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Blind Justice*

A STORY OF CRIME, PUNISHMENT, AND MERCY

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SAIDEE finished washing the supper dishes and hung up her apron in housewifely fashion behind the kitchen door. Had any one told her that she was never to take it down again, she would have laughed.

She laughed a good deal in those days of her youth. Many things seem laughable to a girl of fifteen which later experience might view with doubt and uneasiness.

That apron she had just taken off was longer than Saidee's short skirts, which frankly revealed a good length of undeveloped boyish shin, sensibly covered with black cotton stockings. Her shoes were sensible affairs, too—a little too large around at the ankle, which gave her pipe-stems somewhat the appearance of being potted plants.

Separated from the ground by a little more than five feet of wiry personality was the gold-brown mop which caused Saidee

so much trouble in the morning and in the evening, when she brushed it, but which would have been practically her only claim to beauty if she had known how to fix it. As it was, she considered it a nuisance, and frequently wished that a barber could do his worst on it with a pair of those fascinating clippers which in the summer-time mercilessly revealed the phrenological weaknesses of her boy friends.

Saidee was no beauty then, but she was a good child according to her imperfect lights, and did not do many things of which her mother would have disapproved had she been alive to criticise. Of course, you couldn't expect a girl of her age to sweep under the rugs every day, or to pare the potatoes as thin as a scrimping mother of the previous generation would have done; but in general she kept the flat a good deal neater than her father ever noticed, and found time, besides, to go to school and to

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indulge in an occasional gang-fight with the boy ruffians of the neighborhood.

Not that Saidee was a tomboy. On the contrary, she was a very poor shot with a snowball or a wild cucumber, and an indifferent hand-to-hand scuffer; but she could run like the wind, and she had a surprising degree of strategic ability, which was invaluable to the side she honored with her assistance.

And she never cried when she got hurt. That, primarily, was the reason why the boys let her in on the amusements from which all the other girls, some much larger and stronger than Saidee, were excluded.

Further accurate details of Saidee's personal appearance are not available, because no one ever thought about what she looked like—least of all Saidee herself. She was thin and had unruly hair—that's as much as any one noticed; but she must have had nice eyes, even then, because beautiful eyes are something difficult to acquire in later life unless you have a fair foundation to work upon. It is also reasonable to suppose that her mouth was a little too large, but pleasantly curved at the corners, just as it always has been.

Saidee says herself that most of her features were blanketed by healthy freckles in those days. She still has some of them, but they're tiny ones now, and in complete subjection.

Saidee's environment was pretty much like my own, so I can tell you about her home—or, rather, I can recall it to your memory, because if you didn't live in that kind of a flat yourself a dozen years ago you must have seen one.

It was not in the Back Bay neighborhood, but it was in Boston, which allowed it to be old-fashioned with more distinction than if it had been in New York. There was an honest six rooms in it, with a regular kitchen, not a coopette of the kind we put up with nowadays. Some of the rooms had windows which looked out upon the open air. One of them even commanded a little sunshine—which was the reason Saidee kept a red geranium in it.

The furniture was of the early Grover Cleveland period, and included a folding bed which was also a combined desk, book-case, and chest of drawers. It cost eighty dollars, which was a lot of money in those days; and after you once got it into your apartment you had to live there the rest of your life, because it was too big for the

moving-van men to handle without special apparatus.

There was grille-work over a set of double sliding doors between the front and back parlor—sliding doors which had slid for the last time shortly after the building was completed, and now were stuck hard and fast in the slot in the wall, and would never again expose their warped panels to the glare of the Welsbach.

The library table was cheap mahogany, the chairs were mostly painted or gilded pine—the mission fever had not yet struck that neighborhood—and a couple of patent rockers with carpet seats and backs held forth false promises of comfort. There was Brussels carpet on the floors, framed Sunday supplements hung on the wall, and a faint odor of dead gas and rubber pervaded the air.

All these old-time apartments had that faint odor of gas. You did not notice it particularly, because you encountered it so much. The rubber component was not quite so common, but it was to be found in establishments boasting a drop-light such as Saidee's father used for reading.

His eyes weren't anything extra—he had strained them by close application to his profession—and he had rigged up a powerful gas-mantle lamp on a standard and connected it to a wall-fixture by a considerable length of gas-hose. This was so long that he could move it about to wherever he was working or reading.

He was sitting by his lamp as Saidee came in from the kitchen, a five-pound book of science in his lap. The evening paper lay entirely neglected on the table at his elbow. It was still twisted up in the roll which the carrier made of it to throw from the ground to their third-story porch.

Saidee paused for a moment by her father's side to smooth his thatch of almost white hair in the playful and teasing manner which a woman always adopts toward an absent-minded male who belongs to her.

Reever McCall reached up and patted her hand without taking his eyes from the book he was reading. Their hands were curiously alike as they met—both small, slender, nervous, but highly controlled. One could guess their skilful capability even seeing them in repose.

Saidee probably knew even then that her father was a weak man, although she had practically no standards to go by. It made no difference in her love for him, either

then, when she must have suspected it, or later, when she knew.

Reever McCall was cast in the mold of the unsuccessful. His clever brain outstripped his undeveloped body. He had a fine face, intelligent and good, but somehow lacking in strength. If you were a character-reader, you knew that he was an evader, a man who would ride straight to an issue and then balk at the clean jump. God knows, such men suffer more from their conscious weaknesses than do others from the consequences.

Reever McCall tried to hide behind a defiant mustache that was much darker than his hair and bristly like a politician's, but it was no use. That mustache never fooled any one, especially any one who had heard him speak. His voice betrayed him. Kindly and mellow though it was, it quavered and broke uncertainly in the most unexpected places. You can't be firm and self-confident if your throat suddenly closes up on you just when you are voicing an ultimatum.

But Saidee loved her father. He was hers to look after. Nearly every one who knew him felt the same way—that no matter what happened he must not be allowed to be hurt. She looked now at his slender body, meticulously clad, because Reever McCall had a childish passion for good clothes, and at the soft, well-cared-for skin of his cheeks, fresh from the razor. She smiled. He was her nice, clean baby!

Saidee was not interested in his scientific books. To her the more vivid problems of life were sufficient. She picked up the neglected newspaper and spread it out on the library table.

For a few moments she examined the head-lines in silence. Then, with a cluck of interest, she began reading one of the principal news stories.

"Listen, dad," she interrupted. "Some one has finally cracked the Greenwood Bank."

Her father lifted his eyes from the printed page abstractedly.

"What?"

"The new Greenwood Bank has been robbed," she repeated. "Don't you remember how we were talking about that just the other day, when we went by it on the bus? You thought it couldn't be done, and I said it could, because it was in an outlying district and pretty far away from the regular banking protective service."

Reever McCall put his finger firmly in the place where he had been reading, and allowed his mind to focus on what she had been saying.

"You say it's in the paper?"

She nodded.

"Then I suppose it's true; but I wouldn't have believed it possible. The yeggmen don't operate on the big city banks much any more. It's the country town cribs, which aren't quite up to date on the modern improvements, that furnish the pin-money for the soup-manufacturers. The Greenwood Bank is a mighty up-to-date institution, with electrically protected vaults and the last word in burglar-proof devices."

Saidee laughed.

"Do you believe there is such a thing as a burglar-proof device, dad?" she asked. "Or an absolute check-protector?" she added slyly.

He affected to ignore the latter part of her speech.

"I mean so-called burglar-proof devices, then. Do they know who did it?"

"No—at least it doesn't say so in the paper. There's something about the police expecting to make an arrest before morning, but they always say that," Saidee observed with gamin wisdom. "It makes people think they're on the job."

"I don't think of anybody right now who would be likely to tackle the Greenwood Bank, unless it was—but they're not in this country."

"Who?"

"I was thinking of the Cline brothers; but they're running straight—have been for four or five years. Besides, they've been away."

"If it was them," Saidee reflected naively, "and the police are as good guessers as you are, I hope they don't catch Steve Cline, that's all!"

Her father looked at her sharply.

"Why Steve Cline? Why not Swing Cline as well?"

"Well, if you're going to be particular, I'll hope they both get away; but you have to admit that Steve is better-looking, and—and he has a way with him."

"I don't know anything of the sort," growled McCall. "I scarcely thought that you would remember who they were."

"Of course I do. Nobody would ever forget Steve Cline. I guess I liked him because he has always treated me as if I was

somebody. Most of the men who come to you on business act as if I was a spy or something."

"When did you ever have a chance to become acquainted with Steve?" her father questioned cautiously.

This being both father and mother to a growing girl was a job requiring careful footsteps. Not to be so severe as to inspire deceit, and still not to let her stray into trouble for lack of a restraining hand, was the problem which confronted him, as it confronts every parent.

"Don't you remember?" she explained frankly. "The last time he was at the flat Steve took me to the theater while you were doing some work for him. He treated me just as if I was grown up—eighteen or nineteen, anyway. He bought me a bunch of violets from the man on the corner, and we had ice-cream sodas after the show, just like the real swells. Nobody ever showed me such a good time. I'll bet I think about it at least once every day. Steve's got a lot of class and education. I could learn things from him—just as I do from you," she added belatedly.

Reever McCall sighed.

"That's all very well, Saidee, but you mustn't think too much about a man who is only a crook."

"You just said he was running straight. Besides," she objected, "aren't we crooks, too?"

"Not in the same sense," he told her, and repeated an oft-offered argument—the one with which he fooled himself and anesthetized his conscience. "We use our skill when some one comes to us and wants a signature copied, but we ask only a modest fee for the service, and we have no intent to break the law. If some one uses our work later for something that is not legal, that is their affair, not ours. I would prefer not even to do that, but it's my only accomplishment, and we must live."

Saidee recognized the conclusion of the argument and offered no further ideas of her own. Besides, the cartoon sheet of the evening paper was for a moment a great deal more interesting. So she devoted herself wholly to it, her pointed elbows on the table, her chin in her cupped hands, her critical eyes searching cynically for a grain of humor in the creation of the alleged comic artists.

Once she laughed. This was tribute indeed to the humorists of the day. In order

to amuse any one as wise as Saidee, one had to be pretty funny.

II

THE car which drove up to the entrance of the apartment-building was not a public conveyance, although the man who got out of it handed the driver some money. The car itself was an old-fashioned touring model without fore-doors, and the side curtains of the high tonneau were in place, in spite of the fact that it was quite a warm evening.

There was no uncertainty about the actions of the passenger as soon as he had discharged his financial obligations to the chauffeur. He mounted the steps, entered the gas-lit hallway, and pressed the electric push-button which communicated with the bell in the McCall apartment. He pushed the button five times in all, with irregular pauses between the contacts. The latch in the inside hallway clicked, and the visitor pushed the door open and mounted the stairs.

Practically simultaneous with the entrance of the passenger into the hall below was the first activity of a young man who for two hours had been sitting motionless on the steps of another building across the street. He rose, threw away his cigaret, and walked indolently to the corner drug-store, where he entered the supposedly sound-proof telephone-booth and called up a number. After a few moments' waiting he reported as follows:

"He's here."

He seemed to be receiving some instructions, to which he listened attentively; and at the conclusion he hung up without further reply. Then he bought a fresh package of cigarets at the cigar counter and sauntered back to his former roost on the steps of the building across the way.

Saidee, who opened the door for the unannounced guest, started to ask who he was, and then, perceiving, stopped in mid-speech and changed to—

"It's Mr. Swing Cline, daddy." She looked past him into the darkness. "All alone," she added, with just a tinge of disappointment in her tone.

Her father got up.

"Come in, Swing—come in," he said cordially.

"Wasn't it funny that we were just talking of the Cline brothers to-night?" inquired Saidee.

Upon youth coincidences make noteworthy impressions.

"Humph!" the father grunted, unamazed. "Not so funny, if you remember how we came to mention them."

Saidee thought back rapidly.

"It was in connection with the Greenwood Bank."

"Go easy on that stuff!" interrupted Swing Cline. "Not that I know anything about that place you were speaking of, but—"

"That's all right," Reeve McCall assured him. "This place is safe."

"Anybody in our business who gets to thinking any place in the world is safe for him is going to land in nice quiet seclusion!" sneered Swing.

The younger of the Cline brothers got his name, presumably, from his long arms, which were quite out of proportion to the rest of his body. They were powerful levers, and they swung in front of him a little like those of our distant cousin, the gorilla. Their extreme length and the broad, powerful shoulders to which they were appended did not make for beauty or symmetry of form in their owner; but as weapons they were only slightly inferior in efficiency and range to a forty-five-caliber revolver.

At McCall's suggestion Swing seated himself on the other side of the table.

"Warm this evening," the host ventured timidly.

McCall always feared the man with whom he dealt, by whose commissions he made his livelihood.

"I'm here on business," Swing retorted curtly. "To hell with the weather!"

"I thought you and your brother were out of the game," McCall suggested mildly.

"You don't want to know anything about that now, do you?" Swing demanded truculently.

"No, of course not—no!" the old man made hasty and apologetic denial.

"Good! The fewer who know about it, the better."

The electric bell, located in the kitchen, rang five times at irregular intervals.

"Shall I answer it?" Saidee asked.

"Yes, please," her father requested.

"Do we have to have any one else here?" growled the visitor.

"I can't let any one who knows that ring stand down-stairs in the hall," McCall apologized. "You would not have liked to stand there yourself."

Saidee, without further instructions, pushed the button which unlocked the lower hall door.

Swing Cline's business, whatever it might be, was tacitly laid on the table until the nature of the interruption was ascertained.

Saidee waited by the door, and opened it when climbing footsteps approached the landing.

The visitor crossed the threshold and stood a moment by the door, which Saidee had closed behind him.

"I hoped I'd catch up with you here," he said almost casually, addressing the first visitor.

"How did you locate me?" the other demanded surlily.

"The woman at your apartment told me. She recognized me by a picture you had. Who is she?"

"Does it matter?"

"Not if you say it doesn't." The most recent arrival turned apologetically to the others. "Pardon my not even saying 'Hello!' How are you, Saidee?"

"I'm fine, Mr. Steve, and I'm awfully glad you came!"

McCall exchanged conventional greetings with the elder Cline.

Steve Cline possessed some of the graces which Swing lacked. His was a finer mechanism, not less powerful, but better controlled. He was taller, too, and more slender. Although he was two years older than his brother, he seemed boyish—perhaps because of his tendency toward good humor and a slight shyness of manner that was unintentionally ingratiating. He had an uncertain smile which it was a pleasure to evoke, and pleasant gray eyes which you did not quite know whether to take seriously or not, for they had a disconcerting way of saying something entirely different from his lips.

"I thought you were out of the country," Reeve McCall said.

"I just docked this morning," replied Steve Cline.

"In New York?" questioned his brother.

"Yes."

"You had to hurry to get here this evening," the younger man remarked in no pleasant tone.

"I did."

"Why the mad rush?"

"I saw the account of the Greenwood Bank robbery in the newspapers as soon as I landed."

"Well, cribs are being cracked every day," said Swing.

"Not exactly as this one was—not since three years ago, when the First National of Wayheegan was pried apart, and they found the metal of the vault bolts lying in the shape of powder on the floor. When I read about the stuff on the floor of the Greenwood Bank that looked like pulverized iron pyrites, I hopped on a train for your latest address. I suppose it's none of my business, but what's the idea? You and I agreed that the game doesn't pay, and that we'd cut it out."

"You may remember," suggested the younger brother, "that you did all the talking and all the agreeing at that time. You made me promise, but I had to break it—that's all."

"That woman?" suggested Steve.

"She's got the con," replied Swing briefly. "She's stood by me, and I want to get her away—that's all."

"H-m!" Steve considered the problem and then abandoned it. "It can't be helped, I suppose. What do you do next? I'm here to help."

Swing breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thanks, Steve. I'm sailing to-night. It's all fixed up but the passports. They're hard to get right now—for me, anyway. Kate got hers all right, but I didn't dare apply. But I got one printed—it's all O. K. Langly did it; and here's Kate's to copy the signatures from."

Swing Cline produced some folded papers from his breast pocket, which he laid upon the library table. Steve examined them carefully.

"It looks all right," he admitted.

"Then let's get busy," suggested Swing. "Look 'em over, professor, and finish up the phony!"

McCall, in turn, examined the passports minutely.

"There are three separate signatures on this," he announced; "and there were three different kinds of ink used."

"That doesn't feeze you any, does it?" questioned Swing, with the faint suspicion of a sneer in his tone.

"No," McCall returned pleasantly; "but it will take more time, and will cost—"

"Hang the cost!" Swing interrupted. "And cut down the time to a minimum. That's one thing we haven't got much of to spare." He snapped his fingers in nervous

irritation. "The less I hang around this burg the better."

"Sit tight, Swing," cautioned his brother. "This is no time to develop a case of nerves."

"Well, why don't he get at it?" he demanded. "I don't want to listen to conversation—I want results."

"You expect me to do this work right here and now, while you are waiting?" inquired McCall mildly.

"Yes, if you can, please," requested Steve pleasantly.

"A friend of mine in the booking-office is holding reservations for to-night's sailing for me," explained Swing.

"I'll try," McCall declared nervously; "but, frankly, I have never attempted so large a job on such short notice. Now in a couple of days—"

Swing snapped his fingers again.

"Hell! I may be buried in a couple of days."

"Saidee," directed her father, "bring in my tray with the inks on it, and see that there are plenty of new pens."

Saidee departed into the next room for the supplies. While she was gone, Swing jerked his head in the direction in which she had left.

"How about the kid? Is she safe?"

"Of course," her father assured him. "She's tight as a drum."

The men relapsed into restless silence until Saidee returned with a basket-like tray containing, in all, about two dozen ink-bottles and a sheaf of pens of all sizes from fine to stub.

"Will a tracing do?" the old man inquired. "I can make that in about half the time."

Steve shook his head.

"No—we can't afford to slip up now. It has to be a bona-fide signature. I can spot a tracing myself as far as I can see it."

Reever McCall sighed, and bent himself for a close examination of the first signature he was expected to copy. After perhaps five minutes he drew a sheet of blank paper toward him, and, dipping a pen in one of the ink-bottles, made a facsimile of it. It was very like the original, but he was not satisfied, and tried it again and again. The other two men watched him.

Perhaps their impatience added to the nervousness of the penman, for after three trials he shook his head.

"I can't seem to get it," he declared.

"I thought you were supposed to be good at this," interjected Swing. "I know a chap in Chicago who could shoot off the three of them in this time."

"Steady!" cautioned the elder brother. "You aren't in Chicago, and this has to be done to-night. You know there's no one any better in this business than McCall. Give him a chance!"

"I'm all upset," McCall complained querulously. "I don't know what's the matter."

Saidee came to the rescue of her harassed parent.

"Let me try it, will you, daddy?" she suggested soothingly, and took the pen from his fingers.

"Aw, we ain't got time to monkey with a kid," Swing snarled. "You don't get the idea that we're in a rush. Maybe if your life—"

"Hush!" Steve put his hand on his brother's arm. "Watch the kid!"

Saidee looked at the signature for perhaps thirty seconds with eyes which microscopically divided it into its component parts. Then, without hesitation, she wrote it out on a blank piece of paper as quickly and easily as if it was her own.

"What the—"

Swing was silenced by the uncanny speed and accuracy of it.

"Gee, the kid's better at it than the old man!"

Reever McCall sighed, partly with relief and partly with resignation.

"Saidee began it younger than I did," he explained; "and I suppose she may have inherited some of her skill from me," he added with some pride.

"Would this work do?" Saidee asked, with modest confidence in her ability.

Swing looked to his brother for confirmation of his enthusiasm over Saidee's penmanship. The girl noticed Steve's quizzical, half-disapproving expression of hesitation. She made a mental note to ask him about that later.

"Yes," he directed, "go ahead. We've got to have them."

The silence while Saidee worked was a genuine tribute to her skill. She had the reassuring lack of hesitation and the swift grasp of herself and of the work in hand which denotes an efficient workman in any trade or profession.

Within fifteen minutes the passport was signed and in the pocket of the man who

expected to use it. They stood up. Steve Cline produced a wallet and extracted a large bill, which he tendered in payment for the service.

"No, Steve, that is too much," said Reever McCall.

Steve shook his head.

"It isn't enough." He hesitated, as if debating whether or not to say anything further, and then decided to plunge in. "Look here, McCall, it isn't any of my business, but why in God's name did you teach Saidee to do this trick?"

"Why, I didn't exactly teach her."

"Of course not," Saidee interjected. "I just picked it up from watching father work."

"Well, it isn't fair." Steve shook his head. "It's a rotten kind of cleverness!"

"Oh!"

The exclamation was forced unwittingly from Saidee's lips. She was hurt to the core to feel that instead of appreciation of her help, without which their visit would have been fruitless, she had received only a criticism of her morals.

It was significant of Steve's attitude toward Saidee that, instead of noticing her involuntary protest of pain, he continued the argument to her father.

"You and I know, McCall, that there isn't anything in this game. I am not at all sure that I'm arguing against it just because it isn't right. I'm not even sure that I know what's right or wrong; but breaking the law just doesn't pay. The rewards, even if you win, aren't big enough to counterbalance the chances you take."

"We don't break any laws," began Reever McCall. "We don't know why people want signatures copied. If they are used afterward for some illegal—"

Steve Cline interrupted him impatiently.

"I know that talk," he said, brushing the argument aside; "but it doesn't fool either of us."

"What else can I do?" pleaded the girl's father.

"Perhaps it is all right for you," agreed Steve. "Anyway, you can't change now, I suppose; but a kid of Saidee's age ought to have her chance."

"For God's sake, Steve," snapped his younger brother, "can the chatter! You may not think very much of the bulls in this town, but I tell you the police department has improved since you were here last."

"All right, Swing; but I think that Saidee is worth five minutes of your time, if I can say—"

"There ain't anybody who's worth five minutes of my time if that five minutes costs me my life!"

Steve directly turned to Saidee.

"Look here, kid," he said earnestly. "I've got a hunch you will do something for me. Will you?"

Saidee had forgotten her hurt in the thrill of realization that this man, whom she admired so sincerely, was taking enough interest in her welfare to waste minutes which were tremendously precious to him. She nodded breathlessly.

"All right," declared Steve crisply. "Then I want you to promise right here and now that you will never, so long as you live, copy another signature for any one. Does that go?"

"I promise," declared Saidee solemnly.

"And there is one more thing I want you to do—I want you to forget that you ever knew men like me."

"How can I?" questioned Saidee, the answer to her own question shining in her eyes.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

III

"WHAT did I tell you?" whispered Swing, turning like a trapped animal and facing the door upon which the knock had sounded.

"Don't go to pieces, Swing," Steve admonished hastily. "No one knows we're here. It's probably a friend or a customer for McCall."

Reever McCall was shaking like a leaf.

"Any of my friends would have rung the bell in the hall below," he contributed in a voice which broke mid-way. "If it's the police, don't tell them why you came here."

"Huh! You expect us to protect you, do you?" Swing growled.

"We'll do that," offered Steve. "Shut up, Swing. This probably isn't anything. No one knows we came here."

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The knocks were louder this time, and were followed immediately by the heavy-voiced order:

"Open up here, and be quick about it!"

Saidee looked questioningly at Steve. He nodded, and Saidee proceeded to unchain the door and slide the bolt.

The door opened, to reveal probably the most unwelcome sight that could have greeted the eyes of the group in the room. Four uniformed policemen and a heavy-set man in plain clothes stopped for a moment on the threshold and then marched in.

"Stick 'em up!" ordered the plain-clothes man. "Hello, Swing! I suppose this is your brother, Steve. Never had the pleasure before, Steve."

Even Saidee had elevated her arms along with the others at the police order.

"You can stand to one side, kid," said the detective. "If we have to shoot, we don't want to hit you. Nice eyes you've got, even if you ain't looking exactly amiable out of 'em. I'll come back and look you over later."

Meanwhile the uniformed policemen, without any further orders, had searched the three men for weapons, finding a revolver in the pocket of Swing Cline, but nothing further.

"Well," said the detective, sucking his lower lip, "I guess maybe I wasn't a lucky guy to make this pinch! I'm willing to admit that catching the Cline brothers with the goods is the best job I ever pulled!"

"What do you mean, with the goods?" demanded Swing surlily.

"You know what I mean," declared the detective; "and you know who I am, too, don't you?"

"You're McNab of the Central Office, aren't you?" inquired Steve pleasantly.

"Yes, I'm Sergeant McNab, and you're the guy we've never been able to get anything on, ain't you?"

"There's a lot of people like that, aren't there?" Steve returned with unflinching humor. "There's no particular reason why you should have anything on us, any more than on most of the inhabitants of your beautiful city."

"Cut your kidding, Steve! Save that for the judge."

"Get a going, McNab," Swing suggested irritably. "If you think you have anything on us, spill it. We've got an engagement this evening, and we're late already."

"I should say you are late," the detective agreed with grim humor; "and you're going to be a lot later—about ten years later, I think. Believe me, Swing, this is worth a year's pay to me to be the one to shove you behind the bars. What do you think that woman of yours will do when you are gone? I'll put her on the street, all

right! You would take her away from me, would you?"

He reached over and struck Swing in the face with his open hand.

The next thing that happened was that the long arm of the younger Cline descended like a trip-hammer upon the head of his tormenter. The fine edge of Swing's temper could stand no more.

Sergeant McNab staggered and fell to the floor. The rest of the company stood for an instant in hushed silence. Then the fallen man fumbled in his pocket and produced a police revolver. He didn't say anything—it would not have been so dreadful if he had—but he deliberately cocked it, aimed with an unsteady hand, and pulled the trigger.

In the small room the explosion was so confined that you felt it, rather than heard it. It seemed as if the walls must expand to accommodate the strength of the blast.

Even after it was over, no one moved for a second. Then Swing swayed slightly forward, his knees bent, and he slipped to the floor, face down.

Saidee was never able to explain why she did what she did in the next few moments. Possibly it was the instinctive reaction inspired by her knowledge of gang-fight strategy among the boys.

At any rate, standing to one side as she did, she noticed that the rubber hose of her father's standard lamp was just under her feet. She placed the sharp edge of her shoe against and across the hose, and bore down with all her weight. The gas-lamp fluttered and went out, leaving the room absolutely dark.

In that darkness she was conscious that half a dozen revolver shots flashed and roared. The window-pane crumpled with the sound of tinkling glass. The library table fell over with a crash, and the grunts and murmured curses of men struggling with one another filled the air, along with the odor of escaping gas. Finally there was the sound of a door that slammed and a lock that was turned.

Then silence.

The voice of Sergeant McNab was the first to be heard.

"Somebody with a flash-light turn off that gas," he commanded sharply. "Don't light a match!"

A ray of light from a pocket flash-lantern slit the darkness. By accident, it first rested on the pale face of Saidee. The

strange thing about this sudden flash of Saidee's face in the dark was that there was no trace of fear upon it. Several of the men in the room were to remember that in later years. She was excited, yes, and horrified a little, perhaps; but of concern for her own safety her expression betrayed not the least trace.

"You, kid, find the gas-bracket and turn off the gas," ordered Sergeant McNab from the floor.

Saidee did as requested, being followed in her task by the bright ray from the flashlight. By this time McNab was on his feet once more.

"Let me take that light," he said, commandeering the flash from his subordinate. "Now who's here?"

He turned the shaft of light around the room, resting for an instant on each policeman and on the faces of Reeve McCall and his daughter, then finally on the form of the prostrate Swing Cline. From under Swing's body ran a trickle of blood.

The ray of light moved over to the apartment door. The detective turned the knob.

"Huh!" he exclaimed. "The door locked and the key gone!"

He stood for an instant by the door, silent, then burst forth into a series of sputtered commands.

"Murphy, we'll take a chance on that light. Put a match to the gas. Collins, put your shoulder to this door as soon as the light comes on."

The match sputtered in the darkness, but the explosion which all awaited with in-drawn breaths did not occur.

Saidee noted that the overhead gas-fixature was undamaged by the flying bullets. The officer lit a flaring jet, which whistled and flickered from a defective tip.

The room was a chaotic mess. The combined desk, bookcase, and folding bed was smashed. The table, with its tray of many-colored inks, was lying sideways on the floor, a wreck of glass and vivid-hued stains showing where the bottles had broken.

One of the officers was holding a useless arm with his other hand, but there seemed to be no further casualties from the shooting in the dark. Steve Cline was gone, Saidee noted with a thrill of joy. When she had cut off the light, she had not been sure that it would be of any use to her hero; but now, when she realized that it had been the means of his making his escape, she felt very proud.

The officer who had been detailed to break down the door took a run across the room and threw his whole weight upon it. The panel cracked. A repetition of the same tactics burst it clear through.

"Collins," snapped Sergeant McNab, "you take charge of these two prisoners. The other chap is dead, I think. All the rest of you men go after Steve. Murphy and Salzberg, look up-stairs on the roof, and the rest down on the street with me."

The officers scrambled through the broken door, followed by McNab. Collins was left alone with Reeve McCall and Saidee. He laid his night-stick on a chair and produced a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"I'm sorry, folks," he said; "but as there are two of you, I can't take any chances. You'll have to put your wrists in these." He attached one of the bracelets to the wrist of each prisoner, linking father and daughter together. "The other poor devil, I guess, isn't going to need any one to hold him."

He bent over and slipped his hand under the body of the prostrate Swing, to find out if his heart was still beating.

From that position the officer did not rise. Instead, he sank without a sound across Swing's body.

His own night-stick had been administered as a sleeping potion right on the top of the skull; and the doctor was neither Reeve McCall nor Saidee, but Steve Cline, who had entered from the kitchen, where he had been hiding.

Even when he was sure that the officer would cause no further trouble, Steve signaled to the other two that they should keep silent. Working swiftly, he lifted the unconscious police officer from the body of his brother, and assured himself that Swing's heart was not beating. Next he unfastened a belt that Swing wore under his vest, and transferred it to his own waist. Then he methodically transferred the contents of his brother's pockets to his own, including the passports.

He next proceeded to remove the officer's uniform coat, which he put on himself in place of his own. Then he extracted the policeman's keys from his trouser-pocket, belted himself according to police regulations, with the night-stick in place, picked up the vizored cap, and motioned to Reeve McCall and Saidee to precede him through the door.

Halting McCall at the door, Steve handed him his own discarded coat and hat.

"Carry these," he ordered roughly, acting the part of an officer with prisoners in his custody.

The trio descended the stairs to the street. There was no one of the police force in sight, except the driver of the patrol-wagon which was pulled up at the curb before the house.

Steve indicated by signs that his presumable prisoners were to climb the steps at the rear of the patrol. Wonderingly they did so.

"That's all for now, McNab says. Come back for the rest," directed Steve, speaking to the patrol-driver.

Apparently this conformed well enough with the usual procedure not to arouse the suspicions of the driver, who clucked to his team and started off at a mildly exhilarating pace.

As soon as they were started, Steve sorted over the patrolman's keys until he found the one that fitted the handcuffs. He proceeded to unlock the manacles which linked Reeve McCall and his daughter together. After that he waited his chance until the patrol was passing through a relatively unlighted portion of the street. Then, creeping up behind the driver, he delivered the same kind of a knock-out that he had been obliged to use on the officer in the McCall apartment.

There was no struggle. The driver simply dropped the reins, which Steve took from his hands. Reeve McCall and Saidee dragged the unconscious man back into the body of the patrol-wagon, while Steve scrambled over the seat. Even a passer-by on the street could not have noticed that there had been a change.

The course of the patrol-wagon was altered at the next turning. Instead of proceeding by the nearest way to the police-station, as it would have done under the guidance of the regular driver, it turned up the cross street in the direction of the railroad-station, which it reached after a few minutes' brisk gallop.

A quarter of a block beyond the station Steve pulled up, fastened the reins, and dismounted. His two pseudo-prisoners got out also.

Steve gave the near horse a slap on the flank with the palm of his hand, and the team started off. Steve surmised that they would eventually go back to their stable.

In the shadow of a viaduct he gave his instructions to the other two. As a postscript, he made the following astonishing statement:

"I am going to be a very lonely man from now on. Swing is the only person I ever cared anything about. It's a cinch I don't want the money that cost him his life. I am all through with that sort of thing; so I want you to have it, McCall. We can't give it back. Maybe we can do a little good with it to counterbalance the harm. I meant what I said to Saidee back there in the flat. I want her to have her chance. There's enough here to make it sure. Strap this belt around you under your vest. When you get clear, put the coin away and use it to give Saidee an education and to keep her from knowing any more people like you and me."

The others started to protest, but Steve cut them off almost savagely.

"There's nothing more to be said about it. You've got to take it, or I'll throw it away. I tell you I cared for my brother," he declared, as if this was an adequate explanation.

Perhaps the outburst soothed his feelings, for nothing more was said. McCall took the money, and belted and strapped it around his waist.

Saidee put her hand on the arm of the tall man.

"I am very sorry," she said simply.

He touched her hand negligently.

"That's all right, kid. It's all in the game."

Steve led the way to the railroad-station. There he purchased tickets for all of them for the next train out, which proved to be to St. Louis.

These tickets were duly presented to the gate-keeper at the proper entrance. Once inside, Reeve McCall handed Steve his coat and hat, and then he and his daughter mingled with the group from the incoming train and filed out once more into the waiting-room. Steve boarded the train, and got into a compartment which he had secured. There he changed from the police uniform back to his own clothes.

Ten minutes later he got off at the first outlying station, and hired a taxicab to take him back to the water-front, where he arrived a few minutes before sailing time of a second-rate ocean liner.

The woman whom he had met earlier in the evening at his brother's apartment was

there, waiting nervously in the company of a young man. Steve drew her aside and explained rapidly, finishing with—

"Don't bat an eye until you're on board. Don't you dare cry until you're safe!"

Then he exhibited the two passports to the young man, who declared them O. K., and gave him two steamship tickets. The name on Steve's passport was "John Swift."

IV

IN the life of every one there are a few high lights. In the existence of the average person it is only these illuminated points that possess any interest to the rest of the world. Except for the moments spent in the glare of a search-light under stress of exceptional excitement or emotion, one individual's career is very like another's, and the telling of it would arouse nothing but boredom in the listener. His mind would wander off and dwell lovingly on the fact that he could tell a better tale himself.

So it was with Saidee. Thrice her life rose to a climax. The rest of it might be regarded as a period of preparation for these three strenuous moments.

For the second act of her life drama the curtain rose upon a dimly lit stage.

It was along toward midnight in the railway-station of a manufacturing city in France.

The waiting-room was crowded with people and odors, because in this period the busiest hours at all French railway-stations occurred between retreat and reveille. Railroad-trains moved furtively under cover of darkness. The location of switchyards and terminals was kept concealed as far as possible by the sparing use of light. All exposed incandescents were painted blue, and had opaque shades to cut off their radiance upward toward the sky.

At both doors of the waiting-room stood a dirty, unkempt, little French sentinel with bayonet fixed, to inspect the special permits of those who sought to go or come from the platform. The only persons who passed them carelessly were the female porters in overalls, trundling trunks on heavy trucks, and the ubiquitous *chef de gare*, with his passive lack of interest in the woes of the traveling public—unless the aforesaid traveling public happened to have a package of cigarets in its pocket, American cigarets preferred.

A cue was waiting in front of the ticket-seller's window, which was firmly closed, and would not be opened until just a few moments before train-time. Train-time was any time when a passenger train could get the right of way over the military supply traffic going one way and the hospital trains returning from the front.

It was a heterogeneous crowd, ranging from the weather-beaten, indifferent stoicism of the peasants to the alert garrulosity of the city women. These latter could run on, and on and never tire, and they had views on every subject in the world, which they were willing to share with any one who would listen.

The walls of the station were covered with placards of varying age, labeled "*avis*," and counseling caution in speech lest the ears of an enemy might overhear. They seemed to have no effect upon the chatter.

Perhaps a third of the passengers awaiting transportation were *permissionnaires*—dejected-looking blue-clad soldiers, with everything hung on them but the kitchen stove. A bottle of wine, or two bottles, stuck out of their pockets, and extra *musettes* containing treasures of bread and home-made comforts in the line of wearing apparel were hung over every conceivable portion of their anatomy.

Many lunches were being consumed, consisting chiefly of unbuttered bread and *pinard*. The sour, slightly acrid odor of the latter permeated the station from end to end. You could never escape it so long as you traveled in France.

All the soldiers who could had crowded into the American Red Cross Canteen. These American canteens were very popular with the French *poilu en permission*. In any railway-station in which there was both a French Red Cross Canteen and an American one, the native establishment only got the overflow trade.

And what do you suppose was the favorite order of the ragged-looking, unshaven men in horizon blue?

Coffee and doughnuts!

If the war had lasted one more year, and the Salvation Army and the Red Cross had had backing enough, doughnuts would have become the international delicacy of the allied armies. Almost any soldier of any command would have sat up half of the night, or walked a dozen miles, to get a single sinker.

Behind the counter of the American Red Cross Canteen at this particular railway-station was Saidee.

It would have been pretty hard to tell whether Saidee was a pretty girl or not. The doughboys who passed through the canteen would have rated her higher than Helen of Troy; but the artistic standards of the soldiers in an expeditionary force several thousand miles from home were not to be trusted when it came to their opinion of the appearance of a girl from God's country.

Certainly Saidee had no time or energy to devote to adding to whatever natural advantages she possessed. She was chronically tired. She had been tired for about a million years, it seemed, although she tried her best never to let any one know this but herself.

Her eyes were still fine, and had the direct outlook on life by which it is possible to identify the American girl. She smiled cheerfully, but that doesn't distinguish her from the other American woman in the service; for if they didn't know how to smile when they went over, they learned it while they were there. They had to smile. Conditions were too dreadful for anything else.

A dozen years of association with people who knew nothing of evading the law had almost made Saidee forget that she had ever been able to copy a signature. A girls' school, then college, had provided her with social refinement, and with what was even more advantageous—friends of the right sort.

Saidee had nearly forgotten, yes, but it could not be said exactly that she had reformed. Reformation implies repentance and an aching conscience. Saidee did not look back with horror upon the life that preceded her more conventional one. On the contrary, she regarded it as having been rather interesting. Some of the people whom she remembered from it she still thought of as her friends.

This was especially true of her recollection of Steve Cline. They had never heard a word from him since that night when he had extricated them from the clutches of the law. It was fairly certain that he had not been captured, or the newspapers would have made a sensation out of it; but whether he lived or had died they did not know.

He had intimated that they would not hear from him again, and his intimation

had come true. At first they had been reluctant to use the money he had given them; but later, when there seemed little likelihood that he would ever claim it, they had devoted it, as he had instructed, to Saidee's education.

In some ways Reeve McCall had derived more benefit from this modest competence than his daughter. He was not naturally of an adventurous type, and the opportunity of escaping from the anxieties of his illegal profession had allowed him to carry out nature's intentions and become a student. He was having the time of his life as a dilettante scientist. Saidee, who adored him, thanked God and Steve Cline impartially for having made life smooth for her father.

For herself, she had not particularly sought the paved paths. She had done everything that the modern young woman can do with decorum—which is a great deal, as you know if you are acquainted with the species. When the war came along, it was quite the natural thing to engage in the most active volunteer work open to her sex. Her father had protested at first, had feared for her safety; but she had overruled him, as usual, and he had accepted her going with resignation. This feeling was augmented, perhaps, by the thought that he would have more undisturbed time for reading while Saidee was not there to make him exercise.

So here was Saidee now, still youthful—twenty-five, that is—still slender and boyishly lithe, in full charge of a Red Cross Canteen. A fine young woman, untroubled by regrets, unattached—for love had left her singularly disentangled—she was doing the next thing that had to be done, taking care of each moment as it came along, and letting the future take care of itself.

She moved swiftly about her tasks, shifting with equal speed from one language to another as she addressed first an American soldier and then a French companion in arms who stood in line at the coffee-counter.

A heavy-set French peasant, Julie, stood stolidly at the coffee-urn, measuring out bowls of what passed current for Mocha and Java in such canteens. It wasn't so bad at that, sometimes, especially if it was freshly made, and if you could get condensed milk in it. By comparison with the slop that was served in the French canteens, it was nectar.

The idea of serving it in bowls was an

inspiration. There were no handles to knock off, and it seemed as if you were getting a lot more. Besides, the arched construction of the bowls made it possible to bounce one upon the floor without much damage, except to the floor.

Saidee had infinite patience—she had to have. If anything went wrong, as something did every five minutes, she managed to bridge over the breach with a smile and a hairpin, woman's two most potent repair appliances.

She was the only American woman on duty from dusk to daylight. They were short-handed just then, and two of them held the canteen bar against all comers—one on the long stretch during the day, and the other for the slightly shorter but more arduous period of the night. Sometimes they both worked together. That was when there was a long series of hospital trains coming through.

They had a great deal of help of two kinds. One was the hired assistance of French and Belgian refugee women, who, if you supervised them carefully, could peel potatoes and wash dishes. Some of them could cook, but what the boys wanted was grub prepared in American fashion, and the French women couldn't do that.

The American feminine mind seemed to take naturally to the construction of cakes, cookies, and doughnuts. Many women, like Saidee herself, who knew nothing of pastry except from eating it, became masters in the art of constructing American desserts from nothing in particular. If you are not used to it, frying doughnuts, for instance, is a nerve-racking job, especially if you do a batch of five hundred at once, and the grease spatters on you from an inadequate kettle. Saidee was a correspondence-school cook, but she went at her work with a determination which eventually resulted in a certain degree of skill. Before the war was ended she could point to her cookies with pride, and could even eat one herself when she felt hungry.

The other assistance which the Red Cross workers learned to expect was that of enlisted men. This help was not paid for, save in kindness. Presumably every canteener could depend upon several men, just as Saidee could, to come in and help police-up the place whenever they happened to be off duty.

Saidee's principal striker was a hospital sergeant, who spent many hours at the sta-

tion in charge of stretcher details waiting for ambulance trains. This chap—Reilly by name—treated Saidee very much as if she were some kind of a saint with whom he was on sufficiently familiar terms to josh her occasionally. That attitude was characteristic among American soldiers toward the American women who served with the army in one capacity or another.

Reilly was in the canteen now, a trifle swelled up by his own importance. For just a few minutes before he had been obliged to bounce a "frog" who had tried to get more than the allowance of doughnuts by standing in line several times. Saidee had detected the offender on the third round, and had given Reilly the nod—a signal prearranged between them, for which he was constantly waiting with joyful expectation. Ejecting a "frog" from the canteen was child's play for Reilly. He was six foot three in army socks, and the average *poilu*, with his helmet on, stood just about level with the top of his sergeant's chevrons.

Out of the night came a shrill shriek, like that of a woman being tortured. It failed, however, to arouse a chivalrous instinct in the soldiers in the canteen, because they knew, as did Saidee, that it was only the whistle of a French locomotive, potent in carrying power, but awful for persons with nerves. The locomotive whistle galvanized every one into activity, however, for the next train expected through was carrying wounded from the Argonne. Back there they knew the great drive was on, not so much from the newspapers, but from the overflowing base hospitals—great establishments which were designed to take care of the derelicts of an army of two million men, but which were taxed a little beyond their utmost capacity.

Sergeant Reilly gathered his men together by a gesture of the arm, and they proceeded outside to the ambulances and trucks, the latter being improvised ambulances. From these they took the stained and dirty stretchers which had already made a half a dozen trips that night.

Service at the canteen bar automatically stopped. The soldiers standing in line accepted this deprivation without even a murmur. Saidee, with her French assistants, took up large baskets containing packages of cigarets and sandwiches, and made for the station platform. If they had had more help they would have carried coffee,

too; but for this night cigarets would have to do as a stimulant.

About forty of the worst cases were taken from the train. The others would go on. That was the way the hospital service was handled. Those who needed the most attention were dropped off at the nearest base hospital. The ones who could travel a little farther were carried on. Some of the less severe cases got as far as Bordeaux with only first-aid dressings.

It was to those who went on that Saidee and her assistants catered. It was little enough that they could give them, but they were received as if they had been feminine Santa Clauses visiting a tenement at Christmas-time. Saidee kept her smile working automatically, because it drew smiles in return from lips that were otherwise set; but she had to force herself when she saw some lad with the ghastly pallor and the slightly blue lips that were so often the forerunners of oblivion. All she could do was just to smile and hand out a few cigarets and sandwiches; but when she got through the long train of funny little bobbly coaches she felt as exhausted as if she had done a washing. She had been on duty for six months, but Saidee could never get used to the strain of going through the hospital specials.

By the time she and her assistants returned to the canteen, most of the ambulances had been loaded and despatched. The last heavy truck was receiving its complement of passengers. Finally every inch of the floor space was covered, and there was one stretcher left.

Saidee was standing by when this situation arose.

"I guess you are out of luck, buddy," declared Reilly to the soldier on the stretcher. "We'll have to leave you here until we can make a run out to the hospital and send a special ambulance back for you. Can you stand it?"

The boy on the stretcher looked back at him and essayed a smile.

"Sure I can stand it, sergeant. I don't think I'm hurt very bad, anyway."

But Saidee and Sergeant Reilly knew that he was wrong. If he had not been pretty seriously wounded, they would not have put him off at that station. He would have been taken on to one of the many other base hospitals a hundred miles or so farther along.

"I'll take care of him," Saidee told Sergeant Reilly.

"Did you hear what she says?" Reilly asked with a grin. "She's going to take care of you. You're playing in luck, because if you went out to the hospital it would probably be a couple of hours before the medic would come around to you. This is a better place to wait, especially if Miss McCall gives you some of that coffee she just made and slips you a couple of cookies and a doughnut. I tell you, you've lit on your feet!"

"I sure did," the wounded soldier agreed with all the heartiness possible. "You needn't bother to hurry back."

And so the truck rumbled away into the greasy night. While it was not raining, it was doing the only other thing it ever does in France—misting.

The sentry at the vehicle entrance glistened damply under the arc-light, and his long, slender bayonet caught points of light and threw them back.

"You will be more comfortable right here than in the canteen," Saidee told the wounded soldier. They were on a sort of loading platform adjacent to the military entrance to the tracks. "The air is much better out here than inside, and this place is covered well enough so that you won't get wet."

"Sure, I'm all right," the young man agreed. "Say, tell me, miss, is my helmet still here?"

She looked. Hanging across one of the handles of the stretcher was a tin hat badly dented and covered with clay. For answer, Saidee held it up for his inspection.

He heaved a sigh of relief.

"I'm keeping that lid for a souvenir. That mud on it came out of the shell-hole where I was sitting most of the night before last."

Saidee marveled at the boyishness of her wounded countryman. How wonderful that this lad should be more interested in preserving intact that useless steel helmet than in the question as to whether his arms and legs, or perhaps his life, would be spared to him! She felt that in his case she would probably be groaning and asking why the doctor didn't hurry up.

"You be a good boy for a few minutes, and I'll bring you a little grub," Saidee declared after she had lit a cigaret for him. "Things ought not to be very busy for the next hour or so, and maybe you'll have time to tell me something about the big show while you are waiting."

She went back to her post in the canteen and issued a half a dozen orders to the girls who were helping her. The customers had dwindled to only a score or so, and some of them were asleep at the tables; so Saidee thought she could leave. She picked up a bowl of coffee, piled a plate with such delicacies as were available, and returned to her wounded charge.

"How does that look to you, son?" she inquired, as she placed the rations beside her guest.

"Fine," he declared; "but you needn't trouble about me if you have anything else to do."

Saidee had a hundred other things she might have done, one of them being to snatch half an hour's sleep sitting up in her chair behind the counter; but this was neither the time nor the place to indulge her own whims. She let the soldier suppose that she was only a care-free loafer who had been doing nothing but resting until this moment, and who was, therefore, fresh for anything that might come along.

"You might tell me your name," Saidee suggested as she helped him handle the huge bowl of coffee. "Mine is Saidee McCall, if you care to know."

"I sure do, Miss McCall," he told her. "I'll never forget you. I am Philip Logan, private in B Company, Three Hundredth Infantry. Ouch!" He stopped after the involuntary exclamation and pulled himself together. "Gee, that slipped out," he apologized shamefacedly. "I must have twisted a muscle the wrong way, or something. Will you give me another of those cigarets, Miss McCall? If I get something to smoke, it's kind of easier."

Saidee knew this to be true, because the same thing had been repeated before her eyes hundreds of times. Night after night she had unconsciously thanked God for the invention of cigarets. They probably eased more hours of pain than any other anesthetic employed in the hospitals.

When the soldier was puffing contentedly, she reached out and took hold of his hand, which she held for a moment with a gentle pressure. Then she brushed back his hair from his forehead, which was slightly damp; and it was from that, and that only, that she knew how great his pain was. She looked into his eyes and smiled.

"It's all right, Miss McCall," he reassured her. "I ain't going to let out a yelp,

but I sure do appreciate what you just said."

"But I didn't know I said anything," Saidee objected.

"You would have if you had looked in a mirror," returned Private Logan.

Saidee blushed.

"You ain't mad, are you?" pleaded the boy. "I didn't mean any offense."

"Good Lord, no!" Saidee returned almost roughly. "Do you think I have been serving with this man's army for over six months and haven't learned to stand a bit of blarney from a kind of a bright-looking young private without getting sore?"

Philip Logan grinned appreciatively. This was the kind of treatment that made a fellow buck up—pal-like sympathy, and not coddling.

Along toward two o'clock the *chef de gare* hunted up Saidee, whom he considered a lifelong friend and incidentally an almost inexhaustible source of cigarets. He had a telephone message from Sergeant Reilly, who wanted him to inform Miss McCall that the entire hospital staff was tied up by a fire in one of the main buildings, and that the consequent transfer of patients would prevent his being able to send an ambulance for the wounded man until several hours later. The *chef de gare* conveyed this in polite French.

Saidee received the message with sinking heart, because she knew that Private Logan really needed attention. Perhaps waiting all night might prove fatal to the man in his exhausted condition. She hated to break the news to him, but it didn't seem fair to let him lie awake all night expecting every minute to have his wound treated, when he might possibly be getting a little rest.

Saidee was a person of instant decision. Moreover, her decisions were rather more than instinctive impulses. There was usually a logical basis for them. Now she made up her mind, and having come to a conclusion she carried it out in terms of action.

From her own meager baggage she procured bandages, iodine, antiseptic solution, and surgical tape. A collapsible wash-basin completed her outfit.

Returning to her *blessé* on the station platform, she told him frankly what she purposed to do. He demurred, on the ground that it was too much trouble.

"Unless you are afraid to have me dress

your wound," Saidee said, without abandoning her position, "it will be much better for me to attend to it now than for you to wait perhaps until morning. I have had plenty of instruction in surgical dressing."

Private Logan would not have admitted any fear of having her administer to him, even if he had felt any.

"Shoot! It's no kind of a job for a girl, because I'm kind of messy. You'll find the details of my case, so far as they know them, on the tag here."

He indicated the field hospital classification card, which was fastened to his clothing. Saidee lifted it up and read that his right shoulder was shattered and that he had minor scalp wounds.

"Here's a fresh cigaret," she said in businesslike tones. "It will keep you busy while I fix you up. If I'm clumsy about it, tell me."

With not quite professional skill she peeled off the blood-soaked bandages, cleansing the wound as best she could without in any way interfering with the field surgeon's dressing. Then she repacked it more comfortably and strapped him into the dressing.

"There! I don't know whether I accomplished anything or not, but I believe that ought to be more comfortable."

"You're whistling!" Logan assented cheerfully, as soon as he was able to loosen his teeth, which had been set in involuntary pain. "If I don't owe you my life, I hope you won't mind my saying that I wish I did!"

"You don't," she assured him with firm finality. "There's no debt whatever. I was just practising on you."

Logan grinned. He recognized again the defensive armor of the American girl. More and more she reminded him of a boy—that is, in everything except her feminine charm. She certainly had a masculine aversion to direct praise.

"I go through life finding people to whom I owe my life," Logan confessed engagingly. "Here it belongs to you to-day, and only the night before last I was saved from death by another good scout."

"That's interesting," Saidee remarked, anxious to converse on any topic except herself. "Tell me what happened."

"Nothing but the usual thing," he told her. "I was on patrol, and Fritz accidentally heaved a seventy-seven over in our direction. I was knocked out, and everybody

thought I was dead. It's a cinch I wasn't able to tell them I wasn't. The patrol went back to report and left me out in the shell-hole. The chap I am telling you about asked permission to go out and get me, and the lieutenant in command was a good scout and let him go. It was just daylight when he brought me in. Anyway, the Heinies could see us, and the way they stirred up the dust around us was worth noticing. I got a clip on the head, to add to the gaiety of nations; but they never touched the other chap, although he stood up and dragged me most of the way, so that I would be down low, out of range. He just had pure nerve—that's all. I asked the darned fool why he did it, and he couldn't think of any other reason except just that I was his pal."

Logan sighed.

"That's the kind of pal to have, all right," he went on. "I don't suppose I'll ever get a chance to hand it back to him; but if I ever have, what wouldn't I do for that man?"

Saidee followed with interest the naive recital of the heroic rescue. The wounded man laid himself out a little in his enthusiasm for his friend. It seemed to do him good, too, and Saidee was glad to keep him talking about other things besides his own pain.

"What was the name of your friend?" Saidee asked.

"John Swift," Private Logan returned. "Corporal John Swift—he had charge of my squad, and he's one whale of a fine soldier, I'm here to state!"

"What's he like?" Saidee continued.

"Why, I don't know," said Private Logan. "I never was good at descriptions. He's a lot older than most of us—nearly forty, I guess—but he must be made of some kind of steel that grows tougher with age, for he's one of the strongest men I ever met. He's built something like a bean-pole, all except across the shoulders. Some of the men said he was hard-boiled—they called him the Ten Minute Egg; but after you got to know him you found out that he was laughing behind that square jaw of his all the time, and that he held his eyes so steady because he was afraid they would twinkle."

Private Logan was still talking about his friend and hero when he drifted off into a slight doze, relaxed a bit, and groaned. The mind which had held his lips from com-

plaining was finally off guard, and he whimpered boyishly with pain.

Saidee put her hand on his hot forehead for a moment, but he reached over, took it into his own palm, and clung to it piteously, as if it kept him from sinking into a sea of agony.

It was a hard night. Recognizing the symptoms of fever, Saidee called one of her assistants to wring out cloths in cold water and bring them to her at intervals, to put on the wounded man's forehead. This seemed to give him some relief, and about dawn he relaxed into a less troubled slumber, still clinging tenaciously, however, to Saidee's hand.

She didn't know exactly when it happened, but she fell asleep as she sat beside him. He woke up first, and lay regarding her with fever-cleared eyes, not daring to move, for fear lest he might disturb the tiny snatch of slumber she had been able to get.

But she felt his waking eyes upon her, and opened her own. At first she had a curious little panic, which steadied almost immediately with returning comprehension.

"Why, I've been asleep!" she said in dismay.

Then, noticing that their hands were clasped, she tried to disengage her own.

"I will let you have it," he said, "if you promise to give it back to me in a minute."

Saidee took her hand away firmly and shook her head.

"No," she said. "You are feeling much better now."

"Of course," the young man admitted. "Who wouldn't? I'd be an ungrateful pup if I rewarded your working the whole night by dying on your hands. As it is now, I am going to live on and on to a positively disgusting age!" He looked at her quizzically. "Would you be willing to share that long life with me?"

Before she could answer, he went on to explain.

"You needn't think, because I am just a private, that I couldn't support a wife," he declared. "I've got refinement and education, I have. You may not believe it, but I've been through Johns Hopkins University, and my father is a distinguished public man."

He paused to see if any further selling talk was necessary.

"I admit that you're a nice boy," said Saidee, "and you have done the conven-

tional gentlemanly thing by asking to marry me. Now that's over, we can be friends."

"Then you will marry me?" the soldier persisted.

"Then I will not marry you," she replied decisively.

"Why not?"

"Well," Saidee explained, "I used to promise to marry one of the boys every time a hospital train came through here; but after I lost count, it seemed kind of silly, so during the last couple of weeks I am turning everybody down."

"I really mean this," continued Logan.

"That's what they all said, but most of them forgot to ask me for my name and address."

"But I haven't," the young man exclaimed triumphantly. "Your name is Saidee McCall, and you are going to tell me your address, so that I can make you change your mind after the war is over."

An ambulance from the hospital headed in through the vehicle entrance and pulled up by the platform. Sergeant Reilly hopped out with a stretcher-bearer, and together they lifted up the wounded soldier.

"At last!" said Reilly. "This was the first minute we could spare."

"Don't apologize," said Logan, with a smile. "I've had better care here than I would have had at the hospital, besides meeting my future wife."

Sergeant Reilly laughed.

"You've got a hot chance, buddy! She's been spoken for by every man that's passed through here for six months, from generals down to dog-robbers. You'll have to take your place in line."

"But we have a date for after the war," said Logan. "Tell me, Miss McCall, where is it that we are going to meet?"

"I don't see any reason why I should tell you," replied Saidee, struggling against the impulse to humor this laughing-eyed young fellow who had so little reason to laugh, but who made other people cheerful by his brave gaiety.

"Go on—write it down for me, that's a good fellow!" said Logan, as they shoved him into the ambulance. "Please! You may not care anything about me, but I want you to meet that fellow I was telling you about."

"Whom do you mean?" asked Saidee.

"John Swift," returned Logan—"the fellow who saved my life just before you did. You two ought to meet."

Saidee laughed.

"All right," she acquiesced. "Here's my address. Where shall I write it?"

"Put it on my tin hat."

Laughingly Saidee complied, scratching the numbers and words on the painted metal with the point of a pin. Then she reached over a soothing hand that she placed on the lad's forehead.

"Good-by, Private Logan!"

He touched her hand respectfully with his own left hand, and then carried her finger-tips to his lips.

"Thanks," he said huskily. "Until *après la guerre!* Carry on, James!"

The ambulance started up and drove out of the station yard.

V

SAIDEE had been out of the service scarcely a week when she received an engraved invitation to attend a dinner in honor of the Governor of the State, given by the Lieutenant-Governor.

It was in the morning's mail, and she showed it to her father as they sat over breakfast together in the tiny apartment which had been Reeve McCall's home and Saidee's headquarters ever since they had timidly returned to the city after the memorable night when Swing Cline had been killed at their former home.

This was quite a different sort of an apartment from the old one. The fact that it was an apartment and not a flat embodied the distinction. Here there were no folding beds, no incongruous or inharmonious pieces of furniture. The furnishing and the decorations were in keeping, and the whole impression was one of good taste, as if a crayon had been dusted gently and deftly over a canvas, blending and softening all clashing outlines.

"I can't imagine why I should receive an invitation to the Governor's dinner," mused Saidee. "I don't know any Governors. I don't even know anything about them, except that they have the power to pardon poor devils who get into trouble with the courts."

"Hush!" counseled her father.

Saidee laughed merrily.

"I love this attitude of piety, daddy, that sits upon your brow. No one but me would ever guess that you had ever done anything to annoy a policeman."

"I never did," her father defended, and she laughed again.

"Anyway, I don't understand this craving on the part of the Governor to meet an obscure constituent like myself. I am a constituent now, am I not? I think I read somewhere, while I was away, that women got the vote."

"You're a constituent, all right," her father told her; "but I suppose you are invited to this party because of your service overseas, and also because you are a very charming person."

Obviously he meant it. Pride always shone in Reeve McCall's eyes when they rested upon the face and figure of his daughter. She had come back from the wars rather a stranger to him—a mature young person, used to fending for herself, and twice as kindly and considerate as she had been before.

The worried lines in her face had begun to fade out, tiny wrinkles born of endless nights in the canteen had been smoothed away, and the look of strain had left her eyes. It seemed as if even in a week her body had filled out, and that it was rounder, more feminine-looking. Surely she was a sight to delight the eye of a love-hungry parent as she sat opposite to him in a trim house dress—for Saidee disdained negligée. Her hair was built up high on the top of her head, which gave her a serious look.

"It says here that the Governor's name is Logan," she mused. "It seems to me I once met some one named Logan."

Her mental grapple with the problem was disturbed by the entrance of the maid, who announced:

"A gentleman by the name of Logan wishes to speak to you on the telephone, Miss McCall."

Saidee glanced merrily at her father.

"There you are," she said. "The mystery is about to be solved."

Although she jested about it, she really did wonder who it could be as she went to the telephone.

"Is this Miss Saidee McCall?" inquired a pleasant voice.

"Yes," she answered equably.

"This is Philip Logan speaking."

"Philip Logan!" she repeated, searching her mind for inspiration. "I know I met you somewhere, Mr. Logan, but—"

"You certainly did," he responded with a chuckle, "and you scratched your name and address on my shrapnel helmet. Do you remember now?"

"Oh, yes, I do, Mr. Logan," she assented rapidly. "You asked me to marry you or something, didn't you?"

"Yes," he admitted; "and I am going to do it again as soon as we have looked each other over in civilian clothes."

"Oh, are you? I take it that you are very fond of yourself in long trousers."

"Why—" He hesitated. "Well, at any rate I look healthier than the last time you saw me. You probably don't recollect it, but I had a broken shoulder and one or two other little things the matter with me. Whether you remember me or not, I want to speak to you about an invitation which you ought to receive in the mail to-day."

"Oh, I have that. Are you the Governor Logan mentioned in the invitation?"

"Not quite," he told her. "I happen to be his son, though. What is more to the point, I am also his private secretary. I took the liberty of putting your name on the list of guests for the dinner that Lieutenant-Governor McNab is giving for dad. Of course, I wanted an excuse to see you again. May I?"

"Surely," Saidee told him cordially. "I don't know any reason why I should attend this dinner you mentioned, but I shall be glad to have you call."

"To-night?"

"Why—"

"Thank you. Then I will be there about eight."

Saidee had not intended to undertake any social obligations so soon, but Philip Logan's method of procedure rather swept her off her feet. She found herself looking forward to his call that evening with some curiosity. Not that her recollection of him intrigued her especially, because she had known so many boys in the A. E. F.; but his voice had been specially pleasant, and it was flattering to be remembered by a young man who had seen her only once, even though that once was during a night of pain. There had been hundreds like him, but she had never expected to set eyes on one of them again.

When he finally arrived, she found that he was quite different from what she had expected. True, her recollection of him was entirely blurred by a composite photograph of thousands of pain-painted faces that had passed before her vision while she was in the service; but since talking to him over the telephone she had thought of him as

simply a boy. The realization, on meeting him face to face, that he was a competent young man of affairs was almost a shock to her.

Obviously, the maternal attitude could not be maintained any longer with a gentleman who was at least her own age, and who had acquired by experience a grasp of affairs in the world of politics. For that reason their greeting was perhaps a little more formal than either of them had intended it to be. He sensed this, and laughed after a moment's uneasiness.

"Would you be more inclined to be friendly," he suggested, "if I go out and dirty up my clothes a little, or roll in the mud and put a bandage on my head?"

She laughed too.

"Well, you have to admit," she said, "that it's a trifle disconcerting to remember a man as a brave boy who needed his mother, and then to find out that he is a husky man of the world like yourself."

"Thank you for remembering what I

was like," he said; "even if, as I fear, your attitude toward me at that time was merely a universal maternal instinct. Recollecting me as a kind of a baby probably doesn't help me in my suit for your hand, which I have decided to win after looking at you in that simple but effective creation of the Parisian modiste, Mme.—"

"Mlle. McCall," she supplied. "I made it myself."

"Great Scott, what a wonderful wife you will be! Do you suppose you could do as well with a pair of trousers for me? If you like, I will give you the measurements, and you can—"

"Aren't you rushing things a trifle?" Saidee interrupted.

"Well, life is only just so long, and if we are going to be married— By the way, you aren't intending to marry any one else, are you? That might make it a little awkward for me."

"I am not intending to marry any one," said Saidee, with dignified formality.

(To be continued in the March number of MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE)

FAR AWAY AND LONG AGO

'Twas good to see your Irish eyes,
The same sweet amethystine blue,
As long ago in Paradise
You looked on me and I on you!
Blue flowers in fairyland they grew,
And here, amid the New York snow,
They bring back April and the dew—
My Irish eyes of long ago!

'Twas good to see your Irish eyes,
To hear that Irish music, too—
The little broken melodies,
The quaint staccato once I knew,
Once and forever loved—'tis true!
Though life has tossed us to and fro,
It could not quite divide us two—
My Irish eyes of long ago!

'Twas good to see your Irish eyes,
The same brave spirit shining through,
Like stars that ride the wildest skies,
Nor fear the worst the heavens can do.
A little laurel and much rue
I brought you, dear, right well I know;
But don't deny some roses, too—
My Irish eyes of long ago!

Richard Le Gallienne

Wife of Ivan

THE STORY OF A WOMAN WHO WAS DISSATISFIED WITH LIFE

By Marguerite Lusk Storrs

THE house was smaller than the tenements that surrounded it, and set back slightly farther from the street. For all that, like them, it was a dreary, gray thing. It had an aloof air, as if not yet resigned to being simply East Side. It had the distinction, as well, of a flower-box at a front window on the second floor, giving it the aspect of a thin-lipped woman with a scanty bow under her chin, withdrawing herself from her more promiscuous neighbors.

Inside the house there was a damp chill scarcely less penetrating than that of the drizzly night without. Lan dragged numbed limbs from worn step to worn step of the stairs, so utterly fagged that her arrival at the top gave her a vague sensation of surprise, as if she had drearily thought to continue this painful ascent indefinitely.

At a door half-way down the hall she paused, hitched the suit-box under her left arm a trifle higher, transferred to the same hand a smaller, square box, and started to knock. After a moment's hesitation, however, she turned instead and stumbled on. She was too tired for the baby now, she told herself. Let Mary Rivers keep her until Ivan's supper was prepared.

Lan Sarscovitch passed on to the end of the hall and opened her own door. Of her two dingy rooms the first was a kitchen that masqueraded as a dining-room, a dining-room in the guise of a living-room; the second was a tiny bedroom. Entering the former, she dropped the two boxes on a worn and uneven couch that mocked their sophisticated purple and lavender stripes, across which ran the label, "Mme. Pinchon, Robes," followed by a Fifth Avenue address.

Lan sank down and leaned forward to remove her rubbers. With one of them half off, she slipped suddenly to her knees on the floor, and, flinging her arms straight

across the couch, lay, unfeeling, unmoving, until a hurt in her knees partially aroused her. Even then she made no effort to move, but lingered in a borderland of consciousness cut through by half-formed thoughts, drifting and merging pictures.

Her hand, moving on the couch, encountered the corner of the suit-box. She thought of the weary trip up-town to deliver it, the search for the proper apartment in the huge building on Riverside Drive, her ring at the door-bell unanswered. She hoped dully that *madame* would not be angry with her for bringing the boxes home. The shop was now closed, and she had been adjured not to leave them at the desk of the apartment-house.

Tired resentment swept over her that she, of all the women in the shop, should have been asked to deliver the gown—resentment against *madame* herself, against the delivery boy who had not returned in time—a weary rage that was after all only the expression of Lan's own dissatisfaction with life.

She must cook supper for Ivan, she mused drearily. He would be home from the night school presently—Ivan with his beard!

Her resentment transferred itself now to that. What matter if in Russia the men did wear beards? She argued the old question uselessly. This was not Russia. She was American. She had been American ever since she was a little girl.

Her thoughts went back to the years before she had come to America with her father; to Ivan, a slender boy, tall for his age, whom she had been told she would marry some day. She had carried an exalted picture of him during all those years in which they had been separated. Then, on her sixteenth birthday, the great steamer—herself and her father at Ellis Island to meet it—Ivan with his beard.