

# BUENAS NOCHES

By Eleanor Gates

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR RACKHAM

## I



CARLET fuchsias on a swaying branch freckled the 'dobe wall behind Loretta's perch. The parrot, her claws wide apart, her brilliant rudder tilting to balance her gray body, industriously snapped at the blossoms. One secured at last, she turned slowly about and, with infinite care, let it drop upon the open pages of Padre Alonzo's book.

The padre brushed the flower away and glanced up.

"*Buenos días, señor!*" clacked Loretta; "*buenos días! buenos días! buenos días!*"

"Good-day to thyself," retorted the padre. He spoke in Spanish, shaking a stout finger. "And tear not the flowers again. They be the last of the kind till after the New Year. So take warning, I say, lest thou find thyself thrust without the garden."

Loretta recognized displeasure in his voice. She mumbled an inquiring "*Ga-a-wk! ga-a-wk!*" and shifted thoughtfully from foot to foot. But, presently, the padre having resumed his reading, she turned once more to catch at the swaying branch.

When a second fuchsia came fluttering down to his hand, Padre Alonzo uncrossed his sandals and rose. "Oh! oh! oh!" he cried, wagging his close-cropped head so vigorously that the very beads of his rosary tinkled together. "Thou art the naughtiest bird in all of California! What if Padre Anzar finds thee despoiling his plant? He will put thee again where thou must fight to keep thy feathers—in the kitchen with the cats!"

At the mention of cats a startling change came over the parrot. Her plumage ruffled, her eyes began to roll, she straightened on the perch, uttering hoarse cries of fear and defiance.

"Then be good," he counselled, "be good. Or off thou'lt likely go. Me-e-ow! me-e-ow!"

And now Loretta moved nearer, anxious for friendly terms. "*Dame la mano,*" she suggested; "*a-a-aw, dame la mano. A-a-aw! a-a-aw!*" She balanced tremblingly on one leg, curling the other under her.

Padre Alonzo put the stout finger into the proffered claw. "So, so," he said. "And I shall not tattle. But tell me: What wouldst make thee forget to use thy sharp pruning shears? An apple? or seeds? or one of Gabrielda's sweet bis——"

Loretta perked her head to one side. "*To-o-ny, To-o-ny, To-o-ny,*" she droned coaxingly.

The padre thrust his thumbs under the white cord of his girdle and broke into a guffaw. "Thou jade!" he teased. "Wilt have Tony, eh? Well, I go to find him." He gathered in his brown cassock, preparatory to stepping over the cacti here bordering the garden path. "But look you, if he comes scrape not the gilt from the wires of his pretty cage."

Another threatening shake of the finger, and the padre crossed the low, spiked hedge and waddled away through the sun.

When he came into sight a moment later round the dun wall of the mission, he carried a canary at his shoulder. "E-oo, e-oo," he cooed, pattering forward. "Loretta wishes thy company. Sst! sst! She is bad after thee, Tony! But be wary, little one, be wary."

The advice was wholly ignored. For, spying the parrot, Tony was instantly transformed from a silent, dumpy ball of yellow to a slim, dapper songster with a swelling throat.

Loretta greeted him with uproarious laughter, and a jargon of Spanish, patois, but triumphant. She paced the horizontal piece that gave her perch the form of a cross. She *pu-r-red* and *gu-r-red*. She swung by her curved beak and one leathery foot, shrilling her "*Buenos días, señor!*" Then, as the padre hung the cage to a nail in the trellis built against the wall, she changed her performance to the clamorous repeating of a mass.

Padre Alonzo was shocked. "Sst! sst!" he chided; "thou wicked big-ears!"

The noon angelus was ringing. He caught up book and gown. But before going he pulled at Loretta's gaudy tail not unkindly, and chuckled as she edged toward Tony with many a naïve and fetching cock of her gray head.

## II

HIGH at the garden's center, nailed to a massive tree of wood, stood out the Sacrifice. From behind, fir and pine thrust their long green boughs, as if eager to screen that torn and unclad shape. From below, jasmine and geranium, carnation and rose, sent upward an unfailing incense.

That way, in the heat of mid-afternoon, came Padre Anzar. Thin-lipped, he was, and hollow-eyed. In one hand he held a trowel, in the other a knife. Down the front of his brown cassock, mingling at knee height with red brick stains from the chapel floor, were touches of fresh earth. Anzar the priest was for the moment Anzar the gardener.

He walked slowly, here stooping to right a stalk or jerk a weed, there stretching to pick a fading orange leaf from where it marred the glaucous sheen of its fellows. Fronting the figure, he paused long enough to whisper a prayer and make the holy sign. Then he rambled on, busy with trowel and blade.

But presently he came to a full and startled halt. He was beside the trellis up which climbed his treasured fuchsia. The cross-like perch of the parrot was beyond the bordering cacti, and unoccupied. Nearby, upon its nail, hung the canary cage, with Tony going up stairs and down untiringly, eying his visitor with no uneasiness, greeting him, on the contrary, with saucy chirps. While underneath, spotting the ground in some profusion, and cast as it were at the feet of the garden's singer, were scores of scarlet blossoms!

The padre's look travelled from the scattered flowers to the vacant perch, from the perch to the naked branches swaying against the trellis, from the branches to the wide, warm top of the 'dobe wall. And there was Loretta, patrolling in unceasing apprehension.

The instant he caught sight of her he

knew her guilt. He pursed his thin lips. Then, letting fall trowel and knife, he straddled the hedge.

"I'll wring thy neck for thee!" he vowed.

A sandal in the trellis, a light spring, and his head came even with her. She backed away, raising her wings a little, and *gawk-ing* in protest. He took a fresh grip on the wall, reached out and caught her like a chicken—by both legs.

Wild screeches rang through the garden, screeches that put the sparrows to flight and set the canary cheeping in fear. These were punctuated next by raucous appeals for "*Tony*" or gurgley parrot language.

The padre was down now, and standing on the path again. But he was not fulfilling his threat. Instead, he was viewing his captive angrily, yet in considerable indecision.

Loretta, on the other hand, was at no loss for a course of action. Between cries for the canary, demands for a handshake, and reiterated "*Good-days*", she was vigorously trying her beak upon the padre's fist.

But now a new factor upon the scene. Round the mission wall, waddling fast and propelling himself by his swinging arms, appeared Padre Alonzo. "Is't the cats?" he asked as he came on; "oh, la! la! is't the cats?"

Padre Anzar half turned, scowling. For answer, he only pointed to the severed fuchsias.

The other looked, covering any regret with simulated astonishment. "These were dropping of themselves yesterday," he began between breaths. "They—they fell fast in the night—eh?" He came beside the other now, partly to support the suspended Loretta in his hands. "I saw them—truly."

"Bah!" And Padre Anzar gave Loretta such a shake that she tumbled, squawking and sputtering, from the other's hands and again hung, heels above head, like a chicken caught for the block.

"She did but what the wind hadst done," faltered Padre Alonzo. "Sst! sst!" (This to the parrot.) "Such language from a lady!"

"Ah-hal" grunted Padre Anzar. "I told thee not to buy a bird that was raised in a garrison town."

"*To-o-ny! To-o-ny!*" pleaded the parrot. "*A-aw, To-o-ny!*"

"Yes," he went on solemnly, addressing



"Buenos días, señor!" clacked Loretta.—Page 179.

her, "and thou art of the devil, and hast as many tricks. Twice I forgave thee—once for shouting 'Fire' on St. John's Day as the censer passed; again, for pulling the feathers out of Señor Esteban's choice hen. But thou wilt not escape now. Now, thou'lt go to the kitchen and be shut in with Gabrielda's black mouser. There thou shalt shed some quills."

With this dire threat, he departed along the path, Loretta still hanging head down at his knee.

Scarcely a moment later a commotion sounded from the distance, a commotion muffled by 'dobe wall. First came the voice of old Gabrielda, then the clatter of an overturning pan, next the terror-stricken shrieks of Loretta. Presently, Padre Anzar appeared, his jaw set, his eyes shining with the look of duty done.

"She will be nicely scared this time," he told Padre Alonzo. "She will match her busy peak with Tomasso's claws, and she will remember hereafter to let my blossoms alone."



"Perhaps," began Padre Alonzo, deprecatingly, "perhaps 'twere as well to take her out of temptation's way, to——"

Padre Anzar raised his shoulders, strode over to knife and trowel and caught them up. "Move her as thou wilt," he said grumpily, "and the farther the better. Tony is proper for us, pretty and songful. But that parrot,"—he shook his tools as if they were Loretta—"how altogether useless and ugly and noisy and blasphemous and good-for-naught!"

With this he departed into the shrubbery.

Sounds were still coming from the kitchen—Gabrielda's cracked voice, Loretta's cries, the sullen yowling of a cat. Nodding sadly, Padre Alonzo waddled to the perch, vacant and formed like a cross. This he lifted and bore to a place along the wall opposite the great crucifix, where climbed no flowers. Then, smiling gently, as if with some tender thought, he waddled back to the trellis, took the cage from its nail, and, returning to the perch, hung Tony close beside.

### III

LATE that night, on coming out of the chapel, Padre Alonzo discovered a little black something blocking his way along the moonlit path. As he paused, leaning forward to peer, the black something sidled nearer him, and saluted.

"*Buenas noches!*" it said, its voice monotonous and human with grief and weariness; "*buenas noches! buenas noches!*"

The padre bent lower and lifted the parrot to the level of his face. "Aye, good-night truly, as thou sayest," he repeated proudly. "Thou hast some wicked words of a garrison town, but thou knowest the difference between sun and moon."

"Aw, Lora," murmured the parrot; "*aw, Lo-ral Lo-ral!*"

"Yes, Tomasso has used thee badly." Padre Alonzo patted her head. "I shall put thee on thy perch," he went on; "though I trust good Anzar will not know it. But the moon is up, and my heart is tender. Alas! one does many things when the moon is up. And the next day—one does penance."

He thrust the parrot into a fold of his cassock, made along to where was the perch, and placed her upon it. Then he stood back, folding his arms.

"To-morrow is Christmas Day, Loretta," he said. "And what wilt thou give to Tony? What can the cactus give the golden poppy? Thou hast only love, eh? Well, that is much, though it grows from naught, as a China lily blooms from a bowl of rocks."

He turned, and found himself before the Tree. Fir and pine massed their branches behind it, making a background of plushy green. Against that background, showing full, hung the torn and unclad shape. The moon glinted upon it, haloing the head of the Crucified.

The padre sank, bowing, and touched himself in the sign.

"Aw, To-o-ny! To-o-ny!" came a sleepy croak at his back. The parrot was settling herself for the night.

Padre Alonzo rose and turned, reaching up to stroke her. "Good-night, Loretta," he said fondly. "There were none too lowly for His gift of love. It was spared to thee, a yawping fowl, a talker after the manner of the lazy Mexicans that bred thee."

He turned back upon the path, sighing and raising his eyes once more. "But for high or low," he said, musing aloud, "the fruit of that love is sacrifice."

### IV

OUT of the chapel came the sounds of the noon service—the level intoning of prayer, the rumble and swell of the padres' voices. From her place before the great crucifix Loretta mocked it, only ceasing now and then to answer Tony's warbles with little whistles of delight or to run her open bill up and down the bit of vertical pole dividing her perch. Yesterday's bout in the kitchen, yesterday's hunger and fear, the lonely night ramble along the path, the lack of her preening friend—all these were forgotten in to-day's safety, sunlight, plenty, and companionship. And so she *gurred* and *purred*, *a-a-awed* and *ga-a-wked*, shrilled her "*Buenos días!*" across the garden, laughed uproariously, or droned the familiar mass.

In reach of her pacing, in touch of her very tail, was the gilded cage, with Tony darting up stairs and down, yet sparing time now and then for a sip or a seed or a saucy chirp.

But of a sudden the happy cries of both



*Drawn by Arthur Rackham.*

For answer, he only pointed to the severed fuchsias.—Page 180.





Took the cage from its nail.—Page 182.

birds were changed to notes of alarm. The canary, its round eyes starting like two polished shots, fluttered high and low, beating its yellow wings against the wires; while Loretta squared her rudder, spread her pinions and squatted belligerently. For on the ground, advancing that way by soft steps, and with the gloating look of the hunter fixed upon the cage, came Tomasso, the cat.

Quickly the parrot rallied from her panic. As if she knew that her arch-enemy was not seeking her now, but the precious bit of fluff at her side, she began a series of terror-inspiring performances learned in the profane garrison town of her hatching;

she gave tongue to dire words that had long since gone out of her repertory. Ruffled to twice her size, she strutted along her perch, shrieking angry orders to mount, flinging out "*Vuelta! vuelta! vuelta!*" in husky trooper tones, and whistling the bugle calls.

It failed to scare Tomasso. Within the cage, as it gently danced from its spring, was a tempting morsel, one that lured all the more through its effort to escape. The cat crept steadily forward, velvet foot following velvet foot, across the shifting dapple before the great crucifix, across the packed gravel of the garden path, to the near shade of a gold of Ophir. There, under the roses, he paused, amber eyes

glowing, whetted claws slipping in and out expectantly, muscles rolling and flexing with the measurement of the leap.

Then, with the cunning of the wild mother, Loretta adopted new tactics, seeking to divert him. She wobbled upon her perch, giving vent to bursts of hysterical laughter; she got between him and the cage and railed at him.

His unblinking eyes did not leave his quarry, his muscles kept their quiver of preparation. At the end of his sleek body, touching the path, his long tail swept, to and fro, to and fro, to and fro, like a furry pendulum marking off the dread time.

By now other inmates of the garden were alarmed. A blue jay scolded from the terra-cotta roof of the chapel. From the cross-piece of the tree a line of sparrows gave over their squabbling to look down.

Loretta's excitement grew wilder. Out

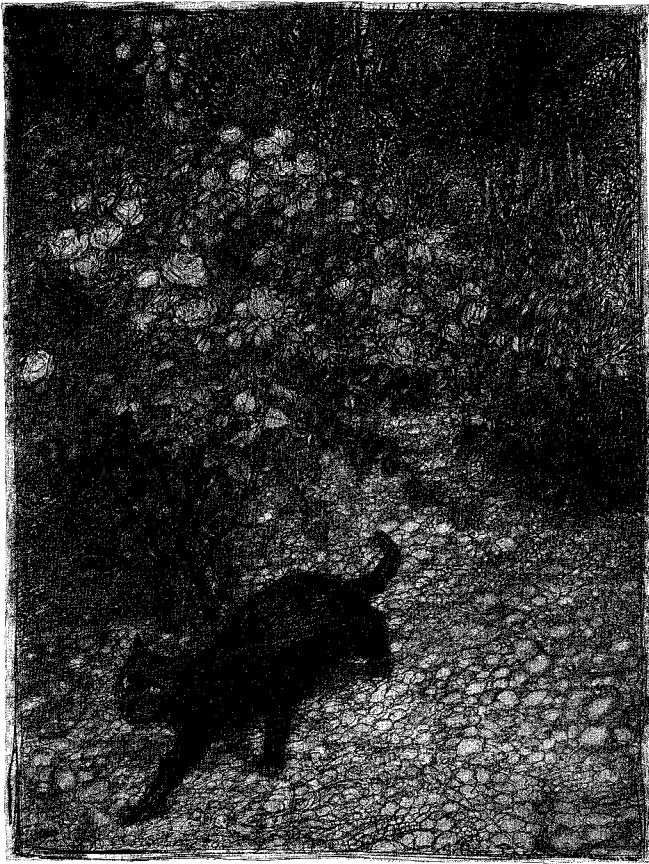
of her beak poured phrases not of mass or military, not of good-days or—nights. For under the gold of Ophir the furry pendulum was standing out straight and the moving muscles down Tomasso's length were tight and still. Her instinct knew the signs, and again and again she quavered out the "*Fuego!*" that had disgraced St. John's Day.

No one heard. From the chapel still sounded the intoning of prayer, broken by the rumble and swell of the padres' voices.

A moment, and she acted. With a "*Ga-a-uhl!*" of defiance, she aimed her flight for the ground, took it in all but a somersault, and landed herself directly before the astonished Tomasso. Then once again she spread her wings and squared her rudder, making ready for a clash.

Tomasso's eyes fell to her, he relaxed, body and tail, spitting resentfully.

Quickly emboldened, she came a hand's



The cat crept steadily forward.—Page 184.





With a "*Ga-a-wh!*" of defiance, she landed herself directly before the astonished Tomasso.—Page 185.

breadth nearer him, snapping at the black tip of his nose.

He retreated to his haunches, but directed a swift cuff her way.

To this she responded with hoarse laughter and yells of "*To-o-ny!*" as if she summoned the canary to witness the encouraging progress of the fight. Then she stalked forward once more.

Tomasso wrinkled his face. Their positions were unpleasantly reversed. In Gabrielda's domain it was she who backed off or sought the safe places, and he who sallied out from his cosy nook by the range to scare her into noisy protests. While here she was bristling to him. His paw poised itself in mid-air.

Loretta grew reckless. Fanning her wings, in one lightning stroke she bit him between his flattened ears.

The pain of it enraged Tomasso. With a jump, he met her.

Then ensued such a scene as the kitchen knew. There was mewing and spitting and yowling; there was *gawking* and squalling and a rending cry for "*Tony!*" All the while, close to the gold of Ophir, the cat and the parrot went dizzily around and around, a whirligig of gray, scarlet and black—that tossed off fur and feathers.

It was over in a moment, when Tomasso fled, over path and grass, and into a dusky recess between the trunks of fir and pine. There he lay down, sulking and grumbling and licking his paws. But Loretta stayed where she was a little, holding her head sideways in the attitude of a listener.

"*Lora,*" she murmured presently, her voice inquiring, "*Lora, Lora.*"

Then, slowly and clumsily, she made her way to the base of the perch, and with beak and talons climbed it.

## V

It was past the noon angelus when Padre Alonzocame waddling along the path, and he found the garden still—still, and filled with the sun-drawn incense of trees and flowers.

"*Sst! sst!* Tony will be too warm, I fear," he was saying aloud as he neared the cage. "The little one shall go to a cooler spot." And with this conclusion, he halted beside the perch of the parrot and lifted the chirping canary down to his knee.

"*Buenos días,*" he said to Loretta, pausing a moment; "a good day, truly, but over-hot, so that my cassock makes of me a living olla, for I am beaded with water drops from top to toe."



The parrot shifted a little, and again set her head sidewise, as if she were puzzled and listening. Next, she edged toward him, and uncertainly, putting a foot down, clasping and unclasping the pole, trying it cautiously. Against the vertical piece that made her perch like a cross, she teetered awkwardly and stopped.

"Loretta," said the padre, in some concern, "hast anything in thy craw? Well, gulp down a stone and grind thy grist. What one swallowest that must one digest."

The gravel crunched behind him. He glanced back, to see Padre Anzar advancing, brown cowl shading hollow eyes.

Padre Alonzo colored guiltily. "Tony must go to the shade," he said. "The sun is hot to the cooking-point."

Padre Anzar paused a moment, glowering up at Loretta. "Then may it singe the plumage of that vixen," he answered. "She desecrates our garden." Another frown, and he passed on.

Padre Alonzo watched him out of sight before he again addressed the parrot. "I

fear thou must mend thy ways, Loretta," he said. "Here it is Christmas Day, and yet Anzar has no good words for thee. But see,"—he held up a plump hand, displaying one of Gabrielda's sweet biscuits—"riotous as thou art, I have remembered. And now tell me, what hast thou given Tony?"

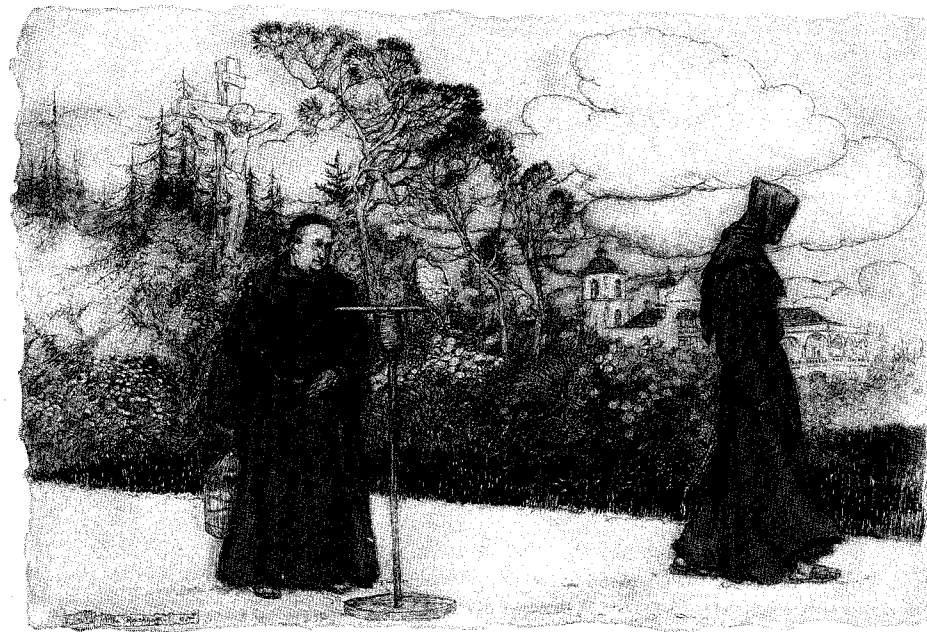
As though in mute answer, the parrot suddenly lowered her head toward him, and he saw that over the gray of her feathered face was a splash of scarlet, as if a vivid fuchsia petal had fallen there.

"Loretta!" he cried anxiously; "Loretta! thine eyes!"

She lifted her head until her beak pointed past the giant crucifix and straight into the glaring sun.

"Buenos días," he prompted tenderly, alarmed now at her unusual silence and the indifference shown his offering; "Loretta, buenos días."

But she was settling herself upon her cross-like perch as if for the night. "A-aw, To-o-ny! To-o-ny!" she returned with a little sleepy croak; "*buenas noches! buenas noches!*"



Padre Alonzo watched him out of sight



*Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.*

"Before I knew my danger, the beast was swimming in deep water and I on him."—Page 190.

# THE LAKE OF DEVILS

By Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews

ILLUSTRATION BY F. WALTER TAYLOR



WHEN I was a youngster I used to be quite a superstitious sort of person—I suppose because I had a nurse till I was rather large, who was the sort of Scotchwoman which believes in fairies and red devils and those things. Even at my present age, when I am fourteen, I feel at times a tendency toward the ultra-natural, against my better judgment. I suppose that was the reason I got so keen about finding the hidden “Lake of Devils,” the minute I heard about it.

My brother Walter and I were up in his club in Canada, and we had left our regular camp and gone off with tents and guides to find better hunting. We followed up the *Rivière aux Vents*—the River of Winds, you know—and discovered three little lakes on streams that discharged into it, and there were plenty of old caribou and moose trails, but no fresh signs, and we were getting discouraged. We had been away three days, all the time working through such wild country that I was knocked in the head when Walter said we had been going toward the railroad steadily and were not more than five miles from it now. But I looked it up on a map and found he was perfectly correct, as he sometimes is. The railroad doesn't mean much up here anyway, for it runs through a maiden wilderness as wild as you can catch 'em, and only one thing in the likelihood of a settlement in the two hundred miles between Quebec and Lake St. John.

One day we were camped by some rapids on the River of Winds, and after lunch—which identically resembled breakfast and dinner, being trout and bacon, flap-jacks and maple sugar—Walter, who is perpetual emotion, decided to walk up the small stream above our camp, and see if it looked as if there were a lake on beyond. But I'd had enough of tramping through alders and beaver meadow and windfalls, and as there was plenty of sunlight I thought I would

bask. It's the reasonable thing for an animal to do after it's fed. So I left the dining room, which was the top of a big flat rock, to the guides, and deployed on to a slope a few feet from them in good hot sunshine, and lay on my back, and became a boaconstrictor. The fire was blazing in a grove of balsams at the edge of the rock, and the guides bent over it, cooking, and it was nice to hear the lake splash up on one side and trout sizzle on the other.

My back was toward the men as they ate, and as I paid no attention to them they paid none to me. These French Canadians are indefatigable talkers and Walter says they probably talk all night in their sleep. The four men were chattering like madpies. I didn't hear what they said for some time, but after a while I happened to listen out of the deepness of my laziness, and I caught on to it that they were chaffing my guide, Henri Jeunesse, about something. Then I began to take notice. But what with the patois which they talk to each other so fast and so clipped that it makes you dizzy, and what with not believing my ears at the little I caught, I couldn't make any particular head or tail of it. They seemed to be guying Henri about riding a caribou, and Henri acted pleasantly, giggling and chuckling as men do, yet it did not seem to me plausible. Walter won't let me talk to the guides at their meals, so I had to stay corked up and not ask questions; but I made up my mind I would investigate it out of Henri what it was, the first chance. So when he and I went out fishing about five that afternoon I hadn't forgotten, not by no means, and all unknowing to him I took his conversation gently by the nose and guided it with unexampled skill to the point.

“Henri,” I said, “what were the men making fun of you about at lunch?”

Henri's paddle missed a dip, and he looked at me with polite surprisedness. “Comment, M'sieur Bob?” he asked, and I repeated.