hotel, which had been my first thought; as the cab drew up, I was aware that the block that usually marked Mrs. Ogilvie's door at that hour was conspicuously absent—the chauffeur had not his usual difficulty in making a landing. I paid and dismissed him before turning my attention to the house, which was still as a dead man. It seemed incredible that such utter desolation could have fastened on it in so short a time; a fortnight ago it had been venerable and hale, enjoying a hoary vitality in contrast to the middle-aged ills of its neighborhood, but now it was plainly done for, not only dead, but abandoned. The surly afternoon light flickering on its boarded windows made the place look as if it had been deserted for a century.

A shabby-looking man, loitering about the premises like a dog that had been forgotten in the general exodus, suggested a former possible connection with the place. My inquiry elicited from this cockney Ulysses an Odyssey, impossible to curtail if I would have those chapters touching the flight of the Ogilvies. It seemed he had been employed as a "hand polisher" in the late establishment, but was subject to attacks of vertigo which made him uncertain as to time or place. He believed he had been absent a matter of two days, when, on presenting himself for work—it happened to be at eleven at night—he had been amazed to see furniture vans backed to the door and a wholesale moving in progress. Presently "the missus" came down, veiled and led by a young lady and gentleman, who put her into a cab, and all of them drove off at a rattling pace. "And I arsked the helper wot 'ad come over the bloomink place, or if 'twas me still 'aving wertigo, and 'e sez: 'It's all gone up in smoke.' 'And the missus?' I arsked 'im, for I liked the missus, I did, and 'e sez, 'Up in smoke too; off to America.'"

At the risk of inducing another attack of vertigo, I gave him a couple of shillings, and as I moved down the street I heard him repeat over and over: "All gone up in smoke—all gone up in smoke."

The Three Sisters

BY CHARLES F. MARPLE

THREE sisters; one sat spinning,
The youngest and most winning;
They asked her as she spun:
"Is the day yet beginning?"
"Day is begun."

Three sisters; one sat sewing,
The middle-aged, the knowing;
They asked, "How doth Day run?"
"The lights and shades are showing
The midday sun."

Three sisters; one sat weaving;
The eldest, she was grieving;
"Is the whole day yet won?"
"We nothing gain deceiving;
Day is done."

Wreckers of the Florida Keys

BY GEORGE HARDING

FOR generations the Florida Keys—a chain of coral reefs covered with semi-tropical vegetation, stretching from Miami to Key West—have been celebrated on all the water-fronts of the world for the trouble they make the deep-sea men. The Keys lie directly in the path of the West-Indian hurricanes, which originate in general in the Caribbean Sea off the Jamaican coast, and pursue a course around Cape San Antonio of Cuba, up the Yucatan Passage, and across the Gulf to sea. What with currents, reefs, and high winds, the shipping bound to the Gulf ports and the West Indies, creeping close inshore to escape the north-bound Gulf Stream, faces catastrophe. Wrecks follow as a matter of course. Tramps, steamers, liners, schooners, and all, from the most ancient to the most modern, often find themselves helplessly stranded, and, more often than not, are beaten to pieces. In a recent hurricane three hundred craft, big and small, were driven ashore. There is therefore, in time of gales, salvage to win. Great craft carrying cargo to the value of a million of dollars have gone ashore within reach of the watchful wreckers from Key West—cotton-steamers, bound from Galveston to Liverpool, for example—and others will surely go ashore again. Wrecking is a profitable avocation—it is always ostensibly an avocation—and is prosecuted with fervor; a certain wrecking-master of Key West has had as much as sixteen thousand dollars for his attentions to a wreck through a period of sixteen days. Followed with daring and skill and a merciless lack of sympathy for skippers in trouble, wrecking has yielded fortunes to the islanders; and it is thus that it has been followed for generations.

It is chiefly with wrecking that the fishing fleet of Key West concerns itself. The fleet is prepared to put to sea on the first news of disaster; not only that, it anticipates disaster. Key West keeps an eye on the weather, is quite well aware of the shipping in the neighborhood, and is informed of every promising happening on the coast, from the outermost island to Miami. Moreover, Key West has peculiar ideas in respect to the beneficence of Providence with which the deep-sea skipper can hardly be said to be in sympathy.

"I was hoping the *Spanish Princess* would turn up here," remarked a wrecker of Key West, with a casual sigh, "but I see by the bulletin that she's safe in Vera Cruz."

There was a general sigh.

"There's just two ways of getting rich in Key West," added a wealthy manufacturer; "I'm in the cigar business myself."

That the wreckers have this peculiar attitude toward shipping in distress is of course beyond question. It is best illustrated by an unauthenticated tradition of Key West. The story goes that the past generation rigged a line between two mules, hung ship lights on it, and walked the mules along the beaches of the outlying keys to convey the impression that a ship was sailing along, and by this means lure the unsuspecting captain of some passing steamer from the channel into the treacherous reefs. This end accomplished, the next step was to board and loot. This is mere tradition. The Key West of to-day is not by any means to be suspected of tricks like these; but Key West has no hesitation in taking advantage of the misfortunes which befall off her coast, and of stripping the wretched owners and underwriters of the last penny to be extracted. Not long ago a steamship, bound from Galveston to Continental ports, went ashore on Rampidias Reef. This was all as it should be, of course, but there was little in it for