he must take cover. Then he smelt peat smoke and went down the bank.

The cottage was a two-roomed *daubin'*, and where the limewash had flaked off Emerson saw the rammed clay walls. His host was frying flounders on the red peat, but when he heard Garnet's step he got up from a box by the hearth. Although his hair was white, his figure was strongly built and straight. His eyes were very blue and his glance was keen. He wore a fisherman's jersey and long rubber boots, and Emerson thought him a pretty good sample of the Viking type. Putting the pan and a loaf on the table, he gave his guest a nod.

"Ye'll be needing some breakfast and there's enough for two."

Emerson approved the flounders, and the big loaf was good. In the Old Country one did not get potatoes for breakfast, but the coffee was better than some they served at Western hotels. Then he liked the primitive furniture and the sunshine on the lime-washed wall. The cottage was homelike; the home of a man who labored in the keen salt wind. When breakfast was over Garnet gave the other his tobacco-pouch and lighted his pipe.

"Nobody keeps house for you," he remarked.

"For ten years I've lived my lone," said the marsh man in a quiet voice, but resumed with a twinkle: "I'm oot by day, and noo and then a good part o' t' night."

"Then, suppose I wanted to stay for a week? I can cook all the food I need, and if you're at work, I might cook yours. I'd be satisfied to camp in the shack, and if you agree, my proposition is——"

He reckoned, like a Canadian, in dollars, and he rather thought his host surprised.

"Easy money!" said the old fellow. "Ye see, I get mine hard; in winter paddling old shooting-punt aboot flats in t' dark. Sometimes ye must wait two-three hours in bitter frost for a shot; and then, if she jumps on the tide-rip, ye maybe get a duck for your pound o' lead."

Emerson thought a gun that carried a pound of shot must be like a cannon. One certainly could not hold the thing; but now he remembered, the punt he helped to load was fitted with wooden chocks that might support a big gun's barrel. Then he saw the marsh man's look got thoughtful.

"You feel my wanting to stop is queer?" he said. "Well, I'm not going to talk about it. If you don't like my proposition, I'll pull out."

The old fellow's eyes twinkled. "It's nowt to do with me; and noo an' then I'd sooner folks did not know where I am, and

I cross the firth to Scotland. So long as you are happy, you can bide, and when it's kent you're at Peter Ivison's neabody will bodder you. Noo I'm away t' mow some rushes to thatch a farmer's stack."

He went for his scythe. Garnet heard the whetstone ring, and when the noise stopped pulled out his notebook. He thought he had an envelope in his sack, and Anne might like to know the bonds were yet safe. Moreover, so long as he used another name, she might now reply. He did not dwell on his adventures; he must try to strike the proper note, and the short, penciled letter was frank and friendly, the sort of letter one wrote to a pal.

Emerson sealed the envelope, crossed a field, and followed a little winding lane until he found a letterbox in an old barn wall. One or two white farmsteads shone behind big ash-trees; quiet pastures and cornfields rolled up the little hill that seemed to cut off the marshes from modern England. The dust in the lane was not disturbed by wheels; tangled briars crept out from the tall hedgerows so that a cart could hardly pass. Emerson thought the cover he had found was good. So long as he stopped at Ivison's, he would be left alone.

XIII

SOLWAY SANDS

For four days Emerson loafed about the cottage. Sometimes when the tide was low, he took Ivison's fish-spear and looked for flounders in the channels that pierced the sands. Wading against the current, he probed the bottom with his toes, and when a swift streak of sand stained the sparkling water, drew back his foot and struck. Sometimes he strolled up the hill and lay in the sunny grass.

So long as he went quietly, his back did not trouble him much, but he doubted if he could walk far, and until he got Anne's letter, he was entitled to rest. Nobody disturbed him. Sometimes, in the early morning when the dew sparkled on the turf, the bent figures of mushroom gatherers cut the sky, but after the sun got hot only the sleek red cattle wandered about the marsh.

At Ivison's Garnet felt he was safe. He trusted his host and thought, if danger threatened, the old fellow would find him a line of retreat. In the Old Country the fishery and game laws were strict, but Harden had talked about the poaching gangs and it looked as if the Borderers were rather a lawless lot. Fishermen and marsh men sprang from nearly pure Viking stock, and their ancestors had *lifted* cattle and smuggled goods from France. Anyhow, Emerson imagined Ivison had confederates across the firth.

Moreover, Garnet's plans were vague. He had carried off a number of the bonds, but he had not got all, and he did not yet know much about the thieves. Then he had got a knock, and when he took the road he must be fit and able to use some speed.

When he lay in the wild thyme one morning Anne's letter arrived, and afterwards to think about her brought back the smell of the small red flowers.

Somehow Anne was like the aromatic thyme. Her beauty was not the rose's flamboyant splendor; something elusive marked her charm, but the charm persisted and one could not forget——

Emerson tore open the envelope and his pulse quickened. On the surface, the letter was frank. Anne wrote as if she felt herself his friend and fellow-conspirator; but when Garnet speculated whether that was all he did not know. After the words were studied, he sensed a sort of fragrance, delicate and ascetic, but queerly moving—He put up the baffling letter. His bent was practical and he liked Anne's pluck. If he could get across the firth, she would meet him at a spot she fixed. Garnet meant to go.

When Ivison came home in the evening he inquired: "Could I get across to Scotland? I don't want to use the train or road."

"Ye might," said Ivison. "Where did ye want to land?"

Garnet told him and he nodded.

"Yan would get four foot o' water over t' banks to the burn foot at about half tide. If ye can pay your passage, it might be fixed."

They agreed about the sum, and after dark fell on the next evening Emerson put on a fisherman's jersey and long rubber boots. The thin moon was low in the west, the wind had dropped, and in the distance the surf rumbled like a heavy train, for the Solway tide raced seawards across the shoals that block the firth.

Ivison pushed off his shooting-punt, and used the pole. The long punt was about two-feet beam, and when his body swung her narrow side-deck dipped. Garnet crouched amidships and smoked his pipe.

The dim marsh top vanished, gleaming wet sands and mud-flats rolled by. The punt went smoothly, but she went very fast, and loud splashes indicated that the current cut the hollow bank. Sometimes she shot, like a toboggan, across a rippling belt, and sometimes in the dark one heard the measured beat of wings. Ivison's stroke was steady, and the roll and surge against the bows were rhythmical.

In the meantime, the channel got wider, and at length all in front was rippling water. Ivison threw down his pole, seized a thin, coiled line, and signed Garnet to get overboard.

Emerson found firm bottom, but the current beat his legs and his progress was marked by frothing streaks. They were near the narrow mouth of the bay, and the tide, swirling round a long, dark point, ran savagely for the firth. Garnet had tracked canoes up Canadian rivers, and he imagined that where they could not hold the punt by pole and paddle they might hold her by the line. They must not be carried out to sea, and although it looked as if Ivison steered for open water, Garnet thought the old fellow knew where they went. Anyhow, to talk would not help and he set his mouth and hauled.

The punt towed heavily and sometimes the line came near to pull them from their feet. The water got deeper and ran in a slow swell that splashed to Garnet's waist, but at length Ivison shouted for him to get on board. He did so, and for a few minutes after the other joined him, the punt was furiously swept along. The current foamed and splashed; it was like plunging down a Canadian rapid; but, laboring with pole and paddle, they steered for a mud bank that broke the angry flood. Under the bank they found slack eddies, and presently Ivison drove the punt into the ooze and carried out the grapnel.

Emerson saw they were on a long point. A mile off, blurred trees marked the beach, but the point apparently ran for some distance into the firth. To get his breath was hard, and he thought all he wore was soaked by sweat. After a few moments Ivison started across the flats, and they splashed through rippling channels and little pools. By and by the ribbed sand got firm and they went faster. The shore faded, and for all Emerson could see, it looked as if they steered for Scotland, nine or ten miles off. Then a tall pole, stayed by wire ropes, broke the dim expanse, and Ivison shouted.

Shrill screams pierced the dark, wings beat, and shadowy flocks of wildfowl wheeled across the sky. Their dreary clamor died away and, some distance off, a light flashed and disappeared.

"Jock keeps tryst," said Ivison. "When we're by t' mussel gut ye'll watch where ye gan."

Ten minutes afterwards, they reached the top of a steep bank. At the bottom water sparkled; water splashed and gurgled in the gullies that pierced the muddy slope, and Emerson thought the forbidding hollow like a large canal lock. Sliding and stumbling, they went down, and he saw the mud was built, by mussels, into broken ridges and pyramids. Between the piles were quagmires in which he thought a man might drown. At one end, the pool opened to a trickling channel in the sands, and a boat rode in the gloom of the high bank.

A rope splashed, and shone with phosphorescent gleams as if somebody pulled her to the shore. Garnet seized her bow and jumped on deck; Ivison, in the water, leaned against the gunwale.

"I've browt your passenger, Jock. Ye'll mind he's my lodger and tak' care o' him. I'se wait ye by the Rig sand on the evening's ebb."

He pushed off the boat and vanished. Ivison did not talk much, but Garnet thought he carried out all he undertook to do. He trusted the old fellow and imagined that his remarks conveyed a warning; Ivison, so to speak, had vouched for him. Garnet washed the mud from his long boots and a man on board laughed.

"If ye're a friend o' Peter's, ye're safe wi' us. Come away doon. The night's getting cauld."

Emerson jumped into the well and looked about. The boat was half-decked, and double-ended, like a whale-boat; twenty feet long, he thought. She carried a short, thick mast, and a tanned lugsail was pulled across the open well. A little funnel stuck out from the deck forward and a thin plume of smoke went up. Emerson smelt coffee and saw somebody was occupied at the stove.

"Ye'll tak' a bit piece?" said his companion. "I doot if we can land ye before aboot three-hours' flood."

The tide would ebb for some time, and reckoning he must wait for six or seven hours, Emerson agreed.

"We're ready for ye, Tam," said his companion.

The other crawled, feet foremost, from under the deck, and put a tin plate and a steaming can on a box. The *piece* was half a loaf and a fine pink-fleshed trout. Emerson wondered whether the men were licensed to catch the fish, but it had nothing to do with him. The night was cold and his appetite was good.

After supper he sat on a box behind the sail and smoked. Sometimes the others talked; about shifting sands, and fish, and the Solway's tides. Where deep water ran not long since, one found a solid bank, they said; and the plaice that fed on the pink shell-fish were across the firth. The small boat skipper must *smell* the changing shoals, for if he struck bottom when the tide was strong, the stream would bury her in the sand.

At all events, the fellows were hospitable and their politeness had a queer touch of dignity. Emerson sought for a phrase he half remembered and smiled when he thought he had got it. *The kindly Scot!* His companions were big and muscular, and if Harden's tales were accurate, they sprang from a virile stock. They married their own sort, the seaboard clan was exclusive, and in build and temperament one sensed the Norseman vein.

Sometimes they drowsed and Garnet meditated languidly about Anne and Keith. He was her servant and her brother's pal. Although he was, perhaps, a pretty good contractor, he admitted his abilities were not the sort one needed for the undertaking in which he had engaged. Moreover, his antagonists were not scrupulous, and unless he could baffle them, they would break him. Yet he was not much daunted. So long as he fought for Anne, he could take the knocks he got. He, no doubt, had rashly left the beaten path, but he did not mean to stop. Anne and Keith trusted him, and although all in front was dark, he must push ahead. Anyhow, there was no use in philosophizing; he had got the bonds, and the night wore away. In the morning Anne would be at the rendezvous.

A black-backed gull called hoarsely and Garnet looked up. The stars were dim and the hills across the firth were very black. A keen wind began to blow across the sands and the tide murmured in the channels. Day was breaking, and he had drowsed and mused for three hours.

The murmuring noise got louder, water splashed about the mussel beds, and it looked as if a star behind the mast moved across the sky. Then the cable jarred, and Emerson knew the boat had swung. The fishermen stretched their legs, and when one got up and pushed an oar across the gunwale the current rippled noisily against the blade.

"Flood's rinning strong," he said. "We'll be away in two hours."

He crawled beneath the sail and the boat gently rocked. Sliding water beat her planks and her cable strained. She floated higher; the mussel beds had vanished, and the steep mud bank sank. Pale white scum and trailing weed went by; terns followed the sandy stream, arched their wings, and splashed. Where all not long since was quiet one felt the beat of dynamic force. Garnet pulled the wet sail between him and the wind and lighted his pipe.

When the trees along shore shone in the sun they hoisted the black lugsail and broke out the anchor. A keen east wind blew down the firth, but the tide went fast the other way, and short, curling waves ridged the channel and foamed across the sands. When the small jib was hoisted the boat careened, and plunging close-hauled, smashed the white combers on her weather bow. Water sluiced across her inclined deck, and sometimes where a tide-ridge broke, the coaming ledge went under. The steersman dashed the spray from his brown face and let her go.

She crossed sands where one must feel one's way with an oar in the racing foam; she lurched and rolled in the deeps, but the flood carried her nobly to wind-ward, and after some time dry banks enclosed the channel along the Scottish shore and the water got smooth. At length, rounding a long sand's end, they lowered sail. In front was a narrow gutter and when the steersman threw an oar in the sculling notch the stream carried them swiftly up the muddy hollow.

Emerson landed on a pebble beach. Yellow sandhills fringed the shore, and in the background he saw a long, white village. Before Anne met him two or three hours must go, and finding a corner where the sun was hot, he was soon asleep.

XIV

ANNE'S INSPIRATION

Emerson turned his head, and with a joyous shout, jumped to his feet. Two or three hundred yards away, somebody crossed the shining grass, and he would have known the slim white figure much farther off. Nobody but Anne walked with that proud grace; for all her slender lightness, she carried herself imperiously. Moreover, she had arrived at the time she fixed, and since she could not state her object for going, Garnet imagined for her to get away was hard. Yet he had not doubted she would be at the rendezvous. All Anne engaged to do she did.

Then he reflected that his clothes were a fisherman's clothes, and Anne was rather an important lady; besides, he had shouted like a schoolboy. When she advanced, however, her smile was kind, and to see his uncouth welcome had not jarred was some comfort. She gave him her hand frankly and, for her sake, he looked about. For Miss Harden of Copshope to meet a fisherman at an unfrequented spot might excite some remark.

Behind a hedge that slanted from the wind, he saw smooth, rolling turf, dotted here and there by posts and little flags. In the background, a mile or two off, telegraph poles and low white houses bordered a road. Only a flock of sheep occupied the golf links, and in front the level sands ran back to the horizon. The sea had vanished, but one heard the beat of the distant tide.

"Well?" said Anne. "I expect nobody will disturb us. Are you satisfied?"

Emerson colored, and said nothing. Anne's eyes twinkled, but she gave him a friendly look.

"Oh, well," she resumed, "I expect you thought for me!"

"I hope it was not awkward for you to leave Copshope," Garnet remarked.

"Perhaps you ought not to inquire," said Anne, and indicated her white woolen jersey. "A golfing engagement was useful, but Madam was difficult——"

She frowned and her look got reflective. "Since you went she has been moody and highly strung—But we will not bother about Mrs. Harden. Was it awkward for you to cross the firth?"

"Not at all. My poaching friend planned the trip and the fishermen he engaged were first-class sorts. The night was fine and I would not have missed the excursion. Besides, it looked as if you wanted me——"

"To know where to stop is something," Anne remarked. "On the Solway, fine nights are not the rule and the tides are savage. Well, you don't protest much; but perhaps a fresh wind would not have held you up."

"If I boasted, you'd be jarred," Garnet rejoined with a smile.

"I wonder—After all, I'm human, and one likes to feel one is important," said Anne, and glanced at the watch on her wrist. "But in an hour I must play golf. I think Madam's interested and she might make inquiries."

She sat down. The sandhills curved behind the spot and the sun was on the sheltered hollow. In front the dry spear-grass slanted to the lonely flats. A big gull circled overhead and called on a raucous note; then all one heard was the distant tide and the wind in the grass. Emerson admitted he was happy. To be with Anne was reward enough for much worse risks than he had run.

"Now I want to know all about your exploits," she said. "Sometimes modesty is a drawback, and you must give me full particulars."

Garnet indulged her. He felt Anne ought to know. She reasoned like a man and her brain was as keen as his. Sometimes he thought a faint rosy tint touched her delicate skin and her eyes got luminous. Moreover, although he dared not study her closely, he was not cheated, for Anne was frankly flesh and blood. The sober narrative stirred her; Garnet was a noble champion and she doubted if he fought only for his friend.

He stopped, and for a few moments looked straight in front. His brows were knit, as if he pondered; his stiff pose was

somehow alert.

"Your carrying off the bonds was splendid!" said Anne. "But where is the packet?"

Emerson pulled the large envelope from under his jersey.

"I can trust my landlord; but if the gang found out where I was, they might search the cottage."

"It's very possible. The packet is a dangerous load. Suppose you give it me?"

"No," said Garnet in a firm voice. "A girl ought not to run the risk your carrying the papers might imply."

Anne smiled. "Now you argue like a man, but although you are rather nice, you are not logical. The thieves know you had the bonds; they would not reckon on your giving them to me—Besides, if they stopped you another time, the documents would be safe."

Her argument carried weight and Garnet allowed her to take the envelope.

"Your load is gone," she said. "Aren't you happier?"

"On the whole, I am not. Since to keep the packet safe is the main thing, you have beaten me; but I feel I've given another my proper job."

"You have given it to a girl! If I fronted a crisis, I might not be as cool as you? I expect there's the drawback?"

"Not altogether, Anne. My talent's not for intrigue, but I can take hard knocks. The gang might not stop at argument."

"You are rather dull, Garnet; but perhaps you're obstinate. So long as the men don't know where the packet is, they will not bother me. In fact, I admit it ought to be at a police office."

"No," said Emerson. "We resolved *we* would use the clue, and when we have found out a little more about the Basset crowd I am going to carry the bonds to Montreal. You see, my tale's not convincing; the police might think me an accomplice who wanted to turn informer. Then I feel I might get a useful hint where they would not—The queer thing is, they seem to leave me alone."

"It is queer," Anne agreed, as if she pondered. "You do not think much for yourself, and you have not yet inquired if the police did ask for you. However, since the sergeant was at Copshope nobody has bothered us, and if the house was watched, I would know. Our servants and the farm people are our friends. We are a clannish lot and I doubt if an Edinburgh detective would cheat a Borderer. Our tenants poach our trout and partridges; but if a *foreigner* annoyed us they'd stanchly support us."

"You are some confederate," Emerson remarked, and laughed. "All the same, we must study up what we ought to do, and, so far, I don't see my line."

"I feel the man you met at the hotel might give us a clue. Was he really like Keith?"

"For a moment I thought him your brother, but I imagine he was two or three years younger and his look was hard. One got a hint of indulgence and the sort of cold boldness we call *gall*. However, when I tried to study him he went off."

"It is very strange," said Anne. "I have not a relation one would think was Keith, and none, of course, would join a gang of thieves—" She frowned, as if she were baffled, and, knitting her brows, resumed: "Well, the fellow is important. Somebody in Canada impersonated Keith, and I think we know the man. It's possible his English accomplices thought you were he, but why they looked for him at Copshope is another thing."

"In the meantime, we'll let it go, and concentrate on the main clue. I feel you're getting somewhere."

"Although you are not?" Anne remarked.

Emerson smiled. He had begun to respect Anne's abilities, and was willing for her to banter him. Anne had not Keith's soberness. She was marked by a touch of capricious humor that sometimes was scornful and sometimes was kind. Harden was his son's type, a staid Scottish gentleman; but when Anne's romantic imagination rather carried her away

Garnet had known his glance light up, as if he sympathized.

"My cogitations have not helped us much," he admitted. "Suppose you go ahead."

"Very well. If the fellow you met was the Vancouver tinhorn, he used his likeness to Keith in order to rob the bank. Why should Keith not use the likeness in order to cheat the robbers?"

"By George!" shouted Emerson. "The scheme's a bully scheme. It's, so to speak, an inspiration! All the same, I see some drawbacks."

"They're numerous," said Anne dryly. "But for example?"

"To begin with, Keith might not agree."

"You are his friend. You do not doubt his pluck?"

"Not at all. I've helped haul your brother across the snow when our food ran out; I've gone down an ugly rapid when he steered the canoe. Well, maybe when I'm hot I don't stop for a risk; but Keith's another sort. His pluck is calculated and logical. So long as he reckoned the adventure justified, he'd calmly shove ahead where my feet got cold."

"One mustn't exaggerate," said Anne. "But go on."

"Keith's coolness is the obstacle. He is not romantic and he likes the beaten track. Although his nerve's first-class, he is cautious. If he thought his part theatrical, he'd hate to play up."

Anne's eyes began to shine. Emerson knew her blood was red.

"The portrait's accurate," she agreed. "Keith, however, might be forced to take a part he did not like. He is not remarkably selfish, and I expect he sees that others pay for his misfortune; for example, the girl he engaged to marry, and the Canadian friends who generously stick to him. Then he knows his father is cruelly humiliated. We are not properly Border landlords; our fortunes were mended on the exchange, and perhaps our code's commercial, but a merchant must not steal. I expect my father pictures the spiteful jokes about the laird of Copshope whose son is a thief. A joke like that has power to hurt a proud old man. Besides, he loves Keith——"

For a moment or two she meditated; and then she gave Emerson a steady glance.

"Keith trusts you, and I can be frank. Madam's doubts are hurting father, and when I think about it, control is hard. I feel she is willing for people to think my brother a thief! Jealousy is keen in women, but although her remarks are guarded, when she talks about him one senses a sort of *revengeful* satisfaction. I'm baffled, Garnet; Keith has not injured her. Then I admit I'm selfish. I am Keith's sister and his disgrace touches me. I will not apologize for my brother, and I hate to feel that when I am about nobody dares use his name. Well, we know him innocent; but he must help us persuade the others."

"Ah," said Emerson, "who will persuade Keith?"

"I believe you know the proper man."

Garnet knitted his brows. His habit was not to protest, and for a few moments he was quiet. Then he looked up.

"Very well! In the meantime, I'm waiting for the gang's move, and I doubt if I could make Montreal. However, you must weigh things, and when you reckon I ought to start. I'll be ready. It looks as if we can trust Ivison, and if I'm not at his cottage when your letter arrives, he'll know where I am."

"Keith and I have got a useful friend," said Anne with feeling.

For a time she talked about something else, and for Garnet the half-hour in the sandhills was golden. Then she got up and gave him her hand.

"Well, I must play golf; Madam is very keen. Thank you, Garnet, for more than you perhaps know," she said, and was gone.

Emerson thrilled, and set off along the coast. At dusk he must meet the fishermen by a small river-mouth.

REBEL YOUTH

Mrs. Harden occupied herself with an account-book and a number of bills. The morning was the last morning in the month, and Mrs. Harden was a methodical housekeeper. Her rule was firm, and although she was perhaps not much loved by servants and tradesmen, nobody disputed her authority. In fact, Copshope was a shining example of efficient control, and Anne acknowledged her stepmother's rather out-of-date domestic virtues.

Yet when Anne came into the room she was faintly jarred. Mrs. Harden's clothes were fashionable, and she carried herself and talked like the laird's lady, but Anne for long had felt the pose was not unconscious. She felt that Madam at some time had laboriously studied the part. At Copshope she was, in a sense, exotic. Anne, herself, was not extravagant; but one did not dispute about sixpence with one's butcher. In fact, she sometimes thought Madam's qualities were the qualities one cultivated at a Glasgow shop.

Mrs. Harden pushed back the bills. For a moment or two she hesitated; and then her look got resolute, as if she meant to carry out a duty she would sooner leave alone. Anne knew her stepmother, and was rather amused. Madam was conscientious; the word was hers.

"My habit is not to meddle, and on the whole I think you and your friends wisely use a freedom we did not get when I was a girl," she said.

"I wonder—" said Anne. "Sometimes I feel our occupations lead us nowhere. At all events, when you do meddle, I admit your object's good."

"There's my justification. Very well. When, two or three days since, you went to the golf match you started much sooner than the others, and you were not with the party all the time."

"You thought you were entitled to inquire?" said Anne, in an ominously level voice.

"I did not inquire, and I believe your friends did not mean to enlighten me; but that is not important. Where were you?"

Anne's temperament was frank, and she was proud. She did not acknowledge Mrs. Harden's right to know, but she would not cheat. Besides, her stepmother sometimes was kind, and as a rule she tried to conquer her half-instinctive antagonism.

"You have found out I was not on the links," she said. "I met Mr. Emerson, by appointment, in the sandhills."

"Then, Emerson is still in Scotland?" Mrs. Harden exclaimed. "In the circumstances, his nerve is good."

"He obviously was in Scotland. I believe, however, he meant to cross the firth."

Mrs. Harden frowned. Her object was not altogether selfish, and since Anne refused her her confidence, she was annoyed.

"I suppose the appointment was his?"

The blood came to Anne's skin, but her glance was level.

"It was mine. Garnet Emerson's modesty is rather remarkable. I fixed the rendezvous."

"Then, you were very indiscreet," Mrs. Harden rejoined in an angry voice. "The young fellow is not your sort and your father certainly would not approve. Since I must be frank, you cannot marry a man of his stamp. Besides, the police believe he had something to do with the Canadian robbery."

Anne laughed, a proud, scornful laugh.

"If that is so, the police and all who agree with them are very dull. Keith is fastidious and Garnet is his friend. Then, if you implicate him, you implicate my brother. The thing's absurd!"

"Yet the bank removed Keith from his post."

Anne colored like a rose. As a rule, she tried to control her emotions, but she was a Borderer and the Borderer's blood is hot.

"Are you *willing* to think Keith a thief?" she asked.

Mrs. Harden hesitated. It looked as if the question disturbed her more than Anne thought it ought. For a few moments they fronted each other like watchful antagonists; and then Mrs. Harden looked the other way.

"At all events, the bonds were stolen, and Keith was responsible for their safety," she said, as if she knew the argument was weak. "But I had wanted to talk about your meeting Mr. Emerson. You ought not to have done so."

"I do not see the obstacle. Emerson is not my lover."

"Then, what is he? You gave him the rendezvous."

"He's my ally, confederate, accomplice; you can choose the term you like——" Anne replied, and stopped; for, after all, if she were honest, could she state that Emerson was not her lover? "You see," she resumed, "since Keith's relations doubt him, he needs his friends' support, and Garnet is faithful. I met him in order to find out if we can in some way help Keith."

Mrs. Harden had remarked her hesitation. She had grounds Anne did not know for disliking her step-daughter's friendship with the young fellow, but this was not all. She believed sincerely she saw danger for Anne.

"A girl must use some caution," she rejoined. "People talk, and malicious whispers have power to wound. But there's another thing. I suppose you and Emerson are occupied by some extravagant plan for Keith. When he steals across the firth to meet you he hazards his freedom, and if you take his help, you acknowledge yourself his debtor. Although you declare he does not love you, a secret intrigue with an attractive young man is frankly dangerous."

"Ah," said Anne, "your school is the old school and your rules are out of date. Now young men and women face life with open eyes. We know its ugly side, as we know its beauty, and we are not afraid. You were afraid; you pretended, and used ridiculous conventions for a shield. We, at all events, are honest; we admit we know all we do. But I mustn't philosophize. The important thing is, I claim my freedom. Where I'm rash I must pay for my rashness, but I will not submit to another's control."

"Although I am not your mother, I am your father's wife, and I'm entitled to rule his household," Mrs. Harden replied in a quiet voice. "However, I know your independence and I will not strain my authority. I have faced life for fifty years. There's my strongest claim."

"It carries some weight," Anne agreed. "Well, I expect I was rebellious and perhaps not always just. For the most part, you bore with me, and often you were kind. But your code is not my code, and liberty's worth something. It's worth fighting for."

Mrs. Harden looked straight in front. A little color touched her lined face; her pose was firm, as if she unconsciously braced up. Anne sensed a sort of dignity she had not before remarked.

"The old school and the new school are but flesh and blood, and although you use fresh rules, human passion is as strong as when I was a girl," she said. "I know its power, Anne, for I, like you, rebelled, and I bought my knowledge for a price I hope you may not be forced to pay. My philosophy is perhaps not up to date; but I am very sure that one must meet one's debts."

Anne was moved. She was generous and she knew her stepmother's warning sincere. Moreover, she thought her frankness had cost her much. The strange thing was, Madam, whom she had thought prudishly conventional, had fronted romantic adventure and known tragedy.

"After all, I am young and raw, and sometimes I hurt people who try to be kind," she said. "Afterwards I'm ashamed and sorry—but one mustn't exaggerate. My friendship for Garnet Emerson is not an intrigue. If it's possible, we want to put things straight for Keith. That is all. I don't know if Emerson will come back to Scotland, but if I think his help useful, I shall send for him."

"Do you expect him to find the thief where the police are baffled?"

Anne hesitated. Mrs. Harden doubted Keith's innocence; to some extent, she was his antagonist, and Anne had resolved not to enlighten her. Then, until she had something to go upon, she must not excite her father's hopes. If he knew Emerson had recovered a number of the bonds, he would insist on meddling.

"Our plans are rather vague; it's possible they will not work," she replied. "For all that, I feel I must try to put things straight, and so long as I think I may need a helper, I will not let Emerson go."

Mrs. Harden sighed. "I have tried to carry out my duty, Anne, and I must be resigned. Since I am not a fool, I shall not bother your father; he indulges you. Well, I certainly doubt if you can solve the puzzle, but Keith's misfortune is worse than you perhaps know. His career is in Canada, for I do not think he will inherit much. If your stockbroking uncle survives your father, he will take Copshope. You must find another home, and I am afraid you will not be rich."

"Ah," said Anne, "to leave a house one loves is hard, but, after all, my inheritance is not brick and stone. Wherever I go, I am Anne Harden. All the same, I'm sorry for father. I believe he thought our luck at length had turned."

"You are a queer lot," Mrs. Harden remarked reflectively. "The Hardens' talent is for business, but when you prosper on the exchanges you squander your reward in a barren moorland that gives you nothing back. Well, your father's fortune was not large, and when it began to melt he speculated rashly. Then taxes get heavier and expenses go up——"

"We are Borderers, and the Borderers *dinna' forget*," Anne rejoined. "The bleak old house our forbears built is home; a few barren fields call us from across the world. Well, Keith's son may yet get Copshope, and my brother must be vindicated. To find the man for whom he pays is not a woman's job, but if I do see a plan, I hope I will not shrink."

She went off, and after a time joined Harden on the terrace. He smoked his pipe and studied a newspaper, but Anne remarked that the paper opened at the market reports and his look was rather grim.

"Madam and I were talking——" she said. "She admitted you had had reverses, if that's the proper word. I'm sorry, Father."

Harden turned his head.

"To sell for two-and-sixpence shares you bought for ten shillings is something of a reverse; but, after all, it will not break me and I have got worse knocks."

"Keith's disgrace?" said Anne. "For him to be suspected is humiliating. In fact, it's intolerable!"

"Intolerable implies not to be borne. I'm afraid we must for some time carry our load."

Anne reflected that a number of the stolen bonds were in her desk, but she was not going to talk about it yet.

"I cannot carry mine philosophically. One hates to wait," she said.

"When one is young, to wait is hard," Harden agreed. "When one gets old, one acquiesces and tries to be resigned."

"Ah," said Anne, "I'm not yet old and youth rebels. Patience, I suppose, is useful, but sometimes it's a sort of soporific, and when you ought to fight you sleep. Modern young men and women have not much use for *dope*."

"One may batter oneself against the bars for nothing," Harden rejoined rather drearily. "To know when one must be patient is much. Then perhaps I'm an old-fashioned optimist, but I cling to the hope that some time all that's now entangled will be put straight."

"You are a dear," said Anne. "One, however, wants all put straight in our time, and to see the people who entangled things forced to meet the bill. The hateful part is, Keith must suffer for another's cunning. I'm persuaded the fellow he saw in the Vancouver saloon impersonated him."

Harden gave her a queer, fixed look.

"Did you and Madam talk about the gambler?"

"I think we did not. We were talking about Mr. Emerson, and I rather boasted that he was going to help me exonerate Keith. Madam was not very sympathetic. I saw she thought our resolve absurd, and perhaps it is. All the same, I mean to try——"

"Since it looks as if the police were baffled, I'm afraid your efforts will not carry you far," Harden remarked, and bent his head as if he were tired. "Anyhow, I like your stanchness, and if you think you can help your brother, I admit that you ought."

"Now you are very nice," said Anne, and kissed him. "Perhaps my youthful hopefulness accounts for something, but I'm satisfied Keith is going to be vindicated. Mr. Emerson means to see him out, and he's a better friend than you know."

She went off. Harden lighted his pipe and brooded drearily.

XVI

THE SEARCH PARTY

Dusk was falling, and Emerson, in a sandy pool, leaned on his fish-spear. The current had not long since run down-channel, but he thought it had stopped. Anyhow, the tide had turned for two or three hours, and a measured turmoil marked its advance up the firth.

In the west, the lonely mountain looked like a dark-blue pyramid against melting saffron and red; in the east, across a wide peat moss, the round, pale moon glimmered in thin mist. When the moon is full the tide runs hard, and Garnet thought it was time for him to leave the sands.

Trying the soft bottom with the spear, he crossed the pool. He had left his boots by the marsh gate and he liked to feel the warm ripples beat his skin. At the top of the bank, he shifted the basket-strap, for he had been on the sands since afternoon and the flounders were heavy.

When he reached the marsh he sat down under the edge of the high bank. The moon was getting bright, and streaks of sparkling water began to pierce the sands. After the hot autumn day, the evening was pleasantly cool and Ivison was not at the cottage. The old fellow had stated he would not be back until midnight, and Emerson did not inquire where he went. Partridge coveys haunted the meadows, and a large, thin net had vanished from its hiding-place.

Sometimes the grass on the marsh top rustled in the faint east wind, but before sunset cirrus clouds had streaked the sky and the mare's tails threatened a stronger breeze. Moreover, the surf throbbed like a drum, and Garnet imagined a boisterous west wind had begun to blow in the Irish Sea. On the next evening he must cross the firth. Anne's letter indicated that she got impatient. They had found out nothing fresh, and she thought Garnet ought to start for Montreal and persuade Keith to come across. Garnet smiled, a sympathetic smile. Anne hated to wait, but he was not remarkably keen to go. He liked to feel he was where she could call him if he were wanted, and although he had expected to be bored, he was content at Ivison's.

After a life of strenuous effort, to lie in the wild thyme and loaf about the sands with a fish-spear was something fresh, and when he caught a basketful of flounders he was boyishly proud of his exploit. Moreover, his waiting for the gang to move justified his taking a rest.

At Copshope he liked his host. The old house was charming, and he had Anne's society. For all that, he sensed a sort of strain that reacted on him and her. In fact, but for Anne he might not have stopped. The gloom he had felt was puzzling. Harden, of course, had grounds to be anxious, but the old fellow was not the sort to exaggerate, and Keith was not Mrs. Harden's son. Yet, for all their efforts to be hospitable, Garnet knew them strangely disturbed. It looked as if they fronted something worse than Keith's unmerited disgrace. Well, it was not his business, and he started for the cottage.

At the marsh gate he stopped to pick up his boots. The ash-tree branches gently moved and leaves fluttered down. Dry sedges rattled in the light wind, and then all was still. Garnet did not put on his boots. After wading about the ribbed sand, his feet were hard, and when he got to the cottage he would use the thin bedroom slippers he carried in his pack. His advance along the lane was noiseless and he thought the horses behind the hedge did not know he passed. When the wind was east, they came at night to the sheltered field by the hill.

A white wall shone in the moon, and when Garnet pushed back the garden gate an owl swooped across the hedge on noiseless wings. Somehow he felt the spot was lonely and the gloom behind the ash-trunks was sinister.

The evening was the first on which Ivison was away at dark, but Garnet pulled off the fish-basket and went up the path. His last meal was a frugal lunch, and to start the peat fire and fry some flounders would banish the rather puzzling dreariness. Anne's pistol was hidden in the shack where he slept, and the poacher's duck gun was somewhere about.

Garnet got down on his knees by the hearth, but he did not rub the match he pulled out. Behind the hedge the horses began to move; in the quiet dark their feet rang on the hard ground. Garnet turned his head and waited. The horses had not moved when he went by, and he thought they would not move for Ivison. Their habit was to haunt the spot, and they knew the old fellow's step. Now, however, they went off across the field. A colt stampeded the others. Garnet knew its frightened plunge, but, as a rule, the animal was friendly, and he got up.

Strangers were in the lane, and his not hearing their advance was ominous. When he was a Royal North-West trooper his superintendent reckoned him a pretty good scout; but he had rashly left Anne's pistol in the shack. Now the moon was on the lime-washed wall, and if he stole across the garden, his figure would be conspicuous. Well, he must wait, and he went quietly to the door of the other room. The moon shone through the window, but he did not see Ivison's gun, although he knew where the cartridges were.

A stone rattled and somebody came up the path. The fellow's step was quick and rather loud, but Garnet had not heard him until he reached the gate. The other did not yet know who was in the cottage, and if it was not the man he thought, he would perhaps inquire the way across the marsh. Yet, had his foot not struck the stone, Emerson imagined he would have crept up to the window. However, since the house was dark, it was possible he did not know if anybody was there. After a few moments the steps stopped and somebody called: "Hallo!"

Emerson glanced about the small room, but saw nowhere for him to hide. He must trust his luck, and he stole behind the inside door. On the whole, he thought the stranger had not seen him go into the house. When the other threw back the kitchen door to the wall and crossed the earth floor, he knew his supposition accurate. Had the fellow seen anything to indicate that his man was in the cottage, he would have waited and signaled his friends.

All the same, he stopped at the bedroom door and his black shadow touched the opposite wall. Garnet, behind the boards, clenched his fist, but his heart beat and his mouth was dry. To knock out the man would not help much. His confederates would hear the struggle and one could not fight a gang. If Basset meant to use force, he would arrange for proper support. All the same, if the spy did look behind the door, Emerson must jump for him and use the few moments before the rest arrived.

The shadow moved on the opposite wall, as if the fellow turned his head. Emerson thought he looked about mechanically, but imagined the cottage was unoccupied. Had he doubted it, he would have looked behind the door. Then somebody whistled and the shadow vanished from the wall. Emerson heard steps in the kitchen and a chair rattle. The steps went down the path and all was quiet.

Garnet leaned against the boards. He was breathless and his skin was wet by sweat, but he braced up and began to feel about the wall. In a dark corner he touched a cold gun-barrel and his mouth went tight. The gun was a big ten-bore and carried a heavy load, and when he had got some cartridges he sat down on a box in the kitchen. If he were forced, he might risk a fight, but he must not be rash. To shoot up somebody would involve him in fresh complications, and he frankly did not want to be shot.

He heard a noise, and when he reached the door a swift reflection leaped across the window of the shed. Again it flickered on the glass and Garnet knew it for the beam from an electric torch. The gang were searching the shed; they no doubt had seen his bed in the nets and rushes, and opened his pack. The clothes he had carried were not the clothes a fisherman would wear. By and by they would search the cottage, and when they did so he must not be there. In the meantime, they were occupied, and he stole across the garden.

An ash-tree threw its shadow over the shed, but the leaves had begun to fall and an ash-tree's shadow is thin. Garnet, however, felt that something must be risked; he must find out if he knew the men. His bare feet sank noiselessly in the wet grass, and creeping up to the window, he crouched against the boards. He dared not push back the door, which was not quite shut.

But for the concentrated illumination the room was dark. The small bright circle moved, and the objects it touched got distinct and vanished. When it stopped for a few moments, Garnet saw a man's bent back, his opened pack, and the few articles of clothing he had carried. The blankets his host had given him were thrown aside in a loose heap. Somebody obviously held the torch while another tried to find the bonds. The bonds were in Scotland and Anne's caution was justified; but Emerson speculated about the fellows' plans when they knew themselves baffled.

On the whole, he reckoned the gang would not be willing to let him go. The sands, across which the tide advanced, were not far off and the spot was lonely. He ought perhaps to crawl away, but he was not going. So far as he could distinguish, two men were in the shed and they did not know he carried a big duck gun. In the dark, one might use a pistol and miss; the ten-bore scattered an ounce and a half of heavy shot. In fact, Garnet thought he might perhaps hold up the men until Ivison came back.

The drawback was, he did not see what he ought then to do. For one thing, he must not send for the police, and any

engagement he might extort would not be carried out. The agreement would stand only as long as the other contracting party faced the muzzle of the gun. Besides, he could not altogether give Ivison his confidence. For all that, he must, if possible, find out who they were, and he was not going to risk their carrying off Anne's pistol. He admitted he was perhaps ridiculous, but Anne's queer present was his for good.

Emerson's reasoning coolly was not remarkable. The big gun gave him confidence and a Royal North-West trooper must cultivate his nerve. In the meantime, the dew was heavy and he got cramped and cold, but since the door was open to move might be rash. Yet he could not wait for long. The shadow got thinner and the moon would presently be on the wall. Garnet frowned and knitted his brows.

He could not see the searcher's face. Sometimes the light touched his bent head and arms, but for the most part it rested on Emerson's clothes and disordered bed. The fellow who carried the torch was in the gloom. A fishing-net, dragged across the illumination, indicated that he tried to help, and he swore softly but viciously. His companion growled and Garnet knew disappointment made them savage. If he was not gone when they came out, he must fight; but he waited. The fellow with the torch might yet turn the beam upon the other's face.

He did not. The light was extinguished and one went to the door. He whistled and somebody pushed through the long grass in the lane. Garnet clenched his fist. He ought to have reckoned on the others posting a look-out and he might be forced to pay for his carelessness. To steal away was now impossible. The fellow at the door would see him, and the look-out, coming from the lane, fronted the other end of the shed. Moreover, the shadow had crept back close to the wall.

Garnet pushed the gun behind him and bent his head. The barrel must not sparkle, and so long as he was quiet, his white face might not be remarked. His figure, he hoped, was indistinct against the dark boards. For all that, his heart beat. He was horribly cramped. In a few moments he must stretch his bent legs.

The man went by, three or four yards off, and stopped by the door.

"Have you got the stuff?" he asked, and Garnet did not know his voice.

"We have not," a man in the hut replied, and the look-out swore.

"All's quiet up the lane," he said. "Let's try the cottage. I'll help."

They crossed the garden and Garnet crept along the wall. He dared not run for the hedge, but the fellows had done with the shed and the door was open. He stole in and sat down on the tumbled nets. Although he had not used much muscular effort, he was breathless. On the whole, he imagined the danger was gone, but the gang might yet come back.

For some time they were occupied in the cottage. Emerson heard them pull about the primitive furniture. Then they left the house, and, crouching by the shed door, he saw them start for the lane. He thought one carried himself like Keith Harden and another was Basset, but they were in the gloom. For ten minutes he waited. His pack and his bed were evidence that he was not far off and the men might watch for his expected return. All he knew was they had gone up the lane, and if they did return he must not be in the shed.

Feeling for his short mackintosh, he started for the trees and reached a hayrick in the field. The farmer had cut the rick, and Garnet covered himself with some loose stuff and rested his back against the broken pile. The hay kept off the chilly dew, the rick was not conspicuous, and he resigned himself to wait for Ivison.

An owl hooted about the trees, the tide throbbed on the sands, and a flight of ducks went noisily by. That, however, was all, until at length Garnet heard steps. The steps were not cautious, and, risking a shout, he thrilled to hear the poacher's voice. So long as somebody was about, the gang dared not molest him, and when the next night's tide flowed up the bay he hoped he would be gone.

XVII

GARNET MOVES ON

The day after Basset's raid was stormy and dark. Mist rolled about the hills, drenching showers swept the marsh, and as the morning advanced the sands melted in noisy surf. High-water was at noon, but until the tide again flowed up the bay Emerson must wait for the boat Ivison had engaged to carry him across the firth.

He dared not take the road to Scotland, and to buy a ticket at the station three or four miles off would mark his trail. The gang knew where he was. He imagined they watched the spot, and when dark fell they might come back, but so long as he was not alone, he perhaps was comparatively safe. In fact, he might play for a sort of stale-mate, in which neither party dared move. The drawback was, if he stayed at the cottage, he could not keep his rendezvous with Anne.

When the rain blew away he helped Ivison mend a hedge. Garnet had told the old fellow all he thought he ought to know, and Ivison was not remarkably inquisitive. He admitted that he himself occasionally found it convenient to cross the firth. Anyhow, until the boatmen signaled, he would not leave the house and garden. Moreover, he reckoned that the man who meddled with him would be sorry.

All the same, Garnet was thoughtful. When the boat arrived he must cross the marsh and get on board Ivison's shooting-punt in the dark. How Anne would manage to keep the rendezvous at the small Scottish village he did not know, but when he met her he would not be entitled to boast. His plan had not worked and he agreed that he must move on. For him to be put out would not exonerate Keith, and he certainly was not keen to face the cheated gang.

In the afternoon a rainstorm drove them to the house, and Garnet sat by the peat fire and mused. Anne's business was to champion her brother, but Garnet, studying her letter, wondered whether she was sorry to part with her confederate. Anyhow, he doubted if he could persuade Keith to come across, and it was possible he would not be allowed to sail for Montreal. Since the Canadian immigration bureau examined all passengers, he must at the steamship office fill up documents stating who he was, and to use another name might be dangerous. All the same, Anne obviously thought he ought to go, and as he was her servant he must make the experiment.

The rain stopped, and when he and Ivison resumed their labors a savage squall drove a white track across the sandy flood running down the bay. Short waves curled in the channels, and the wet flats were bordered by tumbling foam. Yellow ash-leaves whirled about the hedge, and Garnet frowned.

"The wind's freshening. D'you think your friends will face it? Their boat is small."

"You'll not can capsiz a whammle boat, and Jock's has maist a ton o' iron on her keel," Ivison replied and smiled. "If it blew much waur, he'd keep tryst wi' me. As soon as he kens there's three-fit water over banks he'll run roon t' point."

Garnet saw the old fellow did not doubt. His look was humorously proud, as if he knew his power. Well, the Borderers were a queer, virile lot, and Ivison was the old Viking type. One kept one's engagements with men like that. Garnet admitted the excursion was not attractive. In fact, Anne's expecting him was its only charm. There was, however, no use in weighing the obstacles. Anne had called and he must take a fresh plunge. He let it go, and helped Ivison drive thorn-branches into the wet peat bank.

Dusk fell soon. Torn, low-driving clouds sped across the sky and the rumble of the surf was like the noise of a heavy train. At sunset the trees across the bay were hardly distinguishable, and when the moon rose her beams but now and then pierced the tossing wrack. The ash-trees groaned behind the cottage, dead leaves and heavy showers beat the roof, but for all the turmoil Emerson heard the tide advance.

Sitting by the fire, he pulled out his watch. Before the boat got safe water on the sands another hour must go. So far, nobody had disturbed him, and while Ivison was about the gang dared not force the door. Their plan was to seize him when he was alone; a witness would be awkward. Still he imagined they watched the cottage; and the creek where Ivison moored his punt was half a mile away. When he tried to reach her the trouble would begin. Three men had searched the shed, and Basset might bring another. In the meantime, he must wait, as coolly as possible, although to wait was hard.

At length, Ivison went to the door, and presently signed. Behind the marsh top a light tossed in the rain, and when it vanished Garnet seized his pack. Ivison waited for a moment or two, knitting his brows.

"I sent Jock word we'd shove off old punt; but I doot if she wad carry us in a breeze like this. Then maybe your friends have found her, and Yan will watch t' creek—Weel, if Jock dis not see us, he'll beat back to point and wait."

Emerson nodded. If Basset knew about the punt, he would try to cut his antagonist's best line of retreat. The water at the point would soon float the whammle boat to the steep bank; but in order to get there one must cross a belt of open ground. The night, however, was stormy and Garnet thought himself a better scout than a city crook.

"Let's steer for the point. Don't go straight," he said.

The ash-leaves showered about them, and when they stole along the hedge the thorn-branches bent. A moonbeam touched tangled grass and rushes and sparkled in a pool; then the ragged clouds rolled on and all was dark. The surf roared and Emerson imagined Basset's lot would not hear his steps two or three yards away.

They crossed the boggy field and followed a creek to a plank bridge. Whinn-bushes grew along the curving bank, and when they reached the last loop Ivison stopped. A moonbeam swept the marsh and Garnet saw a dark object in the gorse by the bridge. He dropped in the wet grass. Ivison disappeared, but Garnet heard him laugh.

"Noo I'se let ye see how a poacher keps a hare," he said.

"You'll wait," said Garnet. "I think the job is mine."

He crawled away. The noise of the wind and sea would cover his advance, and he thought the watcher fronted the cottage. A man from the cities would perhaps expect him to take the obvious path, but Garnet was not a city man, and as he crawled across the bents and rushes he indulged a grim satisfaction. The gang had hunted him, he thought they had meant to put him out, and since he was forced, he had run away. Now, however, he was going to attack, and if his luck were good, in a few moments the watcher would get a nasty jolt.

Emerson reached a prickly whinn-bush. The other, two or three yards off, had not moved. His head was turned to the cottage path, and behind him was the deep muddy creek. The wind screamed and a cloud rolled across the moon, but the night was not very dark. The fellow did not know his job; his head and the upper part of his body cut the sky. Garnet crawled another yard, and then got off his knees. Crouching behind the bush, he braced his muscles, got his breath, and jumped.

The other turned. Perhaps his legs were cramped, for he was slow, and as he awkwardly got up Garnet's fist crashed in his face. He reeled backwards into the whinn-bush and they rolled about in the prickly stuff, but Garnet was on top. Then somebody said:

"Keep his legs. Noo, away we' him!"

Garnet bent his back and strained, for the brute was heavy. He thought he took a kick, but all he really knew was, water splashed behind the whinns and Basset's man was in the creek.

"Bank steep and gey soft. We'll just leave him to win oot," Ivison remarked.

Garnet thought they might do so; he had felt the black mud's holding-power. Laughing breathlessly, he crossed the plank, and he did not bother to go very fast. Of the Basset gang one presumably watched the punt, another was in the creek, and the point was not far off. Besides, the grim old Borderer carried his big duck gun.

The moon pierced the speeding clouds, and a swift silver beam searched the marsh and sparkled on leaping foam. Behind the broken bank, a small, black sail tossed. The whammle boat had run up the bay, but her steersman, not seeing the punt, was beating back for the point. Close-hauled to the wind, she lurched across the short, white seas along-shore, where the tide was weak.

Her progress was not fast. The stream ran up the bay and she must meet the shock of the angry waves. Short, and double-ended, she leaped like a porpoise, and sometimes all one saw of her was her round, shining bilge. Then the moonbeam vanished and Emerson calculated. Basset, no doubt, had seen the boat, and collecting his scattered forces, would start for the point. Garnet was some distance in front, but if the gang arrived before the boat, it might be awkward.

By and by he reached the bank. The point broke the sea, but oblique rollers splashed against the peat and large blocks fell. Ragged white streaks marked the tideway and, fifty yards from shore, melted in vague, tossing foam. The spray was salt on Emerson's lips and his eyes smarted, but he searched the channel and thought a large dark object rolled about in the gloom. When he turned his head he saw a glimmering creek, ruffled pools, and level grass. His pursuers had not yet reached the open marsh. Then slack canvas beat noisily in the dark. The boat was coming round for a tack in-shore, and he turned to Ivison.

"Are you going? I expect your friends would land you where you like."

"I am not," the poacher replied, with a hoarse laugh. "It's no' me t'ithers are wanting, and I've not yet met t' man who'd chase me off marsh."

Garnet gave him his hand. The moon was breaking through, and the boat steered for the wave-beaten turf. He himself would not engage to find, or fight, the stanch old fellow. Then silver light touched an inclined mast and slanted sails. A little black jib fell, the boat swung head to wind, and lurched upright. Her lugsail beat across her, Ivison seized a rope, and the short, white hull crashed against the turf.

Ivison, in the water, jamed his back against her bow; Garnet jumped on board and helped a fisherman push on a long oar. Then they jumped for the halyard, the little jib went up, and the thrashing lugsail filled. Ivison shouted, and a roller smashed on the weather bow; the boat heeled steeply, and they were off.

Somebody threw Garnet an oilskin coat, and he sat down on wet boards under the narrow side-deck. Water blew from the streaming canvas, water splashed across the coaming ledge above his head. The floorings slanted like a roof. Half a gale blew up the firth, and the tide yet ran up the bay. In order to clear the sands at its mouth, they must carry sail. Speed must make up for leeway and urge her through when she met the steep head-seas. She was built high-sided, with a massive iron keel, for her job was to drag a quarter-mile salmon net in the sandy turmoil a Solway gale stirs up.

By and by a fisherman plunged down a boathook and Emerson got on his feet. He saw a wide belt of foam and, in the background, vague, dark trees. They had reached the shoals that fringed the bay's northern horn, and if they went about, the tide would carry them back. It looked as if the steersman meant to go across.

"Yet a fathom!" shouted the man who used the pole, and, a few moments later, "Noo ye're on the Perch sand; I find about four fit!"

They let her go, and when the sounder got three-feet-six Emerson knitted his brows. On the sand the broken seas were not large, but the margin of safety was disturbingly small. She jarred and slowed but did not stop, and when the pole again went down bottom was not touched.

The seas got long and regular, the steersman let the mainsheet run, and Garnet knew they had made the firth. Wind and tide went with them, and by and by they lowered the lugsail. The small jib was all she needed, and she lurched along before the wind on an even keel. Garnet drained the water from his oilskin, and a fisherman crawled under the fore-deck and brewed coffee.

XVIII

ANNE TAKES CONTROL

Emerson landed on a gravel bank where a burn pierced the flats. The fishermen took the sum Ivison had agreed for him to pay, gave him good-night, and pushed off their boat. The transaction was finished. They had done, efficiently, all they had engaged, and, in the circumstances, Garnet thought the bill was not large. He had begun to like the laconic Border Scots. Although they did not protest much, and indeed rather used under-statement, one could trust them to put across an awkward job.

Well, Anne was a Borderer, and he imagined her part in the joint adventure was not easy. Although Mrs. Harden was jealous and watchful, Anne had fixed to meet him at a small village, remarkably late at night. In the meantime he need not inquire about the methods she would use. His business was to get there. Anne would keep the rendezvous.

Crossing a sandy common, Garnet joined a road. A dry-stone wall broke the savage wind, the moon was bright, and he stopped for a moment and tried to rub the peat mud from his boots and straighten his battered hat. His clothes were wet, his fishing mackintosh was stained, and he feared the landlady might be curious about his disorder when he joined Anne at the inn. Anyhow, Anne waited, and he pushed on for the village.

The little stone houses were quiet and the dormer windows in the low roofs were dark. It looked as if the villagers had some time since gone to bed. A dog barked, and then all Garnet heard was the clamor of the sea. Then clouds drove across the moon, but when they passed the night was clear. By and by he saw trees and a rather ambitious building at the end of the street.

Lights yet burned behind one or two windows, and Garnet believed the building was the inn. Then a dazzling beam swept the road, and mechanically he jumped for the wall. When he touched the stones he swore. He must use some caution, but to run like a cottontail rabbit was another thing. Basset's friends could not yet have reached the spot and there was no cover; the walls of the little houses went up straight from the pavement. The beam vanished, he thought a woman laughed, and a man called him to come on.

Garnet did so, and saw the inn and stables and garage occupied one side of the square. A limousine and a little open run-about were under the trees. Broad sycamore-leaves blew about the stones, and two or three people waited in front of the inn. Garnet's doubts were gone. Somehow Anne had fixed things, and when a short, slim figure left the group he went forward.

"You got across. That's fine!" she said. "Jim rather doubted if you could persuade the boatmen to face the gale. I did not, but I was anxious. The sea is very wild, and to know you had arrived was some relief."

"The boatmen didn't hesitate," said Emerson, and added with a laugh: "I expect you knew me when I jumped!"

Anne gently touched his arm. "Your nerve is very good, Garnet, and after the strain you have borne for Keith and me, I'd sooner you did not joke—well, you know Jim Carruthers; but I think you have not met Flora."

Garnet had not, and was presented to Miss Jardine. She was older than Anne and gave him a swift, searching glance. He imagined he looked something like a British tramp, but her twinkle indicated that she was rather amused than disturbed.

"I expect you had a stormy crossing," Carruthers remarked. "Since you're not stopping at the inn, I'm afraid I can't get you a drink, but the landlady put up some coffee in a vacuum flask and we'll picnic in the limousine."

Emerson had met the young fellow at a tennis match, and he said, "Then, I'm not to stop? You see, I sent off my boat."

"I believe Anne has another scheme, but I'll allow her to state it. To begin with, you must get some supper, and all have had enough of this blustering wind."

The limousine was softly lighted, and Miss Jardine took the host's part, as if the car were hers. When she opened a lunch-basket Emerson doubted if the country inn had supplied the food. The fruit, at all events, did not grow on the bleak Solway coast. His appetite was pretty keen and some minutes went before he began to talk.

In the meantime the inn windows got dark, the sycamore-branches tossed, and rustling leaves blew about the car. The limousine, under the trees, was twenty yards from the quiet road. Emerson, leaning back against the soft cushions, wondered how Anne had contrived to get the party there.

"When did you leave Copshope?" he inquired.

"I think it was seven o'clock," Miss Jardine replied. "We are bound for Dumfries, where we had arranged to visit with some friends and go to a local function tomorrow afternoon. Soon before dark, however, the engine stopped, and since I am not a mechanic, we were lucky when Jim arrived. Anne took his car, and with some difficulty he steered mine to the inn."

"That's not quite all," Carruthers remarked. "I mustn't boast, but if Flora had allowed the village jobber to have his way, it's possible we should have stopped all night. Anyhow, I was firm, and we sent to Dumfries for the stuff we needed."

"But you had a car," said Emerson.

"That is so," Carruthers agreed with some dryness. "I, however, was occupied, pulling down the engine. Then my car carries three. In the circumstances, we thought the proper plan was to send Flora's friends a note—she was stopped by engine trouble, but hoped to arrive before very long."

"But what was the trouble?"

Anne smiled and Carruthers frankly grinned.

"I think we will not bother about technicalities. In fact, my dispute with the village mechanic was rather a strain. The main thing is, we have banished our friends' anxiety."

"Jim really means that nobody will inquire about our late arrival," said Miss Jardine. "A tennis engagement prevented our starting in time to reach Dumfries for dinner; and then the engine refused to go. Jim, who has some business at the quarries along the coast, fortunately overtook us, and I imagine everybody in the village knows he and the repair man were busy for an hour or two. Most of them went to bed some time since, and when you joined us I expect all were asleep. Now I think everything is properly accounted for."

Garnet laughed. All fitted in. Mrs. Harden and the folks with whom Anne was to visit had no grounds to wonder about her stopping by the way. Pretty good staff-work; but perhaps stage-management was the better term. Anne had some talent for theatrical experiments and her cast played up. Garnet did not yet see his and Carruthers' parts, although he was persuaded she had some fresh use for the young fellow. Anyhow, he liked her cleverness.

"Now your engine is all right, ought you not to be off?" he asked.

"We will start in five minutes," Miss Jardine replied, and looked at Anne. "Perhaps you will pack the lunch-basket? Let's see if you put back the tools and fastened the box, Jim."

"If you don't mind, Garnet and I will walk round the square," said Anne.

She pulled on her coat and Emerson helped her down. Old Country folk were not remarkably obvious and Anne's touch was light, but Garnet admitted that she got there. For all her thick coat, she was charmingly slender and small, and he was ridiculously tempted to put the arm on which her hand rested to another use. Yet he dared not. Sometimes Anne, so to speak, was Miss Harden of Copshope, and her temper was imperious. The moon behind the trees was bright, but the inn and the houses opposite were dark, and Garnet's feet sank noiselessly in the drifting leaves. He thought Anne rather floated by his side than walked.

"All we have is five minutes," she said and somehow implied that she was sorry. "Well, what about Basset? Has he found out where you are?"

"Two days since his friends searched the cottage. However, he didn't find me and, of course, the bonds were not there."

"Ah," said Anne, "he might have found you! The strange thing is, he allowed you to cross the firth."

"He was, perhaps, not very willing," Garnet agreed. "At all events, when I made for the boat we found a fellow watching

a marsh bridge. He did not see us in useful time, and went into the creek. That's really all I know."

Anne's touch on his arm got firm.

"I have been horribly selfish; but you must not meet Basset another time."

"Oh, well, I'm not remarkably keen to go back."

"There's another thing," Anne resumed. "I do not think we ought to keep the bonds."

"Perhaps it's dangerous; Basset might get on their track. However, since you sent for me, I expect you have a plan. Carruthers hinted something of the sort."

Anne laughed, a gentle laugh.

"I like your modesty, Garnet; but we mustn't joke. I begin to think the bonds are not safe at Copshope."

"If Basset keeps my trail, I doubt if I would be allowed to carry them to Montreal. The police are the proper people _____"

"No," said Anne firmly. "It's possible we ought to have enlightened the police, at the beginning, but we did not. If we did so now, they'd doubt us, and make us accountable if Basset got away. Then one hates to own one is beaten, and I expect the Edinburgh officers are not a romantic lot. If I talked to our fiscal about Keith's tinhorn, he'd listen with old-fashioned politeness, but I'd know all he'd think. Old people do not use imagination. They hate to experiment, and they stick to worn-out rules."

Garnet saw Anne tried to justify her extravagant scheme, and he smiled, a crooked, humorous smile.

"After I carried off the bonds, I began to feel myself rather young for my job. However, you want me to go to Montreal? I don't know if I can get there, but I'm willing to try."

"Ah," said Anne, "it might be awkward, and I hate to urge you; but if you stay here, you run a worse risk. Then, you see, the risk ought to be Keith's. He must come across."

"Very well," Garnet agreed. "All the same, I had hoped you might let me wait and see you out."

Anne turned and fronted him. The moon was on her face and he thought her brows were knit. In fact, he thought her embarrassed, but the light was puzzling; the sycamore-branches tossed, and falling leaves blew about her head.

"I'd sooner you did stop; but I want you to understand—You have helped nobly, and perhaps one is entitled to use a willing friend. Yet one must not be shabby—Well, I know you're generous and you dislike to leave a half-finished job. The important thing is we get no farther, and Keith must fight for himself. He must use his likeness to the gambler and you must persuade him. Then—if you are not wanted at the factory—you might, perhaps, come back."

Garnet's heart beat, but he smiled.

"My young partner is rather keen to try his powers. I don't expect the factory will hold me, Anne."

For a moment Anne looked the other way. Then she met his glance and said in a quiet voice, "In three days a Donaldson liner sails from Glasgow."

Garnet nodded. He knew he must not stop on an emotional note, and at length he saw Carruthers' part.

"Very well. I expect Jim will help me make the Clyde. But Miss Jardine waits, and you ought to be off."

Anne faced the moonlight and faint color touched her skin.

"You are fine, Garnet! You play up splendidly."

They went back to the car and Anne said, "Garnet is going to Glasgow. He wants to get the Donaldson boat."

Carruthers turned to Emerson. "I could get you there for breakfast, but you would have two days to wait, and perhaps you

would sooner not go by road. Well, we are loading a coaster with granite for the Clyde, and the quarries are not very far off. She starts at high-water tomorrow and I expect the captain will give you a berth."

"There's my line," said Emerson, and Anne gave him her hand.

"Good luck, Garnet—I hope your partner will not need you," she said, and got on board.

The engine rattled, the headlamps flared, and the limousine took the road. Carruthers laughed and cranked his car.

"I'm not remarkably inquisitive and don't expect you to explain," he said. "Anne declares your object's good and I imagine in some way she's accountable for your excursion. Well, she's Flora's friend, and Anne's friends indulge her. Now you, perhaps, see?"

Emerson thought he saw. The young fellow was Miss Jardine's lover, and Anne had used the girl and him. Garnet reflected humorously that although Anne's plans were romantic, as a rule, they worked. The reflection was encouraging, but the engine started and he jumped on board the little car.

XIX

GARNET TRIES PERSUASION

A light breeze rippled the languid swell rolling up the Firth of Clyde, and the Donaldson liner's smoke trailed astern like a long gray cloud. Her engines beat a measured rhythm, and wide belts of foam swirled aft from the thrusting bows. Emerson, on the boat-deck, felt the swift screws throb, and the sense of speed and power was soothing.

In front, Kintyre's high blue crags commanded the Atlantic, but for the most part Emerson's glance was fixed regretfully, the other way. Behind the big boat's quarter, faint hills and moors rolled back to the Solway Firth. Soon the coast began to fade, and Garnet reviewed his adventures since Anne wished him good luck at the Border village.

The road to the West was quiet and Carruthers drove fast. The wind screamed about the car, and when they rolled through a little town behind a mountain Garnet was cold and cramped. All was quiet at the terraced quarries, the street was bleak and dark, but a light or two twinkled by the granite quay. Garnet tumbled over ropes, and crossed a slanted plank to a little coaster lying in the river mud. Carruthers beat on an iron door under the steamer's bridge, a light leaped up behind a round port, and somebody inquired in vigorous Scots what he wanted.

The brown-skinned man had rather obviously jumped from his bunk, but a coasting skipper wakens soon and his glance was alert. It looked as if he knew Carruthers, for he brought out a whisky bottle and at the beginning called him "sir."

In about five minutes all was fixed, and Emerson smiled as he recaptured the interview. Some North Americans imagined the Old Country folk were not businesslike, but Garnet admitted they knew where to take things for granted and where to stop. Tactful implications economized argument. Anyhow, when Carruthers drained his glass the epigrammatic captain had agreed to take a passenger and understood that he must not advertise his being on board. Emerson asked for some paper and wrote a hurried note for Anne. Then they went to the gang-plank, and at the top Carruthers gave Garnet his hand.

"You can trust the fellow and I'll see Anne gets the note. Good luck, and a fair wind," he said meaningly.

That was all, but it was all one wanted. The young fellow had put across his job, and now went down the plank. Ten minutes afterwards Emerson was asleep on a settee in the captain's room.

In the morning he sent for the *Glasgow Herald* and kept in the room under the bridge. The paper gave him the shipping news and he studied the Atlantic companies' advertisements. His note had instructed Anne about the bonds, and since the Donaldson boat was not as fast as some, he hoped his arrival and the packet's, so to speak, would synchronize. Anyhow, he knew Anne would punctually carry out his orders.

At noon the little coaster hauled out from the wharf and, dropping downriver, crossed a rock-guarded bay. Emerson was glad the captain dined before they cleared the sheltering point, although, from his point of view, potato soup, a sheep's head, and strong black tea was not a tempting bill of fare. In the meantime, the crew were strenuously occupied, wedging up the hatch covers, lowering cargo booms, and lashing fast all the sea could move. When the *Craig Dhu* stole round the point, their activity was justified.

A half-gale blew up the firth, the tide went to wind-ward at four miles an hour, and the opposing forces piled the sea in hollow-fronted walls. The *Craig Dhu* carried three hundred tons of granite—a Scots skipper does not cut down a paying load—and Garnet was glad to note her bows were round and her forecastle was high.

When she rammèd a comber, her well-deck vanished in a yeasty flood. She did not climb across the ridges; the tide and the granite's momentum hurled her through. When she rolled, her rails went under and her bilge swung from the sea. Her rusty stack soon was white with crusted salt, but for a time her engines pounded steadily and her smoke trail streamed back across the foam.

In the evening the skipper rang for reduced speed, and Emerson, holding on behind the wheelhouse, saw high black rocks and the wild turmoil that marks the Mull of Galloway race. The boisterous wind held back the tide's urgent rush round the head, and the roar of the tumbling seas was like the roar of a waterfall. Sometimes the *Craig Dhu*, tossed about by the eddies, would not steer, and for a minute or two the white seas leaped on board and cascaded across her tilting

leeward rail. When she rolled back, one heard coal and stokers' tools crash on iron floors. She took a fresh buffet, and then the rudder gripped and swung her head-to-wind.

Sometimes she met the combers squarely. In the plunge her screw was lifted high and the furious beat of engines shook her racked plates. For all that, she went through, and when the black cliffs dropped astern, bore up, swept and battered, for the Clyde.

At Glasgow, Emerson went to a second-class hotel. When he called at the passenger office he hesitated, but used his proper name and accurately supplied the particulars the steamship company required. The passenger clerk was not interested and Garnet got his ticket. It looked as if the Glasgow police had not watched out for him.

Garnet wondered whether he had run away where nobody pursued; but the police had inquired about a Canadian and their inquiries had helped him cheat Basset. Anyhow, until he reached Quebec he need not bother, and if his luck were good, he might soon return with Keith——

A bugle called on the deck below and he made for the ladder. For some time he had cogitated in the keen salt breeze, and he wanted food.

When the liner touched at Quebec his interview with the immigration officers was short and satisfactory. Garnet went on to Montreal, where he asked about the mail-boat arrivals and waited for two days. Then he called at the post-office one morning and started for Harden's bank.

The bank's offices, like the other great blocks bordering the narrow street, were palatial, and when Emerson had given a clerk his name he waited for some time in the spacious central hall. In Montreal a small Western contractor was not of much account, and the high Corinthian pillars, wide marble floor, gilded screens and polished hardwood stood for wealth and power. His business was to persuade the gentlemen who controlled the great commercial enterprise to trust him and take a very unbusinesslike line. Garnet, with a touch of humor, admitted that he might fail.

For one thing, his part was an unaccustomed part. He liked to be independent, and, so far, all he had wanted done he did for himself. To some extent, pride was an obstacle to his using others. To ask for help was humiliating, and he hated argument. There was the trouble; because the bank's head officers would not be easily moved.

After a time he was shown into a private office. The cold light from the long windows touched plate-glass, polished wood, and stamped leather. Emerson noted the nicked clasps of index files, the speaking-tubes, and telephones. For all its utilitarian austerity, the room was dignified; he felt it was a sort of power-house. From their revolving chairs the gentlemen who waited to know his errand measured, and in some degree controlled, the trade of Canada. One called into a tube, and new sawmills started in Pacific Slope forests. His colleague picked up a telephone, and floods of wheat began to flow from the prairie to the lakes.

One was strongly built and fat. His look was rather truculent and his large hands were muscular. Garnet, knowing something of his history, imagined he at one time had used the ax. The other's look was rather ascetic and like a scholar's; his hair was white, but his thoughtful glance was somehow commanding. By contrast, Emerson knew himself a raw Westerner. They, however, received him politely and he felt their agreeing to the interview was significant.

"For some time I have been a customer at your Miscana office," he said. "My account is not of much consequence to a first-class bank; but I hope it may soon be larger, and I mainly owe my progress to your local agent, Mr. Harden's, help."

"Our fresh agent will be happy to give you all the facilities at his command," the strongly built gentleman replied. "Perhaps you know Harden is not now at Miscana?"

"I do know. It explains my asking for an interview. To begin with, the English mail is in, and I expect a registered packet addressed to your care."

The banker called down a tube.

"A messenger is clearing our box at the post-office. He is expected in a few minutes. Your packet will be sent up."

"In the meantime I'll go ahead.... Since I am your customer, I did not reckon on your putting the Old Country police on my track."

The white-haired gentleman smiled. "If they annoyed you, I am sorry. The bank, however, did not advise them to look out for you."

Garnet looked up with surprise. A Scottish police sergeant certainly had asked about him; but he must let it go.

"We did suggest some inquiries at Miscana," the banker resumed. "Our agents and, I believe, the police, thought you might be implicated."

"If your agents had used much intelligence, they would not have implicated Harden. Well, I am his friend. I expect you know I was with him at the fishing camp and soon afterwards started for Scotland?"

"We were so informed," the fat gentleman agreed.

Garnet reflected. He was going to ask something the others might refuse, and since he doubted his persuasive powers, he must try a dramatic stroke.

"Very well. I had planned my excursion before the robbery; but when Harden reckoned the thieves might negotiate the certificates in London, I wondered whether I might somehow spot the gang. You see, I was resolved, if possible, to exonerate my pal. In a way, the notion was ridiculous, and perhaps my luck was strangely good; but, to some extent, *I succeeded.*"

The bankers' surprise was obvious and Garnet acknowledged it logical. They waited and he heard a step in the passage. Somebody knocked and his heart beat. Argument might not help much, but his exploit ought to carry weight. A clerk came in and separated a large envelope from the letters he put on a desk.

"The packet you asked for, sir."

Emerson took the envelope and when he broke the seal his hand shook. Then he thrilled triumphantly. Anne had not let him down, and he pulled out some stamped documents.

"I have pleasure to hand you a number of the stolen bonds!"

The others said nothing, and Garnet thought they wondered whether he joked. They examined the documents, and by and by one addressed him.

"You have done us an important service, Mr. Emerson. But how did you get the certificates?"

"I stole them from the thieves," Garnet replied, and smiled, a rather nervous smile. "I do not want your thanks; I want your confidence, and if you engage to say nothing until you have my leave, I'll give you the tale."

The banker looked at him hard and shook his head.

"In the circumstances, you must not ask us for a promise like that. If we were private merchants, I might perhaps agree; but we are trustees for our stock-holders and investors. We must have freedom to follow up any clue we get."

"Anyhow, I'll tell you something.... The man who broke your safe at Miscana impersonated Harden. Although the statement looks absurd, I ran up against the fellow and for a few moments did not know him from my friend. Well, I reckon you would like to recover the remaining bonds?"

"Your supposition is accurate," said the white-haired gentleman dryly. "Unless the certificates are discovered, the bank must make good a large sum."

Garnet had hoped to carry them away, but he began to see he was cheated. These men were not the sort to be moved by impulse.

"Then I want you to weigh my proposition," he resumed. "I got the bonds because the gang took me for a messenger they expected from Canada, and they would have better grounds to think Harden the man who opened your safe. I want you to give him two months' leave in order to visit the Old Country; but to say nothing about it until he returns."

"The plan, I suppose, is Harden's?"

"Not at all," said Garnet, frowning, because he saw where the remark led. "I landed two days since from the Donaldson liner, and Harden's at Winnipeg. One does not work out a scheme like mine by telegraph."

"We cannot indulge you," said the other gentleman. "For one thing, to find the thieves is the police's job, and I feel that if you refuse to consult with them you undertake an awkward responsibility. We acknowledge that we owe you much, but your plan has some rather obvious drawbacks."

Garnet got up. He knew when he was beaten, but control was hard and his face got red.

"Very well! I see you are firm. All the same, I'm Harden's pal, and if you will not help, I must get to work alone. There's another thing: if the police meddle, they'll find out nothing. They cannot force me to be frank, and Harden cannot put them wise, because he doesn't know. That's all, gentlemen; but I'll take a receipt for the certificates I brought."

He thought one hesitated, but the other signaled for a clerk, and they politely let him go.

HARDEN CAPITULATES

After his interview with the bankers Emerson went to his hotel and wrote a telegram for Miss Forbes at Miscana and a letter to Keith Harden at Winnipeg. Next morning he got on board the Vancouver express and stopped at Miscana for twenty-four hours.

Miss Forbes had started on a visit to Winnipeg before he arrived, but the message she left stated that she hoped to see him soon and Garnet knew she had got his telegram. His partner said nothing much was doing, and declared he could, if necessary, carry on for some time. Emerson told him he might be forced to do so, and started west by the next day's train.

At Winnipeg he waited for evening, and then got on a street-car at the Main Street corner. Keith was occupied all day and the bank was not the proper spot for confidential talk. Besides, when they did talk, Garnet wanted Miss Forbes' support.

The street-car rolled noisily west and Emerson looked about. Ambitious office blocks were springing up along the avenue, and the sidewalk was crowded with smart young men and women going home. Cars and motorcycles sped by, and Garnet reflected that Winnipeg grew fast. Not long since, the avenue was the old Portage Trail; a track, torn by wagon-wheels in the dark gumbo soil. Now, where rude board shacks had stood, steel and concrete buildings cut the sky. Huge flour-mills and grain-elevators dominated the town; the station's floor was marble——

Garnet began to muse. He had failed to move the bank officials, and to move Harden would not be an easy job. In fact, his chiefs' refusal justified Keith's being firm. To some extent, Garnet sympathized, but he had promised Anne he would, if possible, rouse her brother to fight for himself, and he meant to use his best effort.

Keith's soberness was the obstacle, and since Garnet had studied Mr. Harden at Copshope he better understood his friend. Keith's type was the old, sternly logical Scottish type. His nerve was good and he would go stubbornly where he thought he ought, but he hated rashness and he calculated. One could not carry him away, he must be convinced; and Garnet admitted his arguments, if coldly weighed, were not remarkably plausible. In fact, the romantic scheme was rather Anne's than his. Yet he had recovered a number of the bonds, and, anyhow, Anne had his promise.

The car stopped at Deer Park. Small frame-houses, picturesquely built, with verandas and wooden pillars, had sprung up along the road, and soon after Garnet got down he saw Miss Forbes and Harden on the steps to a garden lot. He knew they looked out for him, and when they met, Margaret indicated that she was his ally.

"I am stopping for a few days with Miscana friends—I expect you remember Belle Nasmyth?" she said. "Keith told me when you would arrive and I was keen to hear your tale. Your getting the bonds was splendid, but we'll talk about it again. Now I have seen Keith's lodgings, I think he is lucky to get a home. If he had been housed like a working bee in a crowded hotel, he'd have got horribly bored. Then his Scandinavian landlady is a dear—But I think she's waiting to give us supper."

They went in, and Garnet agreed about Harden's luck. As a rule, in Canadian cities one must be satisfied with a seat at a dining-table, and a very small bedroom. Keith's Danish landlady was motherly. When her son was away on his freight-train the house was quiet, and the supper was first-class.

Garnet studied his friend and knew his troubles weighed. Keith was thinner, his kind smile was gone, and when he talked his voice was different. Garnet thought him rather stubbornly resolved to hold on than resigned. For the most part, they talked about Winnipeg and Miscana, but when the landlady carried off the plates Emerson braced up. In a few minutes the struggle would begin.

They went to the porch. A grass lot, shaded by small trees, sloped to the board sidewalk. The evening was calm, and after a jangling street-car rolled by the road was quiet. Harden fetched a rocking-chair for Margaret.

"Now you must tell us all you did in the Old Country," she said to Emerson. "I'm tremendously interested, and I imagine Keith is much keener than he pretends. However, you were in Scotland, and you know his sort."

Garnet narrated his adventures, but when he talked about the man at the holiday-resort hotel Harden stopped him.

"You really thought the fellow like me?"

"So long as he was at the window, I was almost cheated. When he fronted me I knew a difference, but the difference was not marked. Frankly, I think him your Vancouver tinhorn."

"He was the tinhorn," said Margaret firmly. "He pretended to be Keith at Miscana."

Harden knitted his brows. "Another time, you thought you saw the fellow at Copshope, and Madam was disturbed. It is very queer! Anne and I are all our mother's children, and Madam, of course, has none. Then Basset expected somebody to meet him at Copshope! Well, the thing has baffled us before. Suppose you go ahead?"

Emerson did so, and by and by narrated his interview with the bank managers. Harden moved abruptly, as if he were annoyed.

"You are a first-class pal, Garnet; but I'm sorry you meddled where you did. Don't you see it looks as if I had sent you? As if I wanted to make my get-away!"

"One gentleman suggested something like that. I believe I satisfied him. I had recently landed, could not have seen you, and so forth. Well, I allow I was disappointed. If your chiefs had agreed, you'd have had no reason to hesitate."

"You think not?" said Harden, dryly. "You are a hopeful fellow, but I doubt if the plan for me to go across was altogether yours. For one thing, I know my sister's temperament."

"Anne approved. For your father's sake, she thought you ought to seize the chance. And I'm convinced my proper line is to urge you——"

"Then you are rather dull," Harden rejoined, and went on moodily: "I'm suspected. In the office here I have got a third-class post and I know all I do is watched. It's horribly humiliating, but I must be resigned. Some time, perhaps the police will find the thief; the men at headquarters are just, and when I'm exonerated I expect my promotion will be fast. Until the certificates vanished, I think they admitted I was a pretty good servant. In the meantime, they know where I am and that I dare not quit. I could not get another post, and if I started for the United States, I'd acknowledge myself guilty. The police would stop their search. They'd think they knew the proper man and concentrate on convicting me."

Garnet admitted the argument was logical. Keith was logical. In fact, there was the drawback. Garnet looked at Margaret and saw she waited. He knew her for an ally, but perhaps she felt she could not yet help. Well, he had known his job was awkward.

"Anne stated your career was at the bank," he said. "Your father's fortune has melted, and your uncle, the stockbroker, will take Copshope—I guess the old house is not all your folks' inheritance?"

"It is not," said Harden, and the blood stained his skin. "One would sooner use reserve, but I think you mean me to be frank. Well, we inherit a tradition; a name for uprightness and just dealing. Our farm tenants trust us; on the exchanges our engagements stand. Now you see where the worst hurt is. I've let down my folks, living and dead; I've let down Margaret."

Margaret's eyes began to sparkle. "I have not grumbled, Keith; but a tradition like yours is worth something. It's worth fighting for. I would hate to think you were afraid."

Harden looked up quickly and his mouth went tight. Garnet, however, imagined Miss Forbes was not wantonly cruel. She knew her lover's obstinacy and she used a hint of scorn as one used a whip.

"The trouble is, I cannot fight. All I can do is to wait," Harden rejoined.

"For how long, Keith? The proper thief may not be found; and one soon gets old. You have a talent for business and might make your mark. I am ambitious for you and myself. Are you content to hold a menial post until your chiefs forget you and your chance to rise is gone?"

Harden, trying hard for calm, did not see. He looked surprised, but Garnet liked Miss Forbes' pluck. So long as she moved her lover, she was willing for him to think her selfish and her ambition mean.

"One fights for an obvious advantage, where one hopes to win."

"Is that all? Oh, Keith!"

"I am not a sentimentalist, and Garnet already forced me to boast. Suppose I admit one might fight for a cause, for an ideal, knowing one must be beaten? My case is not like that. If I steal off, like a thief, I go to jail. I myself give my friends, and yours, the worst knock they could get. It's unthinkable!"

"You reckon you could not make the frontier?" Garnet asked.

"I am watched," said Harden grimly. "Then, two or three days since, you rather hinted that I might go. Well, I suppose your object was good!"

Garnet said nothing. So long as Keith was resolved, to dispute would not help. Moreover, his argument was sound. If he stole away and was stopped, to prove him innocent would be hard. All the same, hesitating timidity had nothing to do with his refusal. Keith's sober Scottish temperament was the drawback. Perhaps it was strange, but Anne and Margaret wanted him to take the plunge. Garnet wondered whether a woman's belief in ultimate justice was firmer than a man's. For all Anne's romantic moods, she was sternly practical, and Miss Forbes was not a fool.

"Sometimes one must carry a load, but if one does so for long, one's shoulders bend," she said in a quiet voice. "Your endurance is good, Keith; perhaps you can stand for cold distrust and small humiliations. I, however, have not yet tried mine. I'd hate to see you left at a boy clerk's desk for an example of the directors' clemency; I'd hate you to feel the younger men's half-pitiful scorn. You might hold on; but it would hurt. Sometimes the police are baffled, and by and by hope would go. Then you'd soon get old and tired, and I'd get moody. You would hate your job, and I would hate the bank. When I grumbled you would think I made you accountable for our dreariness and poverty."

Harden's look was very grim, but he clenched his fist, and Emerson thought Margaret struck the proper note. Although she was not selfish, she must force Keith to think for her.

"Garnet's plan is altogether theatrical," he said. "I am to impersonate a man I do not know; I must take a part to which I have not a cue and in which a false line might knock me out. I wonder whether he expects me to make up and wear a wig! Well, I ought to refuse; but perhaps there is not much use in my stopping, and if you would sooner, I'll risk it."

"Sometimes one must risk all one has. I think it's worth while, Keith."

"Very well!" said Harden and threw down his cigarette. "Since I am going, I'll start tonight. When I'm missed in the morning I hope to be some distance off, and the last local for Portage goes out soon. If I'm spotted at the station, it will look as if I had started West, but my line's for Dakota and New York. Are you going, Garnet?"

Emerson smiled. "Sure thing, Keith! The scheme was mine and your sister's, and I've got to see you out. My partner reckons to hold down all the business we can do until the Brockenhurst job begins, and I guess I'm entitled to take a holiday. Well, I must look up some truck I left at the station baggage-room."

He thought he used some tact, but when Margaret gave him her hand she said:

"Perhaps Keith does run some risk; but, if it is possible for flesh and blood, I believe you will see him out."

HARDEN LOOKS IN FRONT

Cinders rattled on the roof and red sparks tossed in the locomotive smoke. The train was near the top of an incline, and Emerson leaned against the platform rails behind the jolting car. Shielding his eyes from the soot and grit, he looked about. A thin moon was in the west, and the night was not dark.

A bluff on the horizon got sharp and black, and a ravine the line followed curved back, like a gray riband, into the grass. Dawn was not far off, and when the train stopped near the frontier the sun would be up. Garnet would sooner have crossed in the dark. A pale, quivering reflection behind the bluff caught his eye and he pondered—When the conductor examined the tickets he said they were behind schedule time and he hoped they would not be held up, but a construction gang was cutting out a curve where the track went round a butte. Garnet thought the flickering light marked the spot and he went to the smoking compartment.

Harden, on the bench along the wall, calmly smoked his pipe. Garnet had not expected him to be disturbed. To move Keith was sometimes difficult, but when he did get going he did not look back. Garnet sat down and pulled out his watch.

"She's running fast, but the conductor expects to be held up at the curve. When we make the frontier the light will be good."

Harden indicated their small suitcases. To check and transfer baggage might mark their trail and they had resolved to travel light.

"You're nervy, Garnet. Our grips will not interest the Customs' officers."

"I was rather thinking about the Immigration folks."

"They don't bother about Canadians. In fact, I don't know if they board the short-distance trains. My notion is, the Americans are glad to get the young men who now stream across."

"The boys ought to stop. A country three thousand miles long with nine million people has room for white men, but we let our best go and fill up with foreigners. When you think about it, we are watering our stock."

"It's possible," said Harden dryly. "In the United States they begin to value the Nordic stock; but you are not much of a politician, and I imagine you meant to talk about something else. Well, you can go ahead."

"Then, suppose the police have got telegraphic orders to watch the railroad?"

"So far as I can calculate, until the bank opens nobody will know I'm gone, and I don't think I was spotted at the station. You are a stranger and you bought the tickets. If there is trouble, I expect it will begin when we are farther south and some time has passed. Perhaps it's strange, but I don't know much about the rules our police must use when a Canadian crook gets across the frontier. Until very recently, I was not interested."

"You are pretty cool, Keith."

Harden smiled. "There is no use in worrying. I, so to speak, have burned my boats, and since retreat's impossible, I must look in front. If I do not make good, I'm done with."

"To some extent, I'm accountable, and anyhow I'd hate to see you sent back. If we go as far as our tickets carry us, we rather blaze our trail; and when we make Minneapolis I'd sooner we did so from a Western point. If the Americans agreed to hold us up, they'd watch the south track from the frontier."

"The risk began when we bought our tickets," Harden rejoined. "Since you like romantic exploits, the queer thing is you did not suggest our jumping a night freight."

Emerson pushed up the window. The train was speeding down grade and the stars got pale. A pool the cars passed glimmered, and where a clump of brush broke the rolling grass its outline was distinct. The lights in front got bright and he knew them for the reflections from big blast-lamps. Garnet shut the window.

"To *jump off* a train might pay. I expect the construction gang will flag the engineer, and in a few minutes we'll reach the spot where they're at work. The conductor has got his piece of ticket, and if we get down when the train slows, nobody will know we're gone."

For a moment or two Harden cogitated, and then he got up.

"On the whole, I like your plan. At all events, we break our trail."

They went to the platform and Garnet swung out from the rail across the steps. The morning was cold and a keen wind blew about the rocking cars. The moon was nearly gone and day had begun to break, but the east yet was gray. In front, and about a mile off, the blast-lamps' white flames tossed. Garnet shivered and turned his head from the wind. Cinders beat his hat, he smelt dust and creosote, and saw the blurred ties leap by. Somehow his plan's advantages were less obvious. When one has not slept, one shrinks from a hazardous jump at cold, forbidding dawn.

The whistle screamed and he looked in front. Down the track a colored lantern flashed, and the locomotive's rapid snorts sank to a slacker beat. Small dark figures were silhouetted against leaping flame, and the rails shone in silver light. The lantern swung about and the engineer acknowledged the signal, but the roll of wheels did not get much slower. Garnet frowned.

"They are calling her to run through. She's not going to stop!"

Harden nodded tranquilly. "We have got to jump. After all, there would not be much use in getting off where the gang is at work. Wait until she takes the curve and the locomotive cuts the light."

After a few moments the cars began to slant. Harden tossed his bag across the rail, went down the steps, and disappeared. Emerson, however, had not expected Keith to hesitate. Now he himself must risk the leap. Seizing the greasy rail, he dropped his bag and swung one foot out from the step. He frankly did not want to move the other foot, but he braced up sternly, leaned back, and let go.

His boot struck a tie and he reeled across sharp stones. Then he rolled down a low bank and stopped in wet grass. He was shaken and breathless, but when he cautiously got up he rather thought he was not hurt. Three or four hundred yards off, thick smoke floated about the track and the end of the train cut the blast-lamps' reflections. Then somebody shouted, and stumbling across the ties, he saw Harden seated on his bag. When Garnet joined him the locomotive snorted explosively and showers of sparks leaped from the smoke.

"She didn't stop! It looks as if nobody knows we jumped off," he gasped.

"Our luck was better than we were entitled to expect," Harden remarked dryly. "Well, we are still on British soil. Which way do we go?"

"Southeast, I think. I'd sooner we steered away from the main line to St. Paul."

Harden got up. Garnet thought he did so awkwardly, but he himself had got a jolt. The light was growing, and for some distance there was not much cover. Keeping the graded bank, as far as possible, between them and the construction gang, they took the dewy grass.

At sunrise they stopped for a few minutes by a lonely butte and looked about. They were on the bleak watershed from which the rivers run to Lake Winnipeg and the Gulf of Mexico, and Emerson imagined the spot commanded the boundary of a British province and two American states. For fifty years white men had settled on the windy plains, but the wide landscape was desolate.

A wavy belt of trees cut the eastern horizon, and when one looked the other way a slow smoke-plume marked a freight-train going north. In the south, where the ground rolled, a rig and team was silhouetted against the sky, but somehow the distant signs that men were about emphasized the loneliness. Until Emerson knew he was on American soil, he, however, did not want much society, and for some time thought he would steer obliquely east. The railroad and the telegraph followed the Red River on his other hand.

In the meantime, he and Keith had made their get-away and he was justified to take a smoke. Lighting a cigarette, he let himself go slack. Dew sparkled in the yellow grass, the sky was blue, and the wind was keen. Only in the North Atlantic

had he known the bracing freshness that marks sunrise on the Western plains. For the most part, the swift cloud shadows sped across virgin soil. The prairie, like the Atlantic, was immaculate, yet unstained by smoke and not disturbed by man's turmoil.

"Your Border dales are beautiful," he remarked. "I like to picture the red cattle feeding by the river pools and the big beech-trees rolling up the hill. The pastures along the waterside are velvet smooth and green; the woods are trimmed, and planted just where woods ought to be. Well, our pruning's done by Arctic cold and savage gales; but the bleak plains give you something your sheltered dales do not. You feel you want to get up and get going."

"As a rule, if you stop you freeze," Harden rejoined. "You're a sentimentalist, Garnet, although your business is to build factory stacks and pollute our rivers by sawdust dumps.

"Oh, well," said Emerson, smiling, "North American blood is red. You can stampede us by a slogan; we'll shout for a catch-word that leaves a dour Scot cold. Your sort hates to push and hustle; folks don't know you're going, but somehow you get there. However, New York is our objective, and since it's fifteen-hundred miles off, I reckon we ought to start. When you carry a gripsack and wear city boots, hiking's a slow job."

They set off. Sometimes a windmill-pump broke the sweep of grass; sometimes from rolling ground they saw distant squares of wheat. At noon they crossed an uneven track, torn in the dark gumbo soil, and Emerson hesitated. Keith was going slowly, the sun was hot, and they had not yet had breakfast. Where the trail went, homesteads were and one might perhaps find a prairie hotel.

"I'd frankly like my dinner, but I doubt if we have made the boundary," he remarked in an apologetic voice.

"Then, we'll shove along," said Harden, rather grimly.

Some time afterward they stopped by a little pond, and Harden, sitting down in the grass, opened his bag.

"When you got the tickets at Winnipeg I went back to a foreign delicatessen store on Main Street," he said. "I imagined you might not be content to keep the beaten track and we might not find a hotel where we wanted one. Now I hope you'll like the stuff. The storekeeper declared they used it at feasts in Norway."

Garnet approved the Scandinavian bill of fare, and he reflected that forethought like Keith's was useful. Keith's habit was to look in front and allow for obstacles.

In the afternoon the wind dropped and the sun was very hot. Garnet's bag got heavy and his boots galled his feet; he thought Harden limped, but they steadily pushed on. At length, when they crossed a ravine where a creek sparkled across a sandy bed, Harden pulled off his boots.

"I'm sorry, but I have had enough," he said. "In fact, I doubt if I can take the trail again until morning."

Emerson attempted sympathetic carelessness, but he was disturbed. Harden's foot was swollen and his leg was red.

"Well, I like your pluck; but in a way we are lucky. The ravine is a pretty good spot for a camp. But where did you hurt your foot?"

Harden sat down in the sand, and putting his foot in the water, lighted his pipe.

"When I jumped off the train I hit the corner of a tie, but it did not hurt very much, and I wasn't keen about stopping by the track. In fact, until three or four hours since, I had not much bother to get along."

Emerson imagined three or four hours would have knocked him out. He hated to think he had not known and had allowed Keith to carry his bag. All the same, there was no use in talking about it and he knew his pal.

"We have dead wood for a fire, and in the poplars the night will not be cold," he said. "I don't know about the mosquitoes; but perhaps I can find a homestead and hire a team. Anyhow, I'll take a smoke."

He needed a rest. To shoulder a pack did not tire him, but to carry a hand-bag for most of the day was another thing, and Harden had somehow kept up a good pace. For all that, to be stopped when the frontier was perhaps but a mile in front was galling. So long as they were on Canadian soil, Harden was in danger of arrest; but Keith could go no farther.

The sun got low and the evening grew cool. From the top of the ravine Emerson thought he saw a homestead, but the light was puzzling and he might walk for some distance before he knew. He went back to the creek, and when the mosquitoes began to bother them, lighted a fire.

The yellow grass he used for kindling was damp, the dead wood smoked but was slow to burn, and when Harden touched him some time had gone. Looking up sharply, he saw a team and a farm wagon at the top of the bank. A lean, brown-faced man on the driving-seat studied the camp. Emerson's disturbance vanished. He had rather thought to see a trooper of the Royal North-West Police.

"Can you tell us where we are?" he asked.

"Well," said the farmer, in a meaning voice, "you're on the right side of the line. Don't you know God's country?"

"It's much like ours," said Garnet. "Which State?"

"Minnesota, bo. How'd you get here?"

"My partner fell off a train."

"That so? Some hike for a man whose foot is hurt. But did you both fall off? And what sort of stuff are you packing in them grips?"

Garnet laughed. "I jumped off; but we have got no hootch. So far as I know, nothing's doing in Manitoba. The whisky road's from Quebec to Maine."

"Some leaks across our ways. Five dollars in the right man's hand helps considerable. But where are you going?"

"Southeast," said Garnet, rather dryly, and threw the clothes from his bag.

The fellow must not think they carried liquor but refused to give him a drink. His imagining they had an object for not getting down at a station did not matter and might command his sympathy. Except where the railroads cross, the frontier is but a line on the map, and where tariffs are high smuggling pays. Emerson knew Western farmers grumbled much about the cost of Ontario tools and agricultural machinery.

"You see my partner's lame," he resumed. "Can you fix us for the night? Then in the morning we'd like to hire your team and drive to a settlement where we could get a car. If you agree, we'll meet the bill."

"Sure thing!" said the farmer. "I ain't met up with a stranger for most three weeks. Give me your grips and help the boss on board."



KEITH COMES HOME

A week after they stole away from Winnipeg, Emerson and Harden reached St. Paul. Harden's foot was getting better, for since they met the farmer they had traveled, like sober American citizens, by automobile and rail. Nobody inquired their business, and stopping for a night at Chicago, they got the famous express for New York.

Emerson admitted he had not traveled as fast before, and he had not thought to find facilities for carrying on one's business and indulging one's tastes for amusements on board a train. The swift cars were rather like a first-class city club, and when they rolled into New York a porter pulled out his watch.

"You don't get your dollar this trip, suh," he said. Garnet looked at him in surprise. The porter grinned.

"For every hour she's late, the company done pay you one hundred cents."

"The plan would break some lines I know. In the West, they *lose* their trains," Garnet rejoined.

His luck held. The Newfoundland banks were clear of fog, and light breezes hardly rippled the smooth Atlantic. At Liverpool the liner hauled alongside the stage several hours ahead of time. The police in the Customs' sheds did not bother Harden, and soon after the searchers franked their light luggage a train went north.

Garnet admitted the adventure had prosperously begun and Keith's preferring the beaten path was not remarkable. To travel by luxurious trains and swift steamships was a softer job than going on one's feet and fronting savage wind on board a wet fishing boat. For all that, he imagined he might again be forced to take the lonely trail.

They left their luggage at the station in the Border hills and walked up the dale. Keith imagined Mr. Harden did not expect them yet, and he had not stated his object for coming home. The afternoon was calm, the grass was dry, and when they were near Copshope they took a field path. Where the path pierced a clipped beech hedge, Keith stopped mechanically.

In front, blue sky and tall, straight trunks were reflected in a quiet pool. Dead leaves had drifted about the water's edge, and across the smooth, green lawn the sun was on the house. Behind the long roof, stately beeches rolled up the hill. Their tops were netted in delicate tracery, but where the gray boughs got thick, leaves yet shone orange and red. A robin sang in the brown hedge and one heard a burn splash.

"All's the same," said Keith in a quiet voice. "The spot has the queer calm beauty I felt when I was a boy. Well, I expect time has touched its occupants. Since I was at Copshope eight years have gone."

The path curved to a gate commanding the flagged terrace, and when they advanced Emerson saw a group sitting in the sun. Only that the leaves were falling, it was like the tranquil afternoon when he first arrived. Yet the queer, brooding calm rather marked the old house than the Hardens. For all their Scots reserve, one knew they carried a load.

Harden, on the terrace, bent his head, as if he mused unhappily. Mrs. Harden was in a basket-chair and her thin mouth was tight. Anne leaned against the terrace wall. Her pose was virile and graceful and she, by contrast, stood for fearless youth, but her look was pensive and Garnet imagined the strain the others bore touched her.

Then Keith let go the gate and the latch's metallic clang brought Harden to his feet. He went quickly to the steps, and Garnet, noting his kind smile, rather sympathized with both. Harden had no other son and Keith had not come home like a conqueror. Mrs. Harden waited, and Garnet felt her satisfaction was, at all events, not very keen. Anne's eyes shone, her color was rose-pink, and she balanced as if she were ready to leap down the steps. Yet she, too, waited. Harden was head of the clan.

A few moments afterward she was in her brother's arms, and Garnet stopped, rather forlornly, at the bottom of the steps. It looked as if nobody had remarked his arrival, and Keith, very properly, took the center of the stage. Well, Garnet was not jealous, and, after all, Keith's part was hard; but to feel himself forgotten hurt.

Then Anne looked about, as if she searched for somebody, and Garnet's heart beat. Keith had got his welcome, and now

Anne looked for him. He advanced and Harden's greeting was friendly and Mrs. Harden's polite. He thought Madam's hand was cold, but when Anne gave him hers he thrilled. Her level glance met his and signaled, "Well done!"

Tea was served on the terrace, and Garnet admired the Scot's control. Only Anne knew why Keith had come home. The others were entitled to think he had fled from the Canadian police, but Harden talked about Copshope and Mrs. Harden occupied herself with calm hospitality. At length, Keith pushed back his plate and gave the old man an apologetic glance.

"I expect Madam and you are surprised by my coming across. Well, of course I wanted to look you up; but, as you no doubt imagined, there is something else. So long as the proper thief is unknown, I am rather naturally suspected. I dare not leave the bank's employment, and if I did so, I could not get another post. In fact, I'm done with, and my career is closed. And I began to doubt if the police could find the thief."

"Then you have not resigned your appointment?" said Mrs. Harden, and her voice was sharp, as if with suspense.

"In a way, I have not. The managers certainly refused to allow the excursion. It's possible they reckoned I might not come back; but I hope, at all events, to resume my post. Anyhow, if my experiment does not work, I shall not hide myself in the Old Country. When I know I'm beaten, I'll get the first boat for Montreal——"

Keith stopped for a moment and Garnet noted that he implied the experiment was his. Moreover, Anne noted it, but her brother's glance warned her to say nothing. Although Keith had been urged, or perhaps driven, to embark on the rash adventure, he would not make others accountable. Throwing away his cigarette, he turned to Harden.

"You see, the police's investigations seem to carry them nowhere, and I cannot wait. I owe something to you and Madam and the girl I engaged to marry. Since others cannot help me, I must help myself."

"Perhaps you ought to try," said Harden, in a queer voice.

"But, where the police are baffled, can you hope to find the thief?" Mrs. Harden inquired. "Their business is to solve such puzzles; they have the technical skill and can use the proper machinery——"

Keith nodded. "And I cannot? That is so, ma'am. All the same, I have an advantage the police cannot use, and sometimes an amateur does beat a professional. For example, when Garnet stopped with you he got back a number of the bonds."

"I did not know!" said Harden, with marked surprise. "The strange thing is, Mr. Emerson did not think us interested."

Garnet was embarrassed; he owned Harden's remark was just, but while he pondered his apology Anne took control.

"Mr. Emerson did not tell you because I ordered him to say nothing. You were disturbed and anxious, and we did not want to excite false hopes. If the hopes were false, the fresh knock might hurt worse than the first."

"You thought you ought to guard me?" Harden remarked, with rather dreary humor. "Well, I do get old, and sometimes youth is kind."

"Garnet and Keith are very noble; they don't want to implicate their accomplice, but the plan for Keith to come home was mine," Anne resumed. "In fact, I sent for him, and Garnet carried my message, although I doubt if he approved. Like Keith and you, he believes he's logical, but he went, and I expect he got Miss Forbes' support. She is young, and you perhaps don't realize a modern girl's pluck. The old rules and conventions do not bind us. We try all things for ourselves, and we are not afraid."

"One rule stands," said Harden. "The loser pays."

"Ah," said Anne, "somehow I'm persuaded we are going to win!"

Mrs. Harden gave her a queer, antagonistic glance, and then turned her head. For a few moments Harden brooded. All was very quiet; the sun had crept back from the wall and the light had begun to go. Garnet felt his hosts bore an awkward strain; of all the group, only Anne was firmly confident. Then Keith lighted a fresh cigarette. The scrape of the match jarred, and Harden slowly turned to his son.

"Am I allowed to inquire about Anne's scheme?"

"You ought to know, sir. I cannot use the police, and I shall be satisfied if they leave me alone. My tale about the fellow

who cheated my friends at Miscana carries no weight, and I stole away from Winnipeg after the managers refused to let me go. The implication is, I was afraid to stay. For all that, the thief did work on his likeness to me, and he is very like. I met the fellow on the Pacific Slope, and Garnet ran up against him at a Cumberland hotel."

"That is so," said Emerson. "I think all but Keith's friends and relations might take one for the other. The tinhorn was perhaps two or three years younger, and although his look was hard, I sensed a sort of cultivation that does not mark his type."

Harden's chair cracked, as if he conquered an impulse to get up. Mrs. Harden's pose was quiet, but her figure was braced, and her lips were firmly set.

"Go on, please," Harden said to Keith.

"I cannot go very far. I mean to use the likeness that helped my antagonist. Since he cheated the folks at Miscana, I may cheat the gang. I don't know where I shall meet them, or if I can put across the bluff; but I mean to try. In the meantime, that's all, sir. I'd like to think you agreed."

Harden knit his brows, and although the light was going, one saw the lines in his face were deep.

"Your plan is romantic, Keith, and may carry you into strange entanglements; but I dare not discourage you. Your duty is, if possible, to exculpate yourself."

He got up and looked at Mrs. Harden. "Well, perhaps we ought to leave the young folk alone."

They went off, and with something of an effort the others began to talk. After dinner Garnet went to the terrace. Harden and Keith were in the smoking-room, and he imagined them resigned to be without his society. Anne had vanished, but by and by he saw a slim figure on the flagged walk, and when he advanced her smile implied that she had expected him. The evening was not cold and a half-moon shone behind the netted branches in the high beech tops. For a few minutes they walked about; and then Anne stopped at the end of the wall farthest from the illuminated windows.

"Was Keith very obstinate?" she asked.

"At the beginning he was firm and I was afraid I might not persuade him. His arguments were better than mine, but I had a first-class confederate."

"Margaret Forbes? I expected her to help."

"Perhaps it's strange, but I did, too," Garnet remarked.

Anne smiled. "You are keener than you think. You see, a modern girl does not stop for obstacles that might daunt a calculating man. We rather like a rash adventure, and we are instinctively optimists. In a way, I think we know that so long as our object's good, for all our muddles and blunders, we'll win out at the end."

"To believe in ultimate justice helps; but at times it's hard."

"Ah," said Anne, "you must, at least, believe that on the whole right will conquer! Evil must destroy itself. If it did not, civilization could not stand and man must go back to savagery. But if I philosophize, you'll soon get bored."

Emerson was not bored. Anne's frankness moved him, because he felt she would not thus confess her faith to a stranger. He saw her, as he knew she was, proud and stanch and inflexibly upright.

"Although Mr. Harden agreed to our experiment, I thought it cost him something," he remarked. "In fact, it looked as if he did agree because he was forced."

Anne gave him a keen glance. "You noted that? Well, his hesitation puzzled me. Our plan, of course, is not the sort of plan he would approve; but that was not all. Somehow I felt he'd sooner we did not meddle. Yet he tried to be just."

"But, perhaps for Keith, I think Mr. Harden is the justest man I know."

"Ah," said Anne, "justness is not comparative; one must be just or not. The queer thing is, he talked about the loser's paying—as if the implication was somehow personal, and he himself must pay. But I'm disturbed and perhaps I

exaggerate. I feel there's a sort of shadow on our house that's darker than Keith's misfortune——"

For a few moments she brooded; and then looked up with an apologetic smile.

"I begin to see I'm not as brave as I imagined. I sent for Keith and to feel I'm responsible for his adventure weighs. However, he has come back and we must see him out. The first thing is to get to know where the thieves are."

Garnet admitted it might be difficult, and for a time they walked up and down the terrace and weighed his vague plans.

XXIII

CONTACT

The short train rolled down a river valley and Emerson mused and looked about. His rucksack, thick stick, and fishing mackintosh were in the rack, for imagining speed might be useful, he had resolved to travel light. Moreover a walking tourist's part had some advantages.

Mist floated along the hill-slopes, and the roll of wheels echoed in the dark gullies that seamed the peat. The cars sped noisily across bridges and slanted round the curves by the brawling river. Its stony bed went down the valley like a wide, gray road to a gap about which the dark hills closed; but only the telegraph-posts and the sheep in the heather indicated man's industry.

Garnet thought the country sterner than his. To wring the means to live from the bleak hills implied stern qualities; but so far as he knew the Borderers, they were a virile lot, and sometimes one sensed a sort of steely hardness in Anne and Keith. In fact, for all Anne's grace and beauty, he knew her keen and true as a tempered blade. It was possible she and Keith might be forced to use all the firmness they had.

In the meantime, their plans, so to speak, were nebulous. Keith was to wait at Copshope; Garnet must try to make contact with the gang and find out where Oakshot was. There was no use in Keith's pretending to be the gang's Canadian boss if the real tinhorn was about. On the whole, Garnet was not hopeful; he understood the population of the Old Country was forty-five millions, and to search for three or four individuals in the crowd was some undertaking. Besides, the gang might have pulled out for the Continent. Yet since Keith had stolen away from Winnipeg, Garnet must use his best effort.

For a start, he meant to stop at Hexham. The town was small and not important, but that was perhaps an advantage, and Basset had used it for a rendezvous. Located on the trunk road across northern England, it commanded the North and Irish Seas and the main rail tracks to London by the east and west coasts. In fact, it commanded a sort of quadrilateral, of which Newcastle, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Glasgow were the strategic points. Moreover, lonely moors, into which one might plunge and disappear, rolled down to its walls.

Emerson nodded and lighted his pipe. On the Western plains and in the trackless North, the R.N.W.P. patrols cultivate a sort of geographical instinct and he thought the argument for his starting at Hexham sound. The trouble was, the undertaking demanded other qualities, and he admitted his talent for accurate abstract reasoning was not marked. Anyhow, he could be practical and he began to study the landscape.

The river attracted him; the belt of gray stones dominated the valley and was straighter than the line. As a rule, the streams that break from the storm-swept moors are nearly straight; but in the North the roads are not. When Garnet searched the hill-slope he saw here and there a gate and a faint row of posts; in some places a dim white streak melted in the heath. The road over which Basset had driven him to Hexham wound about the hills.

The train stopped at small stations, where sometimes a shepherd and his dogs and two or three country women with baskets of eggs got on board. Garnet studied the time-table. The line joined the main track to Edinburgh and, if he were forced to pull out, might help him reach the North. Since his object was to make contact with Basset's lot, he ought to fix his line of retreat.

He got down at Hexham and engaged a room at the hotel he had used before. His search of the register was not rewarded; the only guests were two or three commercial travelers and a motoring tourist. The house, however, was spacious and comfortable, and Garnet resolved to wait.

Hexham interested him. When Cartier landed at Hochelaga the Border town was old. Garnet saw its Moot Hall and the Roman altar in the austere abbey's crypt. On the bleak moors that feed the Tyne he saw broken hypocausts where Vexillary centurions found refuge from the British cold, and, still dominating rocky crests, the wall Hadrian built eighteen hundred years ago. He visited Dilston and Stayward Pele, and in the keen autumn evenings read Besant's *Dorothy Foster* by the smoking-room fire.

The pleasant excursions, however, did not help him much, and he had not left his business for a romantic holiday. It did not look as if the gang would return to Hexham, and Garnet extended his excursions to Newcastle. The Brockenhurst

robbery was perhaps not the only job the thieves had undertaken, and since to negotiate the bonds was dangerous, he imagined Oakshot might look for a market across the North Sea. Although Garnet haunted the stations, hotels, and tourist agencies, he did not find a clue, and he reflected that the routes the fellow might use were rather numerous.

After a week or two, he went one evening to a Newcastle theater. The play was short, and when he got to the station he found he must wait for some time. Long trains arrived, passengers crowded the platforms, and throbbing steam and rolling wheels echoed in the high roof. Garnet walked about rather moodily under the big lamps, and wondered whether he was not a fool. The Old Country was dotted by towns as large as Newcastle, but where people swarmed like bees he had undertaken to find Basset and two or three confederates.

By and by two passengers pushed through a group, and Garnet stepped back quickly to a waiting-room door. He thought he knew the men, and they must not see him. One carried a steamer-rug; the other summoned a porter and gave him their bags. They passed the indicator without a glance, as if they knew where their train started, and steered for the ticket-office. A lamp hung above the indicator, and Garnet knew he was not cheated. The men were Basset's friends, Burke and Lang.

For all the chances against him, he had got contact with the gang, and he was suddenly alert. He, so to speak, had closed a dynamic circuit, and perhaps released forces he could not control. Anyhow, things would happen, and his waiting was over; but in the meantime he must follow the porter's trolley.

The fellow steered for the Hexham train, and when he stopped by a van and pulled off some luggage Garnet examined the two bags. He saw the end of a steamship label and something like a crown stamped on torn paper; a Customs searcher's ticket, he thought. Faint oblong marks implied that other labels had been removed, as if the passengers did not want to mark their itinerary. Garnet had reckoned on something like that, and he stepped behind the milk churns on a neighboring truck.

A minute or two afterward, the porter signaled and seized the bags. The men for whom Garnet waited went by, and he followed a group, four or five yards behind.

"Here you are for Carlisle! Hexham's the only stop," said the porter, opening a door.

Garnet imagined Burke and Lang were not going to Carlisle. Their habit was, no doubt, to break their trail, and when they were on board he got into the end compartment of the next coach. They must not know he had spotted them, and they might walk along the corridor.

When the train rolled out of the station Garnet knitted his brows. The men were going to Hexham, and he imagined they would stop at his hotel; Basset had met them there another time. In about half an hour the train would arrive and he ought to have a plan——

He thought somebody had fixed to meet the men; Basset, perhaps, and they might ask the hotel clerk for a letter or telegram. If they did so, Garnet must be about, and somehow he must get the letter. If there was no other way, he might steal into their rooms and search their clothes. A professional crook would use caution, but something must be risked.

Garnet wondered who the gang had thought he was, and on the whole concluded they knew he had nothing to do with the police. Since Basset had found him at Copshope, they might take him for a Canadian inquiry agent whom the bank or Harden had privately employed. All the same, it was possible they knew him for an amateur and a friend of Keith's. Well, since he had carried off the bonds, he hoped they admitted he had some ability. Anyhow, they had grounds to think him dangerous, but so long as they did not know Keith was in Scotland he was not much concerned.

The locomotive whistled, the roll of wheels got slack, and station lights slid by. Garnet lowered a window, and waited for Burke and Lang to get down. They looked about for a porter, and Garnet, stealing off behind some passengers, started for the hotel, as fast as he could go. He thought the landlord's bus met the train, but he must get there first.

One or two lights yet burned in the hall and dining-room, and a porter leaned against the shelf at the office window. A small parlor across the hall was dark, and Garnet, advancing noiselessly, crept into the room while the drowsy porter looked the other way. Although the door was but two or three yards from the office, the fellow obviously did not expect to be disturbed until the bus arrived.

After a few minutes Garnet heard wheels. The porter hurried to the steps and the men Garnet expected came in. One went

to the dining-room, as if the light attracted him, but stopped at the door.

"The waiter's gone? Oh, well, we got dinner on the train," he said. "We telegraphed for rooms."

"Numbers eight and nine, sir," said the porter. "I'll take up your bags, but if you'll wait a moment, I'll get the book, and there's a telegram for you."

He pushed up the office window, and putting the register and an envelope on the shelf, went off with the bags. Burke tore open the envelope and looked about. Nobody was in the dining-room, the hall was empty and the house was quiet.

"From Johnny at Harwich," he remarked. "He will join us at Dakershall, Wednesday evening, and will take delivery. Moss has found a market for the Canadian goods."

"I'd sooner not wait, but I suppose we must," Lang grumbled. "Anyhow, I'm tired. Let's go to bed."

They went upstairs, and Garnet, going to the dining-room, lighted a cigarette. He knew all he had wanted to know, and he thrilled triumphantly. Oakshot, the supposititious tinhorn, was coming for the stolen certificates, and would arrive in something less than forty-eight hours; it was now ten minutes past twelve on Tuesday morning. Oakshot's telegraphing from Harwich implied that he had recently landed, and Moss was perhaps the name he used for a confederate at a foreign exchange.

Keith must know as soon as possible, but there was not a train until about seven o'clock in the morning. Garnet doubted if he could engage a car, and his leaving the hotel at midnight and wakening the people at the garage might excite some curiosity. On the whole, he thought the proper line was to wait for daybreak, and when the porter came downstairs he said he might start early, and went off to bed.

XXIV

THE WATERSHED

At six o'clock in the morning Emerson got up quietly and went to his bedroom door. The house was dark and quiet, and it looked as if nobody was going by the early train. Getting a light, he took his candle and started for the bathroom.

Burke and Lang's rooms were numbers eight and nine, and Garnet thought the last fronted a corner where the passage to the bathroom turned; but the fellows had arrived at midnight, and were, no doubt, asleep. Besides, they had lost his track for five or six weeks and had no reason for thinking he was at the hotel. For all that, Garnet went up the few steps at the corner as quietly as possible. The door opposite the bottom was not quite shut, and he heard a window-shade rattle.

He got his bath, although he was annoyed because the hot water gurgled rather noisily in the pipe, and he used the other tap. When he was coming back a cold draught touched his skin. A window at the corner was open and the candle-flame slanted. Garnet curved his hand to shield the light, and his foot missed the bottom step.

His bedroom slipper went under a mat, and, stumbling awkwardly, he struck the door across the passage. The door swung back, and a bedstead cracked, as if somebody were going to jump up. Garnet did not stop and apologize. He sped noiselessly along the passage, but when he reached his room and shut the door he frowned.

Had he risked a glance, he might have seen who was in the other room; anyhow, he ought to have looked for the number. Then he had left his slippers by the mat. To get away was all he had thought about. His room was number two, but he had not counted the others and he was afraid to go back.

Pulling on his clothes as fast as possible, he went downstairs. His train did not start for half an hour and there was time to get some coffee; but since he did not know whom he had disturbed, to stop was rash. He gave the porter some money, and said if he was not back in the evening he would send for his bill.

When he was in the street, day began to break and his uneasiness vanished in the fresh morning. He rather thought the door he struck was number seven, the jolt had almost extinguished the candle, and in a moment he was gone. In fact, there was no need for him to worry. Burke and Lang would wait for Oakshot at Dakershall, a village not very far off, and Keith must get there before the fellow arrived. The only drawback was, Keith was perhaps not at Copshope. In a letter Emerson had got a few days since, he stated he thought about joining a shooting party at a country house near Jedburgh. Oakshot, however, would not arrive until Wednesday evening, it was now half-past six on Tuesday morning, and although the train went by Carlisle, Garnet ought to be at Copshope in the afternoon. Besides, he might telegraph to Anne from Carlisle. In the Old Country the post-office controlled the telegraphs and the office would not yet be open.

Garnet did not go directly to the station, and until he heard the train coming up the valley he waited in the street. Only five or six passengers were on the platform, and he got into an unoccupied smoking-compartment. At the last moment somebody ran across a footbridge, but a loaded truck rather blocked Garnet's view, and when he hurried to a window along the corridor the train started. Anyhow, he thought the fellow was too late and he lighted his pipe.

Thin mist floated about the fields by the river, but the sky behind the roofs and trees on the hill was blue, and the high moors in the background were a soft, hazy gray. The day was going to be fine and Garnet's spirits rose. In the afternoon he would walk up the dale to Copshope and Anne would congratulate him on his good luck.

By and by the train stopped. Across the river, brown hill-slopes shone in the rising sun, and the smoke from colliery-stacks stained the sky; then Garnet went to the window on the other side and got a nasty knock. A man at a door in the next coach watched the platform, and when for a moment he turned his head Garnet saw he was Burke. He drew back from the window and the train started.

Garnet clenched his fist. When he stumbled against the bedroom door Burke had recognized him, and Lang was, no doubt, on board the train. So long as he was not alone, Garnet knew he was safe, but they must not find out where he went and he dared not steer for Copshope. If the gang knew Keith was in the Old Country, all hope of his recovering the bonds was gone.

Garnet studied his time-table, and by and by got his stick and rucksack. The train slowed, ran under a bridge, and

stopped. The corridor was next the platform, and Garnet went to the window on the other side. He saw a high bank but nobody on the line. Trying the door handle, he found it turned, and he threw out his pipe. Then he waited for the guard's whistle and quietly jumped off the foot-board.

A louder whistle screamed; the ballast shook, and he saw a locomotive's black front and a row of rocking cars swing round a curve. Smoke and dust tossed about him, the rails bent and sprang straight when the clanging wheels leaped the joints. Garnet, turning his head from the blast of the cars' swift passage, was very still, and when he looked up the last car roared in the gloom under the bridge, and the passenger-train was gone.

"Come off the line," shouted the station-master. "What were you doing there?"

"I dropped my pipe," Garnet replied. "I didn't hear the freight, and my train went before I knew."

He held up the pipe. "A pretty good piece of amber and the briar's the proper stuff. One hates to lose a favorite pipe. But when can I get on to Carlisle?"

"You must wait three hours," said the station-master.

Garnet shrugged resignedly. The train stopped at another station a short distance up the line, but he did not think Burke and Lang had seen him get down. In fact, he doubted if they knew he knew they were on board the train. At Carlisle they would find out that he had cheated them; but there was not a train back for some time and he hardly thought an automobile could reach the spot in an hour. Besides, if they did know where he had got down, they would not expect him to wait for them. Anyhow, he must telegraph Anne and inquire if Keith was at home.

The village was not attractive. Modern brick cottages, stained by smoke, seemed to indicate a coalpit in the neighborhood. The line and the black trunk road curved along the narrow valley, and behind the trees across the track, a heathy waste rolled north. Garnet found an inn and got some breakfast. When the post-office opened he wrote a telegram to Anne.

"Wire where Keith is. If possible recall. Garnet waiting."

He gave the name of the village, and telling the post-mistress he would call for the reply, steered for a bank across the valley and sat down in the sun.

The spot commanded the tableland where the Pennine range breaks down and lonely moors run back to the Cheviots' foothills. On the bleak divide's western side the ground slopes to the Solway, and the railway and trunk road cross the plain to Carlisle. Copshope was north of the village, but there was no direct road, and Garnet had reckoned on going west to Carlisle, where he would steer back obliquely into the Border hills. His pursuers, however, blocked that route.

In the east, shadows between the rounded summits implied a valley running north, and Garnet knew it for the dale down which the loop-line had carried him to Hexham. Roughly, the Carlisle-Hexham road was the base of a triangle, of which Copshope was the apex and the railway-tracks were the sides. For the most part, the ground the triangle enclosed was a high, trackless, waste of peat and bog. Garnet thought his line was now along the eastern side, but he must cut out Hexham, since Burke and Lang might return and search the town.

A short distance north of the village, a small road went east, and Garnet believed it would carry him to the loop-line on the other side of Hexham. The trains were not numerous, but when he looked up his time-table he reckoned he could make Copshope late in the evening. The drawback was, he could not start until he got a reply from Anne.

He went back to the post-office, but the telegram had not arrived, and for two or three hours he waited in anxious suspense. While he loafed about the village, time was going, and Oakshot had fixed to meet his confederates on the next evening. Garnet reckoned they would not stop at Dakershall; as soon as Oakshot had got the documents the gang would vanish, and to find them another time might be impossible. Moreover, Oakshot expected to negotiate the bonds.

In the meantime, a stopping train went east, but so far as Garnet, lurking about the waiting-room windows, could see, Burke and Lang were not on board. Afterward an express for Hexham and Newcastle sped through the station, and Garnet hurried back to the post-office. Anne had not yet telegraphed, and he found a quiet spot from which he could watch the trunk road.

At length he resolved he would not wait. Anne was perhaps not at Copshope, and he must find Keith before morning. He bought some food at a little shop, fastened on his rucksack, and took the northern road across the watershed.

Garnet started briskly. A fresh wind swept the moors, the sun was bright, and to get going was a relief. Sometimes he saw a green rampart, topped by stones a Roman emperor had raised. Where he went the legions had marched, and long afterward, General Wade had used the stones to pave a road for his artillery when Prince Charlie seized Carlisle. He saw broken mile-castles and the Nine Nicks where the Picts breached the Wall, but he was not much interested. His object was to reach Copshope, and the sun was going west. Keith, as soon as possible, must know all he knew about the gang.

The straight white track was quiet. Sheep fed in the short grass and calling grouse skimmed the heathy slopes. Sometimes distant guns cracked. In the south, a plume of coalpit smoke trailed across the sky; north-ward, only soft cloud shadows floated about the lonely hills.

Where the road went over a splashing beck Garnet stopped and looked about. The deep channel in the peat curved southeast, but the last creek had gone the other way. He was on the height-of-land, and the valley for which he steered was not very far in front. Yet the shadow behind a battered thorn was getting long, and, as far as he could see, the road wound like a gray riband across the Waste. The afternoon was going, and his breakfast at the inn was not good. Since he might be forced to use some speed, he must eat, and, stopping by a wall, he opened his pack.

The heather was soft, he had carried his pack for some distance, and behind the stones the sun was warm, but when Garnet had satisfied his appetite he pulled out his watch. He did not yet know where Keith was, and in the evening he must get the train up the valley.

He took the road, and an hour afterward stopped by a gate on the flat at the top of a hill. His shadow was long, and when he looked west the moors were black against dazzling yellow light. Well, he must go faster, but for a few moments he waited by the fence. An engine throbbed in the hollow from which he had climbed. He could not yet see the car, and he pushed a stone against the open gate. The long bent-grass would hide him, and until he knew who was on board he would sooner the car did not stop.

The front of a baker's van topped the hill, and Garnet smiled. It looked as if he were getting nervy. When the van slowed he signaled the driver.

"I'll shut the gate. Don't get down."

The van rolled by and stopped.

"Are you for Hexham?" the driver asked.

"I am not," said Garnet. "The town's interesting, but I've been there before. I thought I'd head farther north for the Border Counties line and see the Cheviots."

"Then, Gunnerston's your station. You have a good walk in front of you, but if you jump up, I'll give you a lift."

Garnet was glad to get up, and when the van went rocking down the hill he lighted a cigarette and gave the friendly driver his case. He ought to get the train up the valley, and for the rest he must trust his luck.

THE VALLEY ROAD

The short train stopped at a lonely station and Emerson got down. A noisy river flowed through the dale and mist drifted about the flats along the waterside. Black moor-tops cut the sunset's melting reflections and daylight was nearly gone. The station-master's windows shone and a lantern twinkled by a farmstead in a clump of ash-trees, but that was all, and when the river's turmoil drowned the rattle of the train Garnet knew himself tired and rather forlorn.

The moon would not be up for an hour or two, and he must cross the boggy hills in the dark. His map showed a track, but the hill tracks were hard to find and keep. Sometimes they vanished in belts of rushes, and sometimes they stopped at a peat moss. Moreover, he must climb for sixteen hundred feet and the valley where he would join the road to Copshope was seven miles off. Anyhow, there was no use in grumbling, and to make inquiries might put Burke on his track. Garnet pushed his coat through the pack-straps and set off.

Crossing the river, he took a stony road. For a mile or two he must keep the road, and he pushed on as fast as possible. Had he gone on to the railway junction at the top of the valley, he must have waited two or three hours for a train. Copshope was some distance from the line and speed was important.

By and by he stopped for a moment by a fence. In the southwest the sky behind a hill gap was green and gold; in front, the moors' tops faded into dusky blue. Above a broken summit a pale star began to shine. The station lights had vanished; all Garnet heard was the river, and when he let the gate swing back the clash of the fastening was startlingly loud.

He went downhill into a belt of quiet mist. At first, its level top was waist-high, and the battered thorns on one side looked like islands in a silver pool, but where the road dipped steeply the vapor closed above his head. Now he could not see the thorns, Garnet took the other side. On that side there was no fence, and he heard the river, about a hundred yards away.

A branch cracked, and Garnet stopped. Then stones rattled, as if somebody jumped into the road, and he started for the waterside. Two dark figures loomed in the mist, and a fresh noise indicated that another man was somewhere about. It looked as if he must hustle, and he went across the tangled grass and boggy peat like a deer.

Garnet had steered for the river instinctively, but he began to reflect—As a rule, a crook was not athletic, and to labor across the stones along the channel might tire his pursuers before it tired him. Anyhow, he was a few seconds in front, and since the river curved away from the road, they could not send one ahead over the smoother surface to cut his line. All the same, the fellows were going fast, and he pulled off his pack and threw down his fishing-coat. He imagined he must run for his life, but he kept his thick stick. Unless he was forced, he must not use Anne's pistol.

Stumbling across rattling stones, he saw the gleam of a pool. He had reached the waterside, and he wondered whether the others would follow if he swam across; but if he did so he must steer away from Copshope into the lonely moors, and time was going. The river went nearly straight up the valley, but he thought the road curved around a hill. The mist had rolled away, and he reckoned the moorland track he meant to take was not far off. When he rejoined the road he must be in front.

For some time he stumbled along the stony bank. Three men were behind him and he doubted if he could shake them off. For one thing, they were fresh, but for the most part he had been on his legs since breakfast and he had not had much food. The third man's joining the others was ominous. If Burke, as Garnet thought, had telegraphed for help, it implied that the fellow was resolved he should not escape. Finding out at Carlisle that he was not on the train, Burke and Lang had reckoned on his going back to the Border Counties line. He wondered whether they knew he was bound for Scotland and they had engaged a car at Hexham.

Anyhow, the dale was lonely and the river pools were deep. So long as Garnet kept his freedom, the gang risked theirs. They, no doubt, had had enough and meant to be rid of him for good. Well, to think about it would not help, and he must concentrate on keeping ahead.

The river's turmoil got louder and the ground began to rise. It looked as if a lynn pierced the foot of the hill, and if Garnet kept the water, he might be stopped by whirlpools in the rocks. Scrambling up across rough ledges, he reached a level

spot where small mountain-ashes grew and saw the road thirty yards off. Behind the wall on the other side was a glen, up which he thought the track to Copshope went, but he dared not take it. The gang was at the bottom of the rocks and they must not know where he went. Besides, on the map he had noted another track that crossed a hill some distance farther on and joined the first.

Stopping for a moment, Garnet got his breath. The others were coming up; he heard their boots rattle on the stones, and one fell against a rock and swore. They meant to stick to him, and he was alone. Garnet stole away behind the mountain-ashes, and when he reached the road went as fast as possible downhill. At the bottom he jumped a little burn and braced up to climb the rise in front. The hill was long, and unless he had increased his lead when he reached the top, he must stop and fight.

Garnet was not hopeful. Now he was getting exhausted, he must face three antagonists, who meant to put him out. His heart beat and his side hurt, but, setting his mouth grimly, he labored up the hill.

In the dark behind him pursuing feet beat the stones; he heard heavy breathing, and by and by a splash. Somebody had plunged into the burn, and perhaps it was significant that the fellow had not jumped; but before Garnet heard another splash some moments went. At length, the gang was tiring, and two began to drop behind. Well, the hill would try their pluck, but one was not yet flagging much.

Garnet strained and sweated. His side hurt worse and his knees were getting slack, but he reached the top of the hill and ran down an incline into light mist. Somewhere in front, another burn throbbed in a ghyll; the throb got loud and presently drowned the noise Garnet's pursuer made. All the same, he knew the brute was not far off, and when a wall loomed in the mist he clenched his fist. The wall implied a gate, and sometimes one must lift a gate from the sinking post; anyhow, one must feel for the fastening, and while he did so the man behind him might arrive.

A plan flashed across Garnet's brain. The road was carrying him away from Copshope and he could not go much farther; but the mist got thick, and since he could not hear the others for the burn, they could not hear him. Seizing the gate, he lifted his body to the top bar, swung his legs across, and dropped noisily on the other side. The crash and rattle were louder than the waterfall, and he hoped they suggested headlong flight. Garnet, however, stopped behind the gate.

Leaning against the wall, he got his breath and grasped his stick by the lower end; the other end was a useful knob. If his aim were good, he might put his fastest pursuer out of action before the rest came up. Although he carried Anne's pistol, he did not think they would stop for a random shot, and to shoot straight might have awkward consequences. Besides, the mist was thick, and his hand shook.

The gate rattled and swung back. Garnet measured the distance and braced his muscles. Somebody jumped through the gap, and swinging his stick, he aimed for the dark figure's head. The tough wood jarred; the man staggered, and lurched awkwardly across the road. Garnet stopped him with his fist and knocked him savagely against the wall. Then he flung the gate against the post, and jaming a stone from the loose wall under the bottom rail, started for the river.

Crossing the noisy burn's deep channel, he dropped in the heath on the other side. Angry voices pierced the clamor of the waterfall, as if the two slower men had found their comrade by the gate. Garnet imagined they wondered where he had gone, but he hardly thought the fellow he had knocked out could enlighten them. Well, he had now one less to deal with and he might risk giving them a lead. If they kept the road, they would soon find out he was not in front, and the track across the hill was perhaps marked by a post. Pulling a large stone from the peaty soil, he rolled it over the bank.

The block struck a ledge and splashed noisily in a pool. Garnet crawled away for a few yards, and waited behind a clump of tall bent-grass. Two indistinct figures loomed in the mist and began to run along the burn. Garnet hoped they took it for granted he had gone for the river, but when they vanished he went the other way.

Rejoining the road, he kept the grassy border and pushed on up the valley. By and by the mist melted and pale stars shone above the vague hill-slopes. A hundred yards off, the river brawled in the rocks and sometimes a glimmering pool reflected the sky. Garnet's pursuers had melted like the mist and all he heard was angry water.

After a time he saw a bank of gravel in a hollow where the hillside was torn by winter storms. The stones were tossed about, as if by horses' feet, and, outside a central channel, were plowed up in roughly parallel ridges. Garnet stopped and examined the ground; the stone-boats, on which the dalesfolk hauled their peat, made marks like that. He thought the track was the fork from the Copshope path, and, leaving the road, he began to climb the hill.

XXVI

WHITRIGG FLOW

Half an hour after he left the road, Emerson sat down in the heath and lighted a cigarette. The spot was four or five hundred feet above the valley and on the top of a long ridge running down from a dark hill. The heather was not remarkably wet, and after a strenuous, exhausting day, Garnet thought himself entitled to take a rest.

For a time he had baffled the gang, and he reflected with grim humor that three carried his mark. One he had knocked out with a stone in a field by the Solway. Ivison and he had flung another into a marsh creek, and he doubted if the third had yet got up from the grass by the gate. They were perhaps cleverer crooks than scouts.

All the same, his job was not yet finished and to boast was premature. He must find Keith Harden, and time was going. Since he had alarmed Basset's lot, they might not wait at Dakershall for their leader; but Garnet reckoned they did not know where to warn Oakshot and they would risk it. At all events, when their business was transacted they and the certificates would vanish, perhaps for good. It was now about nine o'clock, and Keith must keep the rendezvous in something less than twenty-four hours. Since Keith was not at Copshope, Garnet must get there as soon as possible and find out where he was.

He was frankly tired and the night was rather dark. The valley he steered for was four or five miles off, and then Copshope was four miles up the dale. On a good road, when one was fresh, nine miles was not much of a hike, but to push across dark bogs and tangled heather was another thing. Garnet frowned and began to look about.

The ridge sloped to a deep hollow, on the other side of which a hill went up. Its top did not join the main ridge; a belt of thicker gloom marked a gap. The glen below Garnet curved into the moors, and he thought it flattened out in the wet slopes near their summits. Anyhow, where there was a glen one found running water, and on the map the dotted line for some distance followed a burn. Garnet got up stiffly and fronted the descent.

For three or four hundred feet, he plunged down across sharp stones and through long heather. He had lost the sledge-track, but that did not bother him; the stream was his guide and he heard water splash. The bottom of the glen was very dark and the gloom exaggerated the steepness of the hill in front. Garnet, searching its vague crest, however, saw it sloped toward the road he had left. It was a sort of spur, that projected from the main range, and the faint throb of a cataract indicated a burn on the other side. Garnet had not reckoned on finding two burns, and he considered.

To climb the steep, dividing spur was unthinkable; he had begun to feel he could not hold on for long. The black main rampart of the moor, however, cut the sky, and either glen would lead him to the top, where he ought to see the dale up which the road to Copshope went. Yet for a minute or two he did not start. He was getting exhausted and had not had much food. The dark hills were daunting and his impulse was to go back to the valley and take the firm dry road.

Burke had obviously lost his trail and perhaps had returned to Hexham; Garnet reckoned he had hidden a car behind a wall. He ought to find a farmstead where he could stop for the night; anyhow, if he followed the railroad-track, he would reach a station. In the morning he could get a train and reach Copshope soon after breakfast, which would allow Keith eight or nine hours to get to Dakershall. The village was on the Carlisle line, not very far from Hexham.

Garnet knitted his brows. The argument was plausible, but he was arguing for himself, permitting bodily instincts to conquer his resolution. He really shrank from the dark and the fresh effort he must make. Keith was not at Copshope; Garnet did not know where he was, but he must be at Dakershall on the next evening. Garnet braced up and began the long climb.

For a time a rough sledge-track followed the stream, but it stopped at a small, level flat in a bowl-like hollow. Dark moors curved round three sides and the ground was soft. Water shone in holes where the dalesfolk had cut peat, and Garnet saw small piles of crumbling blocks, left perhaps to rot when the autumn rains began. Behind the flat, a long, broken slope went up, and he hoped it would carry him to the summit of the moor.

The heath was wet and tangled, and as he advanced the ground got boggier. He tried the edge of the burn, but his boots sank deep in spongy moss, and sometimes dead fern covered sharp limestone blocks. When his boots were soaked and his legs were bruised, he left the water and plowed stubbornly up the breast of the hill.

By and by the pitch got less steep and the glen got wider. The slopes rolled back and curved round a sort of shallow basin. Garnet thought basin the proper word, for the ground was soft and very wet. In some places it would not bear his foot, but for the most part the surface was dotted by hummocks of grass and peat, standing, rather like short, broken pillars, in the bog. Jumping from one to another, he made progress, but to measure the distance was awkward and sometimes a hummock sank under his weight. Then water began to shine in the holes, and Garnet pushed down his stick.

Finding no bottom under the mud, he went cautiously and studied where he jumped; but the gaps got wider and now and then his foot went through the rotten peat. At length he stopped, and, balancing awkwardly, looked for a safer line. He was near the middle of the basin and had thought to push straight across; but, twenty or thirty yards ahead, the surface was smooth and livid, and pale reflections seemed to indicate a pool. Although Garnet heard the burn, the noise was faint, and he thought it oozed by miry channels from the quaking bog. For a few moments, the reflections puzzled him, and then he saw the sky behind a hill was bright. The moon was rising, and soon he ought to see his way.

Garnet pulled out his watch and rubbed a match. Ten o'clock! Since he got off the train three pretty strenuous hours had gone, and he reckoned he was not much nearer Copshope. Anyhow, he was not going back laboriously to firm ground. He had started to cross the bog, and he must make the other side.

His advance was slow and tortuous. Near the pool the hummocks melted in slimy ooze, and when he tried to circle round he must take long jumps and probe with his stick for ground that would carry him. Sometimes, for a minute or two, he found none and balanced on a sinking tussock. Where he pulled out his stick bubbles of marsh-gas rose and broke. Yet he was resolved he would not go back; he dared not own himself beaten. Moreover, if he could but find firm ground, the effort his return would cost ought to carry him up the hill.

He pushed on, and by and by jumped for a tall clump of grass. The grass sank and cold slime closed about his legs. Garnet had broken the treacherous crust before, but now the mud was round his knees and held his feet like glue. Yet it was soft and bubbled noisily. The surface heaved and he felt it slowly pulled him down.

He dared not use much effort. To plunge about would sink him in the mire, and, leaning gently forward, he seized at arm's length a heather-bush. The tough stalks held, and although he heard the roots crack, he got enough support to help him pull his legs near the top. His chest now touched the mud, but he saw the risk was worse when he was upright, and, studying every movement, he slowly dragged himself toward the bush. At length, he got a fresh hold on stalks he could trust. The strain on his arms was almost intolerable, but he felt the mud let him go and he crawled on to a bed of heather-roots. His skin was wet by sweat and chilled by the ooze. His knees were slack, his hands shook, and he frankly dared not attempt the bog again.

After a time he looked up. The moon had topped the hill behind him, and on the basin's other side the broken limestone on a summit shone in silver light. Garnet knew where he was. Harden's gamekeeper had talked about Whitrigg Flow. The sparkling limestone was the white rigg, and a *flow* was a dangerous bog. In Canada *muskeg* was the word. Well, the light was creeping down the hill, and he must not yet acknowledge defeat. When he could see where he went, he might find a way across. Beating his hands, he lighted a cigarette and waited for the moon to creep across the hill. His clothes were wet and the night got very cold——

By and by the pale illumination touched shining water and patches of smooth green bog. Round the ominous level belts, little mounds, covered by risp grass and heath, were scattered unevenly, and Garnet hoped he might find a way over the thickest clumps. Anyhow, he must try before he was numbed by damp and cold.

He set off. Sometimes his foot slipped and he fell on hands and knees into the grass for which he jumped; sometimes the treacherous hummock broke and his leg went down into the mire. For all that, turning and twisting where the blocks were most numerous, he slowly neared firm ground, and at length felt stones and dry heather under his squelching boots. He had crossed the flow, the numbing cold was gone, and he thrilled triumphantly. The moor-top was now but two or three hundred feet above.

Gasping and stumbling in the netted heath, he struggled up, and stopped by a cairn on the flat top. In front was a valley, and far down the rugged slope he saw a twinkling light. Where there was a light there was a house, and its occupants were not yet in bed. Garnet nerved himself for a last effort, and went down the hill.

The twinkle vanished, but after some time he saw a steady yellow glow. It looked as if a lamp burned in a farmstead kitchen, and, steering for the spot, he stopped by a gate in a dry-stone wall. A dog barked, and a man carrying a lantern

came from a byre.

"Weel?" he said. "What are ye wanting?"

"I'd like a hot drink and some food; but in particular, I want somebody to carry a message to Copshope," Garnet replied.

"Ye're acquaint wi' Mr. Harden?" said the farmer, and raised his lantern.

Garnet's clothes bore the stains of conflict and his scramble through the bog, and he thought the other's surprise was not remarkable.

"I was his son's pal in Canada and was on my way to Copshope when I got into the flow."

"Then ye were lucky to win oot," said the farmer dryly. "But that I'm watching a sick coo, ye would not have found us up. Come ben the hoose."

He showed Garnet into a flagged kitchen where a peat fire burned. A woman got up and gave Garnet a curious glance. Then she turned to her husband.

"Hoo's the quey? Will ye save her?"

"I thought she was away wi' it, but she'll maybe live. If I'm wantit, Jock will call me."

"And wha's yon man?"

"A freend o' Mr. Harden's. He got mired in the flow."

Something like that was obvious. When Garnet went to the fire he left a wet track across the flags. The woman nodded and fetched him a chair. Now she knew about the cow, she could think for her guest; but Garnet knew the Scots were practical.

"Tak' off your boots; it's no lang since the floor was washed," she said, and lifted a kettle from a hook in the chimney.

"Noo, if ye'll light yon candle, I'll get ye a change."

Garnet went with her to another room, and when she had given him hot water and dry clothes she pulled a rug across the carpet.

"Ye'll no' leave they clarty things to seep. Bring them back wi' ye."

When Garnet returned to the kitchen a plate of mutton ham and a teapot were on the table. His appetite was keen, but by and by he pushed back his plate.

"I ought to start for Copshope, but I doubt if I could get there and I'd sooner send a note. Has your hired man got a bicycle?"

The woman brought him some note-paper. The farmer went to the porch and shouted, "Jock!"

A young fellow arrived from the byre, and when Garnet had fastened the envelope he went with the lad to the courtyard.

"You perhaps know Mr. Harden's butler?"

"Mr. Syme?" said the lad. "Oh, aye; I ken him fine."

"Very well. You must knock until somebody comes down, and tell the servant to inform Mr. Harden where I am and that I hope to get across in the morning. Then I want you to give Syme this envelope; if possible, when nobody is about. Anyhow, you must know he has got it. I think a neat job deserves some reward."

The lad's grin implied that Garnet could trust him, and pushing his fee into his pocket, he got on his bicycle. Garnet went back to the kitchen and thought he had taken the proper line. He must not disturb Mr. Harden and he did not know if Anne, or Keith, was at home. Old Syme, however, was a model of discretion, and Garnet imagined Anne had not boasted when she declared the servants were her friends.

"The Copshope folk may send a car for me, and if they do not, I'll push off at daybreak," he said. "In the circumstances, a chair by the fire, is all I want."

His host shouted to his wife upstairs, and pulled an old couch from the wall.

"The mistress was redding up a room for ye—Well, there's peats in the basket, and I must away and mind the coo."

He went off, and Garnet, stretching his legs on the couch, was soon asleep. After some time, his host touched him and he jumped up and looked for his stick. For a moment he imagined the Basset gang had found him.

"A car frae Copshope's at the gate," the farmer remarked.

Garnet thanked him and stumbled across the yard. Somebody pulled him on board the car, the wheels began to turn and the headlamps searched the uneven road.

"Keith?" he gasped.

"Yes," said Harden. "When your telegram arrived, Anne had gone to a meet of otter hounds, and she was late for lunch; but as soon as she arrived she wired you and went off for me. I was shooting and we did not get back until dark. We had no fresh news from you and were anxious when your messenger knocked us up. Syme at once gave us your note."

"Oakshot will be at Dakershall in the evening," said Garnet and narrated his escape from the gang.

"Very well," said Keith, "in the morning we will fix our program, but you have had enough and I am not remarkably fresh. As soon as we get home you are going to bed."



XXVII

KEITH GETS BUSY

After breakfast Emerson went with Keith and Anne to the library. He had not yet seen Mr. Harden and he supposed Mrs. Harden was not up. Anne had fixed on the library because they would not be disturbed there, and as they stole along the passage, Garnet felt they had something of the look of furtive conspirators. He had felt at other times that he plotted against his host, and he was satisfied that Harden would not like their plan. Moreover, he saw its weak points and admitted that much must be left to chance.

The morning was gloomy, and although Anne had ordered a fire to be lighted, the spacious room was cold. In the woods the long windows commanded, naked branches tossed in a dreary wind; the moors behind the trees were dark and forbidding. Garnet thought the reaction after the strain and fatigue he had borne accounted for his moodiness, but he was persuaded their risking a fresh encounter with the gang was rash. All the same, to hesitate now was ridiculous, and he saw the others did not share his doubts.

Anne was highly strung, but sometimes she smiled with a sort of queer, triumphant satisfaction. Keith's look was grimly resolute. His mouth was set, his glance was fixed, and one got a sense of dour Scottish calm.

"To begin with, I'd like you to recount all you heard and saw and did since you found Burke and Lang at the hotel," he said.

For five or ten minutes Garnet gave him particulars; and then resumed:

"Perhaps Oakshot's fixing Dakershall for the meeting is strange, but all I know about it is, I saw the village from the Carlisle road."

"Oh, well," said Keith, "we have admitted that, from Oakshot's point of view, the Hexham neighborhood has some advantages, particularly since it is not the place where one would look for a gang of crooks. Then, if Oakshot is anxious to arrange for a quick get-away, it gives him the choice of three or four routes. The town, of course, is not populous, but it is a town and the police patrol the streets; and if the fellow is nervy, he'd sooner take the bonds at a quiet spot. Well, Dakershall is not far off. In summer, it's a tourists' haunt, and although probably the holiday folks have gone, two or three strangers stopping for the night would not attract much notice."

"They would go to Cherry Garth," Anne remarked.

Keith nodded and turned to Emerson. "The Garth is an old-fashioned house that has recently been used for a hotel. Since the excursionists' season is over, I expect nobody but two or three servants is about; the gardens are large and the house stands back from the road. In fact, I don't know a better spot for a thieves' rendezvous."

"Its loneliness might be awkward for us," Garnet rejoined, and hesitated. "I don't think the fellows suspected I was in the parlor when Burke read Oakshot's telegram," he went on. "In fact, I expect they will chance waiting for him, and they will bring the bonds. Well, our luck perhaps has been strangely good; but I begin to feel the police ought to finish the job."

Anne looked up in surprise.

"To imagine you daunted would be absurd. After your last exploit you are not remarkably fresh, and when one is tired and dull hopefulness is hard."

"It's possible," Garnet agreed. "All the same, I'm not yet played out. The trouble rather is, I know where I ought to be satisfied."

Keith turned and gave him a humorous glance.

"You're not logical, Garnet. You yourself urged me to take an independent line, and the time to ask for the police's help is gone. The job is not one for a village constable, and we could not get to headquarters until afternoon. Our tale is not very convincing, and the chiefs might refuse to move before they made inquiries—Then, you see, all the evidence

implies that I carried off the bonds, and the police would want to know why I did not enlighten them before. To do so at the last moment would look like a thieves' quarrel; they'd imagine I was *ratting* in order to save myself. Suspicion clings, and I doubt if anything would afterwards altogether exculpate me."

"It's obvious! You mustn't hesitate," said Anne.

"I dare not hesitate. Unless I get the bonds, I cannot go back to Canada, and, for all I know, the chiefs at Ottawa have cabled the London police to search for me. Well, this evening Burke will carry the documents to Cherry Garth, and somehow I am going to seize the packet."

Garnet's doubts remained, but he admitted Keith was logical. Anyhow, since he was resolved, one could not move him. They must go through with it, but some caution must be used.

"You are going to pretend to be a man you do not know, and the likeness may not cheat folks who know him well. Then you must fix the time to correspond with the arrival of a train from the south at Newcastle; but we don't know whether Oakshot will wait for a local train or engage a car. Suppose he came along before you pulled out? There's another thing: when he does arrive, the gang will at once start after you. The hill roads are bad and you could not make Copshope in the dark for two or three hours. Where are you going to put the bonds?"

"I know," said Anne. "They must go to Hexham. Matthews, the bank manager, will lock them in his safe."

"You have got it!" Garnet agreed. "But Keith must not go to Hexham. He will give me the packet and start another way."

"But I must go alone to Dakershall," Keith objected. "If the gang spotted you, they would see the trick."

Garnet smiled. "They will not spot me; we knew something about scouting in the Royal North-West. You will give me a note for the banker, and you might perhaps pick me up after I have handed him the bonds. Now let's study the time-table and fix our program."

They were occupied for some time; and then Keith got up.

"I think the plan will work. There is, of course, a chance the men may know I am not their confederate; and if the interview were long, an inquiry I could not answer might bowl me out. All the same, they expect Oakshot, they have some grounds to be uneasy, and I must work upon their fears. In fact, I must get the bonds and get away as soon as possible. Well, we start after lunch, and in the meantime I'll see if the car's all right."

He went off and Anne crossed the floor. Her color was rather high and when Emerson got up she gave him an apologetic smile.

"One takes one's courage for granted; but when I need mine, I find it's gone. You see, I persuaded Keith to come across, and now we must front the consequences I'm horribly anxious. Then, I feel I have entangled you. You were our guest and I ought to have left you alone."

"Then I'd have been hurt," said Garnet. "Before I was Mr. Harden's guest I was your brother's pal; and afterwards——"

He hesitated, and Anne gave him a queer, challenging glance.

"Afterwards, you were, for example, my indulgent confederate? Well, that was something, because I expect you really thought me rash."

"So long as you know I'm your servant, we perhaps can let it go," said Garnet in a quiet voice. "For one thing, I have not yet put across my job. Anyhow, you mustn't be disturbed. I think tonight's encounter is the last and in the morning we'll be justified to boast. When one is up against it, temperament counts for much, and Keith's as steady as a rock and as hard to daunt."

"Keith is like that," Anne agreed, with a touch of pride. "In a sense, he is not red-blooded, as you use the words in the West. Like a Scot, he weighs the obstacles, but when he thinks the venture justified he does not stop. However, not long since I thought you doubted."

"I did not doubt Keith's nerve, and I admitted he might seize the documents—Well, I expect I was ridiculous——"

Anne nodded, sympathetically, as if she understood.

"You declared our luck was strangely good and one must know where to stop! Perhaps the caution's instinctive; sometimes one is afraid to seize all one wants. Although you were willing to fight, you felt victory might be expensive. In fact, to win might cost us more than we knew?"

She turned her head for a moment, and then gave Emerson a level glance.

"Well, I myself have felt something like that, but I dared not let it frighten me. We cannot turn back, and if somehow I am hurt by our triumph, I have a noble champion."

Garnet said nothing. He saw Anne was moved by queer emotion, and although she was frank, he thought she did not want him to talk. All the same, he thrilled, and Anne, smiling as if she approved his reserve, went off.

Lunch was rather dreary, and Garnet sensed the queer strain that sometimes marked the function when his hosts were about. He had felt a puzzling shadow rested on the house. Keith's triumphant return from Dakershall ought perhaps to banish the gloom, but Garnet wondered——

He thought Anne's efforts for cheerfulness cost her much and he knew her highly strung. Keith was quiet and his look was grim. Harden was preoccupied, and Garnet wondered whether he was hurt because his son did not enlighten him about the undertaking in which he was rather obviously engaged. All Harden knew was that they had some business to transact at Hexham and might not be back until nine or ten o'clock. Since he had grounds to infer Keith's going about was rash, the statement did not reassure the old man much. Mrs. Harden was frankly curious. In fact, Garnet thought her disturbed and perhaps antagonistic; but she did not make any direct inquiry about her stepson's excursion.

To get up was some relief, and a few minutes afterward a servant brought Anne's small car to the steps. Harden went to the door and Garnet thought his giving Keith his hand significant.

"Although I don't know your business, I hope it's satisfactory," he said.

"If all goes as I expect, you will know when we are back, sir, and I believe you'll like my news," said Keith.

He got on board and started the engine, and Emerson, turning his head, saw Mrs. Harden at the door. Her pose was queerly stiff, and she looked straight in front; but Garnet was not much interested, for Anne, on the bottom step, smiled pluckily and waved them good luck. Then the car swung round a curve and Copshope vanished behind the trees.

XXVIII

CHERRY GARTH

The afternoon was bleak, and dark clouds rolled across the hills. Keith did not talk much and Emerson cogitated rather moodily. His adventures were almost over and that was something, for he admitted the part he had been forced to take was not properly his. Keith's misfortune and Anne's resolve to help her brother had entangled him.

Garnet did not regret his rash compliance, but he had felt from the beginning he was not the stuff of which one could shape a theatrical conspirator. Keith certainly was not; yet he was going to Dakershall, and Garnet knew he would play up. After all, he reflected with dry amusement, they had so far made good. It looked as if Anne knew how to handle an awkward team.

Stopping for food at an inn on the moors, they got out the time-table and reviewed their plans. Keith must arrive at Cherry Garth some time before the train they reckoned Oakshot would get reached Dakershall. He would explain that he did not want to wait at Newcastle and had another object for using a car. Then, working on his supposititious confederates' fears, he must get the bonds, and vanish when he had given Emerson the documents. Garnet had a note for Matthews, the banker, and would join a train for Hexham that arrived not long after Oakshot's, but from the opposite direction. The plan looked workable, but much, so to speak, depended on all synchronizing.

For a time they smoked by the fire; and then Keith pulled out his watch and they got in the car. Garnet mechanically braced up. When they next stopped, the last encounter would begin. So far as they could arrange it, the stage was set, and they knew their parts, but they could not altogether foresee how the act would go.

In the early dark the car rolled quietly through Dakershall. It looked as if the tourists were gone, for nobody was in the long street. Two or three shop windows were dimly illuminated, and Garnet marked the station lights at the top of the hill, and a gate opening to a path across the fields. Anne had told him the path went to Cherry Garth. At the end of the village, they crossed a noisy river and took a road under a grove of oaks. A few stars shone behind the branches, but the moon was not up, and the evening was rather dark and cold. Dead leaves crackled beneath the wheels and Garnet noted their faint aromatic smell.

By and by Keith steered the car on to the grass in the opening to a lane. They got down, and for a few minutes followed the road under the trees. Then, fifty or sixty yards back, they saw lights behind the trunks and Keith stopped by a stone gate-post.

"You will be on the terrace in about ten minutes; I mustn't stay much longer. Watch the door and the ground-floor windows," he said coolly, and went up the drive.

Emerson waited. By contrast, his part was an easy part, but when he weighed the chances Keith took he was anxious for his friend. All the same, he must not dwell on things like that; and, reflecting that Keith was not the sort to get rattled, he began to look about.

Cherry Garth was an old Georgian house, and since Anne had stopped there, he knew its ground-floor plan. The rooms the guests used fronted the terrace, and one or two long windows opened on the flags. The roof was low, and in the background naked trees cut the sky. The lawn was bordered on one side by dark Scots firs, and broken by yews and cypresses. Under the Scots firs Garnet had remarked a wicket-gate.

Wide steps went up to the middle of the terrace, and a beam of light touched the pillars at the porch. The big main door was open, and Garnet thought a glass door protected the hall. Lights shone behind three or four window-shades, but that was all. The house was quiet, as if the last summer guests and most of the servants had taken their departure. Garnet studied the gravel by the gate and saw but few wheel-marks. In fact, for a minute or two the quiet was rather daunting, and when the branches shook in the wind to hear the noise was some comfort.

Then heavy, measured steps echoed in the gloom, and Garnet pulled out a cigarette and rubbed a match. If the man passed the gate, he would sooner it looked as if he had strolled down the path for a smoke. The steps, however, stopped, and a dog barked. Garnet, noting a faint reflection farther along the road, imagined a field laborer had gone into a cottage. The fellow's boots were thick and his stride was slow.

Garnet waited for another minute or two, and then started for the house; but although he kept the grass edge, he smoked his cigarette. If somebody came to the door, he must carelessly inquire for an imaginary guest. Nobody came, and when he was near the steps he threw his cigarette into a clump of cypress and stole across the lawn.

The terrace wall went up from a low bank, and he got down quietly on the other side. The top reached a few inches above his waist, and urns for flowers, spaced at even distances, occupied the wide coping. If he stood behind an urn, he thought nobody would see him. He knew where the smoking-room was, and creeping along the terrace, he counted the windows. On the whole, he thought Burke and Lang would take Keith there.

The room was large. Two long windows opened to the terrace, and in front were short iron steps. Garnet crouched on the bottom step and thought the room dimly lighted. Perhaps they used oil, and since the guests were obviously not numerous, the servants had not bothered to light all the lamps. Anyhow, Keith would not ask for much illumination.

Garnet thought the windows modern. Half-way up in the one he faced, he noted a curved lever fastening. Thin shades covered the glass, and heavier curtains, looped across, left a gap in which human figures were silhouetted. Two men were at a table, and one or two more stood a short distance behind the others. All the same, the picture was not sharp; the lights were not at the proper spot to give all the shadows individuality.

Using some caution, Garnet straightened his back and brought his head nearer the glass. The men were talking, and although the thick curtains muffled their voices, he thought one was Keith's. Anyhow, he must try to hear. So far, Keith had put across his bluff. His nerve was very good, and he would see he did not front a strong light; the trouble was, he could not be silent, and men's voices differed. If he were forced to talk much, the others might find out the cheat. Garnet wondered whether he could push back the fastening, and he felt for his knife.

The blade jarred on iron. One of the shadows wavered, as if somebody looked up, and Garnet crouched on the step. If the fellow came to the window, he must pull up the shades and throw back the frame; and then the light would probably shine over Garnet's bent head. Moreover, when the night is dark, to look out from an illuminated room is puzzling.

For all that, Garnet presently crawled away for two or three yards. He must not make another attempt to open the fastening, and one could see the terrace from the road. When he had stood nearly upright his figure was no doubt visible against the glass. He had heard steps, and if the fellow had not stopped at the cottage, his thinking Garnet's movements suspicious would not be strange.

Garnet admitted he was anxious. Although he could not see his watch, he knew some time had gone since Keith left him at the gate, and the train from Newcastle would presently arrive. Unless Keith got the bonds soon, he and the man he impersonated would meet. Garnet supposed he would hear the train run down the valley, but so far all was quiet.

A stick cracked by the hedge across the lawn and he turned his head. He had not heard fresh steps; but a belt of grass went along the hedge bank, and if somebody were in the road his silent advance was ominous. For a few moments Garnet concentrated—All he heard was the branches shaking in the wind and dead leaves blown about the road. Well, he must not indulge his imagination, and, until he knew Keith did not want him, he must keep his post. All the same, time was going, and the suspense was hard——

Garnet jumped to his feet. A voice in the room got sharp and a shadow flickered across the glass. Garnet clenched his fist. The gangsters, perhaps, had found out they were cheated, but he could not get in.

The puzzling shadow disappeared and he heard a crash. Somebody had knocked down the lamp and he thought it was Keith. When one could not fight, to get away was easier in the dark. Then the window rattled and swung back. Somebody jumped out, and pushed a packet into Garnet's hand. The man vanished, and Garnet ran along the terrace. Keith had given him the bonds and he must carry out his job.

Another man sprang from the window and, jumping the wall, sped across the lawn. Garnet saw somebody run up the path, and he pushed the packet under his coat. Then, stopping at the porch, he faced a breathless policeman. He hoped it looked as if he had just come from the house, and the constable did not remark that the glass door was shut.

"A man jumped from the smoking-room window; I thought somebody lurked about," gasped the constable. "Did you see him? Where did he go?"

"I heard a noise," said Garnet. "Come in, and we'll inquire about it."

"Tell the manager!" shouted the policeman, and hurried along the terrace.

Garnet let him go and started for the gate. A bright beam shone from the hall door, and he thought people ran about in the house. The constable had seen him at the window and thought he broke in. Garnet imagined he had not seen Keith steal off; the man he inquired about was the fellow who jumped the wall. Keith had got away a moment or two before. The hedge by the road was thick and perhaps blocked the officer's view.

When Garnet reached the gate, dead leaves rustled in the grass border and boots rang on stones. Three people were in the dark road. Keith was first, and Garnet thought he took the grass; he ought to keep in front, and his car was at the corner of the lane. Basset's man tried to overtake him, and the constable followed Basset's man. He kept the road, and for all his thick boots, his speed was good. Garnet imagined that none but he knew who the others were. Basset's man, no doubt, thought the fellow behind him his confederate, and might soon get a jar. Garnet himself rather cautiously followed the constable. To some extent, he felt the situation was humorous.

An engine rattled; dazzling light swept the hedge rows, and he knew Keith had reached his car. One pursuer stopped, but the other did not, and it looked as if the constable would seize his man. Then a whistle pierced the car's receding throb, and Garnet knew the train from Newcastle had arrived. In a few minutes, Oakshot would take the road for Cherry Garth.

Garnet stopped and pondered. If he joined the constable and they got help, it might be possible to round up the gang; but he saw some obstacles. He had engaged to carry the bonds to Hexham and meet Keith at a spot they had fixed. If he did not arrive, Keith would return to look for him and might be arrested for another of the gang. Anyhow, to enlighten the constable implied his being forced to give the fellow's officers all his confidence. Moreover, the packet he carried was rather bulky and might be lost in a struggle with Basset's man.

On the whole, Garnet thought he must leave the job for the police, and since the constable was on the road in front, he resolved to take the fields.

GARNET DELIVERS THE BONDS

After a time Garnet stopped at the top of a rocky bank. Alders spread their branches across the precipitous slope, and the night was dark, but he heard an angry current break against the stones. The river had bothered him; in the dark he could not find a spot to cross and he dared not go back to the bridge. For one thing, a noise in the road had seemed to indicate that the constable had seized Basset's man. Then, since he did not want to be conspicuous, to arrive at the station with the water draining from his clothes had obvious disadvantages.

Garnet wondered where the gang was. He was satisfied two men, besides Keith, were in the smoking-room, and he rather thought there was another. The constable perhaps had arrested one, but Oakshot had, no doubt, joined his friends, and Garnet reckoned they would use some effort to recover the bonds. Anyhow, his business was to get to Hexham, and he pulled out his watch and rubbed a match. The time was later than he thought and his train would soon start. He must get across the river, and he ran along the bank.

A path went down to some stepping-stones, but when Garnet got across he clenched his fist. The lights in the village were some distance off and the station was at its other end. Then the path was uneven; he stumbled over roots and ledges, and plunged into holes, but he thought he heard the train and he savagely pushed ahead.

When he reached a gate and jumped into the street the roll of wheels was loud, and fiery reflections lighted a plume of steam. Gasping and sweating, Garnet went up the hill, shouted for a ticket, and leaped into a compartment where other people were. A jolt threw him against the cushions, the station-lights slid back, and, sitting down in a corner, he labored for breath.

"You were nearabouts too late," a passenger remarked. "When you sprinted along platform, I thowt I'd seen worse running at Moorend sports."

Garnet laughed, and his laugh struck a triumphant note. He had made it! If Basset's lot were on board the train, they dared not meddle with him so long as people were about, and when he reached the banker's office the strain would be over.

"Sometimes speed is useful, and I wasn't keen about waiting for another train," he replied, and felt he did not exaggerate. "I expect I can get to Bellingham tonight?"

"A motor-bus goes from Hexham. You'll have half an hour to wait," the passenger agreed.

Garnet leaned back in his corner and lighted a cigarette. Anne, in the library at Copshope, had fixed the time-table; Garnet pictured her balancing her pencil and knitting her brows. All went as she calculated, but he had known Anne's staff-work was good. In fact, but for her, Keith and he might not have bluffed the gang and carried off the bonds. Perhaps, if when he first met Basset, they had called the police, the officers might, some time since, have seized the bonds and the gang; but Garnet was not going to dwell on things like that, and, after all, he did not know.

In the meantime, he was safe in the corner of the smoking-compartment, and two big Northumbrians occupied the other seat. Moreover, one presently stated that he was going to Bellingham, and Garnet, noting his muscular arms and heavy shoulders, thought if the gang did hit his track, he might find a useful champion.

When the train stopped at Hexham he waited for a moment by the carriage door and looked about. Nobody he knew got down, but the gang might use a fast car and he must see the bonds locked up as soon as possible. The bank was near the hotel at which he had stopped, and when Garnet knocked, Matthews himself let him in. The banker was tall and strongly built; his hands were large and his shoulders were rather bent.

"You are Mr. Emerson?" he said. "I got Mr. Harden's telegram and heard your train arrive. You were not long on the road from the station."

Garnet noted the faint Northumbrian burr and inferred Matthews sprang from yeoman stock. He had some grounds to like North Country folk, and he knew he could trust the fellow.

"Oh, well," he said, "the packet I've brought is important, and I felt when I had delivered it I'd be happier."

Matthews signed him to come in, and they went to an office where he got a light. Garnet saw old-fashioned shutters covered the window fronting the street, and he knew the banker had remarked his glance, but he opened an iron door. A lock clicked, steel jarred on steel; and then the door clanged and Matthews was back.

Garnet sat down rather slackly. The documents were safe and he began to feel that Keith and he had really won. Sometimes he had thought it impossible, and now the reaction bothered him.

"I expect you want an acknowledgment?" Matthews remarked.

"No, thanks," said Garnet firmly. "You might post a receipt to Keith Harden at Copshope. I'd sooner not carry the paper."

Matthews' glance was keen, but he nodded carelessly.

"Very well. There is a fire in my sitting-room and I'm not occupied."

Garnet went with him, and when the banker gave him a drink he drained his glass.

"Then Keith Harden is at home? I supposed the telegram was from his father," Matthews resumed.

"Keith is not anxious for anybody but his friends to know he is at Copshope."

"For a number of years Mr. Harden has been my customer and I think I enjoy his confidence," Matthews remarked in a meaning voice. "You are evidently his son's friend. The telegram stated you were a trustworthy messenger, and you perhaps wonder how much I know. Well, I know the Canadian bank was robbed and it looked as if Keith Harden was implicated."

"Then, I hope you're satisfied the men who suspected him are fools!"

"I have met none and do not know," said Matthews with a touch of humor. "I have, however, met your friend, and to doubt his honesty would be absurd. Up-rightness is a tradition of his house. Perhaps I must not ask you for particulars; but, if I can help, you can reckon on my doing so."

"Thanks," said Garnet. "You can guard the documents. If it were known that you had them, I rather think one or two first-class crooks would look you up. However, I have stopped some minutes and must get the bus for Bellingham."

"Our safe is good; but in the morning I must send some securities to the Newcastle office, and the manager will lock up your packet in his thief-proof vaults. Would you like me to walk down to the bus with you?"

"I think not," said Garnet with a smile. "For one thing, the Hexham people know you, and if an interested stranger spotted me, I'd sooner he did not find out I was at your bank."

Matthews nodded. "Yes, of course! Well, I'll see the police officer whose business it is to patrol the street, and by noon tomorrow your packet will be at Newcastle."

Garnet thanked him and went off. But for a few young men and women, he met nobody in the street, and a few minutes after he reached its starting-place the motor-bus took the road. The farmer he had met and two or three more were on board, and Garnet lighted his pipe and let himself go slack. Now he had carried out his job, he was strangely tired, and all he wanted was to indulge his rather languid satisfaction. The bonds were in the banker's safe, and so far as he knew, nobody had spotted him. In fact, he believed the gang had scattered at Dakershall.

The bus jolted noisily along the road. Sometimes farmstead lights twinkled in the gloom; sometimes the rattling wheels stopped and a passenger got down, but nobody got on board and no car sped by. For the most part, all outside the shaking windows was indistinct; the dull rumble and rocking were soothing, and when at length the engine stopped, Garnet thought he had slept.

A cold wind blew up the village street; the moon was hidden and the stars were dim. Where the white houses were separated by gardens, vague, dark hills cut the sky. The passengers went the other way, and when their steps got faint Garnet mechanically grasped his stick. He admitted he had begun to be afraid in the dark. After a time, shining windows marked an inn. Garnet stopped and saw Keith at the door.

"Well?" said Harden quietly.

"All's right. Matthews has the documents. Were you followed?"

"I think not. At all events, nobody tried to stop me."

"We have made it!" said Garnet in a triumphant voice. "Anne has put her scheme across!"

Keith smiled and took him to a small, old-fashioned room. A cheerful fire burned in the grate, food was on the table, and Keith signed Garnet to a chair.

"I think we have earned our supper and a short rest."

Garnet's appetite was keen, but by and by he lighted his pipe and stretched his legs to the fire.

"Now I want to know all about your exploit. When you left me at the gate I was horribly anxious."

"Oh, well, I had tried to calculate the chances and thought I might make good. To begin with, the fellows expected the man whose place I took. Then the landlord was closing down for the winter and had sent off most of his servants. Some rooms were shut, the lamps were not all burning, and where the light was good I allowed the others to go in front."

Garnet nodded. Keith did not get rattled; he pictured his coolly maneuvering for the proper spot.

"Who was there?"

"Burke and Lang. I think another was Basset, but I did not get his name."

"Three!" said Garnet. "But for the gang, the house was almost unoccupied and you were alone. You surely have some gall!"

"So long as I was at the house, I reckoned I was comparatively safe. The gang might be willing to put me out; but I did not think they'd risk it where somebody would find me very soon afterwards. Then, of course, a shot would bring the landlord. Besides, I thought them nervy and anxious to finish the job. In fact, it looked as if the police at length began to push them hard."

"You were there *soon*," said Garnet. "And then your voice——"

"My voice helped. They had fixed to meet a Canadian and I talked like a Westerner. My arriving rather soon was useful, and helped me scare the gang. The police were getting busy and I had got one or two nasty jars. If I waited at Newcastle, I might be spotted, and I hired up a car. The explanation went; but I must get away before the proper man arrived, and I had not much time—Well, we went to the smoking-room. The fire was low, the room was cold, and all the light was a tall pillar lamp. A waiter followed us and wanted to put things straight, but I sent him off for drinks and stated that we were not stopping long. I chanced the others' noting I was keen to quit. To some extent, I had accounted for my eagerness ——"

Keith lighted a cigarette and Garnet pondered his narrative. Its reserve and concentration were typical of the narrator. He saw Keith coolly work on the others' nervousness and use all the advantage it gave him.

"I needed a drink," Keith resumed. "You see, if somebody asked for particulars I could not supply, I was done for. Two, I think, were satisfied and wanted to be off; I feel the other was not. My chair was some distance from the passage and near the lamp, but not where the light touched my face, and I wondered if the fellow had noted my choosing the spot. I took him for Basset, and hoped he had not remarked the lever fastening of the long iron window behind the thin shade ——"

"At all events, I felt he studied me, and for some minutes the strain was fierce. Then Burke pulled out the certificates, and since I'd seen Walthew's list at Miscana, I was able to state the sums and numbers. Perhaps I was too keen and something of my control went, for I made a fool inquiry. Burke turned and asked a challenging question in a sharp voice, and when I looked at Basset I saw he knew who I was——"

Keith unconsciously set his mouth, as if the tension had not yet altogether relaxed.

"Well, Basset had perhaps an object for waiting; but I had not. Although he said nothing, he commanded my line to the door, and in a few minutes Oakshot would arrive. I leaned back, as carelessly as possible; away from the documents on

the table, but nearer the lamp. I believed I could reach it, and I did not see another plan. The lamp crashed, my hand met Basset's on the table, but I got the bonds. He was on the other side, and in the dark I jumped for the window. When the first man got out, I was on the lawn, and I reached my car a few moments ahead. Well, I think that's all you did not know."

Garnet narrated his part, and then got up.

"I expect the country policeman knew nothing about the gang; but I rather think he got the man who followed you. Since the others did not bother me at Hexham, they were not on board my train. Looks as if they pulled out for Carlisle. But I reckon we ought to start."

GARNET SHUTS THE GATE

A shower beat the streaming glass, and Harden slowed the car. The unfenced road was loose and stony, and the curves were sharp. On one side, a burn splashed in a deep hollow.

By and by the rain stopped. Wet stones flashed in silver light and water sparkled in the rocks. Dark shadow veiled the moor's steep slopes, but the moon was on the valley that opened in front, and Emerson knew the woods and fields. Copshope was three or four miles off, and he imagined Anne anxiously awaited her brother's arrival. She would soon know they had conquered, and when he pictured her satisfaction he thrilled. The triumph was Anne's and Keith's; but, after all, he had helped.

Yet, until they were at Copshope, Garnet felt he must not boast. All had gone better than he had had much reason to hope, and somehow he was nervous. He wondered whether Keith's exculpation would banish the gloom that seemed to haunt the old house, but he doubted. Moreover, they had three or four miles to go and the car did not run smoothly. A back tire was getting soft, but Keith thought he could reach the house before it went down. When he let the engine go Garnet touched him.

"Watch out for the gate near the bottom of the hill."

"If we stop, I may be forced to change the tire," Harden grumbled.

A minute or two afterward, the car sped round a curve and they saw the gate across the road. Harden swore, the brakes jarred, and Garnet, jumping down, threw back the gate. He used some force, for the post was not upright and the spring was stiff, and he had already opened a number of gates. The car rolled ahead, and when it stopped behind the dry-stone wall Garnet crossed the road. The gate had swung back into the heather and the bottom rail was jammed. He began to kick some turf from under the bar, but Harden called him.

"Perhaps you can fix the pump on the valve. My hands are stiff."

Garnet left the gate and attached the pump. Keith beat his hands and resumed:

"The tire is going down; but I expect she will carry us home and I don't want to bother with the spare tire."

Garnet looked up. The engine was running quietly, and he thought he heard a measured beat some distance off.

"A motorcycle?" he said.

"The burn in the stones," said Keith, and laughed. "Anyhow, a motorcycle is a common object, and at the most carries two passengers. If Basset had wanted to load up his friends, he'd have got a car."

He began to pump, and Garnet refastened the spare tire. The motorcycle was perhaps behind the hill, but he rather thought he had only heard the noisy burn. A cold wind blew across the moors, and, forgetting the gate was yet open, he began to walk about.

By and by he turned his head. The thudding noise was distinct, and when he looked uphill, a swift refulgence touched the heather on one side of the curve. He had not been cheated: a motorcycle was in the road. The moon was bright, the wet stones sparkled, and Harden, his head and shoulders bent, labored at the pump, a foot or two from the wheel. He was on the near, his proper, side, and although the road was narrow, Garnet thought there was room for a cautious driver to pass the car. On the other side, the stones did not, for two or three yards, run into the heather.

Garnet afterward decided that he had noted the particulars subconsciously. When one is highly strung one does not measure distances; but when he recaptured the scene at Copshope all was as distinct, and went as swiftly, as a moving-picture.

A motorcycle, snorting explosively, leaped round the curve. Garnet saw a man's bent figure, and water splash about the wheels. The fellow was going very fast, and obviously did not mean to stop for Harden's car. Garnet was on the unoccupied side of the road, and rather behind the wall. He supposed the motorcyclist did not know he was about. The

gate, however, was open, and since the fellow did not pull up when he saw Harden, Garnet inferred he had nothing to do with Basset's lot.

Then the motorcycle swerved. The driver was not going round the car, as he ought. His body got straight, as if he braced himself against a shock, and he steered for Harden, who was still occupied with the pump. Garnet saw his object. The brute was going to run down Keith; and, plunging across the road, he shut the gate.

The fastening held, but rails and braces crashed. Splintered wood was thrown about, the motorcycle went on end, and a man, hurled across the shattered bars, struck the stones. He groaned, and then was quiet, his bent arm thrown forward in front of his head. When Garnet reached him, his face was stained with blood. A small pistol, jolted from his pocket, sparkled in a pool. Garnet got down in the road and lifted the other's head.

"Oakshot!" he gasped.

"The tinhorn I met at Vancouver," Keith agreed. "Steady him for a few moments. I don't think he's dead."

They examined the unconscious man. Although Keith was awkward, Garnet had helped injured men before. Oakshot's skin was cold and his pulse was very slow, but it had not stopped. By and by Garnet got up and looked about. He saw the broken gate and sweep of lonely, shining road; and then the moon went behind a cloud. But for the burn's turmoil, all was quiet.

"I suppose the shock accounts for his unconsciousness; he was going for you at full speed. Nothing seems to indicate a broken arm or leg, but I don't know about his ribs. Anyhow, we cannot leave him in the road."

"He is going to Copshope," said Harden grimly. "We'll send for a doctor, and as soon as the fellow is able to talk, I'll force him to give us a statement about the robbery. Let's get him in the car."

To do so was awkward. Anne's car was small, and the unconscious man was a heavy load. At length, however, they put him on the cushions, where Harden could squeeze between his legs and the wheel.

"You must sit on the running-board," he said to Emerson.

Garnet ran back to the gate and dragged the broken motorcycle down the bank. Then he jumped up, and Keith, warning him to hold on, let the engine go.

When they rolled under the beeches at Copshope the moon was behind a cloud and rain beat the trunks. One or two dim lights glimmered behind the trees, and Garnet thought Mr. Harden and Madam had some time since gone to bed; they knew nothing about the object for Keith's excursion. Slowing the car, he touched Emerson.

"Until somebody helps you move the fellow, I cannot get down. Anne will be waiting for us. Tell her to call Syme."

He drove quietly, but when he stopped in front of the house a beam shone from the door and a slim figure cut the light. Garnet ran up the steps, and when Anne gave him her hand he felt it shake, although her pose was firm.

"All's right!" he said. "We have got the bonds."

"That's splendid! But Keith——"

"He's in the car and wants you to send Syme. You see, we have got the gang's leader, and he's hurt."

"I kept Syme up. Wait a moment," said Anne, and was gone.

Garnet thought her coolness cost her something, but she was cool and efficient. In a few moments she returned with Syme, and Garnet and the old fellow went to the car. Keith put his arm round Oakshot, who tried to get up.

"I'm not yet all in. If you steady me, I guess I can walk," he gasped.

They got him from the car and up the steps. Syme and Keith supported him, and although he leaned against them awkwardly, they went along a passage to a small room on the ground floor. The room was warm; thick curtains covered the windows and a brass kettle steamed by the fire. Keith put Oakshot on a couch and Syme pulled off his boots. His head was cut, and by contrast with the smear of blood, his face was blanched, but his eyes were open.

Anne, standing by the couch, gave him a searching glance. Her look was rather surprised than pitiful, and a touch of haughtiness marked her pose.

"The likeness is extraordinary," she said in a queer, level voice. "Get the brandy, Syme. I doubt if we can carry him quietly upstairs."

"If you don't mind, I'd sooner you left me alone. I rather think one or two of my ribs are broken," Oakshot remarked.

"Can we get Doctor Scott?" Anne asked Syme.

"The doctor's at Myrtoun. I'm thinking he will not be back before the morn."

Anne nodded, as if she had some ground to believe the butler's surmise accurate.

"It's awkward! Well, bring the brandy and some rugs."

Syme brought the rugs, made up the fire, and went off. The old fellow knew his job; moreover, he knew Anne. She mixed a hot drink and gave it to Oakshot, who drained the glass.

"We will get the doctor as soon as possible," she said. "I don't know if you ought to talk; but how did you get hurt?"

"As a rule, a broken rib is not a dangerous injury and I have been worse hurt before. The knock I took when I came off my motorcycle perhaps explains my slackness. Your friend shut a gate in front of me."

Garnet looked up. Oakshot's reply was rather labored, but he did not talk like the ruffianly adventurers one met at red-light gambling-joints. His voice had a touch of cultivation, and his crooked smile indicated ironical humor.

"You meant him to hit the gate?" Anne said to Emerson.

"That is so. He was steering for Keith, who pumped up a tire, and did not see him."

"I expected Keith, rather than me, would be hurt," Oakshot resumed. "Anyhow, I was resolved to get back some documents he had carried off; but until I swerved and could not stop, I did not know the other was about. He probably saw I meant to force a collision."

Anne turned to Garnet, and although she said nothing, he thrilled when he met her glance. Then she knitted her brows.

"There is no use in sending for the doctor; he cannot leave his patient," she said to Oakshot. "I believe we ought not to move you from the couch. At all events, you cannot run away."

"I am resigned to stop," said Oakshot, and although his voice was uneven, his queer smile was rather marked. "For one thing, the police will soon begin a careful search for me; but I think I'm as safe at Copshope as at any spot I know."

Anne turned abruptly and fronted him. Her glance was very keen and somehow disturbed. Garnet thought she, like himself, began to see a light.

"I do not understand," she said. "What do you imply?"

"In the circumstances, perhaps you ought to know. The strange thing is, you really seem to need the explanation. Although you may not be proud to own me, I am your half-brother."

The blood came to Anne's skin, and then her face got white. Keith jumped up, his fist firmly clenched; and Garnet looked straight in front. All shrank from the illumination they had got, but none could doubt.

"You are younger than Keith?" said Anne, in a rather breathless voice.

"Two years, I believe," Oakshot agreed. "In a way, the time is important. You see, your mother was not mine; I am the second Mrs. Harden's son."

Anne crossed the floor and sat down at the other end of the room. Keith leaned against the table, and Oakshot was quiet. His face was wet by sweat, as if his efforts to talk had exhausted him, but Garnet thought he indulged a sort of malignant triumph.

Then they heard steps in the passage and Anne got up.

"Father!" she said, rather hoarsely. "Well, he must know, and I hope he will not make me accountable—but, after all, I was justified. Keith is innocent; he could not be allowed to carry a load that is not his——"

"Your meddlesome friend is accountable," Oakshot rejoined. "When he shut the gate he did not know all he did."

The door was pushed back and Harden and Mrs. Harden came in. Harden stopped and his look got very stern; Mrs. Harden gasped and trembled, but she crossed the floor to Oakshot's couch. Oakshot's effort to brace up was obviously painful; he had not long since taken a nasty knock. It, however, had nothing to do with Garnet, and he stole away.

A TRUE BILL

In the morning Garnet had breakfast alone. Syme served him, and stated in a confidential voice that the doctor had arrived and, Syme understood, was not disturbed about his patient. Garnet wondered how much the old fellow guessed, but he imagined Mr. Harden could reckon on his discreet support.

After breakfast, he went to the terrace. The morning was calm, and, sitting down where pale sunshine touched the old house's front, he lighted his pipe. His business called, and now the bonds were recovered, Keith and he ought to start for Montreal. Moreover, Mr. Harden and Madam would be willing for them to go. All the same, Garnet frankly did not want to start. Miscana was four thousand miles from Copshope, and this time there was nothing to justify his coming back. Anne no longer needed him; he had finished his job.

For a time he brooded; and then Anne came from the house. Garnet noted that she was pale, but when she joined him on the bench she was not embarrassed. Well, he knew her pluck; Anne would not want him to pretend.

"I am afraid you got an awkward shock," he said.

"Well, I must take my punishment. But for my meddling, Keith would not have come home. Yet I don't know that I am sorry. Keith is my brother; I feel the other is not. In fact, I think I hate him. When you shut the gate he meant to drive his motorcycle over Keith, and after we put him on the couch, although he was faint and shaken, he wanted to hurt us."

Garnet nodded. He had thought Oakshot malignant; at all events, if *malignant* was not the proper word, the fellow was glad he yet had power to humiliate his relations. The ground, however, was awkward, and although Anne's frankness moved him, he said nothing. She noted his reserve and gave him a kind look.

"You are not a stranger, Garnet. You are my friend and Keith's, and Father trusts you."

"Mrs. Harden cannot reckon me her friend," said Garnet, with a touch of embarrassment.

"If she were revengeful, I am the proper subject for her dislike, but I do not think she is revengeful. Although Madam and I have jarred, she is better stuff than I thought, and when she saw Oakshot on the couch she was fine—She did not think about all that her acknowledging him would cost. It frankly did not matter. He was hurt and beaten; she went to her son."

"I thought his consciousness was going," Garnet remarked. "A fellow like that is pretty hard, but he had got a smashing knock, and after his interview with us, I expect he'd had enough."

"He fainted, and I believe he has not talked much since," said Anne. "Syme waited on the doctor and declares he's not at all anxious. That is something, but it does not help Father much——"

She stopped for a moment, and although she gave Garnet a level glance, warm color flooded her pale skin when she resumed:

"I have boasted I am up-to-date, and one must try to face life as it is, honestly. Well, I'm horribly sorry for Father—and I'm sorry for Madam. The old rules stand; they must stand. And you see the dreadful entanglement!"

Garnet thrilled. Anne's reserve was gone. In her distress and, in a sense, her humiliation, she, perhaps instinctively, trusted him. He wanted to take her in his arms and comfort her, but he dared not yet.

"You think Mr. Harden knew who Oakshot is?" he said.

"Madam knew for some time. He was here before; he stole past us one evening in the glen. I do not know if Madam told Father; but when you and Keith talked about the tinhorn he must have guessed. Well, one can picture his emotions. If our plan worked, Keith must implicate his brother and humiliate Madam. Yet he did not try to dissuade Keith. Although he knew the consequences, he saw he must be just."

"Perhaps we were very dull," said Emerson.

For a moment Anne hesitated; and then she looked up.

"Sometimes I felt as if I might solve the puzzle; but I hated myself for my shabbiness. I was afraid to dwell upon it—the thing was impossible!"

Garnet saw her humiliation, and he touched her gently.

"We are flesh and blood; and, after all, Mr. Harden agreed for Keith to try his plan. He owned the debt was his and he was willing to pay."

"Ah," said Anne, "Keith did not trust you rashly. You never let one down——"

She turned her head and Syme advanced.

"If convenient, Mr. Harden would like to see you, sir."

Anne signed Garnet to go, and he followed Syme to the room Oakshot occupied. Oakshot was on the couch, his chest firmly bandaged, but the color had come back to his skin, as if he had recovered from the shock. Keith brooded by the fire, and when Syme went Mr. Harden crossed the floor. His look was worn and his shoulders were bent.

"I believe my son, to some extent, will give us his confidence, and Keith asked for you," he said to Emerson. "He thought you ought to know all we knew, and I agreed."

Oakshot turned his head awkwardly, but he was not embarrassed.

"Keith's resourceful pal was the combine's driving-force, and but for him I very much doubt if you'd have got the bonds, Keith certainly would not have kept them."

"Then, you admit you meant to run down your brother by the gate?" said Harden sternly.

Oakshot's mouth curved in an ironical smile.

"I certainly meant to seize his load, and if he had got hurt I would have been resigned. The drawback was, I did not see his friend—However, I engaged to tell you about the robbery at the bank——"

Oakshot's narrative was short, but it supplied the particulars the others had wanted. At the beginning, a confederate of his had found out the Brockenhurst securities would be deposited at Keith's office, although Oakshot refused to state how they got the information. They resolved to steal the documents and use Oakshot's likeness to Keith in order to help them make their get-away. One had lurked about the camp at the lake, and when Keith went fishing, swam the rapid and carried off the canoe. In the meantime, one or two more occupied the Miscana folks' attention with the suppositiously broken-down car while Oakshot and another opened the safe. He declared he expected Keith would presently be able to exculpate himself, but admitted that he did not think it very important.

"For me to carry the blame for your knavery was not enough?" said Keith. "When you thought I had got the bonds, you tried to put me out for good!"

"It was not altogether my object," said Oakshot coolly. "Anyhow, I had not much grounds to love you. For one thing, you had all that I had not and thought I ought to have had. You went to a first-class school and were properly started on an honorable career, and when you had made good Copshope would be yours. Well, I guess you'll make a model Scottish laird!"

"Keith will not inherit Copshope," Harden remarked with some dryness. "When I gave up business I was not rich, and to free you from your criminal entanglements helped to impoverish me."

"Ah," said Oakshot, "you talk like a merchant! Poverty was not my worst handicap; from the start I carried a heavier load. My relations dared not acknowledge me; all the care I got was from my foster mother at a moorland farm. She was kind but primitive; I learned to cheat and poach. They do not put a disowned boy on the Loretto waiting-list, and I went to a school where my sort go and questions are not asked. Our defense against the parsimonious head's brutality was to lie and steal. Then I was smuggled off to Melbourne, and in order not to starve I must report, like a ticket-of-leave man, at a lawyer's office."

"You had another choice," said Harden. "My agent found you a useful post."

"The talents you forced me to cultivate were not for labor," Oakshot rejoined. "I knew a better plan; but it's done with, and we'll let it go. All the same, when you refused to acknowledge me you disowned a debt that has got heavier ever since. Because you were afraid, I hated Keith, and when I robbed the bank to think he might bear the consequences was some satisfaction. You forced us to be antagonists, and I hope you like your reward——"

He stopped. His breath was rather labored and beads of sweat glistened on his skin. Harden's face was lined and gray, and his head was bent. The bill, so to speak, was a true bill, but Garnet was sorry for the old man. For Mrs. Harden's sake, he had denied their son, but he had obviously borne his punishment. Moreover, he knew he had forced Keith to pay.

"You were at Copshope before," he said to Oakshot.

"That is so; I stopped about ten minutes, and, in the circumstances, my looking up my respectable relations was humorous. I had carried off bonds for a large sum, but I needed money, and my mother must help me finance a gang of thieves. Well, I did not get all I wanted; she was pluckier than I thought!"

"You take advantage of your helplessness," Keith remarked grimly. "Your nerve is pretty good, but perhaps you ought to use some caution. Anyhow, you did not negotiate the securities."

For a few moments Oakshot said nothing. He had talked for some time and it looked as if physical effort rather than emotion accounted for his quietness.

"On the whole, I think my confederates in this country were a third-class lot," he resumed. "Your pal, however, bothered us; we did not know who he was, and when time was valuable, we were occupied watching him. Then people on whose help we had reckoned were shy or scared. We got up against obstacles we did not foresee, and I began to feel we had not properly allowed for the cleverness of the Old Country police. In fact, the others' nerve began to go, but at length I found a tougher agent, who reckoned, if I could get the stuff across to Holland, he'd help me unload. Well, I fixed with Basset and Burke to bring the bonds to Cherry Garth, and at Newcastle I found the police were on my track. But for an accident, they'd have got me. All the same, I resolved to go ahead and trust my luck. If you had not arrived ten minutes ahead of me, I might have made good——"

"Then, you imagine the police will soon know where you are?" said Harden in a dreary voice.

"I imagine they found out I hired a motorcycle. The broken machine is in the road, a few miles off."

"The motorcycle is in the burn," Emerson remarked.

"The burn is small and but three or four yards from the road," Oakshot rejoined, and turned to Harden. "For some time I cannot walk. If I move, I must be carried. What are you going to do about it?"

"You expect me to help you escape?" said Harden moodily.

"You must. It's rather obvious."

Harden frowned and crossed the floor, and stopped irresolutely.

"I ought to give you up and bear the consequences."

"It might be awkward," said Oakshot, with a cruel smile. "For one thing, Mrs. Harden must bear the consequences. To do so would hurt her worse than you."

Harden turned his head from the others. When he looked up his skin was wet and his hands shook.

"I expect you have a plan. What help do you want?"

"Until I can get about, you must find me a place to hide. Then I expect you can smuggle me on board a ship for South America. Where there are casinos and sporting *rastouques* I will not starve. At Monte Video, for example, I'd soon find some use for my talents. Anyhow, since I dare not come back, you'd be rid of me for good."

"We will talk about it again," said Harden, and signed the others.

They went to the smoking-room, and Keith asked: "Can you hide him, sir?"

"It might be possible; in a day or two, perhaps, we could move him by car. In the meantime, he must see nobody but Syme. The old fellow will not talk, and we can trust the doctor. Yet, the risk is daunting; to give him shelter makes his mother and me his accomplices, and the police may soon arrive."

Keith smiled and touched his father's arm.

"You mustn't bother, sir. If the police do arrive, I think Garnet and I can baffle them. Suppose you concentrate on the other part of the scheme?"

Harden went off and Keith turned to Emerson.

"You have joined the clan, Garnet, and you'll agree that my business is to support the chief. Well, frankness hurts, but if you do not yet altogether see the complication, I must enlighten you. My half-brother was born when *my* mother was alive. The second Mrs. Harden married my father some time afterwards."

"You must see the old man out," said Emerson. "I'll help where my help's possible; and then we must start for Montreal."

KEITH PLAYS OUT HIS PART

After Keith left the smoking-room, Emerson asked Syme to get him quietly an old shooting-coat and a cartridge-bag. Then he put on his thickest boots and crossed the courtyard to the gardener's tool-house. The gardener was sweeping up dead leaves on the other side of the lawn, and Garnet tied a small crowbar to a narrow draining-spade. When he threw them on his shoulder he reckoned anybody who might see him on the hills would think he carried a gun.

Garnet imagined nobody was about, but when he stole away behind a rhododendron bank he stopped. Anne was in the path, and her faint twinkle implied that she had watched his cautious advance.

"To frown when you meet me is not polite," she said, and studied him thoughtfully. "I do not like your tailor; your shooting-coat is horribly old-fashioned. Then if you are going to dig for rabbits, you ought to carry a ferret and a net."

"I am not going to dig for rabbits," Garnet rejoined. "The coat you have probably recognized for Mr. Harden's; but I don't know the proper outfit for Old Country sports. My job's to bury a motorcycle——" He hesitated, and resumed with a touch of embarrassment: "You see, I'd no particular grounds to hide the thing before, and Keith, of course, ought not to do so."

Anne nodded. "Yes—Keith has told me. You are very keen, and we know you are faithful."

"At one time I was a police trooper. A broken motorcycle with a number-plate is a useful clue."

"It looks as if you do not mean us to forget you were a mounted policeman," Anne remarked. "Well, I suppose the Royal North-West are famous; but you do not boast about your contractor's exploits, although Keith declares Miscana begins to wear your stamp."

"One must sometimes be modest," Garnet replied.

"Ah," said Anne, "you are rather obvious; but you are a very useful friend and I must not banter you. Besides, to be humorous just now is hard. Well, go and bury the motorcycle; and perhaps you had better take the path across the peat-moss."

Garnet did so, and an hour afterward climbed the hill above the broken gate. For three or four miles the road curved about the moors, but all he saw was a flock of sheep, and he descended to the gate. After studying the ground, he reckoned nothing had disturbed the loose wet stones since Keith started his car. Moreover, it looked as if heavy rain would soon sweep the glen and wash away the marks the wheels had left. Garnet pulled off his coat and got to work.

He had used spade and grub-hoe in the Canadian woods, and before long he had cut a deep hole in the boggy turf and levered out some big limestone blocks. Then he dragged the motorcycle from the burn and buried the number-plate in a soft bog some distance off. When he got back he pulled off the wheels, and using his crowbar on the frame, threw the wreck into the hole. Twenty minutes afterward he beat down the turf and rolled the limestone blocks on top. He was splashed with mud and wet with sweat, but he thought he had made an artistic job and he must get home before the rain.

Garnet was back for lunch. Mrs. Harden had kept to her room, but none of the others was free from embarrassment, and although Harden was laboriously polite Garnet felt he would be happier when his host got up. By and by Syme came in and gave Harden an apologetic glance.

"Sergeant Monroe and the Cleugh-head polisman, sir."

Harden pushed back his plate, but Keith stopped him.

"Garnet and I will see the officers. You might follow us in a minute or two."

They went to the hall, and a big police-sergeant pulled out some documents and put his hand on Keith's arm. Garnet saw a constable kept the door.

"I have instructions to arrest you, John Oakshot, also known as John Bethune, recently of Taminisqua in western Ontario

——"

Keith laughed. "The Taminisqua is a Canadian river, sergeant. I don't dispute the fiscal's authority, but you have the wrong man. Anyhow, I am Keith Harden. My father, whom you know, and my Canadian friend, Mr. Emerson, will identify me."

He turned. The dining-room door opened, and Mr. Harden gave the sergeant a rather haughty glance. Garnet thought his calm cost some effort, but the old fellow played up nobly, and the officer began to look embarrassed. Mr. Harden of Copshope was an important gentleman.

"Perhaps you will state why you again disturb us, Sergeant Monroe?" he said.

"I have the fiscal's orders, sir," Monroe replied, and opened a document. "Acting on instructions from London, the Northumberland police followed John Oakshot from Newcastle, and our inquiries lead us to believe he stopped at your house. His description, given us on another occasion, applies correctly to the man I find here——"

"You may put up your papers. This gentleman is my son, Keith Nichol Harden."

Monroe frowned in awkward surprise. Keith smiled.

"The mistake is not flattering, but I imagine we can put all straight. If you will allow me to send for a few letters and so forth, I'll go with you to the fiscal's office."

"It is not usual."

Mr. Harden shrugged. "Oh, well, we must not urge you to agree; but I doubt if Mr. Carmichael will approve your refusing. For one thing, he knows me. Then I expect your locking up my son would soon be a first-class joke."

The sergeant hesitated, but after a moment or two he said, "Very well, sir. If Mr. Harden is ready to start——We have a car."

Keith rang a bell, and when he had given Syme some orders lighted a cigarette.

"Mr. Emerson must go with me. His business is to satisfy Mr. Carmichael I am Keith Harden."

Emerson said he would get his coat, and, going off, looked for Anne.

"Oakshot must be moved at once," he said. "I suppose the servants have not yet seen him?"

"Only Syme was in his room," said Anne, and when Garnet narrated the interview in the hall she nodded. "Yes; it may hurt him, but we must smuggle him away."

Garnet got his coat, and, returning to the hall, said to Harden:

"I suppose a *fiscal* is a sort of magistrate?"

"A Scottish fiscal is something like an American district attorney," Harden replied. "He has powers an English magistrate does not possess. Our criminal laws are not the laws in force across the Border."

"Oh, well, I reckon we can satisfy him," said Garnet cheerfully, and added in a quiet voice: "Put your patient in a car as soon as we start."

In a few minutes, Syme, carrying a small parcel, arrived. Keith took the parcel, signed the sergeant, and giving Harden a smile, went down the steps. A car waited, and for some time they sped by winding roads across the hills. All were quiet. The sergeant perhaps wondered whether the fiscal would approve his allowing the interview. Keith was preoccupied, and Garnet admitted his thoughtfulness was not remarkable. Keith was going to fight for an unscrupulous antagonist who had come near to breaking him. He, no doubt, felt he must not let Mrs. Harden down; but perhaps it did not account for all. The half-brothers must be enemies, but Keith was a Borderer and Oakshot belonged to the clan. Anyhow, Garnet knew Keith would not be resigned to be beaten. He meant, if possible, to win.

At length, at the top of a green valley, the sergeant touched the driver.

"We'll need to find Mr. Carmichael before he's away home."

They sped down from the moors and Garnet saw a shining river and an old red abbey. Then the car rolled through a quiet town and stopped at an office door. The sergeant went in, and, returning in a few moments, convoyed the others along a passage. The room into which he showed them was furnished like a lawyer's office, and a gray-haired gentleman occupied a desk at the other end. Signing the sergeant to go, he indicated chairs, and for a few moments quietly studied Keith. His look was imperturbable, but Garnet doubted if he himself could baffle the Scottish lawyer. Yet Keith had, perhaps, some advantage in the intricate game.

"You claim you are not the man we want?" Carmichael said by and by.

"That I am not is rather evident," Keith rejoined. "The sergeant heard my father state who I am, and you knew me when I was a boy."

"Since I saw Keith Harden fourteen years have gone," said Carmichael, and took a small portrait from the papers on his desk. "The picture was sent from Calgary. It is faded and perhaps the photographer was not very good; but I think it justifies our arresting you."

"The likeness is rather evident," Keith agreed. "All the same, if you study it carefully, I think you will see it is not my portrait. Then, since you have received Mr. Emerson, you will perhaps hear his statement. He is a contractor at Miscana whose business I have for some time transacted."

"We know something about your friend," Carmichael replied in a meaning voice. "Well, Mr. Emerson?"

Garnet stated that he had first met Keith in the Rockies seven or eight years since and had hauled him on a sledge a hundred miles across the snow. Afterward he had regularly visited at his house and office. The fellow whose portrait he now examined certainly was not Keith Harden. He was, no doubt, the crook who robbed the Miscana bank.

The fiscal's face was expressionless. Garnet thought he could not doubt Mr. Harden's statement, supported, as it was, by his; but he said nothing, and Keith resumed:

"Since you have Oakshot's photograph, I expect you have his finger-prints, and although I don't know the proper material for the experiment, we might try the inkpot."

Carmichael reached for another paper and pushed the inkpot across his desk. Keith smeared his thumb and pressed it firmly on a blotting-pad. The print was not very sharp, but it differed from the other. Garnet thought the experiment conclusive. In fact, he imagined Carmichael had not really doubted; but Keith had not finished his job. He must yet persuade the keen Scots lawyer the police had not followed two men to Copshope, but one. He waited calmly, and by and by Carmichael inquired:

"Were you at home yesterday evening?"

"I was not. Mr. Emerson and I were at Hexham. Our errand was to lodge some documents at the bank."

"In the *evening*?" Carmichael remarked.

"That is so. We could not get there before the office shut. I telegraphed the agent, and Mr. Emerson gave him the packet between eight and nine o'clock."

"You used the road?"

"The trains were not convenient. I drove my sister's small car and we came back across the hills."

Carmichael nodded. "A small car was on the road; but the police report the tracks of lighter wheels, and a motorcycle with the Newcastle register went through Hexham shortly after you state you were in the town."

"We certainly were not at Newcastle, and when we stopped for supper at Bellingham the landlord of the inn saw us get down from the car. Have you found the motorcycle?"

"The police followed the wheel-marks to a broken gate," said Carmichael dryly.

"I broke the gate," said Emerson in an apologetic voice. "You see, we had opened quite a number and I was annoyed about getting down again. Then the bottom rail jambed on some stones, and I threw the gate back angrily before the road was clear."

For a few moments Carmichael pondered, and then Keith remarked:

"It is, of course, possible that the fellow whose portrait you have and I were on the Hexham road at much the same time; but if so, the coincidence is rather extraordinary."

"Then, you imply——"

Keith smiled. "The business is not mine, sir; but the fellow seems to have vanished, and it looks as if the police were cheated by the likeness and followed me. Seeing the wheel-marks, they perhaps jumped to the conclusion that I used the motorcycle."

"They had some grounds to think the man was at Copshope another time!"

"I was at Copshope," said Emerson. "You see, I had arrived from Montreal, and I expect the dalesfolk knew me for a Canadian. Your officers were looking for a Canadian. That perhaps accounts for something."

The fiscal was quiet for nearly a minute, and then he got up and turned to Keith.

"Although you must agree that your arrest was justified, I am sorry we bothered you, and you will, I hope, carry my apologies to Mr. Harden. If we get fresh information, I may send for you again."

"I must start for Winnipeg very shortly," Keith replied.

"Then, you are returning to the bank?" said Carmichael, looking at him hard.

"On the whole, I think the directors will allow me to keep my post, sir."

Carmichael let them go, and when they were in the street Keith turned to Emerson.

"Well? My job was awkward. Do you think I made good?"

"The old fellow is clever," said Garnet in a thoughtful voice. "He's puzzled; I doubt if he is altogether satisfied."

Keith nodded. "I felt something like that. We will get the *Herald* at the station and look up the steamship advertisements."

HOMeward BOUND

On the valley branch line trains were not frequent, and Emerson and Keith arrived at Copshope late in the evening. Syme himself let them in, and when he took their coats he said:

"I hope your visit to Mr. Carmichael was satisfactory, sir."

"On the whole, I was satisfied," Keith replied rather dryly. "But what about your patient?"

"Mr. Harden thought we might venture to move him and he started twenty minutes after you went. We made him comfortable in the car, and I do not think the journey will harm him much."

"Well, that's all right," said Keith. "You are something of a treasure, Syme, and if I were rich, I'd very much like to take you back with me to Winnipeg. Still, my father would certainly refuse to let you go."

"Thank you, sir," said Syme, and carried off their coats.

Garnet felt he liked the old fellow. The Scots were an efficient lot, and their reserve was a useful quality; but a door opened and he saw Mrs. Harden was in the hall. Her look was strained and hard, as if she tried for control. Garnet saw she had forgotten she was the laird's lady; she was but a woman, anxious for her son.

"All's well," said Keith in a quiet voice.

The blood leaped to Mrs. Harden's skin; her stiff pose relaxed and she signed them to advance. Her gesture included Emerson, and he knew she, at length, acknowledged him her friend.

They went to the old-fashioned drawing-room. Harden crossed the floor, but when he saw his wife and son he stopped as if he knew all he had waited in suspense to learn. Garnet, however, hardly noticed him, for Keith's was the dominant figure. Fronting Mrs. Harden, he stood squarely upright; now Garnet thought about it, Keith's unconscious pose was seldom careless. One knew him for a sober and rather fastidious gentleman. Yet, for all his calm, his look was kind.

"For a time, I think my step-brother is safe, ma'am," he said. "At all events, Garnet and I used our best efforts to put Carmichael off his track."

Mrs. Harden's relief was poignant. Her color came and went and her eyes shone with a queer gentle light. Now she had done with pretense, she was touched by dignity.

"You are very generous to me, Keith. When you baffled the fiscal I expect you ran some risk."

"Oh, well, one cannot always think about safety first; and for my father's sake—and yours—I imagine all the risk I did run was justified. Then Garnet nobly played up."

Emerson began to think he had not yet really known his friend. Although Keith's English was colloquial, he did not at Copshope talk like a Miscana bank clerk. One felt he was another man. In fact, Garnet vaguely sensed a touch of haughtiness Keith had perhaps inherited. He implied that Mrs. Harden was his relation, and since she was the lady of Copshope, he was her servant.

"You are all a Borderer, and I think you know I am not," she said with a queer smile. "For long I was jealous of you; but you saved my son. Well, when you did so, I suppose you acknowledged me your father's wife."

"It weighed," said Keith. "For all that, it perhaps did not tip the beam. A woman's business is to think for her own child. To be just was not easy for you, but when I was a boy you tried to be kind——"

"And then it is not important? A man does not revenge himself on a woman who needs his help?" Mrs. Harden rejoined, but she was not ironical. "Well, we must let it go. You are fine stuff, Keith. Only that we were entangled by circumstances, I might have loved you——"

She turned to Garnet. "I tried to thwart you, Mr. Emerson. It looked as if you were dangerous, and I was afraid——Now

I hope you'll agree it's done with."

Garnet, with some embarrassment, did agree, and Harden said, "But for Mr. Emerson, Keith might be in jail."

"I expect Garnet would sooner we talked about something else, and we must begin to do so," Keith remarked. "You see, I doubt if Carmichael is baffled, I rather think he's puzzled; but that's another thing, and he'll soon get busy. Can you hide my step-brother?"

"When we put him in the car only Anne and Syme knew he was going," Harden replied in a thoughtful voice. "The servants had not seen him and I fancy the doctor will not talk——He has gone to the lonely sheep-farm where he went when he was a child. The people are primitive moorfolk and they are getting old; but I can trust Herries, and I do not think his wife has forgotten the boy she brought up."

"Ah," said Mrs. Harden, "a woman does not forget!"

"Herries is as secret as a badger and as cunning as a fox," Harden resumed with a faint smile. "I do not see an inquisitive policeman finding out much from him. Then his farm is far back in the moors, and if he can hide his guest for a week or two, I expect to get him on board ship."

"Very well," said Keith. "Where our help was useful Garnet and I have helped, but I doubt if I could bluff Carmichael another time. Then the bank must get the bonds and Garnet's partner needs him. We have fixed to sail from Liverpool in three days."

Harden looked up, but hesitated. The lines in his face got deeper, as if his thoughts distressed him, and his pose was tired and slack. Then he said quietly:

"The managers doubted you and your post was not very good. I might get you another; the merchants and manufacturers have not yet forgotten me, and if you went to Glasgow, I would know you were not far away. That would be something, Keith."

"Ah!" said Keith, "I'd like to indulge you, but I cannot. In the circumstances, the bank's doubting me was not surprising. The directors, however, are just, and when I give them back the certificates, I expect they will try to make some amends. In fact, I expect I shall not wait long for promotion——"

He stopped, but when Harden gave him a searching look, he resumed with a touch of firmness:

"When I started for Montreal I knew I had done with the Old Country; I hoped I might sometimes visit you, but I would not stop. The old ties were broken and could not again be joined. Well, I am going to marry a Canadian girl, I am a Canadian, and Canada is home——"

For a moment or two both men were quiet, and Emerson was conscious of the strain they bore. Keith was not revengeful; Garnet knew him strongly moved, and saw Harden understood. When Keith went from Copshope, Harden himself, for his fresh wife's sake, had broken the ties. He had let the boy go, and now he was a man he could not call him back.

Keith, however, got up and smiled, as if to banish the emotional stress.

"The day has been pretty strenuous, sir. Garnet and I will smoke a pipe, and then I think we'll go to bed."

They went off, and when they were in the hall saw Anne on the stairs. She ran down swiftly and kissed Keith.

"You have put Carmichael off the track! Syme told me all I wanted to know. Now I'll own I was afraid; Carmichael is very shrewd——But I suppose you will not stay?"

"We start in three days," Keith replied in a quiet voice.

Anne looked at him hard and nodded.

"Yes——You have generously done all that was possible, and I expect to refuse hurt Father; but I think you ought to go. Although we might pretend, nothing will be as it was, and one cannot forget. But you are tired. We still talk about it in the morning." She left them and they went to the smoking-room. In the meantime, Harden brooded, and by and by said to his wife:

"I must not grumble because Keith was firm. Perhaps he was forced to refuse me; but I have lost both my sons."

"Ah," said Mrs. Harden, "although I am his mother, I have not known mine! I gave him to strangers, and I think he hates me. After all, you are luckier; Keith yet loves you. But I think you may lose your daughter."

For a few moments Harden looked straight in front. His shoulders were bent and he shivered.

"If Anne goes, I must try for resignation; but when one gets old, to be alone is hard. Copshope is drearily quiet, and no children's voices will banish its gloom. Then, for my fault, my sons are enemies—as long as one shall live."

"Our punishment is just," said Mrs. Harden. "The old law stands, and we, who broke it, must bear the consequences. So far, the others were forced to pay for us; but they are young and their life is yet in front. By and by they will forget, although we cannot."

She got up, but for a time Harden brooded by the sinking fire.

After dinner two days afterward, Emerson packed his trunk, and then, coming down for some labels, found Anne in the hall.

"All's ready for our start in the morning," he remarked with an effort for carelessness.

"Your holiday was rather strenuous," said Anne. "To return to your proper business will perhaps be some relief."

"The business certainly waits. In Canada one is not allowed to loaf; but I'd sooner you gave me another job. For one thing, when I leave Copshope I cannot come back. For Mr. Harden and Madam to receive me would be an embarrassment."

"Yes," said Anne, "that is so. For Keith's sake, Father owes you much, and he does not disown his debts. Madam, at length, is your friend; but they must try to forget all that's gone. There's the trouble, Garnet! I meddled, perhaps rashly, and so long as I am at Copshope, *I* must embarrass them."

She turned her head. Although she felt Emerson's sympathy, she could not meet his glance. He knew her father's humiliation and Mrs. Harden's shame. For long Anne was quietly proud of her inheritance, but her house, so to speak, had gone down like a house built on sand. Garnet rather vaguely understood, and he touched her gently.

"There is a way out, Anne! Come back with me to Canada. I need you, and I think you know I love you."

Anne looked up and blushed like a rose. In the ruin she felt she fronted, he was a sure support. Where all on which she had reckoned melted, he, at least, stood firm. Anne was young and perhaps she exaggerated. Moreover, she was very proud, and her look got resolute.

"No," she said, "I must not. I'm afraid——"

"You afraid? My dear, I know your pluck; but, after all, I am not the sort you perhaps thought to marry. Yet, I think if you did risk it——"

"Now you are ridiculous," said Anne, and smiled, but hot color again touched her face when she resumed: "Well, your rashness moves me, but I must think for you. Keith, for his brother's fault, must long carry an awkward load. The load is his and mine; you have nothing to do with it. I am Anne Harden and my relations' disgrace touches me."

"Anne Harden is the girl I want. She is all I want, and I cannot be satisfied with another."

"Sometimes you are very obstinate," said Anne, as if she dared not indulge her emotion. "But if you urge me now, I must refuse and let you go for good."

"In the morning I start for Canada."

"Ah," said Anne, "you start for home; but I have none. Madam and I are not enemies; but for me to be where she is would hurt us both——" She hesitated, and giving Garnet a swift shy glance, went on: "Although you cannot come back, I am going to Winnipeg, and when Keith is married I shall stay with him. Perhaps if you waited, the obstacles would not look so large. Besides, you'd have time to ponder, and if you were not daunted and you urged me very much——"

Garnet kissed her. Anne's hand gently brushed his bent head; and then she pushed him back. A door jarred and Garnet was alone, but his heart beat and he thrilled triumphantly. A few moments afterward Keith came into the hall.

"Hallo! Haven't you got the labels? I told you where to look."

"It's possible. I was thinking about something else," said Emerson.

He found the labels, and Keith sent a servant to carry down their trunks. Soon after daybreak in the morning the car came to the steps, and the last thing Emerson saw at Copshope was Anne's light figure by the opening in the terrace wall. She waved to him, and vanished when the car rolled under the trees; but she had signaled, and Garnet was satisfied.

THE END

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE BROKEN TRAIL
PINE CREEK RANCH
PRAIRIE GOLD
CROSS TRAILS
CARSON OF RED RIVER
GREEN TIMBER
THE WILDERNESS PATROL
THE BUSH-RANCHER
NORTHWEST!
THE MAN FROM THE WILDS
KIT MUSGRAVE'S LUCK
LISTER'S GREAT ADVENTURE
THE WILDERNESS MINE
WYNDHAM'S PAL
PARTNER'S OF THE OUT-TRAIL
THE BUCCANEER FARMER
THE LURE OF THE NORTH
THE GIRL FROM KELLER'S
CARMEN'S MESSENGER
HARDING OF ALLENWOOD
THE INTRIGUERS
RANCHING FOR SYLVIA
THE LONG PORTAGE
A PRAIRIE COURTSHIP
THURSTON OF ORCHARD VALLEY
THE GREATER POWER
THRICE ARMED
DELLAH OF THE SNOWS
FOR JACINTA
THE DUST OF CONFLICT
ALTON OF SOMASCO
THE CATTLE BARON'S DAUGHTER

[The end of *The Broken Trail* by Harold Edward Bindloss]