THE APPLE OF DISCORD

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Title: The Apple of Discord

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Release Date: May 28, 2016 [eBook #52180]

Language: English

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THE APPLE OF DISCORD

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"Blindfolded"

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GROSSET & DUNLAP
Publishers :: :: New York

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OCTOBER

CONTENTS

THE APPLE OF DISCORD

CHAPTER I

I AM PRESENTED WITH AN OVERCOAT

Colonel Wharton Kendrick leaned back in his chair, stroked his red side-whiskers reflectively, and looked across the table with an expression of embarrassment on his round ruddy face. For the moment his command of words had evidently failed him.

As embarrassment and failure of language were equally foreign to his nature, I was confirmed in a growing suspicion that there had been an ulterior purpose behind his cordial invitation to luncheon. The meal had been a good one, and he was paying for it, and so I felt that I owed him my moral support. Therefore, I returned such a look of encouragement as might properly express the feelings of a fledgling attorney toward a millionaire who was the probable source of active litigation, and waited for him to speak.

"See here, Hampden," he said at last; "you know something about my row with Peter Bolton, don't you?"

"The Bolton-Kendrick feud is a part of my very earliest recollections," I admitted. "When I was a small boy I was convinced that it was quite as much a part of the institutions of the country as the Fourth of July. You may remember that my father took something of an interest in your affairs."

"Good old Dick Hampden–the best friend a man ever had!" And there was a note of tenderness in his voice that touched my heart-strings. "It was a sad loss when he went, my boy. Well, then I needn't go into the beginning of the feud, as no doubt he explained it all to you."

"I should like very much to have an account of it at first hand," I replied. In spite of my familiarity with the quarrels between Bolton and Kendrick, I had never solved the mystery of the beginning of the feud. Its origin was as deeply buried in the haze of historic doubts as the causes of the Trojan War. I had heard it assigned to a dozen different beginnings, ranging from a boyhood battle for the possession of a red apple to a maturer rivalry for the hand of the village belle, who had finally bestowed herself on a suitor whose very name was forgotten. None of the explanations seemed adequate. The first could scarce account for the depth of hatred that each felt for the other. As for the last–imagination refused to picture Peter Bolton in the figure of a sighing swain; the caricature was too monstrous for credit. Therefore, I spoke hopefully, as one who sees the doors of mystery ajar. But Wharton Kendrick shrank from the task of enlightening me, and with a shake of his head he replied:

"Well, there's no need to go into it all now. It began back in the Ohio village where we were born–long before the days we heard of California–and it'll end when one of us is carried out feet foremost."

"I hope you're not expecting anything of that sort," I said.

"No, I can't say that I am. I'm expecting something, and I don't know what it is. But what I want to know is this: Have you any objections to doing a bit of

secret service?" The manner in which he plunged through his sentence, and the air of visible relief on his face when he had done, told me that this was what he had been leading toward.

"Well, that depends. You know there are some things considered unprofessional–"

"Even in the law!" said Wharton Kendrick with a jovial laugh. "Oh, thunder! What would the game be if we didn't pretend to have rules? Well, I don't think this is anything that would get you on the black books, though some of you fellows are so confounded touchy that I've shied away from mentioning it to you. I want you to keep an eye on Bolton for a while, and find out what he is up to."

"That sounds as though you wanted a private detective agency," I said dubiously, with distrust of my ability to fill the bill.

"If I had wanted one I should have sent for it," replied Wharton Kendrick dryly. "I've had enough experience of them to know that I don't want them. I want you because I must have some one I can trust."

I murmured my thanks at this expression of esteem. It was the more gratifying as, like the rest of my father's old friends, he had carefully avoided giving me his legal business, with a wise but annoying preference for having me try my 'prentice hand on the litigation of strangers. So at this I professed my entire willingness to be of service.

"That's good," he said. "Now, I've had warning from a source I trust that Bolton is fixing up some sort of surprise for me. I want you to find out what it is. Six months ago I got the same sort of hint that came to me this morning, and I forgot all about it. Then one day I got a jolt that cost me a cool hundred thousand dollars when I found that Bolton had taken the Golden West Land and Water Company away from me. He got hold of some of the stock that I thought was in safe hands, and I had to pay four prices to get it. I've a notion that the thing is more serious this time."

Something in his voice suggested alarming possibilities.

"Do you mean that Bolton is plotting against your life?"

"Oh, I don't say that. But, oh, thunder! You wouldn't put it beyond him, would you?"

"Not beyond his morals, perhaps; but I should certainly put it beyond his courage."

"Oh, P. Bolton isn't the man to go gunning for any one. But he hasn't any scruples against getting another man to do it for him. That's why he owns the Miroban mine."

"You don't mean to say so? I never heard of that."

"I suppose not. You're too young to remember the murder of the Eddy boys.

They had located the Miroban mine, and one day they struck it rich. Bolton put in a claim that he had bought it from a prior locator, and pretty soon they were all tangled up in litigation. One night somebody poked a double-barreled shotgun through a window in the Eddy boys' cabin, and filled them full of buckshot. There was a good deal of excitement about it for a while, but nobody could find out the man who did the shooting, and we were all too busy in those days to waste much time hunting criminals. When the talk died down, Bolton was found in possession of the Miroban."

"And you think–"

"I don't know who pulled the trigger, but I know well enough that Bolton pointed the gun."

"Old Bolton is a more interesting character than I had supposed," I confessed.

"You'll have a chance to get better acquainted with him," said Kendrick, "but I can't promise you that he improves on acquaintance." He smoothed his ruddy cheeks, and ran his fingers through his side-whiskers, and then continued: "You'd better not come to see me till you have something important to report. You'll find it easier to get hold of things if the old spider doesn't know that you are in my employ. Send word around to my office when you want to see me. I suppose you'll want some money. You needn't spare expense. I guess this will do for a starter." And, reaching into his pocket, he brought up a handful of twenties and passed them over. And in this pleasant way began my active relations with the famous feud that was to shake San Francisco to its foundations.

Several days of cautious but diligent inquiry followed before my industry was rewarded with an insight into Peter Bolton's purposes. Then a lead of much promise opened, and I sent word to my employer that I was prepared to make a progress report.

"Come around to the office to-night–nine-thirty," was the reply; and prompt to the minute I mounted the stairs of the California Street building in which Wharton Kendrick kept his business quarters, and knocked at his private door.

At his brusk "Come in," I entered, and found him seated behind his wide desk busily running over a bundle of papers. The gas-light fell on his ruddy face and was reflected in glints from his red side-whiskers with which he eked out the fullness of his cheeks. He was indeed a handsome man, and carried his sixty years with the ease of forty.

"So you have brought news," he said, thrusting his papers into a drawer and leaning back to receive my communication. "Well, what is the old fox up to now?"

"I have the honor," I returned, "to report that the old fox has turned reformer."

"Reformer?" And a puzzled look overspread his face. "Well, if he wants a job in that line he won't have to leave home to get it. He can spend the rest of his life reforming himself and not have time enough by half."

"He is not so selfish as all that. His zeal has reached out to embrace the regeneration of the whole human race–or at least the part of it that inhabits San Francisco."

"What do you mean? I may be thick-headed, but I don't get your meaning."

"Oh, it is just as I say. And to carry out his benevolent purposes he has engaged the services of the Council of Nine–or at least has entered into active cooperation with it."

"The Council of Nine! I never heard of it." Wharton Kendrick looked at me in amazement.

"Well, to confess the truth, I never heard of it myself until to-day. However, you are likely to hear more of it later. It has a valiant recruit in Bolton."

"But what is it? What is it trying to do?"

"So far as I can find out, it is the head-center of the local organization of the International Reds. It is made up of anarchists, socialists, communists, and the discontented of all sorts. I'll admit that I don't understand fully the distinctions between these elements, and they are so mixed up here that you can't tell one from another."

"That's a promising combination," laughed Wharton Kendrick; and then a thoughtful look followed his laughter, as he added: "But what does P. Bolton think he can get out of that crowd?"

"A liberal education–or at least an education in liberality. He has given a handsome contribution to their funds–"

"What!" ejaculated Kendrick, starting forward in astonishment. "You don't mean to say that he has given them money?"

"I have the authority of a good witness–to wit, a man who saw the money paid."

"Whew! That's pretty hard to swallow. What is the man's name?"

"Clark–Jonas Clark."

"Who is he?"

"Why, he's a shining light in the Carpenters' Union. He's a decent chap who is a little carried away by the eloquence of the agitators, but he is all right. He has been a messenger back and forth between Bolton and some members of the Council, but he had the fault of being too scrupulous, and Bolton gave him the sack. So now he is employee number one of our detective bureau."

"Hm-m! And maybe you can give a guess why P. Bolton is putting up his good money for that crazy crowd? You are not trying to tell me it's a case of pure philanthropy?"

"That is what he wants them to believe. He told Clark that before he gave any money he must be satisfied that the aims and methods of the Council were for the benefit of the people."

"Oh, thunder! To think of P. Bolton playing a game like that! Well, did they satisfy him?"

"Clark took him any quantity of documents. They fed him first with the brotherhood-of-man and the one-for-all-and-all-for-one course of lectures. He thought there was too much milk-and-water about that, so they gradually worked up to the dynamiting of royal oppressors and the extinction of capitalistic robbers. At this he gave up some good coin–five hundred dollars, as near as I can learn–paid in person at midnight to three members of the Council of Nine."

Kendrick leaned back in his chair, and meditatively stroked his red side-whiskers once more, while the thoughtful wrinkles chased each other about his eyes.

"That begins to look like business," he said at last. "I'm sure I could put a name to the capitalistic robber he would like to see extinguished. Still, I don't see what he is driving at. Have you got any light on his plans?"

"No. So far as I can find out, he has made no suggestions. He has only approved their propaganda, and hinted that they might look for more money if their course was such as to satisfy him."

"Then you think their schemes worth looking into?"

"Indeed I do. I have an engagement to meet Clark at their headquarters, down at the House of Blazes to-morrow night. He is going to introduce me to some of the leaders, and I hope to get a line on what they are planning."

"The House of Blazes? What's that?"

"Oh, it's a saloon down on Tar Flat. The socialists and anarchists and a lot of other 'ists' loaf around there and drink beer in their hours of ease, and I believe there is a hall there where they hold their meetings."

"Umph! I hope you'll enjoy your evening. But don't get your head smashed." Wharton Kendrick was silent a little, and then continued thoughtfully: "I don't see what P. Bolton can expect to gain out of a lot of crack-brained fanatics like that, but you can do as you like about looking into them. I suspect, though, that this is just a blind for something else. Just remember that if you are expecting P. Bolton to show himself in one place, he's sure to turn up in another. Now, is that all your budget?"

"One thing more. Bolton has a little detective bureau of his own. He has engaged Jim Morgan, the prize-fighter, with three or four more of the same sort, and you're being watched. I've no doubt there's a fellow out by the door, waiting to follow you home. So I'll take the liberty of walking with you, and engage a few reliable body-guards to-morrow."

Wharton Kendrick's mouth closed with a snap.

"Not much–no body-guards for me! I've walked San Francisco for twenty years in the face of Peter Bolton, and I'm not going to be afraid of him at this day. Hire all the men you want, but set them to looking after P. Bolton–not after me."

"There are two at his heels already."

"Good; but I'm afraid a hundred wouldn't be enough to keep track of the old fox," laughed Kendrick. "Well, it's time to be getting home. Reach me my hat there, will you? Make sure of the door–here goes the light." And he followed me into the hall and turned the key behind him. "Now, there's no need for you to go home with me," he continued.

"It's my way as well as yours," I replied, "and unless you object to my company, we'll go together."

We faced the west wind that came in gusts from over Nob Hill, with the salt freshness of the ocean fog heavy upon it, turned north at Kearny Street, and at Clay Street took the hill-climbing cable-car that still passed as one of the city's novelties. From the western end of the line we walked to the Kendrick residence on Van Ness Avenue.

"Well, good night, my boy," he said. "Sorry to have brought you up here for nothing. If you should get any light on the Council's plans to-morrow night, come up here next evening–say at eight o'clock. I may have an idea of my own by that time." And he closed the door.

As I turned to descend the steps, my eye was startled by a glimpse of movement among the shrubs that decorated the Kendrick lawn. At first I thought it but a branch tossed by the wind; but an incautious movement revealed the figure of a man silhouetted against the faint illumination from a distant street-lamp, and I felt a momentary gratification that my precaution had been justified.

I descended the flight of steps to the garden with assumed unconcern. Then, instead of following the second flight to the street, I turned, made a sudden spring on to the lawn, straight for the shrub behind which I had seen the man hide himself. It was but twenty-five feet away, and I reached it in an instant. No one was there. For a moment I thought my eyes must have deceived me. Then the rustle of a bush by the fence attracted my attention, and I made a dash for the spot. Before I could reach it a man rose from behind the bush, vaulted the fence, disappeared for a second of time, and then could be seen running swiftly down the street.

There was an eight-foot drop from the garden to the sidewalk, but I made the leap in my turn without mishap, and was running in the wake of the flying night-hawk before I had time to draw breath. I soon gained upon him, and as I came nearer I could hear his hoarse gasps, as the unaccustomed pace told upon him. At the corner of Sacramento Street I was near enough to reach out and

grasp him by the coat.

He halted and turned.

"What do you want?" he growled, and then struck at me with sudden movement. "Take that!" he cried, striking again as I tried to close with him, and I felt the shearing of cloth before a sharp blade.

As I staggered back from the impact of the blow, my foot caught on the curb, the earth whirled about, the stone sidewalk gave me a thump alongside the head, and I witnessed a private meteoric display of unrivaled splendor.

I was stunned for a minute, but collecting my wits I scrambled to my feet, cleared my eyes, and looked for the flying enemy. He was nowhere to be seen, and no sound of his footfalls came to my ear. Making sure that he had escaped, I turned to take stock of my injuries. I could find no wound, though a rent through my coat showed how near I had come to the end of all my adventures. A memorandum-book in my inside pocket had stopped the blade with which the spy had struck at me. Then I recovered from my daze enough to become aware that I was holding an overcoat that was none of mine. The enemy had slipped from the garment to secure his escape, and had left it in my hands.

CHAPTER II
THE HOUSE OF BLAZES

With the morning's light I looked carefully over the captured overcoat for identifying marks by which I might trace the elusive spy who was so near ending my life. A hasty survey of the garment when I had reached my room had revealed nothing by which I might learn of the owner; but after a night's sleep the detective instinct burned within me, and I was persuaded that there was something about it to differentiate it from other overcoats, if only I had the keenness to discover it. The garment was of cheap material, and even the maker's name had disappeared from it. There was nothing individual about it, and not even a handkerchief was to be found in its pockets. But when I was about to abandon search once more, a small inside pocket attracted my attention, and, diving within it, I brought out a square of paper, three or four inches wide. The detective instinct within me raised a shout of triumph, and I opened the paper with the conviction that it would bear some address that would lead me to the spy. The detective instinct became more humble to find that the paper bore only a few sprawling

characters that were reminiscent of a Chinese laundry or a Canton tea-chest.

Nevertheless, it was the only clue in my possession, and during the day I made several attempts to secure a translation of the marks. But nightfall came without success, and, reinforced by a good dinner, I turned my steps south of Market Street to keep my appointment with Clark.

"Here's the place," said the policeman, pointing across Natoma Street to the corner building, from which lights flashed and sounds of laughter and drunken song floated out on the night air. "We call it the House of Blazes."

Even in the semi-darkness left by the street-lamps and the lights that streamed from the windows, I could see that it was a rambling two-story frame building, with signs of premature age upon it. The neighborhood was far from select, but the House of Blazes had characteristics of evil all its own. Above, the small windows scowled dark, stealthy, mistrustful, as though they sought to escape the eye of the officer of the law who stood by my side. Below, the broader windows, ablaze with lamps, and the swinging half-doors, through which we could see the feet of men and the occasional hat of a taller customer, made a show of openness. But it all seemed the bravado of the criminal who ventures forth by daylight, aggressively assertive of his self-confidence and ready to take to his heels at the first sign that he is recognized by the police. Across the windows and on a swinging sign were painted letters proclaiming that wines and liquors were to be had within and that H. Blasius was the owner.

"It doesn't look to be just the place for a stranger to show his money in," I said lightly.

"It's about as tough as they make 'em," growled the policeman. "There's a sight more throuble in that darty den than in all the others on the beat."

I thanked the policeman and bade him good night.

"Good night, sor. I'm hoping you won't need anything more from me, sor. But just blow a whistle if ye are in chance of throuble, and I'll do my best for ye."

And with this cheerful parting ringing in my ears, I swung back the doors and stepped into the saloon, with the shadow of a wish that the Council of Nine had shown better taste in headquarters.

I found myself in a long, low-ceiled room, lighted by a dozen lamps that struggled to overpower the tobacco smoke that filled it. A dingy, painted bar stretched half-way down the side of the room, and behind it a cracked mirror and a gaudy array of bottles served for ornament and use. Below the bar the room jutted back into an L, where a half-dozen tables were scattered about. The floor was littered with sawdust, trampled and soiled with many feet, and mottled with many a splotch of tobacco juice.

I looked about for Clark and his companions. Five or six loungers leaned against the bar, listening to a stout, red-faced Irishman, who was shaking his fist

vigorously as an accompaniment to a loud denunciation of the Chinese. There was something about the man that drew a second look, though at first glance I thought I had recognized the symptoms of the saloon politician. He had a bristling brown mustache, a shrewd mouth, and a strong aggressive jaw. A little above the medium height, with compact, heavy frame, and broad shoulders that betokened strength, he was a type of the substantial workman.

Beyond the oratorical Irishman with his denunciations of "the haythen divils," stood a man with hat drawn down over his eyes, half hiding his sallow face, and with hands deep in his pockets, who glanced furtively from side to side, as if in suspicion that an enemy was about. Something faintly stirred in memory at the sight of him, but he shuffled out of the saloon as I passed him, and it was not until he was gone that I connected him with the spy whose overcoat lay in my room. It was too late to follow him, for, before I had recalled the vagrant memory, a short fat old man waddled slowly forward and stood before me with the air of a proprietor. I divined that I was face to face with H. Blasius.

"Vat vill you have, mine friend?" he inquired deliberately.

I looked into his fat pasty face, that gave back an unhealthy almost livid pallor to the light that shone upon it, and caught the glance of his shifty bleary eyes under their puffy lids, and a shudder of repulsion ran through me. He was a man of sixty or more. His face, clean-shaven except for a mustache and chin-tuft stained with tobacco juice, revealed to the world every line that a wicked life had left upon it.

He rubbed his fat, moist hands on the dingy white apron that he wore, gave a tug at his mustache, and waited for my reply.

"I'm looking for Mr. Clark," I said.

"*Non*–no soch man is here," he said suspiciously. "I have no one of zat name."

"I'm quite sure he's here," I said. "And I must see him."

The brow of H. Blasius darkened, and he looked about slowly as though he meditated calling for assistance to hasten my departure.

"I don't vant ze trouble," he had begun, when I caught sight of my man at a table in the alcove at the other end of the long room.

"There he is now," I interrupted. "There'll be no trouble, if you don't make it yourself."

I was gone before H. Blasius had brought his wits to understand my meaning, and in a moment stood beside a group of men who were sitting around the farther table, beer glasses before them and pipes in hand, listening to an excited young man with a shock of long, tawny hair, who pounded the table to strengthen the force of his argument. As he came to a pause, I put my hand on the shoulder of a tall, awkward, spare-built man, with a stubby red beard, who was listening

with effort, and evidently burning to reply to the fervid young orator. It was Clark, and he rose clumsily and shook hands with effusion.

"I'm glad you come, Mr. Hampden; I'd about give you up. Boys, this is Mr. Hampden, the friend I was telling you about. Won't you take this chair, sir, and spend the evening with us? We was having a little discussion about the Revolution."

"The Revolution!" I exclaimed. "Well, that's a safe antiquarian topic."

"Oh," stammered Clark, "it isn't the old Revolution. That's too far back for us. It's the coming Revolution we're talking about, when all men are to be equal and share alike in the good things of the earth. Parks, here, thinks he knows all about it." And he waved his hand toward the oratorical young man, who looked on the world with eyes that seemed to burn with the light of fever.

Parks accepted this as an introduction, and acknowledged it with a nod as I took a seat. I looked at him with keen interest, for I knew his name as one of the nine leaders who had banded themselves to right the wrongs of the world–with the incidental assistance of Peter Bolton. Then I looked about the rest of the group as Clark spoke their names, and was disappointed to find that a little spectacled German, with a bristling black beard, was the only other member of the Council at the table.

"Hope to know you better, Mr. Hampden," said Parks. "You don't look to be one of us."

"If it's a secret society, I can't say that I've been initiated," I said. "But I hope you'll count me as one of you for an occasional evening. What do you happen to be, if I may ask?"

"We," said Parks, leaning forward and gazing fiercely into my eyes, "we represent the people. We are from the masses."

"I'm afraid, then," I returned with a laugh, "you'll have to count me as one of you. I can't think of any way in which my name gets above the level of the lower ten million."

"Sir," cried Parks, shaking his finger in my face and speaking rapidly and excitedly, "your speech betrays you. You speak of the lower ten million. They are not the lower–no, by Heaven! Your heart is not with the people. There is nothing in you that beats responsive to their cry of distress. You may be as poor as the rest of us, but your feelings, your prejudices are with the despoilers of labor, the oppressors of the lowly. You are–"

What further offense of aristocracy he would have charged upon my head I know not, for Clark reached over and seized his arm.

"Hold on!" he cried. "Mr. Hampden is our guest and a good fellow, so don't be too hard on him. He ain't educated yet. That's all the matter with him. Give him time."

Parks' voice had been rising and his utterance had been growing more rapid and excited, but he lowered his tones once more.

"No offense, Hampden, but my blood boils at the wrongs inflicted on the downtrodden slaves of the wage system, and I speak my mind."

"Oh, go ahead," I said. "It doesn't worry me. Come to think of it, Mr. Parks, you don't seem to be one of the slaves of the wage system yourself. You are, I take it from your words and ways, a man of education and something more."

"Sir," said Parks, striking the table angrily, "it is my misfortune."

"Misfortune?" I laughed inquiringly, and the others laughed in sympathy.

"Misfortune–yes, sir. I repeat it. I have had schooling and to spare. And if it wasn't for that, I could raise this city in arms in a month."

My left-hand neighbor was an old man, a little bent with years, who had been looking about the table with dreamy eye. But at Parks' boastful words his face lighted and he gave a cackling laugh.

"Heh, heh! He's right," he said, addressing the rest of us. "There's a crowd of thieves and robbers on top and they need a taking-down. Parks is just the one to do it."

"You're wrong, Merwin," said Parks, calming down and looking at the old man reflectively. "I'm not the one to do it."

"And why not?" I asked.

"It's the cursed education you speak of," said Parks fiercely. "I am with the masses, but not of them. They mistrust me. Try as I will I can't get their confidence. I can't rouse them. They shout for me, they applaud me, but I can't stir them as they must be stirred before the Revolution can begin."

"What sort of man do you want?" I asked.

"He must be a man of the people," said Parks.

"By which you mean a day-laborer, I judge."

Parks ignored the interruption and went on:

"He must have eloquence, courage, and he must understand men; he must be a statesman by nature–a man of brains. But he must be one of the class he addresses."

"But how are you going to get a man of brains out of that class?" I inquired.

Parks struck the table a sounding blow with his fist, shook his head until his shock of hair stood out in protest, and glared at me fiercely.

"Do you mean to deny," he began hotly, "that brains are born to what you call the lowest classes? Do you deny the divine spark of intelligence to the sons of toil? Do you say that genius is sent to the houses of the rich and not to those of the poor? Do you dare to say that the son of a banker may have brains and that the son of a hodman may not?"

"By no means, my dear fellow. I only say if he has brains he won't be a

hodman."

"I've known some pretty smart hodmen in my time," said Clark, when he saw that Parks had no answer ready. "I knew a fellow who made four hundred dollars on a contract. But," he added regretfully, "he lost it in stocks."

"I'm afraid that instance doesn't prove anything, Clark," said Merwin with a thin laugh. "He should have had brains enough to keep out of stocks."

"There's not many as has that," said a heavy-jowled Englishman who sat across the table. "I wish I had 'em myself."

"I'm afraid you're right, Mr. Hampden," said Clark. "We can't get a leader from the hodman class."

Parks leaned forward and spoke quietly and impressively.

"By God, we must!" he said. "*I'll* be the brains. I'll find the hodman for the mouth, and I'll teach him to talk in a way to set the world on fire."

"And then what?" I asked.

Parks gave his head a shake, and closed his lips tightly as though he feared that some secret would escape them. But the excitable little German with spectacles and a bushy black beard gave me an answer.

"Leeberty, equality, fraternity!" he exclaimed.

"And justice," added the heavy-jowled Englishman.

"These are words, and very good ones," I returned. "But what do you mean by them? You have these things now, or you don't have them–just as you happen to look at it. It usually depends on whether you are successful or not. What does all this mean in action?"

"For one thing," said the square-jawed man seriously, "it means an end of the sort of robbery by law that our friend Merwin here has suffered. Now, twenty years ago he was a prosperous contractor. He took a lot of contracts from old Peter Bolton for filling in some of these water-front blocks down here. He spent two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, d'ye know, and has been lawing for it ever since."

I turned and looked at the face of the old man with more interest. The case of Merwin against Bolton was celebrated in the law books. It was now before the Supreme Court for the sixth time. In the trial court the juries had invariably found for Merwin with costs and interest, and the appellate court had as invariably sent the case back for retrial on errors committed by the lower court, until it had become an impersonal issue, a jest of the law, a legal ghost, almost as far removed from affairs of to-day as "Shelley's case" of unblessed memory.

Merwin looked up quickly, the dreamy gaze no longer clouding his eye.

"I have been kept out of my property for more than twenty years, sir," he said. "It has been a great wrong. If you are interested I should like to tell you about it."

"I am pretty well informed about it already," I replied. "You have been much abused." The legal jest had become a living tragedy, and I felt a glow of shame for the futility of the law that had been unable to do justice to this man.

"I have been made a poor man," said Merwin. "My money was stolen from me by Peter Bolton, and I tell you, sir, he is the greatest scoundrel in the city." And in a sudden flash of temper he struck his fist upon the table.

"He ought to be hanged," said the heavy-jowled man.

"No, no," cried Parks. "It isn't Bolton you should blame. It is the system that makes such things possible. Bolton himself is but the creature of circumstances. As I have reason to know, his heart is stirred by thoughts of better things for humanity. Hang Bolton and another Bolton would take his place to-morrow. Abolish the system, and no man could oppress his neighbor."

"But how are you going to abolish it?" I asked. "It won't go for fine words."

"Rouse the people," cried Parks with passion. "The men who are suffering from these evils are the strength of the nation. Those who profit by the evils are a small minority. Once the people rise in their might the oppressors must fly or be overwhelmed."

"Here's to guns, and the men who know how to use them!" said the heavy-jowled man, draining his glass.

"*Oui, oui! Vive la barricade!*" croaked a harsh voice behind me, and I turned to see the pasty face of H. Blasius over my shoulder.

"Shut up!" said Parks. "We're not ready to talk of guns and barricades."

At this moment a sudden noise of scuffle and angry voices rose above the sounds of conversation and argument that filled the room. Some one made an abortive attempt to blow a police whistle; curses and blows thrilled the air; and then the swinging doors fell apart and a man staggered in, holding dizzily to the door-post for support. His hat was crushed, his clothing torn, and his face covered with blood that seemed to blind him.

As he staggered into the saloon, ten or twelve young men, hardly more than boys, crowded after him, striking at him with fists and clubs. Their faces were hard at best, the lines written upon them by vice and crime giving plain warning to all who might read; but now rage and hatred and lust for blood lighted their eyes and flushed their cheeks, till they might have stood as models for escapes from the infernal regions.

"The cop!" cried a voice; and others took it up, and I recognized in the battered man the policeman who had shown me my way.

"He's the cop as got Paddy Rafferty sent across the bay for ten years," shouted one of the hoodlums, striking a blow that was barely warded off.

"Kick him!" "Do him up!" "Kill him!" came in excited chorus from all parts of the room and swelled into a roar that lost semblance of articulate sound.

Parks and I jumped to our feet at the first sound of the riot.

"Here! this won't do!" said Parks roughly, throwing me back in my chair. "Sit down! You'll get killed without doing any good. I'll settle this." And before I could remonstrate he was running down the room shouting wrathfully.

As I got to my feet again, I saw him pulling and hauling at the mob, shouting lustily in the ears of the men as he threw them aside.

"Come on!" I cried. "We must take a hand in this." And at my call Clark and the Englishman and the little German rose and followed in the wake of the young agitator.

Parks worked his way into the crowd, shouting, appealing, using hands and tongue and body at once to carry his point. He was soon at the side of the policeman, who swayed, half raised his arms, and would have fallen had Parks' arm not come to steady him. The shouting hoodlums paused at this reinforcement. Then the leader, with a curse, struck wildly at Parks' face, and the cries of rage rose louder than before. At this moment, however, the tall, broad-shouldered Irishman, whom I had noticed at my entrance, deftly caught the hoodlum with a blow on the chin that sent him back into the midst of his band.

"Hould on!" he shouted in a resonant voice. "There's to be fair play here! Here's two against the crowd to save a man's life. If there's any more men here let them come next us."

"Here are four," I cried, and our reinforcement shouldered through the throng to the side of the two defenders. The tumult stilled for a little, and Parks seized the moment to burst into indignant speech. He had a high, keen, not unpleasant voice, though it thrilled now with anger and scorn, as he denounced the assault.

"He's the cop that got Paddy Rafferty sent up, I tell you," replied one of the hoodlums. "We said we'd fix him and we done it."

"Well, you get home now or you'll be fixed yourself, sonny," said Parks. "The cops will be on you in just three minutes by the watch. Git!"

"Come on, youse!" said the leader sullenly, rubbing his jaw and giving a spiteful glance at the stout Irishman. "We'll fix these tarriers some other time,"–and the band slunk out into the darkness.

"That's the kind of cattle that keep back the cause," cried Parks, turning to the crowd with keen eye for the opportunity for speech. And he went on with rude eloquence to expound the "rights of the people," which I judged from his language to be the right to work eight hours for about eight dollars a day and own nobody for master.

"Well said for you, Mr. Parks!" said the Irishman. "I'm of your way of thinkin'. My name's Kearney–Denis Kearney–maybe you've heard of me."

"Maybe I have," said Parks. "I hope to hear more of you, Mr. Kearney. You

came in the nick of time to-night."

The policeman now sat in a chair with his face washed and his head bound up in a cloth, and with a sip of liquor was recovering strength and spirit.

"There comes the boys," he said. "They've heard of the shindy." And in another minute four policemen burst into the place.

"Cowdery's gang!" was the brief comment of the commanding officer. "We'll have them under lock and key before morning."

H. Blasius had assumed a most pious expression in a most inconspicuous position behind the bar, but dropped it as the policemen left.

"I've found my hodman," whispered Parks to me.

"Where?"

"Here. He isn't a hodman, but he's just as good. He's a drayman with a voice like a fog-horn and a gift of tongue."

"And the brains?"

"I carry them under my hat," said Parks.

"What's his name?"

"Mr. Kearney–Mr. Hampden," said Parks, raising his voice and introducing me gravely. Then, taking the arm of his new-found treasure, Parks walked out of the saloon.

CHAPTER III

A GLIMPSE OF SUNSHINE

My watch-hands pointed to eight o'clock as I was ushered into Wharton Kendrick's library. It was a handsome room, with handsome books and handsome solid leather-covered furniture to match the leather-covered volumes that lined its walls, but the effect of dark walls, dark ceilings, and dark bindings was a trifle gloomy. I made up my mind that my library should be a light and cheerful room with white and gold trimmings, and was trying to decide whether it should be in the southwest or southeast corner of my château in Spain, when my architectural studies were interrupted by the opening of a door.

I rose in the expectation of meeting my employer; but it was not my employer who entered. Instead of Wharton Kendrick I found myself facing a young woman, who halted, irresolute and surprised, a pace or two from the door. Had it not been for her trailing dress I should at first glance have thought her but a

young girl. She was short of stature and slender of figure, and for an instant I had the idea that the long gown and the arrangement of the yellow hair that crowned her head were part of a masquerade. But when I looked in her face I saw that she was a woman grown, and her years might have reached twenty.

"Why, I didn't know you were here," said the startled intruder. Her voice was even-pitched, but it had a curious piquant quality about it.

As I hesitated in surprise, she repeated her thought in more positive form: "I didn't know that any one was here."

"I was waiting for Mr. Kendrick. I was told to wait here," I said apologetically.

The gas-light fell on her face and I saw that she was pretty. Her head was small, but well shaped. Her color was that of the delicate blonde type, but her large eyes were of a deep brown.

"I don't believe you know me, after all," she said, with a sudden mischievous look.

I wanted to lie, but my tongue refused its office.

"You'd better not tell any stories," she added.

"I'm afraid–" I began.

"Oh, if you're afraid I shall go away. I was going to read a book, but it doesn't matter."

"I'm sure it does matter," I said. "If you go away I shall certainly feel as though I'm the one who ought to have gone."

"I don't believe I ought to stay here talking with a man who thinks he doesn't know me."

"I'm a very stupid person, I fear," I said.

"I'm afraid some people would say so," she said with another mischievous look, though her face was perfectly grave; "but I shouldn't dare."

"I'm on the lookout for a good bargain," I said desperately. "I should like very much to exchange names with you."

"Oh, that wouldn't be a fair exchange at all," said the girl, shaking her head gravely. "I know Mr. Hampden's name already. You must offer a better bargain than that."

"Then I must sue for pardon for a treacherous memory," I said.

"It's a very serious matter," said the girl, "but I'll give you three chances to guess. If that's not enough, you'll have to ask uncle."

"Miss Laura–Miss Kendrick!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, did I tell you, after all?" she cried in dismay. "I said uncle, didn't I? Now, you see, I'm quite as stupid as other people."

"Indeed, no," I said. "It's quite unpardonable that I should have forgotten."

"It ought to be, but I'm afraid I shall have to forgive you," she said, dropping

into a chair. "It's a longish time."

"How many years has it been?" I asked.

"I'm afraid you're adding to your offenses," she said, with a shake of the head. "You should certainly remember that it was five years ago this summer."

"Have you been away so long?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, dear! what shall I do with such a man? First he doesn't remember me at all, and then he doesn't know how many years I've been gone, and then he has no idea it was so long."

"But you were only a little girl then," I urged.

"And not worth noticing, would you say if you dared? I used to think I was quite grown up in those days."

"You didn't–er–quite give the impression."

"I see I didn't make one," she said. "It's a very good lesson for one's vanity, isn't it?"

"And haven't you been back in all these years?"

"'All these years' sounds better," she said. "I believe you are learning. I've been back twice, if you want your question answered."

"It was kept quite a secret."

"Oh, dear, no! Everybody knew who cared anything about knowing."

"And where have you been, and what doing?"

"I was in the East. First I finished the seminary."

"And then?"

"Then I went through college."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, you needn't be so surprised. It's nothing so very wonderful. You didn't suspect it from my looks?"

"You certainly don't look like a blue-stocking."

"I'm afraid I'm not. I never could get enough into my head at one time to be worthy of such a title. I believe a blue-stocking is a lady who has a great deal of learning."

"Or at least," I said, "is very fond of showing it."

"Oh, I think I have her main characteristic then," laughed my companion. "If I know anything I can't rest till I let somebody else know about it, too."

"I believe you're not alone. They say that failing has descended to all the daughters of Mother Eve. How long are you to be here?" I asked.

"Ages, I'm afraid," said Miss Kendrick. "Six months at least–maybe a year."

"Then I can hope for the pleasure of seeing you sometimes?" I said.

"I don't know," she answered, appealing to a bust of Homer on a book-shelf. "Do you think a man with such an uncertain memory could be trusted to keep it in mind that such a person is here?"

"I can vouch for him," I said.

"If you're quite sure–" she said.

"Quite sure," I repeated positively.

"Then you can be told that we are at home on Thursdays. There–I hear uncle showing that comical General Wilson out the door, so I'll be getting my book and go. It was uncle you came to see, I believe."

"It was Mr. Kendrick I called for, but–"

"You needn't go on," interrupted Miss Kendrick calmly. "I suppose you think it is only a white one, but I'd rather not hear it. Now if you wouldn't mind reaching that fourth book from the end of the second row from the top, you'll save me from the mortification of climbing on a chair."

"This one?"

"Yes, please," she said. "Thank you. Good night. I really don't see why I've talked so much."

"It was very good of you," I protested. "Good night."

The swish of her skirts had hardly died away when the opposite door–the one by which I had entered–opened, and Wharton Kendrick walked in.

"Come this way, Wilson. I can put my hand on the book in one second."

"You can't find your citation, Kendrick–it isn't there," said a short, stout, red-faced man, with short yellow-gray side-whiskers, as he bustled in the wake of my client. "I tell you you can't find it. I know the whole thing from cover to cover. Just give me the first line of any page and I'll repeat it right to the bottom. I never have to read a thing more than once and I can carry it on the tip of my tongue for years afterward. Lord bless us, whom have we here?"

"Oh, Hampden," said Kendrick. "I didn't see you. General Wilson, allow me to introduce you." And the magnate gave me a kind word of identification.

"A lawyer?" exclaimed General Wilson, his red face beaming in the frame of his yellow-gray side-whiskers. "Young man, you are entering on the greatest and noblest profession that the human mind has devised. You are following the most elevated and grandest principles that the wit of mankind is capable of evolving from the truths of the ages. I am a humble follower of the profession myself, and am proud to take you by the hand."

He was not proud enough to make the most of the honor, for he gave but a perfunctory grasp as I made some appropriate reply.

"I've been in the profession more decades than I like to tell about," said General Wilson, with a lofty wave of the hand, "but I've been trying to get out of it for the last five years. Perhaps you can't appreciate that, Hampden. Here you're trying to get into it, and I dare say finding it devilish hard; but if you're like me you'll be trying to get out of it some day and finding it a damned sight harder yet."

"I don't doubt it," said I with pious mendacity.

"Here's the book," said Kendrick. But General Wilson waved him aside.

"It's wonderful the way business sticks to a man. I've got clients who just won't be discharged. I thought a year ago that I was going to see the last of them, but no sooner did I mention it than they were all up in arms. 'We can't spare you,' they said. 'I must take a rest,' I told them. 'Take it at our expense,' they said. And the Ohio Midland gave me a special car and paid the expenses of a trip around the country, and the Pennsylvania Southern gave me a twenty-thousand-dollar check to settle for a vacation in Europe, and the Rockland and Western made me the present of a country place where I could go and have quiet; and after that what could I do?"

"They must have been irresistible," I admitted.

"Just so; but even then I tried to beg off. I told 'em I had enough money. It wasn't money I wanted. It was rest–freedom from worry of business, the grinding care of law cases–that I was after. But it wouldn't do. The Ohio Midland said, 'Wilson, if you can't be with us, you mustn't be against us. We know you'll be back again. Take twenty thousand a year as a retainer and count yourself as one of us yet. We shouldn't be easy else.' But the Pennsylvania Southern and the Rockland and Western wouldn't allow even that. They said, 'Wilson, we can't do without you. We'll give you all the help you want, but we must have you at the head. Name your own figures. It isn't a question of money. You must be our leading counsel, even if you don't look in on us more than once a quarter.' I couldn't shake 'em off, so, as I've been saying to Kendrick, I'm like to die in harness, though I'd give anything to be free and enjoy life as you young fellows do."

"Just so," said Kendrick cheerily; "but you're way out of the running about that Mosely matter. Here's the book, and here's the page, and it was just as I was telling you."

"Ahem!" growled General Wilson, turning redder than ever and taking the book gingerly. "Oh, this is the thing you were talking about, is it? Of course, of course, you were quite right–Mosely, of course. I don't need to read a word of it. I thought you were talking about that Moberly case. Mosely, of course. Well, I'll send you those papers as soon as I get to New York. I must be off now. I've got to see Governor Stanford to-night, and he's one of your early-to-bed men; so good night."

"You'll call in on me within the week, then?" said Kendrick, taking him to the door.

"Oh, I shall see you in two days. We must press this business to an issue. They are waiting for me in New York, and I can't waste much time in small affairs like this. Well, good night, Kendrick, God bless you! There ought to be more men

like you. Good night." And the outer door closed behind him.

Kendrick suppressed a burst of laughter with a muscular effort that appeared to threaten apoplexy.

"The old humbug!" he gasped. "Hampden, you've seen the most picturesque liar that ever struck the Golden Gate. He is a regular Roman candle of romances."

"Is he a fraud? Is it all a case of imagination run wild?"

"No, not altogether, I should say. Half of it seems to be the truth, though which half to believe I'm blest if I can make out. He brings good letters."

"From New York?"

"Yes; and Chicago, too. He came out two weeks ago to work up a land deal. Represents a million dollars in a syndicate, though I fancy he's not so big a part of it as he makes out. He's full of these tall stories, though they don't all of them hang together well. It's fun to listen to him, though. I couldn't help taking him down about that Mosely affair. He was so cock-sure of knowing everything that I couldn't resist the temptation."

"You did give his vanity a singe."

"It wasn't the politic thing to do with a million-dollar trade hanging in the balance, but I reckon he's got enough of his feathers left to carry him through the deal."

Wharton Kendrick leaned back in his chair, and his face glowed in amusement.

Then on a sudden he straightened up, all gravity.

"Did you bring any news?" he asked.

"I have a present of an overcoat," I answered. And I gave him the story of the adventure of the night.

"That was a rash play of yours," he said gravely. "Don't do it again. It wasn't necessary."

"Are you certain that Bolton is the only man who has an interest in setting a watch on you?" I inquired.

"Why, what have you found?" asked Kendrick, a little startled.

"I haven't found anything but an idea–and that," I said, handing him a bit of paper.

"What's this?" asked Kendrick, putting on his eye-glasses. "Your wash bill? China lottery? or what?"

"That's the thing that has puzzled me. You see, there's quite a bit of Chinese writing on it."

"Well, what of it?"

"I got it out of the overcoat that the fellow left in my hands."

"Ah-ha!" said Kendrick. "And you don't see what one of Bolton's men

would be doing with a Chinese letter in his pocket?"

"That was just my idea–in part, at least. The letter was a clue, anyhow, and I took it to a Chinese firm I have done some law business for and know pretty well. I showed it to the boss partner. He talks English like a native, and chatters like a magpie. But when he saw that slip of paper he shut up like a clam, and all I could get out of him was 'No sabby.' You know the look of stolid ignorance they can put on when there's anything they don't want to tell."

"It's the most exasperating thing you can run against."

"Well, when my merchant failed me, I went to another I knew slightly, then to an interpreter, then to the boss of the Chinese guides. The same 'No sabby,' and the same stolid look everywhere."

"Why didn't you go to the Chinese interpreter at the City Hall? He's a white man, and wouldn't be afraid to give away secrets."

"I tried him, but he said it was nonsense. It's evidently a cipher, though it's one pretty well known in Chinatown."

"I'll tell you what to do then, Hampden,"–and he took out his pencil and wrote a few words on a card. "Take this to Big Sam at his Chinatown office tomorrow. Show him the paper, and he'll give you the reading. He is under some obligations to me, and he can hardly refuse."

"Just the thing! As Big Sam comes pretty near being the King of Chinatown, he will have no one to fear."

"Now about the Council of Nine. What did you get?"

"Well, I saw two members of the Council and a few of their followers. I tried to pump them, and I dare say I shall become as good a convert to their propaganda as old Bolton himself. They have some crack-brained notions of an uprising of the people, but they don't appear to have anything definite in view at present." And I gave my employer an account of my visit to the House of Blazes.

He stroked his red whiskers meditatively, and then said:

"Well, that doesn't sound as though they could amount to much, but as long as P. Bolton is backing them, you'd better keep a close eye on them."

CHAPTER IV

MACHIAVELLI IN BRONZE

Waverly Place was in the full tide of business. The little brown man in his blue

blouse and clattering shoes was seen in his endless variety, chattering, bargaining, working, lounging, moving; and the short street, with its American architecture half orientalized, was gay with colors and foul with odors.

Patient coolies trotted past, bending between the heavily laden baskets that swung upon the poles passed over the shoulder. On the corner an itinerant merchant sat under an improvised awning with a rude bench before him on which to display his wares, and a big Chinese basket beside him from which his stock might be renewed as it was sold. Here was a store with a window display of fine porcelains, silks, padded coats and gowns covered with grotesque figures, everything about it denoting neatness and order. Next it was a barber shop where two Chinese customers were undergoing the ordeal of a shave.

Beyond the barber shop was a stairway leading to the depths, from which the odors of opium and a sickening compound of indescribable smells floated on the morning air. Brown men could be seen through the smoke and darkness, moving silently as though in dreams, or listlessly gazing at nothing. Here was a shop of many goods, with fish and fruits exposed to tempt the palates and purses of the passer: Chinese nut-fruits, dried and smoked to please the Chinese taste, candied cocoanut chips that form the most popular of Chinese confections, with roots and nuts and preserves in variety, appealing temptingly to the eyes of the Chinese who passed. Behind, were boxes and bales and cans, big chests and little chests, bright chests and dingy chests, in endless confusion. The blackened walls and ceilings gave such an air of age that the shop seemed as though it might have come out of the ancient Chinese cities as a relic of the days of Kublai Khan. Shoe factories, clothing factories, and cigar factories, were scattered along the street, with wares made and displayed in the American fashion, and here and there, as if in mockery, hung signs that bore the legend "White Labor Goods."

The little brown men sewed and hammered and smoothed and polished and smoked and chaffered and traded–the great hive of Chinatown was astir; and over all rose the murmur of the strange sing-song tongue that finds its home on the banks of the Yellow River. Here and there a white face showed. But where it belonged to a dweller in Waverly Place it was sodden, brutal, depraved. Waverly Place got only the dregs and seepage of the white race, and such as dwelt there boasted of an intimate knowledge and possession of the vices of three continents.

Half-way up the block from Clay Street I paused before a dingy doorway. The building had been one of the substantial structures of early San Francisco, but the coolie occupation had orientalized it with a coating of dirt and a mask of decay.

"This is an unpromising place to look for the richest Chinaman in San Francisco," was my mental comment. "But it is surely the number given me."

As I moved to enter the door, a stout, well-fed Chinaman, with a pock-

marked face, his hands hidden in the sleeves of his thick blue blouse, put his body in the way.

"What you wan'?" he asked, with a trace of aggression in his voice.

"I want see Big Sam," I said.

The Chinaman's face took on the blank, stolid look of utter ignorance.

"No sabby Big Sam. No Big Sam heah."

"Nonsense! You know Big Sam. Every Chinaman in San Francisco knows Big Sam. This is where I'm told he lives. I've got to see him."

"No sabby Big Sam heah. One Big Sam he live Stockton St'eet, one Big Sam he live Oakyland. You go Stockton St'eet, you go Oakyland. No Big Sam heah."

"See here, John," I said, "I've got to see Big Sam, and I know he's here, and I'm going to see him. So get out of the way."

The Chinaman straightened up in offended dignity. "John" was a term of insult, or at least of derogation in the Chinese mind. Then he called back into the darkness and two other Chinese appeared. They were better dressed than the ordinary, and were evidently some grades above the Chinese laborers who thronged the street.

There was a minute or two of conversation in the high-pitched singsong tongue that is so well adapted to the purpose of concealing thought–from the white race, at least–and then one of the others stepped forward.

"I must see Big Sam," I said in a determined tone. "You can tell him first, or I'll go in without it, just as you please."

Before he could speak there was a shout and a scream behind me, and I turned to see a Chinese girl running out of the fruit and variety store across the way. She was probably fifteen years old and had that clear, brilliant, creamy complexion that is sometimes seen in Chinese women. Though her round flat face was not beautiful to the western eye, it represented one of the highest types of oriental attractiveness. Even the clumsy garments in which the Chinese dress their women, with their long sleeves and armless coat and baggy trousers, were not able to conceal the fact that she was graceful and well formed. I noted these details more in memory than in the moment when she clattered into view, her clumsy Chinese shoes beating a tattoo on the boards. She had hardly reached the sidewalk when a half-dozen blue-bloused heathen surrounded her. She gave a scream, but she was seized by two of the band, a cloth was thrown over her head, and her cries were silenced. If I had taken time for thought, I should have sought the police instead of the center of disturbance, for I understood how little chance I should have in a contest with a band of highbinders. But I could not see murder or kidnapping done before my eyes without lifting a hand, and I raised a cry and started across the way.

The street suddenly became alive with shouts and screams, and a hundred

Chinamen came running, all with hands under their blouses, chattering ferociously as they pressed toward the struggling group. Before I could reach the other side of the way the girl and her captors had mysteriously disappeared, whisked through some of the doors that looked blankly upon the street, and in their place was a mob of Chinamen, shouting, gesticulating, and blowing police whistles, while threats of slaughter flashed from their ugly faces. Two policemen appeared on the run and there was a sudden melting away of the crowd. Hands came out from under the blouses and from inside the long roomy sleeves. Threats and hatred faded out of the faces of the quarreling men, and in their place came the stolid mask of the "no sabby."

"What's the matter here?" panted one of the policemen, while the other hustled the Chinese from one side of the walk to the other with gruff orders to "move on."

I told of what I had seen.

"Highbinders," said the policeman. "I thought it was time they was breakin' out again. Oh, murther, but there'll be killin' over this before the day's at an end. Hullo! what's this?"

An old Chinaman came forward at this moment, wringing his hands and chattering like a monkey. His face was stricken with signs of heart-breaking woe.

"He says it was his daughter," said the other policeman.

"Yes–all same daughtah–my gell–you sabby?" wailed the old man. "She go down store one minute all 'long boy–all same my boy–you sabby? One man come, say 'you come 'long me.' She heap cly. Boy heap cly. Two men come 'long–catch gell–so. One man hit boy 'long side head. Tlee, fo' men thlow cloth over gell's head–she no cly no mo'. Tlee, fo', fi' men take gell. Boy lun home. All same I sabby no mo'. Gell all steal." And the old man wrung his hands with mournful cries.

"H-m! the old girl-stealing trick of the highbinders," said the first policeman, whom I took to be a sergeant of the force.

"Does he suspect anybody?" I asked.

The old man caught the idea.

"Maybe–I no know," he cried. "One day two men come. All same they say heap like my gell. I say no got gell. One man say all same give me t'ousand dolla'. I say I no want t'ousand dolla'. Othe' man he say twel' hund' dolla'. I say all same I no want twel' hund' dolla'. Two men say bad word, all same Clistian, you sabby?"

"What men were they?" asked the sergeant.

"You sabby Suey Sing men?" said the old man. "Two men all same Suey Sing."

"The Suey Sing Tong–I'll bet he's lying," said the sergeant. "It's more like

the Sare Bo Tong. Well, go along with him and get the boy's story. Maybe the kid can't lie so fast. I'll go down to the hall and send up a squad. There's like to be trouble over this."

"Do you think there will be a fight?" I asked.

"There was a lot of the Hop Sings about as we came up," said the officer, "and I reckon the old man belongs to 'em. The others was mostly Sare Bos. There's bad blood between 'em, anyhow, and I look for some killing out of it. Are you walking down?"

"No, I've a bit of business here." And I turned back to the door that had barred the way to the rooms of Big Sam.

As I reached the threshold I drew back before the advance of a party of Chinese, who filed out of the shop one by one to the number of a dozen or more. Their stolid faces showed no interest in me or anything else, and half of them turned to the south, half to the north, and they followed the uncompanionable Chinese habit of straggling in single file. A tall stout Chinaman, dressed in baggy trousers and a padded Chinese coat of fine blue cloth, stood just inside the door and watched them narrowly as they went out. As the last coolie passed I stepped forward and into the doorway.

The tall Chinaman looked at me blandly.

"Were you not a little indiscreet to think of interfering in one of our family quarrels?" he said, with a ghost of a smile on his full smooth face. He spoke English fluently, with just a trace of the Chinese intonation. The "r" that is the despair of the Chinese tongue rolled full and clear from his lips. I had been on the point of addressing him in the "pidgin English" considered necessary in communicating with the heathen intelligence, and was stricken with surprise.

"I–I didn't think of interfering," I replied.

"One would not have suspected you of so much discretion to see you running across the street," he said, with the same bland look. "The next time you think of taking part in such an entertainment, I beg of you to reflect that half the men in the crowd carried something like this." And with a smile he drew back the Chinese jacket and touched the handle of a big navy six-shooter. The weapon was eighteen inches long and would carry a forty-four caliber bullet for a hundred yards. "If he didn't have that he probably had something of this sort about him." He gave his voluminous sleeve a shake, and a big knife with a ten-inch blade was in his hand. "These pleasant little parties are not always what they seem," he continued, "and it is just as well to watch them from a distance."

"Thank you," I said. "I'd prefer not to be on close acquaintance with anything of the kind you are hinting at. That wasn't what I came for."

"I understand that you were looking for me, Mr.–"

"Hampden," I supplied the name. "I believe I am speaking to–" Then I hesi-

tated. I really did not know his name, and it struck me as something of an absurdity to call the dignified and forceful man before me by the nickname that was on the tip of my tongue.

He smiled.

"Sometimes I am known as Kwan Sam Suey," he said, "but your people call me 'Big Sam.' Won't you step this way?"

He turned back into the dingy shop, passed into a dingy hallway, and led to a dingy stairway beyond. It was something worse than shabby. I reflected with wonder that one of the richest of the Chinese, and by report the most powerful man in Chinatown, should be content to dwell in such a barn. On the third floor Big Sam opened a door and stood aside bowing me to enter.

"My office," said he.

As I passed the threshold I was overwhelmed with amazement. Instead of the bare walls and dingy cobwebbed den the entrance had led me to expect, I was ushered into a room fitted up with a wealth of decoration and discomfort that was thoroughly oriental. The walls were covered with woven tapestry, grotesque in figures and bright with colors. Dark cabinets, rich with carving, stood about the room; the desk and chairs showed the patient handicraft of the Ancient Empire; the floor was inlaid with varied woods, and beaten brass and copper were freely used for decorative effect. To the western mind the colors and the ornamentation were garish, yet I could see that the fittings were costly and a striking example of Chinese artistic taste.

Big Sam waved me to a seat and took his place at the desk.

"I assume, Mr. Hampden, that you did not come here out of idle curiosity?"

"That depends," said I, repressing with difficulty the instinct to address him in the "pidgin" dialect. "You might call it curiosity, and idle at that; but it is of some concern to me."

"I can believe it," he said politely.

"But before I enter on the errand that brings me here, I should present you with my credentials." And I handed him the card from Kendrick.

He scarcely glanced at it.

"Any friend of Mr. Kendrick's is welcome to any service in my power to give," he said, with a bow.

"I have a paper written in your tongue that I should like explained to me," I said, bringing forth the sheet and unfolding it.

Big Sam leaned across the desk to receive it. I put it in his hand and kept one eye on his face, the other on the sheet of paper.

There was no trace of surprise on the bronze mask of the Oriental. For an instant I thought I could detect a shadow of the stolid "no-sabby" look of the coolie, but it was gone with the dropping of an eyelid. There was before me only

the grave, impassive face of the Chinese merchant.

"What is the difficulty?" he asked with a polite smile, after he had glanced over the paper.

"The difficulty is that none of your countrymen seems to be able to translate it."

"I can not believe it."

"I have asked a dozen."

"They were very busy." The voice was a combination of assertion and inquiry, but my ear warned me of something mocking in it, too.

"They concealed it most successfully, if they were," I retorted.

Big Sam smiled again, and took up the paper. It slipped from his hand and fluttered to the floor.

"Excuse my clumsiness," he said, diving after it.

I sprang around the corner of the desk to assist in recovering it, and dropped to one knee.

"I beg your pardon," I said, catching at the paper that Big Sam was stowing away in his capacious sleeve. "I believe this is the document." And I held it up.

"I think not," said Big Sam, straightening up and looking me blandly in the eye. "I believe this is it." And he handed me another paper with a bewildering maze of Chinese characters straggling across it.

I was puzzled and rose, looking first at the sheets of paper and then at Big Sam. There was a flash of triumph in his eye that made me suspect that neither sheet was mine, after all. I cursed my ill-luck in not knowing something of Chinese writing.

"Allow me to assist you," said Big Sam politely. "This is your paper." And he indicated one of the two in my hand with his long brown finger.

I saw that I was beaten. The clever Oriental had been one too many for me. I raged inwardly as I looked at that bland, courteous, impassive face before me, and for an instant thought of attempting to search him by force. The thought was gone as soon as it came. Even with a fair field the result of a personal encounter between us would have been in doubt. Big Sam was a well-built, powerful man, able to give a good account of himself in a rough-and-tumble fight. But in that den it would have been madness to raise a finger against him. I should but add another to the long list of mysterious disappearances. I swallowed my discomfiture and said as blandly as Big Sam himself:

"If you have no objections I'll take a translation of both documents."

Big Sam paid my request the tribute of a smile. I read in the turn of his lips a confirmation of my suspicion that neither paper was the one I had brought.

"Certainly," he said. "I will read them both to you. After that you can say more wisely which is yours."

He reached out his hand to take one of the papers, when a triple rap sounded at one of the panels. He straightened up and looked at me gravely.

"If you have no objections, Mr. Hampden, I shall do a little business. Can you spare the time for the interruption?"

"Certainly. When shall I come back?" said I, rising.

"Don't move," said the Oriental courteously. "It will be but a few minutes, and it may interest you." He rapped on the desk before him, the door swung open, and in filed a dozen or more Chinese.

In the midst of the band were two men whose coarse dark faces stirred a ripple of memory. Where had I seen them? For a moment I could not recall them, searching too far back in time to cross their trail. Then it came to me that these were the two villains who had seized the Chinese girl across the way but a few minutes before. Their stolid faces were hardly more expressive than a mask, yet under the "no-sabby" look there was an indefinable trace of fear. In the rear of the band was the old man whose girl had been stolen. None of them paid the slightest attention to my presence, yet I felt well assured that not a detail of my appearance was lost to them, as they huddled about the desk before Big Sam.

The face of Big Sam had changed. In place of the bland and courteous diplomat was the stern judge and ruler. In his eye was the anger that he could not wholly conceal. His voice gave no sign of emotion. He spoke in even tones, yet there was a force behind them that made every word a threat.

It might all have been in dumb show for the understanding I got of it. On the one side was accusation and reproach. On the other was sullen excuse and defense. I could see that the anger of Big Sam grew as he spoke. Then at some denial or evasion of the men before him he clapped his hands, a door opened and the young girl whose abduction I had witnessed stepped in. She gave a cry as she saw the two men who had seized her, and would have shrunk back.

The old man, who had been standing in dejection in the rear of the crowd, made an inarticulate sound of satisfaction and started toward her.

Big Sam jumped to his feet; the rage in his eyes overflowed into his face, and his voice rang out sharply. The girl ran to Big Sam and clasped her hands, then threw herself on the floor before him.

[image]

The girl threw herself on the floor

At the sound of Big Sam's words the old man stepped back mumbling. Big Sam waved his hand, the abductors and the old man were led away, and the girl,

with hands clasped, lay bowed to the floor beside me.

The rage slowly faded out of the face of Big Sam. With a word he raised the girl to her feet, motioned her to a chair and seated himself.

"Of what use is it to hold the power of life and death over men, when folly and greed are more powerful than your will?"

Big Sam spoke with a smile, but there was a bitterness in his tone.

"Neither money nor fear can put brains into the head of a fool," he continued, with the same acrid savor to his words. "I suppose you have hardly understood what has gone on, Mr. Hampden."

"I confess I am much in the dark."

"Necessarily, as you do not understand our language. You saw the beginning of the trouble. You have seen what followed. I wish you could tell me the end."

"I'm sorry," I answered, "that I'm not a prophet–"

"It would be worth something to me–to both of us–if you were."

He paused a moment and turned to his charge before he continued: "This girl, as you may suppose, is a valuable piece of property."

"I had not looked at her in that light."

"A defect of your western training, Mr. Hampden. She belongs to one of our tongs–or to the leading men of that tong, which amounts to the same thing. Another tong has been most anxious to secure her, and has offered as high as three thousand dollars for her possession. It was refused and four thousand demanded. I interfered so far as to order that the girl should be reserved until some man offered to make her his wife. She is pretty–very pretty, to our notions–and I have interested myself so much in her welfare as to think that she would grace a home. I suppose I do not need to tell you that the leaders of the two tongs have no such destiny in view for her."

"Well, no, if rumor does them no injustice," I assented.

"It was promised that I should be obeyed. I have been obeyed for many months. Yet just at this moment, when it is of the utmost importance that we should be a peaceful, united body, these dogs of the gutter start a war between the tongs."

"You have shown your power to end it," I said.

"You are too flattering, I fear," said the King of Chinatown. "Fire in flax, you say. It is so much easier to keep fire out of flax than to stamp it out after it starts. It is in my power to punish these men, but I fear that it is beyond my power to smother their enmity. In the code of the tongs blood or blood-money must pay for this." He mused for a little and seemed to be speaking to himself as much as to me. "That this should happen at such a time, when everything depends on our self-control! It is shameful–shameful–a reproach to our race."

"At such a time? I do not understand you," I ventured. The hint in his words was too plain to miss.

He looked at me sharply.

"You do not know what is going on in your own city, Mr. Hampden," he said politely.

"I confess to a lack of information on the point you mention."

"It will be brought to your attention later," said Big Sam dryly. "But I am detaining you with matters of no interest. You wished a translation of these papers?"

His face was bland and impassive, yet I had the impression that he felt he had said too much.

"It has been deeply interesting," I said. "But I am imposing on your good nature." It was of no use to seek to learn from Big Sam anything that he thought fit to conceal, and I placed the slips before him.

He read them off gravely. One was a polite note of invitation to dinner. The other a memorandum of goods bought, or to be bought.

I thanked him and raged inwardly that I should have been outwitted.

Big Sam smiled blandly. "It is nothing in the way of treason, whichever paper you may choose."

"Quite innocent," I said, looking in his half veiled eyes. I read that he was under no delusion that he had deceived me. I rose to go.

"One moment, Mr. Hampden," he said. "You have asked a trifling favor of me. May I ask a much greater one of you?"

"Certainly."

"This girl–I am perplexed to know what to do with her."

"Is there a more proper custodian than her father?"

"Father?"

"The old man–you know."

Big Sam laughed–a most unpleasant laugh, too.

"Quite as near a relation as yourself, Mr. Hampden. He is merely the custodian for his tong."

"Then his pitiful tale to the police–"

"Oh, we do not want for the inventive faculty."

"Then what better guardian could you suggest than yourself," I said, "or what better place than in your own home–or one of your homes?" Big Sam was reported to have one white wife and two Chinese wives, and it seemed to me that he might provide for her safety with one of the three, in case he did not wish to add to his matrimonial blessings.

"I have thought of that, but there are difficulties," he said, as a man considering. "I shall excite less enmity if I can provide for her safety in another way."

"The Mission–" I suggested.

"I should have both tongs at my throat at once," he laughed. "She must be where she can be returned at my will. And it is best that she should be with some good white woman."

"I'm afraid that the good white woman you have in mind would not care to take her in charge on those terms," I said.

Big Sam looked at the girl thoughtfully.

"Well, then, I must let my benevolent plans for her welfare go. It is a pity, too. I do not often indulge in such a luxury. But there are more important matters at stake than the life of a girl."

I looked at the girl and remembered a painted face that had grinned at me from behind a wicket a little while before. At the thought of what it meant to her, I took a sudden resolve.

"If I can be of service, I shall be happy."

"I don't think you will regret it," said Big Sam. "Can you arrange it by this evening?"

"I can not promise. The conditions make a difficulty."

"True. But they are imperative. I must trust to your honor to carry them out. But I hope that you will remember that I stake my life on it."

I looked my surprise.

"It is quite true," he said simply. "My people are not troubled with scruples in the matter, and I must be security that the girl will be returned when the conditions I make are complied with."

"And these are–"

"That a worthy man of her race wishes to make her his wife, and is willing to settle the claims of the two tongs."

"The two tongs?"

"Yes. He must pay the price demanded by the one, and the–the–"

"Blackmail," I suggested, as Big Sam hesitated for a word.

"Well, yes–not a pleasant word, I believe, but accurate–the blackmail demanded by the other."

"I will do my best to find a guardian who will meet your conditions."

"Can you make it convenient to bring your word this evening?"

"That is short notice."

"It is important. I shall be here from nine to twelve."

"I shall do my best."

"I shall be deeply in your debt," he said.

I looked at him closely.

"You can cancel it readily."

"I shall be most happy. How?"

I hesitated a moment and rose.

"By telling me what is the business of your communications with Mr. Peter Bolton."

We had come to such confidential terms on the matter of the maiden that Big Sam allowed himself to be surprised. His discomposure flashed in his eyes for but an instant, and was gone.

"I do not understand you," he said politely, rising in his turn.

"The memorandum that I brought might remind you," I said dryly.

I could see that I had risen a notch in Big Sam's estimation; and he was uncertain how much more I knew than was on the surface.

"You have the advantage of me," he said. "I furnished Mr. Bolton a thousand men three months ago, but we have had no transactions since. I wish you good morning. I shall expect you to-night between nine o'clock and midnight."

And he bowed me out.

CHAPTER V
MISS KENDRICK'S PLEASURE

"I suppose it's my uncle you want to see, so I'll be going," said Miss Kendrick in her piquant voice. She had been reading as I was ushered into the library, and now stood, book in hand, in a graceful attitude of meditated flight.

"If you please," I said, "it's not your uncle I want to see. I want to ask a favor of you."

"A favor? Of me? Well, I hope it has nothing to do with the Bellinger ball, for I'm trying to invent an excuse for not going." And Miss Kendrick tilted her nose and looked defiantly at me.

"I had no idea such an atrocity was in contemplation," I said. "What I want is some advice."

"Oh, how delightful!" cried Miss Kendrick, sinking into her chair and motioning me to a seat. "I always did dearly love to give advice. It's such fun, for nobody ever follows it, and I can always tell them how much better things would have turned out if they had. But I never had anybody come and ask for it before." There was a sarcastic note in her piquant voice that made me wonder, after all, whether I liked it.

"Now you are making sport of me," I said.

"Not at all. I am quite serious, and shall listen with all my ears. Who is she, and what is the difficulty?"

"*Cherchez la femme*–I see you have learned your proverbs. She's a little heathen and I forgot to ask her name, and–"

"You're a heathen yourself, then. Why don't you tell your story straight?"

"You interrupted me. She's a Chinese girl–"

"Oh," cried Miss Kendrick, "I don't want to criticize, but if she isn't prettier than the ones I've seen, it's due my conscience to tell you that I don't admire your taste. And you might at least have inquired her name."

"Good heavens!" I gasped. "It's not a love affair."

"How disappointing!" she sighed, with an affectation of addressing the bust of Homer that frowned from the top of the bookcase. "I thought he was going to be interesting. Well, if it isn't a love affair, I don't see what you want my advice for; but if you'll have the goodness to explain the matter, I'll do my best for you."

Thereupon I told her the story of my morning's adventure, or so much as concerned the Chinese maiden, and set forth the wish of Big Sam to have the girl in the hands of a white woman who would surrender her on demand.

"Now, I've gone to three ladies I thought might be willing to undertake the charge," I concluded, "but they would hear nothing of it unless she was to be converted and stay with the whites, or with Christian Chinese. That is out of the question. I'm at the end of my list, and I'm looking for another; so I've come to you."

Miss Kendrick listened with absorbed interest. Whatever of raillery or affectation there had been in her manner was gone.

"I'm not wise about such matters," she said soberly, "but I think you have done what you ought. I've heard of this dreadful slavery from the girls who teach at the Mission, but I can hardly believe it. I'm sure we must do what we can to save this girl." She was silent for a little, and then went on. "I'm afraid my list is the Mission list. And you're quite certain the Mission list won't do?"

"Quite certain."

She counted her small fingers with an inaudible moving of the lips, and I watched her with the pleasure that one takes in watching a pretty child. She was so small it seemed impossible that she was seriously considering one of the serious problems of life. She gave a little sigh as the last finger was reached.

"I'm afraid I don't know her," she said regretfully. "All my ladies are very religious ladies, and I don't think they would approve your bargain at all. I'm not sure, on mature consideration, that I approve it myself."

"It is that or nothing."

"Isn't there a law, or a habeas corpus writ, or a policeman, or something?" said Miss Kendrick anxiously.

"I'm afraid," said I, smiling grimly at the recollection of Big Sam and his power, "that the law doesn't afford us much encouragement. We should never find her if we tried that policy."

"Well, I suppose you know best about that. So I don't see anything to do but to take her in here."

"Why, Miss Kendrick!" I exclaimed. "I didn't think of such a thing as that. What would your uncle say?"

"Uncle might be a little explosive," admitted Miss Kendrick with a smile, "but it's just possible that he could be managed."

I was perplexed to know what to do. I could see vague, unformed reasons against accepting her offer, yet it might prove that there was no other resource, if I was not to abandon the Chinese girl to her fate. I was turning over in my mind what to say when a servant appeared and announced:

"Mr. Baldwin to see you, Miss."

Miss Kendrick blushed very prettily at the name, and I felt a sudden dislike of any man who should be so far in her favor that his name should call the color to her face.

"Here's the man who can help us," she said. "He's sure to know somebody who will do."

This confidence in Mr. Baldwin gave me a most unpleasant shock, nor were my unchristian feelings softened by the air of confidential proprietorship with which Mr. Baldwin took Miss Kendrick's hand and replied to Miss Kendrick's greeting.

Mr. Baldwin proved to be a tall, big-faced young man, with a black mustache and a pair of snapping black eyes. He accepted an introduction with such frigid politeness that it was only an access of internal resentment that prevented me from being frozen.

"I believe we have not met," he said coldly.

"I believe not," I replied cheerfully, "though I saw you in the last trial of Merwin against Bolton."

He bowed in a superior way at the compliment of the recollection, though as junior member of the firm of Hunter, Fessenden and Baldwin he had played in court what the actors know as a "thinking part" as the guardian of a stack of law books from which his more celebrated partners drew their inspiration.

"For the defense," admitted Mr. Baldwin. "A very interesting case."

"Oh, don't get him started on that, Mr. Hampden," said Miss Kendrick. "I've lectured him on the wickedness of being in the hire of that awful Peter Bolton, but he's quite incorrigible. I've something much more important to talk to him about."

"I am all ears," said Mr. Baldwin, unbending graciously. It was marvelous

to note the difference in his manner of addressing us.

"Not so bad as that!" said Miss Kendrick. "Well, it's a case of knight-errantry that Mr. Hampden has engaged in, and your help is needed."

"Oh," said Mr. Baldwin, "my services are tendered only to beauty in distress."

"That's exactly the case," said Miss Kendrick. "It isn't Mr. Hampden who is to be rescued. It's a lady fair. She's locked up in the ogre's castle and I want her taken out."

"Very good," said Mr. Baldwin. "Would any particular time suit you? It lacks three hours yet of midnight."

"Oh, it must be done right away," said Miss Kendrick.

"Well," I said, "Mr. Baldwin should be enlightened as to the chief difficulty. There's no trouble in getting the lady in the case. The principal thing is to know what to do with her after she's rescued." I began to hope that Mr. Baldwin might know of some proper custodian for the Chinese girl.

"Why, Mr. Hampden is to marry her out of hand, I suppose," said he. "That's the way it used to run in the old story-books."

"Thank you, no," I laughed. "I resign my claim to Mr. Baldwin in advance."

"I don't think it would do," said Miss Kendrick, shaking her head sagely. "Besides, there are other conditions to be fulfilled. But I truly want your counsel, Mr. Baldwin."

"At your service. Let me hear the case."

Thereupon Miss Kendrick stated the problem of the Chinese girl.

"Now," she continued, "unless you can suggest some better way, I want her brought here."

"Well, my advice, since you have asked it, is to have nothing to do with the affair," said Mr. Baldwin.

"Oh, that wasn't the part I wanted to ask you about," said Miss Kendrick composedly. "I want to find if you know anybody better fitted than I am to take charge of her under the conditions–some older person, you know, for I'm not so venerable as I'm afraid I shall be some day."

Mr. Baldwin appeared to be no better pleased than I with the idea of having Miss Kendrick take charge of the girl.

"These are not the sort of people you should have to do with," he began, when she stopped him.

"Were you going to say that you knew of somebody who can do it better than I? Because if you weren't, the sooner you and Mr. Hampden start on your expedition the sooner you'll be coming back."

I was not so sure that I cared for the company of Mr. Baldwin in my visit to Big Sam, but I could see no way to decline it.

"I think," said Mr. Baldwin with sudden brightening, "that we want Mercy Fillmore. She isn't so old a person as you might like, Miss Kendrick, but she has taken to charity work and is used to dealing with this sort of people. Except for her liking for that kind of work, she's a reasonable creature and doesn't make conversion to a church the sole object of her life. I don't see why she has gone in for it, but as she has decided to waste her life in that way she might as well waste it on this young person as on any other."

"I remember her," said Miss Kendrick, nodding her shapely head. "She was one of the 'big girls' when I started to school. She was very good to us youngsters and I believe the other big girls used to call her 'a little queer.' I used to think her quite grown up, for she was fifteen when I was ten. But I dare say she wouldn't seem so venerable now. I'm sure she would be just the one–if she'll do it."

"I can answer for her, I think," said Mr. Baldwin.

"Well, you can't see her to-night," said Miss Kendrick, "so you had better go with Mr. Hampden and bring the girl here. Then you can arrange with Miss Fillmore to-morrow."

Mr. Baldwin looked appealingly at me.

"Why wouldn't it be better," I said, "to leave the girl where she is till to-morrow? I shall tell Big Sam what we have decided and he can keep her safe."

Mr. Baldwin nodded approval.

"I see," said Miss Kendrick, "that you have oceans of confidence in Big Sam and those murderous highbinders. But I'm not a man, and I haven't. I don't know what will happen before morning. Now, if you'll put on your hats and coats and go, you'll relieve my mind."

I rose reluctantly.

"If you don't like to go alone," said Miss Kendrick, with a saucy shake of the head and a very determined look about the mouth, "I'll ask you to be my escort."

"But, I was about to ask–what will your uncle say?"

"Say?" cried the hearty voice of Wharton Kendrick, as his big frame filled the doorway and his ruddy face shone in the light. "Why, shovels and scissors, gentlemen, he would say just what she told him to. What's it about?"

Miss Kendrick had risen, and with an emphatic nod of the head at this indorsement of a blank check in her favor, looked at us steadily.

"In that case, we'd best be going," said Mr. Baldwin. "Miss Kendrick can explain the case better than we."

"I shall expect you back in an hour," she said.

CHAPTER VI
BIG SAM'S DIPLOMACY

We walked down the street in silence, and I could feel Mr. Baldwin's chilling disapproval of our errand radiating from him at every step.

"We had better take the Clay Street car down to the City Hall, and get a hack at the Plaza," I said at last.

"I suppose that will be the best way," he assented coldly. "Since we are in for this unfortunate business, the less notice we attract, the better."

His tone roused a flash of temper in me, and I replied tartly:

"If the business is so distasteful to you, there are plenty of streets that lead in the other direction."

"Very true," he said with a shrug. But his steady footstep told me that he had no thought of turning back. We fell into silence, and so continued until we reached the Plaza.

"What's this?" I exclaimed, for at the corner of Clay and Kearny Streets a crowd was gathered, and a cheer, or rather a confusion of vocal applause, broke out as we approached.

A man mounted on a cart was shouting fiercely to several hundred men who had gathered about him, and I could hear such words as "leprous heathen," "cursed Mongols," and other phrases of denunciation roll from his lips.

I looked at him more closely. He was tall and broad-shouldered, and his coarse, florid features brought in a flash of memory the scene in the House of Blazes when the bleeding policeman had been rescued from his hoodlum assailants.

"Why, that's Kearney!" I cried.

"A friend of yours?" asked Mr. Baldwin sarcastically.

"I met him once."

"Perhaps you'd like to renew your acquaintance," said Mr. Baldwin, as we paused in curiosity on the edge of the crowd. "He seems to have an education in classical history."

We caught some reference to the labor troubles of Rome, and the fate of the freeman under the slave system that destroyed the ancient republic.

"I hadn't suspected it from a moment's speech with him," I said. "He has a good voice for this sort of work."

The crowd again broke out into tumultuous shouts at some bit of pleasing denunciation.

"Where are the police?" said Mr. Baldwin. "They ought to stop this."

I pointed to three or four members of the force who were standing near the speaker, apparently indifferent to his language.

"That's a scandalous neglect of duty," said Mr. Baldwin. "But we had better go about our unfortunate errand."

We had gone but two steps, however, before a hand grasped me by the shoulder.

"Glad to see you, Hampden. Glad to see you interested in the cause of the people. Welcome to our reception!"

It was the voice of Parks, giving boisterous greeting as he shook me by the hand.

"Isn't he great?" he continued rapidly. "What do you think of his speech?"

There was pride of authorship in his inquiry, and every movement testified to the excitement and pleasure that thrilled him.

"Is this your first performance?" I asked.

"No," he said. "We've been trying it on the street corners at odd times. Now we are ready to begin in earnest. What do you think of it?"

"I think you are rash to begin your agitation so near the police station. Your man will probably find himself in jail before he gets through his speech."

"The very thing!" said Parks explosively. "The best advertisement we could have. Here's our motto: 'The Chinese must go.' You can see it stirs 'em. Listen to that cheer. What could rouse the men of the city faster than to have Kearney thrown into jail for expressing their sentiments? Sir, if you think otherwise, you do not understand the people."

Parks gave an emphatic shake to his head and another to his warning forefinger that was held before me, and the wild look of the enthusiast glowed in his face.

"Doubtless you are right," I admitted. "But I must keep an engagement that will deprive me of the privilege of listening to your orator."

"You will have to listen to him some day," said Parks, shaking his finger at us once more. "The day of the people is coming."

Mr. Baldwin had been watching us with some interest.

"Your friend appears to be very much in earnest," he said as we went our way.

"There's a man who's very likely to be hanged because he thinks he has an idea," I replied.

"I should say he was more likely to end his days in the violent ward at Stockton," returned Mr. Baldwin.

"Perhaps you are the better guesser," I admitted. "It will depend on his opportunities."

We had come among the hackmen at the other end of Portsmouth Square, and I picked out one with courage in his face and a good span of horses to his hack.

"This will do, I think," I said.

"Very good," replied Mr. Baldwin, stepping into the hack. "Have you arranged any plan of proceeding? I suppose you know the condition of affairs better than I." This last an evident apology for deferring to my judgment.

"Yes," said I, as we lurched around the corner and rolled up Washington Street. "You had better remain with the hack across the street and a door or two from Big Sam's. I shall run up-stairs and tell him our plans. If he approves of them we will bring the girl down, bundle her into the hack and get her out of here as quick as the fates will let us."

"You are certain you would not like company when you go up the stairs to see Big Sam?" inquired Mr. Baldwin carelessly.

"I don't think it necessary," I replied.

"Are you armed?" he asked.

"I have a revolver."

"Very good. I have nothing but a penknife. It is hardly customary to carry firearms when making a social call."

"I do not make a habit of it," I said coldly. "I expected to come here to-night, and I did not foresee that I was to have company."

He made no reply to this, and the hack drew up near Big Sam's door as I had directed.

I stepped out and Mr. Baldwin followed.

"I think you had better remain here," I said.

"Perhaps," he replied. "But if you have no objection I'll stop at the foot of the stairs. You might have occasion to call to me and I should hear you better there."

"I think there is no danger."

"Big Sam is not as scrupulous as you may think. It has been said that men have gone up those stairs who never came down."

I remembered Big Sam's judgment hall, and the power he had apparently exercised over the warring tongs, and thought it quite likely that judgments had been executed as well as passed within its walls.

"Suit yourself," I said. "But as you are not armed you can do nothing but raise an alarm if the need comes. And you may be in more danger than I."

"Perhaps the hackman has a pistol," said Mr. Baldwin coolly. "I may be able to get a loan."

The hackman proved to be supplied with a fire-arm and he surrendered it cheerfully to Mr. Baldwin.

"Oh, the place has a bad name, but I've been through it for tin year and niver fired a shot," said he, laughing at the apprehension of the two innocent strangers he supposed us to be. And we crossed the street and opened the door of the shop that made the entrance to Big Sam's lodgings.

Four or five Chinese lounged about the place and one took my name to Big Sam. The others watched us furtively, and one made some comment upon us that caused his companions to give us a quick look and grim smile.

The action was not lost on Mr. Baldwin.

"Our friend's body-guard do not seem to anticipate the same ending to the affair that you do, Mr. Hampden," said he, with a shrug of the shoulder.

"I do not suppose they are in his confidence in the matter," said I. Then as the messenger returned with word that I was to "come up," I continued: "Keep near the door in yonder corner where you can not be taken from behind. If anything happens, get to the police station as soon as you can. I shall probably be back inside of ten minutes."

Mr. Baldwin bowed as his reply to this injunction, and spoke affably to the shopman who had paused from the swift reckoning of his accounts on an abacus, and was watching us furtively with the innocent pretense of casting up sums in his mind.

I mounted the rough stairs and in another minute was ushered into Big Sam's office.

The softer lights of the night that came from the gas-jets brought out the richness of the apartment far more effectively than the coarse light of day. The carvings and painted ornaments showed to more advantage, and the colors were softened into harmony with the western eye. In spite of the preoccupation of my errand, I could not repress an exclamation of pleasure at the sight.

Big Sam sat at his desk as he had sat when I left him in the morning, and looked at me with bland impassiveness.

"Good evening, Mr. Hampden," he said politely. "Can I serve you again?"

"No," I said, a little taken aback at this greeting. "It is on your business I have come."

"And your companion down-stairs?" he said, looking at me out of half-closed oriental eyes.

"He may be of service in case–"

Big Sam raised his hand to check my speech and spoke in Chinese. At his words there was the soft sound of the closing of a door somewhere behind the

screens.

"A prudent precaution," he said. "You have found a place for the girl?"

"Yes," I replied. "I must say I do not fully approve of what I am going to do. But it is not on account of your ward. Nothing could be better for her than what I have to offer."

Then I explained with some detail the plans that had been approved by Miss Kendrick. He listened with studious attention.

"Miss Kendrick is too kind," said Big Sam diplomatically. "She is young, I believe?"

I bowed.

"And Miss Fillmore also?"

I bowed again.

"And you do not approve?"

"I do not."

"I see your reasons. Perhaps you are right. Do you wish to abandon the girl to her fate?"

"Oh, not at all. But with more time–"

"There is no more time."

"Not to-morrow?"

"The tongs are even now in session. I have word that before morning there will be a demand for the girl, and if she is not surrendered there will be the reward of blood."

"You are more powerful than they," said I, remembering the scene of the morning.

"I have passed the limits of my power," said Big Sam placidly. "What is it you say of Russia? 'Despotism tempered by assassination?' Well, I am but little of a despot, and the assassin has so much the better opportunity."

"And by to-morrow you would give her up?" I asked.

"To be frank with you, I would give her up to-night, Mr. Hampden, if it would purchase peace and safety."

I looked sharply at Big Sam, but the oriental mask gave back the record of nothing but bland and child-like simplicity.

"Then why not?" I asked.

"There is but one girl. There are two tongs," said Big Sam.

"That makes a difficulty," I admitted. "Yet only one tong owns the girl."

"I fear I could not explain to you the attitude and customs of the tongs in this matter," said Big Sam with a smile. "One tong demands the delivery of the girl, or five thousand dollars. That is the one you would perhaps call the owner of the girl. The other demands the girl, or twenty-five hundred dollars."

"Seventy-five hundred dollars for a girl–that is a little expensive."

"I believe some of your countrymen have paid more. Though the bargain has not been made in so simple a fashion."

Big Sam allowed himself to smile.

"I don't see how we are to help you then," I said. "But if you think it will put the tongs in better humor to have the girl in our custody, we are at your service."

"This evening," said Big Sam, "I saw three dogs quarreling over a bone. A fourth dog much larger came by and snatched it. The three dogs ceased to quarrel and started in chase of the fourth."

"A cheerful augury," I said. "I wish no quarrel with assassins, and least of all would I wish to bring them upon Mr. Kendrick's household."

"The fourth dog," continued Big Sam, "was larger–much larger–than the three put together. They ceased the chase before it was fairly begun, and joined in mourning their loss."

"You put me in doubt," said I. "I must not bring danger to others."

"I can guarantee their safety, Mr. Hampden," said Big Sam. "Your police have impressed it thoroughly on the minds of our people that the white race is not to be meddled with by any but white men."

I hesitated, still fearful of the dangers that might follow the custody of the girl.

"There is then no resource but to turn the girl into the street," said Big Sam decisively. "I can not risk my plans merely to secure her safety."

"Nor your life," I retorted.

"Oh, a man will die when he dies. Life, death, riches, poverty–they are man's fate. But my plans–they are much to me and my people."

Big Sam then pulled a cord that swung behind him. The door opened and the Chinese girl, frightened and tearful, was pushed in.

"The decision is for you, Mr. Hampden," he said.

I looked upon her and thought what the decision meant to her.

"Does she go with you, or with the tongs?" he asked.

"I have decided. I will take her," I said with sudden resolution.

"On the conditions I mentioned this morning?"

"It is late to bargain," said I.

"On the contrary," he said, "it is necessary. It is only with these conditions of compromise that I can hope to make my peace with the tongs."

"You have my promise," I said, rising.

"One moment," said Big Sam. "I believe you are a brave man, Mr. Hampden."

"I really don't know," I replied.

"At least you do not mind hearing a few revolver shots?"

"Not at all."

"They will serve to amuse some of our friends who are on the watch."

The implied information that we were spied upon by sentinels of the tongs startled me for a moment, though I might have known that they would not neglect so obvious a precaution.

"If you and your friend wouldn't mind breaking a window and smashing something and firing a shot or two yourselves and making a good deal of noise before you carry off the girl, it would oblige me."

"Why should we attract so much attention? Is it not better to slip out quietly?"

"Do you think to avoid the eyes that are watching?" said Big Sain. "The bold course is the best. We make sound as of a fight. The watchers of the two tongs will each believe that the other has made an attack. They will hasten to the meeting places to summon help. For a minute the road will be clear. Then you must run for it."

This was more of an enterprise than I had bargained for, and if I had had time to think I should have got out of Big Sam's net and left him to carry out his plans through some other agency. But I did not stop to reflect and acted at the urging of the wily Oriental.

"Take the girl," he said, and spoke to her in brief command. "My men will assist you to disturb things down-stairs."

I picked my way down the steps, and the soft clack of the Chinese shoe sounded behind me as the girl followed. Big Sam accompanied me to the lower floor, and, after making sure that our hack was where we had left it, he gave orders to his men. I hastily explained the situation to Mr. Baldwin.

"Ah–a comedy performance," he said with affected carelessness. But I could see that he cursed himself for a fool for being drawn into the affair.

"Draw your revolver, but don't fire more than one shot," I said.

Big Sam gave a shout, and in an instant the place was filled with a medley of voices raised in tones of anger and alarm. A table was overturned, boxes were flung about, cries of men rose, a dozen revolver shots followed in quick succession, a woman's scream pierced the air, and there was an excellent imitation of a highbinder affray on a small scale. I fired one shot into the breast of a mandarin, whose painted outlines ornamented a chest, and providently reserved the rest of my bullets for possible need. Then two of the Chinese lifted a heavy box and flung it at the closed doors. There was a crash of wood, a jingle of breaking glass, and the door fell outward.

"Well, I should judge it was time to go," said Mr. Baldwin.

"Come on," I said, seizing the Chinese girl. And we started on the run for the hack as the lights were extinguished.

We had just reached it when two or three more shots were fired and a bullet

sang uncomfortably close to my head.

"In there, quick!" I said to Mr. Baldwin, as I lifted the girl to her seat "This place is getting too hot for us."

"Aren't you coming in?" he asked, with a trace of anxiety in his tone.

"No. I'll ride with the driver." I slammed the door and was climbing to the box when two breathless Chinese ran to the side of the hack and wrenched open the door with angry exclamations. There was a howl as one of them staggered back from a blow from Mr. Baldwin's revolver. I gave the other a kick alongside the head that sent him in a heap on his fellow.

It was all done in a second.

"Now!" I said to the driver; and with a cut at his horses we dashed away as cries and shouts and sounds of police whistles began to rise behind us.

As we lurched around the corner of Sacramento Street, I could see three policemen turning into Waverly Place from Clay Street and hurrying to the scene of disturbance. A crowd of shouting Chinese had already gathered about the entrance to Big Sam's store, and a man was waving his arm and pointing after us, while half a dozen Chinese had started on the run in pursuit. Then, the corner turned, the sight was shut out, and we went down the street on the flying gallop.

We slackened speed as we neared Kearny Street, for a policeman stood on the corner. If the sounds of battle had reached him he must certainly have suspected and stopped us. But if he heard anything of the uproar we had raised he had doubtless placed it to the credit of the leather-lunged orator and his clamorous hearers who held forth but a block away. He scarce looked at us, and we swung into Kearny Street on a swift trot, and were soon in the quiet precincts of the shopping district.

The hackman had been silent, heeding only my directions; but now he said:

"I don't know what you've been a-doin', an' it's none of my business. But I'll want pay for this night's work."

"Make yourself easy," I replied. "We've done nothing against the law."

"Oh, it's not the law I'm botherin' about. There's little law for a Chaynese; an' it's not me that would be hollerin' murther if you've sent a dozen of 'em to sup with the divil to-night. But you might have damaged the hack, an' ye'll pay for that."

I promised him a liberal reward, and we rolled rapidly out Sutter Street to Van Ness Avenue, and in a few minutes more had drawn up before Wharton Kendrick's house.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Baldwin as I opened the door to the hack, "that our charge is hurt. She has been groaning for a while, and now I think she has fainted."

My nerves had served me without flinching through the dangers of the

escape. But at the apprehension that all our efforts had been in vain, and that death, not we, had been the rescuer, I fell a-trembling.

"I hope not," I cried. "Perhaps she is only scared. Let us carry her into the house."

As I put my hand to the girl, however, my fears received a fresh provocation, for the back of her dress was wet with the sticky wetness of coagulating blood. We lifted her between us, and carried her up the steps. We had scarce reached the upper landing when the door was flung open, and Miss Kendrick peered out.

"Have you brought her?" she cried.

"She is here," I replied, "but–"

"Oh, what is the matter?" interrupted Miss Kendrick in a voice of alarm, as she saw that we carried a senseless burden.

"She is hurt," I explained as we laid our charge down upon a hall seat. "There was a row over her, and she got one of the bullets that was meant for us."

Miss Kendrick grew white, and I looked to see her follow the Chinese girl by falling in a faint. But her small figure straightened as though in rebound from a physical shock, and in a moment she was directing servants to carry the girl to the room that had been prepared for her, ordering hot water, hot blankets, lint and bandages, and sending me on the run for the nearest doctor.

CHAPTER VII
IN THE CURRENT

The Chinese girl's wound proved a desperate matter, and for days she hung between life and death, dependent for the flickering vital spark upon the ceaseless ministrations of her self-appointed nurses. Mercy Fillmore was brought to the house by Mr. Baldwin at an early hour of the morning that followed the rescue, and took her place as naturally and unostentatiously as though she had always been one of the family.

"She's a thousand times lovelier than I had expected," confessed Laura Kendrick, "and when you see her you're to be very nice to her. I'm sure you owe her that much, after making her all this trouble."

I promised to use all gentleness and courtesy toward Miss Fillmore, but the full significance of my debt to the young lady did not appear to me till later.

Eventually I found that by some inexplicable freak of logic I was supposed to be chiefly in fault for the Chinese girl's wound. I had bungled the enterprise, it seemed; otherwise she must have been brought safely off. The sense of my delinquency was finally stirred within me by overhearing the comment of two indignant servants, which ran something like this:

"Those two big men without ever a scratch on them, and that poor heathen creature bleeding to death between 'em–that's what I call a shame."

Below stairs, it thus appeared that I shared equally with Mr. Baldwin in the discredit of the outcome. In my lady's chamber it was different. I learned that in those sacred realms I had all the blame for my very own. Mr. Baldwin appeared to be regarded, like the gallant army of Bazaine or Mack, as merely the unfortunate victim of an incompetent leader. Nothing of this judgment came to me directly. But it was conveyed delicately, imperceptibly, intangibly, through the days when the girl's life hung in suspense, mingled with an unspoken assurance that as I didn't appear to know any better I should ultimately be forgiven.

All this was galling enough, but it was nothing compared to the afflictions I suffered from the sight of Mr. Baldwin's airs. He was possessed of a cold and haughty nature, but the situation roused in him something approaching an enthusiasm. For my sorrow he was endowed with an odious gift of competency, and no false modesty restrained him from exhibiting it to the fullest measure. Whenever I offered to perform a service, I found that he had already performed it, or was then engaged upon it, or was just about to perform it, until I was consumed with regret that the highbinder bullet had not found its billet with Mr. Baldwin, instead of with the Chinese girl.

I should not go so far as to assert that any one of the self-sufficiency of Mr. Baldwin would be at a loss for an excuse for following his own inclinations; yet it struck me that he carried the pretense of devotion to the interests of the Chinese girl to an extent altogether indecorous. The prosperity of the firm of Hunter, Fessenden and Baldwin had never before appealed to my fears or my sympathies, but I was at this period distressed to observe that its law business appeared to be at a low ebb. Either that, or the junior partner was grossly neglecting his duties. Whatever time of day or night I called at the Kendrick house to seek news of the Chinese girl, and incidentally to enjoy the society of the ladies, I was sure to find Mr. Baldwin there, or to learn that he had just gone or was presently expected, until I grew to resent the sound of his name. Furthermore, his air of proprietorship in Laura Kendrick and her affairs, which had disturbed me on our first meeting, appeared to grow more marked. If Miss Kendrick, her uncle, and all things beneath the roof had been turned over to him in fee simple, the sense of ownership could not have been shown more clearly in his manner. And, worst of all, I could not see that his attitude roused resentment in any breast but my

own. Miss Kendrick smiled on him, called him by his first name, and discussed the theory and practice of surgery with him in a manner most confidential.

At this day I can confess with freedom that my dislike of Mr. Baldwin found its root in the fertile soil of jealousy and envy. At the time, however, I stoutly maintained to myself that I hated him for his faults alone. In the light of later experience, I am willing to concede that men are not hated for their faults, or even for their virtues. Had Mr. Baldwin been an angel of light, instead of a cold and supercilious young attorney who was receiving an undeserved amount of favor, I should have disliked him none the less heartily.

Mr. Baldwin returned my dislike with acridity. Whenever possible, he affected to have forgotten me, had to be assisted to my name when compelled to speak to me; and when he did decide to remember me, was so patronizing in his condescensions that I longed to throw him through the window.

Miss Kendrick was not long in discovering this suppressed hostility; and at first alarmed by it, she presently found it a source of amusement. Then she appeared to derive a certain pleasure in blowing the smoldering coals into a blaze; for she would, with the most innocent air imaginable, bring forward topics of discussion that served to range us in hostile argument. As we held opposite views on almost every question of politics, law, sociology, and the arts, she had usually more difficulty to close the argument than to inspire it. Yet she handled the situation with a skill that would have been the admiration of a diplomat, and had a tact in diversion that enabled us both to retire from the heat of battle in good order with the conviction that we had each won a substantial victory.

In the anxious days through which the Chinese girl's life hung by a thread, I learned that Laura Kendrick's characterization of Mercy Fillmore was no example of feminine exaggeration. Miss Fillmore proved to be a young woman of about twenty-five, a little above the average height, a little fuller in outline than was demanded by the rules of proportion, a little slow in her movements. Her face was round, and though lacking in color gave a distinct impression of prettiness. But her chief characteristic was a certain calm sweetness in expression and manner, a certain gentle tact that made her presence as soothing as a strain of sweet music. It was on the evening following the rescue that Miss Kendrick introduced us.

"I am glad to meet you," she said in a voice that was low and melodious. "I am glad to find a man who is not afraid to do the right thing because somebody is going to laugh at him."

Miss Fillmore gave me her hand, and I found that her touch had the same soothing quality that was manifest in her voice and presence.

I professed myself gratified at her approval, and murmured that any one would have done the same in the circumstances.

"No, indeed," said Miss Fillmore earnestly. "It isn't every one who would

have followed Mr. Baldwin to that den and risked his life to rescue a poor Chinese slave girl."

Mr. Baldwin's part in the affair had evidently lost nothing in Mr. Baldwin's telling of it, and Miss Fillmore's imagination had filled out the blanks in his narrative in a way to make him the promoter of the enterprise.

He was quick to see the peril of his situation, and said stiffly:

"Oh, if there's any credit to the affair, it belongs to Mr. Hampden alone. He discovered the distressed damsel, and is entitled to all the rewards."

Laura Kendrick gave him a pleased look and a gracious nod, which afflicted me with a pang of unwarranted resentment.

"I claim all the credit myself," she said, with a little air of importance. "I seem to remember two rather reluctant knights who were anything but pleased to be sent out to storm the ogre's castle at the call of beauty in distress."

"It was well done, whoever was responsible for it," said Miss Fillmore gently. "It is a noble thing to have rescued Moon Ying."

"Moon Ying!" cried Mr. Baldwin. "Is that the creature's name?"

"I never thought to ask it," I said.

"So like a man!" sighed Miss Kendrick.

"I want you to tell me," said Mercy Fillmore, "how you came to find Moon Ying, and be interested in her. How long have you known her?"

"She's a very recent acquaintance. I first saw her yesterday morning." And then I gave in detail the story of my visit to Chinatown, and the adventures that came of it.

"And that is all you know about her?" asked Miss Fillmore, in a voice that imported disappointment. "I had hoped that you knew more. She is so much above the type of Chinese girls that we meet at the Mission that she has interested me particularly."

"Big Sam gave me the idea that except for her beauty, which I understand to be of a sort highly considered among her countrymen, she is not above the girls you find at the Mission."

"Well, then, it's only another romance spoiled," said Miss Fillmore.

"Oh, you needn't despair. Big Sam appeared to be dealing frankly with me, but that proves nothing. Big Sam is an accomplished diplomat and would tell any story that suited his purpose, and tell it so neatly that you couldn't distinguish it from the truth. For all I know, she may be the daughter of the Empress of China."

"Nothing so interesting, I fear," said Miss Fillmore, with a sober shake of the head.

"Well, then, let's make believe. She shall be a princess of the blood royal, and shall have a story suited to her dignity."

Miss Fillmore smiled dubiously, as though she were not quite certain

whether I was in jest or earnest.

"It isn't necessary," she said, her practical mind refusing to descend to frivolity. "Whatever her origin, we must see that she has a better fate than the one that threatens her."

"Yes, so far as it can be done within the conditions laid down by Big Sam."

Miss Fillmore's forehead drew into a knot of lines in which could be read a mingling of disapproval and anxiety.

"I have been thinking," she said, with an apologetic reproach in her voice, "that you didn't do quite right to make those conditions. Can't they be–" she was going to say "evaded" but after a moment's debate with a feminine conscience changed it to "modified."

"I'm afraid I didn't make myself clear," I said. "Those were the only conditions on which the girl could have the opportunity to escape. Unless Big Sam can arrange better terms with the tongs, we have no choice but to live up to them."

Miss Fillmore was silent at this, and I wondered whether I had not, on my side, given too strong an emphasis to the reminder that we were discussing a question of good faith.

"Well," said Miss Kendrick with decision, "we'll leave all that till Moon Ying is quite well, and then I'll see Big Sam and the highbinders myself, if Mr. Hampden can't get them to listen to decency and reason."

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Baldwin, with chilling protest in his tone. "You surely can't mean to do anything of that sort. You don't suppose that those creatures are open to reason and decency, do you?"

"Oh, indeed," said Miss Kendrick, straightening her small figure and tip-tilting her small nose, "I consider Big Sam an interesting man, and I'm sure I should like to talk with him. And as for reason, I have no doubt he's quite as open to conviction as the rest of his sex. I shan't have the slightest hesitation in appealing to him, or even to those explosive highbinders, if it's necessary to Moon Ying's interests."

"Why, my dear young lady," protested Mr. Baldwin in his most superior manner, "you surely can't be thinking of going down to Chinatown and talking to those fellows. It's altogether absurd."

"Well, if you consider it absurd to try to save a girl's life or happiness, I don't," said Miss Kendrick tartly. And for the rest of the evening Mr. Baldwin sat

under a cloud, and I enjoyed a brief period of sunshine.

CHAPTER VIII
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAUSE

I confess that, despite all discouragements, I spent as much time as I could spare from my duties in haunting the Kendrick house; yet I found the pursuit of Peter Bolton, and the oversight of the Council of Nine, a more exacting task than I had expected.

On Peter Bolton's ultimate purposes I could secure no direct light whatever. For the time he appeared to have suspended relations with the Council of Nine, yet his activities in conferring with bankers, brokers, merchants, lawyers, and men of no classification, were so various and bewildering that I was compelled to keep watch in many directions. Twice Parks and Waldorf, the president of the Council of Nine, visited his office, and were turned away without seeing him, though on at least one of these visits he was within. His plans appeared to have taken another direction than the schemes of the Council, yet there was nothing in his movements that revealed whatever designs he might have against Wharton Kendrick's property or life.

Nevertheless I took the precaution to station a number of watchmen about Wharton Kendrick's house, masqueraded as gardeners and stable-men. The episode of the spy had shown plainly that Peter Bolton's emissaries had no scruples about invading the premises. Furthermore, Big Sam's assurance that the highbinders would never dare to attack the white man's place, confirmed as it was by the history of San Francisco's Chinese population, did not justify me in neglecting precautions. Even a highbinder might have an exception to his rules, especially when more than one tong was interested in the recovery of Moon Ying. Therefore I kept two men on guard in the daytime and four at night.

One effect of Peter Bolton's activities was easy to discover. His contribution to the cause had inspired a marvelous activity among the agents of the Council of Nine. Clubs were organized, a few for the propagation of radical ideas, but most of them for the ostensible purpose of driving the Chinese from the city. The intent of the Council was to make the revolutionary clubs the main strength of their organization, but it soon became evident that the anti-Chinese movement had outrun their plans. "The Chinese Must Go," was so popular a cry that it

was taken up by elements over which the Council had no control. But outwardly the Council was prospering, and the meetings inaugurated by Parks and Kearney down by the Old City Hall soon attracted such crowds that they were encouraged to seek a larger forum on the sand-lots by the New City Hall. The plans for driving out the Chinese were seized upon eagerly by the thousands of unemployed workmen, as well as by the disorderly elements of the city's population. Multitudes attended the meetings that were held nightly and on Sundays, and sporadic outbreaks of hoodlums, who beat Chinamen and plundered wash-houses, were frequently reported. The newspapers began to pay attention to the meetings, and as a genuine interest was shown in them by the working-men of the city, there was soon a hot rivalry to see which paper should attract the largest sales by the fullest accounts of the speeches and the most extended reports of the growth of the anti-Chinese propaganda. Under the stimulus of publicity the movement spread with startling rapidity, the politicians began to count upon it as a force to be reckoned with, and serious-minded citizens were shaking their heads over the possibilities of disorder that it covered.

These possibilities were increased by the threatening condition of affairs in the eastern States. There was a rapidly increasing tension in the relations between capital and labor, and a railroad strike was organizing that would paralyze industry from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. It was felt that the spark of Eastern example might furnish the torch for San Francisco.

With matters in this state, Clark came to me one day with every mark of perturbation and alarm.

"The Council of Nine is in funds," he gasped.

"That's an enviable situation," I replied. "Where did they get them, and what are they going to do with them? Hold a smoker at the House of Blazes?"

Clark looked a little vexed at the bantering tone.

"They've bought guns with them, sir."

"Bought guns?" I said. "How many? A dozen?"

"Guess again," said Clark, with an aggrieved air at my declination to take his information seriously. "If you'd say a thousand you'd come nearer to it."

"A thousand!" I cried, rousing at last to the gravity of his information. "How could they do that?"

"Easy enough," said Clark. "They got thirty thousand dollars night before last, and yesterday they cleaned out all the gun stores in town."

"Thirty thousand dollars!" I exclaimed. "Whew! Is this old Bolton's second contribution?"

"I reckon he's the one that give it," said Clark, "but I can't be sure. There ain't any one else with that much money that's interested in the cause. Habernicht was trying to tell me that it came from the International Treasury, but I'm

willing to bet my boots that the International Treasury never had thirty thousand cents in it, let alone thirty thousand dollars."

It was Peter Bolton, beyond doubt, who had taken the role of fairy godfather for the Council of Nine, and I raked my imagination in vain to conceive the purpose that had inspired this amazing generosity.

"I reckon," continued Clark, "that they've got a corner on everything that'll shoot, except what's in the arsenals, and they're counting on getting those when the time comes to rise."

"Well," said I, "I don't see just how this affects Colonel Kendrick, for they could get him with one rifle just as well as with a thousand. But whatever the game is, we can block it right now. Just give me the number of the building where they have stored those guns, and I'll see the Chief of Police."

"Good God!" cried Clark, seizing my arm. "Do you want to get me killed?"

"Why," I argued, "you aren't the only man who knows about them. There must be dozens if not hundreds of men in the scheme, and there would be no more reason to put the blame on you than on the others."

Clark shook his head, and his white face showed the fierce grip of terror.

"I'm a dead man if you go to the police," he said huskily, gulping down the lump that rose in his dry throat. And no repetition or variation of my argument could move him. So at last I promised to keep the information from the police, and sought Wharton Kendrick's office to lay this perplexing information before my client.

Kendrick was not at his desk.

"He went out some time ago, Mr. Hampden," said a clerk.

"Where would I be likely to find him? It's quite important."

"He didn't say, and I got the idea that he wasn't likely to be back to-day."

I wrote a note giving information of the armament, and leaving it on his desk, turned to go, when the door opened and General Wilson bustled in. His round red face glowed in the frame of his short, yellow-gray side-whiskers even more fiercely by day than by night, and his self-importance was even more scintillant than when he had bustled into Kendrick's library.

"What! Kendrick not in?" he cried explosively. "Why, I don't see how you San Franciscans do any business. I haven't found a man in his office this morning. Why, God bless me, is this you, Ham–Hamfer–"

"Hampden," I said, assisting him to the name. "I'm glad to see you, General Wilson."

"Exactly–Hampden–Hampden," said the general, shaking hands. "I never forget a name or a face. It's a trick you ought to cultivate, my boy. You'll find it of more importance than half your legal learning, when it comes to the practical business of the law. There's nothing better in managing clients and jurors and

court officials. It's likely to be worth anything to you to come on a man you haven't met for twenty years and call him by his name. The beggar always beams with satisfaction–thinks you've been doing nothing all those years but carry his name and face in your mind, and is ready to do you a good turn if it comes his way."

"Very true," I said, as General Wilson paused for breath.

"Now I remember," he continued, with a wave of his arm, "that I won one of my hardest fought cases by that little talent of being able to call a man's name after I have once heard it. 'Twas when the Rockland and Western was suing the R. D. & G. about the right of way into St. Louis. The matter was worth a trifle of two or three million dollars, and we had a jury trial, and it was a damned ticklish business. 'It's two to one on the other side,' said the president of the Rockland and Western, 'and if you pull us out, Wilson, you're a wonder.' 'God knows what a jury will do,' I told him, 'but if it's in the power of mortal man I'll get you out with honors.' I talked to cheer him up, but I didn't feel half as hopeful as I let on to be. My unprofessional opinion was that we were in for a licking. I'll bet you the price of this building, Hampden, that we would have had to take our medicine if it hadn't been for an old acquaintance of mine. I used to know him when we were young fellows in Ohio. He was clerking in a grocery store while I was dusting the books in Lawyer Boker's office. Now, what was his name? Oh,–ah–yes, I remember–Westlake, or something like that. Well, as he came into the court, I saw him, and by the look on his face I was sure he was called in the case. I knew him in an instant and I hurried up to him, shook him by the hand, and said 'Westburn'–yes, it was Westburn, not Westlake–I said 'Westburn, God bless you, it's thirty-five years since the night we dropped that watermelon, and I haven't got over mourning the loss of it yet.' By Jove, Hampden, you ought to have seen the fellow beam to think that the big lawyer from Chicago had remembered him all that time, and we had a five-minute chat that turned out to be worth everything to my clients. He got on the jury, and there wasn't a point or an argument I made that was lost on him. He told me afterward that he never heard a speech to beat the one I delivered in closing for my side. Well, the jury was out nearly two days, but on the strength of that speech my old friend talked the last of them over and we got judgment. So there, my boy, you see what it's worth to call up names. It's one of the tricks of trade that we share with statesmen and kings."

"And hotel clerks," I added irreverently, with something of envy for the general's talent at finding cause for self-congratulation.

General Wilson flushed a little deeper red, and looked at me doubtingly. I hastened to add an expression of complete agreement with the conclusions he had announced.

"Well, God bless us," he cried, "I can't be waiting here all day for Kendrick. I want to talk over that tule land proposition with him, but as he isn't here I'm going over to talk on the same business with a miserly old curmudgeon named Bolton. As it concerns Kendrick, in a way, maybe you'd like to come along as his representative." And with a commanding gesture General Wilson intimated his desire for my company, and linked arms with me in the affectation of deepest confidence.

I had for several days been meditating on the problem of an interview with Peter Bolton, and, accepting General Wilson's offer of a convoy as a gift of benignant chance, was soon climbing the stair to the curmudgeon's office to the boom-boom of General Wilson's gasconades, and wondering how I might surprise the secret of Peter Bolton's plans.

CHAPTER IX
PETER BOLTON

Peter Bolton's office conformed to the first principles of art. It supplied an appropriate frame for Peter Bolton himself. The outer room presented to the eye of the visitor four bare and grimy walls that had once been white, a bare and worn board floor, two kitchen chairs and a rickety desk. There was, however, nothing shrinking or apologetic about this meager display of furnishing. It smacked not of poverty, but of an inclement disposition in its owner. In the inner room the walls and floor were as bare and grimy as those of the outer office, but the furnishing was a little less disregardful of personal comfort, for it held five solid chairs, a solid safe that made a show of bidding defiance to burglars, and a solid desk, behind which sat Peter Bolton himself.

The outer office was empty, save for the uninviting chairs and the rickety desk, and General Wilson, with a quick jerk, opened the inner door and bustled into the room.

"Ha-ha, Bolton!" he cried, "I catch you with your washee-washee man, eh? That's right, that's right. Cleanliness next to godliness, you know–though you can't always be sure that the Chinese washman is to be recommended on either count. Hey, John, you trot along now. I want to talk to Mr. Bolton."

Glancing over General Wilson's head I saw the thin, sour face of Peter Bolton, and behind the mask of its dry expression I thought I recognized a passing

flash of mental disturbance that suggested fear, or even consternation. Then a sardonic smile tightened and drew down the corners of the mouth, and his hard, nasal voice twanged out a grudging word of recognition.

At the same moment the "washee-washee" man stepped to the doorway, and I was startled to find myself looking into the face of Big Sam. He was dressed in the coarse blue jeans and trousers of the Chinese working-man, his hat was drawn down over his eyes, and his face was of a darker hue than I remembered it. But the man shone through his disguise as plainly as the sun shines through colored glass.

I recovered from my surprise in an instant, and halted him in the outer room.

"This is a lucky meeting," I said. "I have been wondering whether I ought to report to you about your ward. She is badly hurt, but is now out of danger."

The man glanced at me with expressionless eye.

"I no sabby you," he said with the true coolie accent. "What you wan'?"

"Oh," I returned, repressing my amusement at this preposterous attempt to deceive me, "if Kwan Sam Suey, sometimes known as Big Sam, doesn't want to hear what I have to say, I am in no hurry to say it."

"No sabby Big Sam," said the Chinaman gruffly.

"And I should really like to know," I said, lowering my voice, "what Big Sam is doing with Mr. Bolton."

"I no sabby Missah Bolton," growled the Oriental.

"You don't 'sabby' the man you've just been talking with?"

"I no sabby him name. I no sabby you' name. I sabby him one man–I sabby you 'nothe' man. I come sell him lotte'y ticket. You likee buy lotte'y ticket?"

This appeared to be an excellent chance to trap the wily Oriental. I replied that I would risk twenty-five cents on his game, and waited with a smile for the excuse that would be invented to put me off. But Big Sam had made up for his part with more attention to detail than I had supposed. At my word he calmly drew forth from his capacious sleeve a blank ticket and a marking brush.

"I make you good ticket," he said gravely, marking ten of the squares. "You sabby Kwan Luey?"

"Yes, I sabby Kwan Luey." He was one of the big merchants of Chinatown, and among other things did a brisk banking and lottery business among his countrymen.

"Dlawing to-mollow," said the Chinaman. "You take 'em ticket Kwan Luey you get 'em heap big money." And with a brusk nod he was gone.

I stared after him in perplexity. My eyes were never more certain of anything than of the identity of this man with Big Sam. And yet he had carried off his imposture with such assurance that, for a moment after he had disappeared,

I was shaken in my conviction. But it was only for a moment. With a glance at the paper in my hand and with a recollection of his parting words, certainty returned, and I was convinced that the ticket was an order on Kwan Luey for money. Was Big Sam trying to bribe me, or was he attempting thus to provide for the expenses of the Chinese girl? Nothing had been said on the delicate point of meeting her charges for food, care and lodging. Possibly he had chosen this eccentric way of putting the money in my hands.

There was, however, another question more perplexing than that of money. What were the relations between Bolton and Big Sam? Here for the second time I had evidence that they were in secret alliance. The business of supplying coolie workmen was not of such disrepute that it had to be conducted in disguise. Could it be possible that Big Sam was one of Bolton's agents in the plot to overthrow Wharton Kendrick? And if so, was the Chinese girl brought under the Kendrick roof as a part of Peter Bolton's tortuous policy?

As there was no answer to my questions to be had by studying the ticket Big Sam had given me, I thrust it into my pocket and followed General Wilson into Peter Bolton's private den.

There are certain natures whose approach brings an access of mental or physical repulsion. A man may conform to all the sanitary laws, and yet appeal quite as objectionably to the inner spirit as the Eskimo reeking of spoiled blubber appeals to the physical senses.

To approach Peter Bolton was like putting your hand on the spider to which current metaphor compared him. If you liked spiders, he was doubtless a pleasant enough companion. But as for me, I share the popular prejudice against the arachnidæ, and found myself at once in mental antagonism to Mr. Bolton.

General Wilson had plunged into a brisk but one-sided conversation with his curmudgeon. The first words I had missed in the encounter with Big Sam, but as I crossed the threshold he was holding forth in his most coruscating style.

"By George, Bolton, I wish I had time to show you how it ought to be done, but I've got to think of getting back to New York toward the end of the month. Why, this is my vacation time, and I'm carrying on five trades that count up to three or four million dollars. Of course, I couldn't afford to touch 'em under ordinary circumstances, but one has to do these little things for one's friends. I took a run down to New York just before I came out here, and we had a little dinner at the club–oh, there were only a dozen of us, or so–but big men all of them. Why, the men around that table could have signed a joint note for three hundred million–and got it discounted, too, if there was a bank big enough to do the business. Young Vanderbilt was there–I suppose we must call him Old Van, now the Commodore is gone–Astor, Belmont, and the rest of that crowd. Jay Gould couldn't come, because he and Vanderbilt don't speak. I was telling them

that I was going to make a flying trip out here, when Vanderbilt pipes up, and says, 'General Wilson, you're just the man we want. There are good bargains to be picked up out there, and you must keep your eye out for them.' And the others chimed in and said, 'Yes, you must do some business for us while you are out there.' 'Hold on, gentlemen,' I said; 'I'm going out for a vacation, and I can't burden my mind with business.' But it was no use. The more I protested, the warmer they got over it–insisted that I could get lots more fun out of the trip if I did business than I could if I didn't–said it was like a man going for a walk–if he's just out for exercise it's confounded stupid work, and he gets tired in no time; but put a gun on his shoulder and turn him out to look for deer and he will tramp all day and think he's had no end of fun. Well, at last I had to give in. What can you do when you've got three hundred million against you? So I said, 'Gentlemen, let's have everything regular. Get up a syndicate–make it a blind pool–and I'll guarantee to bring you back something worth while.' Well, they jumped at that idea like cats at a mouse, and in ten minutes they had made up a five-million-dollar pool. So I expect to put in at least three million before I leave. I closed one big trade with Governor Stanford last night, and I've got three or four others on the books now."

Peter Bolton's gaunt sallow face, with its projecting jaw, lost none of its sourness, but a sardonic smile tightened his thin lips and drew down the corners of his mouth.

"Well," he drawled in his cracked nasal tone, "you can have that tract of mine for six hundred thousand."

"Couldn't think of it," said General Wilson bruskly. "Two hundred thousand would be a fancy figure for it. I don't want it, anyhow, unless I can get that piece of Kendrick's just above it."

Bolton's thin lips tightened once more, and a slight flush passed over his sallow face.

"Kendrick's place?" he said, the sarcastic drawl quickening a little. "I shouldn't think you'd want to show yourself again in New York if you'd 'a' bought that swamp. What'd he ask you for it?"

"A stiff figure, a stiff figure," said General Wilson with a wave of his arm, as if Bolton's question were a missile that he was fending aside. "It's swampy enough, and needs any quantity of leveeing and draining. But it's rich land. I've been over it all. I don't say I'll buy it, but I might, if I can get it at a reasonable price."

"You can get My Land at My Price," drawled the sarcastic voice of Peter Bolton, audibly putting capital letters to his words and making the possessive pronoun appear very large. "I said six hundred thousand, didn't I? Well, it's had a raise since then. It's seven hundred thousand now. I shouldn't be surprised if

it went to eight hundred thousand before you got out."

General Wilson appeared to regard this as an excellent piece of pleasantry.

"It looks to a man up a tree," he said good-humoredly, "as though you didn't want me to buy Kendrick's land."

Bolton's lips drew into a sneer.

"I don't know why I should want you to buy Kendrick's land," he said. "You can have My Land at My Price," he repeated, the sneer deepening on his face. "My price is nine hundred thousand now."

"Well," said General Wilson with a chuckle, "I've been in Chicago through some pretty exciting times, and I've had real-estate deals in nearly every part of the country, but I never saw property go up so fast as that piece of yours out in the San Joaquin swamps." Then, changing his tone suddenly, he asked: "Why do you want to stop the trade on Kendrick's tract? I see that you're nobody's fool, and you know as well as I do that we've got to have your place if we take his. Now, what's your game?"

A look of malevolent shrewdness came over Bolton's face, and he pursed up his mouth as though he was afraid his thoughts were going to escape.

"If you would like to know," he drawled at last, "you might ask Kendrick's young man standing over there by the door."

I was startled at this sudden attack. Peter Bolton had to this minute given no sign that he was aware of my existence, and I was filled with wonder to know how he had discovered that I was in Kendrick's employ. There was nothing to do but to put up a bold front on the matter, and I said:

"The only thing I could tell about the trouble is that the Council of Nine has plenty of money and is spending it like water."

A covering of gray ashes appeared to spread over the sallow face of Peter Bolton, and caused General Wilson to spring to his feet with the exclamation:

"Good God, what's the matter?"

Peter Bolton waved him back to his seat, and with an effort gasped out:

"The Council of Nine! What do you mean by that nonsense? I never heard of such damned foolery before!"

"Oh, yes," said I, pressing my advantage. "Waldorf was up here night before last, you remember, and got thirty thousand dollars. I thought you would like to know that your contribution was being spent with a liberal hand."

Peter Bolton's face assumed a gray-green tint, and he cried out:

"I don't know what you're talking about. You've gone crazy–" Then, as if he feared that I would take offense at the words, he fell from the attitude of protest to one of cringing obsequiousness. "No, I don't mean that–I mean that I want you to do some business for me."

The man appeared carried away with fright; his claw-like hands worked

convulsively, and a perspiration started on his forehead. I saw in his eyes a foretaste of the terrors of unsuccessful crime, and that as he remembered the purposes that lay behind those rifles in the Council's armory, his conscience conjured up the vision of the police and the hangman stretching forth their hands to seize him.

"Good God, Bolton!" cried General Wilson again. "What have you been doing? You couldn't look more upset if you had murdered your grandmother and Hampden had uncovered the corpse."

"It's nothing–nothing," gasped Bolton, recovering himself with an effort; "just a little joke we have–just a little joke." And he framed his thin lips into the semblance of a ghastly smile.

General Wilson's red face grew redder yet as an angry color swept over it.

"Well, you've got too many jokes to suit me, and a damned queer taste in humor–that's all I've got to say about it. I came to talk business, and you've been wasting my time with your tomfoolery." And with an angry wave of his hand he got to his feet and strode out.

Almost before General Wilson had reached the hall, Bolton had turned eagerly to me.

"Come in and shut the door," he said with a quavering voice. "That gilded ass may stop to listen."

He was silent a minute as I obeyed him, and I surmised that he was turning over in his mind the possible plans by which I might be gagged. And as he motioned me to a seat his calculating eye was taking my measure with all the coolness of a butcher estimating the value of a steer.

"You are a young man," he began with an insinuating drawl.

I admitted the charge, but offered him the consolation to be drawn from the theory that I should probably get over it in time. He paid no attention to my flippant suggestion, but continued in a slow tone of ironic emphasis:

"You are old enough, though, to know that you have got to look out for your own Interests. That's what every Man must do, if he wants to keep in Business." Peter Bolton's sarcastic drawl punctuated his important words with capitals. "If you don't think enough of your Interests to look out for Yourself, nobody is going to look out for them for you."

"If you want to do me a good turn," I said with strategic frankness, "you might tell me what your business is with Big Sam."

He was not to be caught off his guard again. He paid no attention to my words, but continued with more of propitiation in his voice than I had considered possible.

"Now, you're a Man of the World–young as you are–and you have seen something of Business. You have seen the man who has given his best years to

making money for the other fellow turned adrift as soon as the other fellow finds somebody who can make more money for him. That's the Gratitude of Business, young man–the Gratitude of Business. I've seen a man who made fifty thousand dollars for his employer in a trade turned out inside of six months because somebody offered to work for twenty-five dollars less a month. That's what you get when you look out for your Employer's interests instead of your Own." The depth of sarcasm in Peter Bolton's drawl was portentous.

I did not know whether to be amused or indignant at this attempt to teach me the folly of loyalty and the essential respectability of treachery. So I gave a nod of comprehension, which he took for encouragement, and he continued:

"Now, I'm a plain-speaking old fellow, and I won't talk nonsense to you about Gratitude or Friendship. I won't say a word about the things I'll do for you Some day. I'll just talk Cash in Hand to you, with no back bills to be paid with promises on either side."

"Very good," I replied, "but I'd rather you would answer the questions about Big Sam and the Council of Nine."

Bolton gave me a cunning look.

"I want you to take up some private business for me," he said slowly, "and I'll give you ten thousand dollars for sixty days' work."

"What work?" I asked sharply, my indignation getting the better of my amusement.

"Confidential work," said Bolton deliberately. "I want a representative in Kendrick's office, and you're the best man I know for the job."

My repressed indignation broke forth at this brazen proffer of a bribe, and I jumped to my feet and shook my fist in Peter Bolton's face.

"You old scoundrel!" I cried. "If you were a younger man, I'd thump the breath out of you!"

"You are a bigger Fool than I thought," said Bolton in his most sarcastic voice. And he threw back his head and opened his mouth in silent laughter.

"I give you warning," I continued, "that I shall tell Colonel Kendrick of your offer."

The unabashed Bolton drew down the corners of his mouth in a sarcastic smile, and his sarcastic voice followed me as I opened the door:

"If Kendrick offers you eleven thousand, come back and I'll see if I can do

better."

CHAPTER X
A COUNCIL OF WAR

"No," said Laura Kendrick, in her piquant voice, "uncle isn't at home, but he sent word he would be back at nine o'clock. You look very important, but I'm sure it's something that will wait an hour."

"It is a bit important," I replied, thinking grimly of the thirty-thousand-dollar contribution to the Council of Nine, the thousand rifles, and Peter Bolton's self-revelations in his attempt to bribe me. "I've been hunting Mr. Kendrick all day about it. But it has kept without spoiling for eight or nine hours already, so another sixty minutes will do no harm."

"Well, then," said Miss Kendrick, "I won't keep you standing in the hall. I came out when your name was announced, to let you know that Mr. Baldwin is in the library, and Mercy will be down in a few minutes. So you can have your choice of waiting in there, or you can find an easy chair in uncle's den."

"Oh, if that is the choice, give me the library, by all means."

"You may think your tone is complimentary, but I'll tell you I don't consider it so. He's a very agreeable man, and you had better be very civil, or I shall banish you to the den, after all." Then she changed her half-bantering tone to one of earnestness, and halted me at the library door. "What is it you are about?" she asked. "Is uncle in danger?"

"I believe not," I replied.

She laid her hand upon my arm.

"You would not answer so unless he were. What is it that you fear?" And her brown eyes looked anxiously up into mine.

"There is no danger that I can learn of that threatens your uncle. I believe he is perfectly safe."

She threw my arm aside with a gesture of irritation.

"Do you think I have not the right to know?" she exclaimed. "Do you think I could be of no use? Do you think I ought to be shut up in the dark, wondering what is going to happen?"

"You are worrying yourself without need," I said. "You can hold me responsible for his safety."

"It is the trouble with old Mr. Bolton, is it not?" she asked after a pause.

I balanced the advantages of a lie and the truth.

"Yes, it is on that business that I am engaged."

"And you will tell me nothing about it." There was a trace of bitterness in her tone, and giving a shrug of resentful resignation she opened the door to the library and preceded me into the room.

Mr. Baldwin sat there wrapped in his superiority to all created things, and gave me a stiff nod of recognition, but melted into something resembling geniality as Laura Kendrick took a chair by his side. Mercy Fillmore had come in at the other door while we had been carrying on our skirmish in the hall, and now made room for me on the sofa beside her.

"I'm glad you came," she said. "I wanted to ask you something." The soothing quality of Mercy Fillmore's voice and manner was doubly welcome after the rasping that Laura Kendrick had managed to inflict upon my spirit as the just punishment for the crime of incommunicativeness.

I responded to Miss Fillmore's greeting with fitting words.

"Well," she continued, "what I wanted to ask you was this: Do you think there is any danger to this house from having the Chinese girl here?"

"Why, no; I hardly think so. Big Sam assured me that there was not." Then, after a moment's hesitation, I added: "While I don't doubt Big Sam's good faith in the matter, I have taken the precaution to have the place well guarded. There are four watchmen outside at the present moment–unless I underestimate the attractions of the corner grocery; and the highbinder who tries to get in will have the warmest five minutes of his life."

"How kind of you to attend to that!" said Miss Fillmore. "But I wasn't thinking of the highbinders. What set me to asking you was a meeting I had with Mr. Parks to-day."

"Parks!" I exclaimed in surprise. "You know him?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. We were children together, and I count him as a good friend." A blush that tinted her cheeks suggested that the friendship was a little nearer than she would have me believe.

"Then I wish you would get him to cut his hair! I think it would save him from getting hanged."

"How absurd you are!"

"Merely an application of the theory of clothes–*Sartor Resartus*, and all that, you know. Dress to a part, and you get the spirit of it."

"You are joking," said Miss Fillmore, with the seriousness of one to whom the sense of humor is beyond understanding.

"Not at all," I returned. "If Parks came down to the normal supply of hair he might get rid of some abnormal ideas that are going to bring him into trouble."

Miss Fillmore looked at me doubtfully a moment, and again expressed her opinion that I was joking. Then she put aside the subject as one beyond her comprehension, and continued:

"But never mind. I met him this afternoon when I was out taking the air, and he said that there was going to be trouble in the city, and asked if we kept any Chinese servants."

"Yes? And if you did–?"

"Well, we don't, and I told him so, and he said if we did we had better turn them away in a hurry. Then he went on to tell me that there was going to be an uprising of the people, and that the unemployed might make an attack on the Chinese and those who hire them. Now, do you think that the presence of our poor little Moon Ying will bring the mob here?"

"Mr. Parks could answer that question much better than I."

"I asked him, and he said 'Oh, no'–that his people were not warring on women or the sick; but I feared he was too hopeful."

"I do not think there is the slightest danger," I replied. "If Mr. Parks' friends get to be too obstreperous, the police will make short work of them. But I don't think they are enterprising enough to get so far away from Tar Flat." I spoke with a confidence that was more assumed than real.

"Oh, indeed they are. There was some one here to-day about the matter. Laura, my dear," she said, raising her voice and earning a frown from Mr. Baldwin by breaking into his monopoly; "Laura, my dear, didn't you say there was some one here to-day inquiring about Chinese?"

"Indeed there was," said Miss Laura, emphasizing the statement with an indignant nod. "He was a very disagreeable man, and insisted on seeing the lady of the house, so at last I went to the door. I found him horribly impolite. I had to tell him three times that I was the lady before he would believe me."

"What sort of looking man was he? And what did he say?" I asked.

"Oh, he was well-looking enough–a man of good size, about thirty, with a black mustache and an insolent way. What he said was that he hoped we didn't employ any Chinese. I just told him that I was much obliged to him for his interest in us, but as I couldn't see that it concerned him I would ask to be excused. Then he got saucy, and said that if I wouldn't listen to him I would have to listen to a mob–that wasn't what he called it, but that's what he meant. He said he was a delegate from some anti-coolie club or convention, or something of the sort, with a hundred thousand members, and they were going to see that the Chinese were discharged and white men put in their places."

"That's rather a large contract," said Mr. Baldwin. "I hope you shut the door in his face. I should like to have given employment to one white man to boot him off the place."

"Well," continued Miss Kendrick, "I was too mad to tell him that uncle is so opposed to the Chinese that he's never allowed one about the house. I just said that we hadn't any Chinese now, but if he would come around in about two weeks we would try to accommodate him."

"A soft answer," I said. "I hope it turned away wrath."

"Well, he got saucier, and I told him to go, and he went. I'm afraid I wasn't polite. But I'm as sorry as sorry can be now, for he told me he had been out of work for six months because the Chinese had taken the factory that had employed him, and I'm sure it is a very unpleasant thing to be turned out of the place where you make your living." Miss Kendrick's voice had softened with her last words, and the light of womanly sympathy shone in her eyes.

"You are right, my dear," said Miss Fillmore. "It has been a hard year for many. We have been appealed to by scores of men who have been turned out of one place and could find no other."

"Serves 'em right," said Mr. Baldwin shortly. "If they can't keep their jobs, they ought to lose them. This talk about Chinese competition is absolute nonsense. A competent man can find work any time. The anti-Chinese howl comes from the fellows who don't want to work, and wouldn't work if there wasn't a Chinaman within eight thousand miles."

"I hope you are right," said Miss Kendrick. "It isn't good for the spirits to think of men going hungry when they are willing to labor."

"You needn't distress yourself, Miss Laura," said Mr. Baldwin, with an air of contempt for the difficulties of the unemployed. "You couldn't drive those fellows to work with a Gatling gun. This talk about Chinese taking away their jobs is just an excuse for them to get out on street corners and howl about their wrongs, in the hope that somebody like you and Mercy will set up a soup-house for them."

"I am afraid you haven't looked into the matter," said Miss Fillmore. "Our Helping Hand Society has found much real distress from want of employment. You don't agree with Mr. Baldwin, do you, Mr. Hampden?"

"Certainly not," said I, with some irritation at Mr. Baldwin's scornful airs. "The anti-Chinese cry may have been taken up by those who had rather talk than work, but there is plenty of foundation for the statement that the Chinese are driving white men out of employment."

"I have found nothing of the sort in my experience," said Mr. Baldwin contemptuously.

"Well, your experience is not that of men in business," I returned warmly. "You will find that class for class the Chinaman can run the white man out of any line he enters. The Chinese laborer can work and live on less wages than the white laborer; the Chinese merchant can grow wealthy in a market that would

throw the white merchant into bankruptcy, and the Chinese manufacturer thrives under conditions that drive his white competitor to the wall."

"What do you mean by talking that way, Hampden?" cried Mr. Baldwin with irritation. "You know well enough that you're not serious. It's impossible."

A sharp answer was on the tip of my tongue when Miss Kendrick interposed.

"That will do for a very stupid debate," she said. "You can put the rest of it in the papers. I think I hear the doctor, and I want Mr. Hampden to come and see him." And with a peremptory wave of her hand she rose, and I followed her out into the hall. As the door closed she dropped her commanding manner. "Do you know it is ten o'clock?" she said, "and uncle hasn't come in yet." Her tone was troubled.

"Is it anything unusual?" I asked.

"I suppose you think it's a case of nerves," she said, "and maybe it is. But I shouldn't worry if he hadn't sent word to me that he would be here by nine. I'm afraid something has happened, and I want you to see about it."

"Have you any idea where he went?"

"He spoke of going to Mr. Coleman's."

"William T. Coleman's?"

"Yes."

"Well, that will be a good place to start a search, then." And I secured my hat.

"It's good of you to go," said Miss Kendrick.

"Am I forgiven?" I asked, taking the small hand that lay so temptingly near my own, and bending over it.

"There, that will do," she said, snatching her hand away and retreating in some confusion. "Your pardon for being an obstinate man-creature is signed, and you'd better not imperil it by any Louis Quatorze manners. And I'm sure you'd better not waste any more time."

Once out of the house my fears for Wharton Kendrick became more lively, and I hastened to the Coleman residence.

"Take my card to Colonel Kendrick," I said briskly to the man who opened the door.

He looked at it doubtfully a moment. But my assured air, and the "Attorney at law" that announced my business in unmistakable type impressed him, and he called a fellow servant to his side, gave him the card with a word of instruction, and advised me to be seated.

After a few minutes of waiting I wondered whether I would not have done better, after all, to ask speech with the master of the house, and I was just on the point of requesting the Cerberus to take my name to Mr. Coleman, when

my dubitations were cut short by the opening of a door, and a sudden outburst of voices, which softened to an indistinguishable murmur as it closed again, and Colonel Kendrick came walking down the hall.

"Ah, Hampden," he said gravely, stroking his flame-tinted whiskers, "I'm not sure whether I am glad to see you or not. What has happened? Anything?"

"Well, I'm in no doubt about being glad to see you," I returned. "I've been suspecting you were knocked on the head."

"Pooh!" said Wharton Kendrick. "I'm in no danger. Don't worry about me. What you want to do is to find out what the other fellow is doing. Can you tell me that?"

"Certainly. He left his office at six o'clock, went directly to his house, and hasn't stirred out of it since."

"Very good. Now, I believe you had something to tell me." And his eye wandered uneasily to the door from behind which the confused murmur swelled with tantalizing indistinctness.

"Yes: I have been hunting you all day to tell you that I received word this morning that the Council of Nine had bought a thousand rifles."

This bit of news brought no answering sign of surprise on the face of my client.

"Well," he said thoughtfully, "I wasn't much behind you in getting the information. I heard about it this afternoon on the street."

"On the street!" I exclaimed. "It was told to me as a profound secret." It seemed an altogether perplexing thing that the information that Clark had considered it death to reveal should be the talk of commercial San Francisco.

"Well," said Wharton Kendrick with a smile, "if it's a secret it's one that needs a good deal of help in keeping it. I heard it from a dozen different directions."

"There will be some astonished men in the Council if they hear of this report," I said.

A grim smile wrinkled Wharton Kendrick's ruddy cheeks, and drove for a moment the thoughtful look from his eyes. He put his hands in his pockets and threw himself back in his chair.

"Well," he said, "you can expect them to have an attack of heart disease at the breakfast-table then. It will all be in the papers in the morning. But, to tell the truth, I got the impression that the nine members of the Council and all their friends were giving their afternoon to circulating the report."

I was a little piqued at the staleness of my information.

"Since you are so well-posted about the purchase of the rifles–" I began.

"The alleged purchase of the rifles," interrupted Wharton Kendrick.

"The purchase of the rifles," I repeated. "I suppose I don't need to tell you

where the money came from to pay for them."

"Oh," said Wharton Kendrick carelessly, "it doesn't take much money to get up a report."

"Well, it took thirty thousand dollars for this one."

"Pooh, Hampden, you've been dreaming. That crowd couldn't raise thirty thousand cents."

"Not alone, I grant you. But you will admit that it might be done with the assistance of a generous-hearted millionaire who has been convinced of the loftiness of their aims."

"What the devil are you driving at, Hampden? Talk plain United States." Wharton Kendrick sat bolt upright, and looked at me sternly, with the light of half-comprehension in his eyes.

"In plain language, then, Peter Bolton paid thirty thousand dollars into the treasury of the Council of Nine night before last, and the rifles have been bought with his money."

Kendrick jumped to his feet. His ruddy face went pale, and then turned ruddier than ever.

"Bolton!" he cried. "How do you know that?"

I gave Clark's account of the matter, recalled Bolton's dealings with the Council, and clenched the conclusion with the corroborative testimony of my interview with Bolton in his office. Wharton Kendrick settled back in his chair and received my tale in a brown study. Before I had done, he interrupted me.

"I see his game. This puts a different face on the matter. Come in here." And rising suddenly he seized me by the arm and marched me into the room from which he had come, with the authoritative air of a policeman haling a burglar to prison.

The room to which I was introduced in this ignominious fashion was of moderate size, and the score or so of men who were gathered there filled it comfortably. I had noted in the company several of the leading financial men of the city, when Wharton Kendrick brought me to a halt before a tall, broad-shouldered, full-faced man, with a long gray mustache, kindly gray eyes, and a calm, resourceful expression.

"Coleman, let me introduce my attorney, Mr. Hampden,"–I became suddenly grateful that he had presented me in this character–"son of Dick Hampden, you remember. He brings news that puts a different face on affairs."

I had seen William T. Coleman on the street, and had known something of his romantic history. His leadership of the forces of order in the city, when the criminals of 1851 and 1856 left no remedy to honest men but that of revolution, had impressed my imagination, and I was prepared to feel the glow of admiration that warmed my spirit as he shook my hand with a kindly word. No one could

approach the man without receiving the impression of quiet force; yet it was, after all, difficult to realize that this kindly merchant had developed the highest qualities of leadership at two critical periods in the history of the city and state, had headed a successful revolution against a criminal administration of the law, and had, after showing gifts that in another day would have made him a Cromwell or a Simon de Montfort, quietly surrendered his powers when his work was done, and settled contentedly back to the prosaic business of buying and selling goods. I felt proud to be in his presence.

"What is this important information?" asked Coleman, his gray eyes searching my face with penetrating glance.

"Chiefly," said Wharton Kendrick, "that we are mistaken in supposing that the story of the purchase of arms is false."

"There is no doubt of its truth, gentlemen," I said. "The conspirators have received a large sum of money, and have put a good part of it into guns. They have, on my information, about one thousand rifles."

This assurance produced a visible effect on the company.

"Where did they get this money?" asked the doubting voice of a man who had been introduced as Mr. Partridge.

"That's not the important point," said Wharton Kendrick, striking in smoothly. "The main thing is to know what they are going to do with it."

I understood from this hint that I was to keep the name of Peter Bolton out of the discussion.

"I have a little special information on that point," I said. And I described the multiform purposes of the Council of Nine as they had appeared from my investigations.

"How do you know all this?" came from several of the assembled magnates.

Wharton Kendrick took the reply out of my mouth.

"He has practically direct communication with the conspirators," he said. "I think we shall all agree that it is best not to mention names."

"Well, this certainly makes it a horse of another color," said Partridge. "In the light of Mr. Hampden's information I withdraw my objections to the plan proposed by Mr. Kendrick."

Wharton Kendrick heaved a scarcely perceptible sigh, and whispered to me, "That settles it; Partridge represents the Golconda Bank, and the rest will follow his lead."

"That is right," said another. "Let us take no chances." And with a few similar expressions the company appeared to have come to a unanimous agreement.

"Then," said Wharton Kendrick, turning to Partridge, "I'll put you down for–"

"For five hundred thousand," replied Partridge.

"Make it a million," said Kendrick. "Nelson here is going to stand responsible for five hundred thousand, and your people should stand for more."

"Well, if you think the emergency calls for it, you can count on a million," said Partridge.

One after another the men named the amounts for which they would stand responsible, and Wharton Kendrick jotted down the figures in his memorandum-book.

"Please make out your checks, gentlemen," he said at last. "Here is ten million dollars pledged to the committee."

"That will be enough," said Coleman with decision. "I think that our arrangements cover every point where there can be a break in the markets."

"Unless it's M. & N., and the bank we mentioned," said Nelson.

"Oh, yes," said Kendrick; "our arrangements cover them, too. We've got to back them up till this storm is over. They are bound to go some day, but if they go now there will be a smash all along the line. Partridge will see to getting the best collateral they have, and we'll feed them just enough to keep their doors open."

"They will draw pretty heavily on the pool if disorder actually starts," said another.

"Oh," said Partridge, "we have a very comfortable reserve, and it isn't likely that there will be an actual outbreak."

"Well, we have prepared for every emergency," said a stout and sleepy-looking man in the corner; "and as we're likely to have a hard day of it to-morrow, I move we get home and to bed. It's three minutes of midnight, now."

The suggestion appeared to be approved, for everybody rose with the breaking-up atmosphere that ends a gathering.

"One moment," said Coleman, raising his hand. "There is one thing we have neglected to discuss. It is not impossible that the constituted authorities will prove unable to handle the disorderly elements. In case of need, how many of you gentlemen are ready to give your services to the city to preserve order?"

There was a silence for a moment. Then one said:

"Pshaw, Coleman! This isn't fifty-six! We're twenty years older than we were then, and the police and the militia can handle those fellows if they make any trouble."

"I believe," said Coleman with deliberate emphasis, "that we are standing on the crust of a volcano. We should be prepared to give our money and our personal services to the public safety if the need comes."

"There's no danger," growled the sleepy man, "so what's the use of worrying about it? Let's go home."

"Oh," said Kendrick, "we'll all stand in if there's trouble, of course."

"We'll leave Coleman on guard," said another with a facetious nod. "We'll

all turn out when he rings the bell."

In the bustle of guests departing, Coleman took me by the arm and led me to a corner.

"Do you know where these guns are stored?" he asked.

I balanced my obligations to Clark against the obvious fact that the publicity given to the armament had relieved him from chance of suspicion, and replied:

"I understand that they were stored near the headquarters of the Council–Blasius' saloon–known to the police as the House of Blazes."

"I think they should belong to the police," said Coleman dryly. "I dare say Chief Ellis has heard of them, but I shall send word to him before I go to bed."

In a moment more Kendrick called me, and we bade good night to our host.

As we reached the Kendrick house the magnate roused himself from a brown study and said:

"The curmudgeon is a rather amusing cuss, Hampden, if you know how to take him. I advise you to cultivate his acquaintance."

"Do you mean–" I began.

"I mean," said Kendrick sharply, "that the closer you get to a man the more you find out about what he intends to do. If he wants to pay for the pleasure of your society it might be a pity to deny him the privilege."

CHAPTER XI

TROUBLES IN THE MARKET

Storm-signals were flying in the financial quarter of San Francisco. California and Sansome Streets were thronged with men whose faces, anxious, confident, hopeful or despairing, pictured a time of commercial stress. There was an unusual bustle about the orderly precincts of the banks, as clerks rushed in and out with the air of men who carried the fate of the day on their shoulders. Bearers of checks jostled one another in their eagerness to be first at the counters of the paying teller. The doors to the offices of bank presidents and cashiers, that on ordinary days opened but sedately to the occasional visitor, were now swinging constantly to admit their customers in search of unusual accommodation. And even at the savings banks there was a flutter of uneasiness; for at the opening hour a long line of timid-faced men and women had formed in front of the paying tellers' counters.

In the banking district this anxious activity was orderly and well-mannered. The center of disturbance was to be found about the rival stock exchanges on Pine and Montgomery Streets, where excited crowds blocked the sidewalks and roadways, curbstone brokers raised a deafening clamor with their offers to buy and sell, and groups of individual traders surged hither and thither in endless but changing combinations. The shouts followed one another in short and rapid volleys, like the popping of a pack of fire-crackers, and as each vocal explosion was the signal for the dissolution or rearrangement of a group of traders, the human herd was tossed about in waves, eddies and cross-currents, like the bay in a storm.

The granite pile on Pine Street that held the San Francisco Stock Exchange–the "Big Board" as it was known in the parlance of the street–was the origin of waves of disturbance that spread to the remotest confines of the crowds. The flight of a messenger down the granite steps would be followed by a roar of inarticulate sound, a wave of human motion spreading out in a circle of eddies, individual groups colliding, coalescing, separating into new combinations in a mad confusion of excited voices, till its impulse was lost on the confines of the crowd or whirled aside into the scores of bucket-shops that lined the adjacent streets. And similar waves of excitement spread in smaller volume from the rival and lesser exchanges on Montgomery and Leidesdorff Streets.

The developing strength of the agitators, and the rumors of the arming of the turbulent elements, had roused a spirit of uneasiness in the city that was not far from panic. As a consequence of their fears, men were rushing to protect their business interests, loans were called in, collections were pressed, lenders became wary, and weak holders of stocks were forced to sell. With these conditions overshadowing the market, professional traders in stocks became fierce and aggressive bears, and hammered at prices with every weapon that money and mendacity put at their hand.

Wharton Kendrick was early at his office, and I sought him for directions.

"Look after the other fellow," was his brusk command. "That is your part of the business. Let me know what Peter Bolton does. Send me reports every ten or fifteen minutes till the exchanges close. I'll be here all day."

Having satisfied myself that my messenger system was in good working order, I awaited the first move of the enemy. It came shortly after the opening of the stock exchanges. I received word that Peter Bolton had started for the "Big Board;" so I made my way thither to observe for myself what sort of activity he might be about.

As I was edging my way forward between the shouting, tossing eddies that divided the crowd, I felt a tap on the shoulder, and turned to find Parks beside me.

"A shameful sight!" he shouted in my ear. "Sad and shameful!" And he gave a vigorous shake to his head that put his shock of hair all a-quiver. "It's like a round-up of helpless cattle driven to the slaughter-house. It's worse than shameful. It's damnable!"

"More like the dairy, isn't it?" I asked. "They are like cows brought up to be milked, and afterward turned loose to accumulate a new supply."

This view of the market brought an angry flame of color into Parks' face.

"Worse than that–worse than that!" he cried indignantly. "It's like those African fellows that cut a steak out of their live cattle and then turn them out to grow another. Those men there," and he shook his fist at the granite front of the Stock Exchange, "and those men there," and he shook his fist at the El Dorado Bank as the nearest representative of speculative finance, "are vampires that grow by sucking the blood of the people."

"The people appear to be willing victims," I suggested, looking at the eager if apprehensive faces about us.

"By heavens, no!" cried Parks, in his high excited voice. "They are driven into the shambles by their poverty–by the inequalities and injustices in the distribution of wealth–as surely as if they had been driven by whips or bayonets." He glared about him as though he sought contradiction. "They are here in the hope of wresting from knavery and rapacity the share of the earth's products of which they have been despoiled."

"I suspect," was my scoffing reply, "that they are here in the hope of doing exactly what the owners of the El Dorado Bank have done–of taking all they can get and a little more."

"Sir," said Parks, "you lose sight of the mass in looking at the individual. The individual has been corrupted by a false system of society into striving for unjust gains. But the mass calls only for simple justice."

"Well, Parks," I returned, "I admire your optimism, though I can't say as much for your judgment."

"Admire it or not, sir, as you like," said Parks. "That will not alter facts. But this," he added, shaking his fist again at the frowning front of the Exchange, "is one of the iniquities that we shall sweep away."

"If we can judge by the patronage it is getting to-day it won't have to close very soon," was my comment.

"Sir," said Parks, "the day when it will be closed is nearer than you imagine. Our denunciations of the robbers of the stock exchanges excite more applause than anything except our denunciations of the Chinese."

"I should think it quite likely. Men like to hear hard words said of those who succeed where they themselves have failed. But the applause means nothing."

"It means," said Parks, "that we shall have the masses behind us when we

give the word to abolish these iniquities."

"Abolish them? Pooh! It would take a despotism to do that."

"A despotism? No. A revolution. The revolution that will bring equality to the people is all that is needed."

"And you still think your revolution is coming?" I asked.

"Not the slightest doubt of it." And Parks gave a mysterious nod as though he could tell many things if he would, and then closed his mouth tightly as though tortures could not wring another word from him.

At this moment I caught sight of Peter Bolton intent on pressing a way to the entrance of the Exchange. His gaunt face was drawn into harsh, determined lines, his sharp chin was thrust forward, and his whole attitude was an expression of grim purpose. I lost sight of him in the struggle of making my way through the throng, and I had reached the door before I brought him under my eye again. He was pausing in the lobby to pass a word with an alert, bright-eyed man whom I knew as a broker, and I surmised that he was giving orders in regard to sales or purchases of stocks.

Inside the Board-room the clamor was more insistent and disturbing than on the street. The confined space compressed the waves of sound till they struck upon the ear with a force that benumbed my unaccustomed nerves. The cries, shouts, and yells of the brokers bidding for stocks or making their offerings came only as a confused roar.

Except for the noise, the scene on the floor of the Exchange resembled nothing so much as a magnified foot-ball scrimmage. The scores of excited brokers were rushing hither and thither within the railed pit, shouting, screaming, waving their arms, shaking their fists, forming groups about a half-dozen of their fellows, flinging one another aside to get to the center, struggling with all signs of personal combat, and then separating a moment later to form new groups. The dissolving combinations, the quick rushes, the kaleidoscopic changes among the circling men, were as confusing to the eye as the swelling dissonance of shouts was deafening to the ear.

The spectators of this tournament of riot made themselves a part of the brabble. They felt all the interest of those unarmed citizens who watched a battle which was to settle the fate of their goods and households. They were mostly speculators, winning or losing money with each burst of sound that rose from the bedlam dance in the pit. They filled the seats and crowded the aisles, and added their quota of outcries to the uproar, now shouting instructions to their brokers, now bargaining among themselves, and now voicing an exclamation of satisfaction or discomposure as the stocks changed prices at the call.

Peter Bolton dropped into a seat that had been reserved for him at the rail, and watched the scene with keen and wary eye. It was plain that he had been

brought there by no idle curiosity. For the first time in the knowledge of the frequenters of the Exchange he took an open part in the trading, called brokers to him at every turn of the battle of the pit, and gave his directions with confident brevity.

The Exchange was not altogether a novelty to me, and after I had become accustomed to the confusion of sight and sound, I had no difficulty in discerning the progress of the struggle that was going on before me. It needed no broker to tell me that a hot financial battle was being fought in that confined arena. A novice in trade could have seen that there was a determined effort to break the market, met by an equally determined effort to uphold it. The attacking force had strong support. The alarms and anxieties caused by the signs of approaching trouble had brought into the market the stocks held by small margins, those of frightened investors, and those held by speculative merchants who found their credits suddenly shortened. The rumors of coming disorder had also brought to the bear side the professional traders who foresaw a probable fall in prices, and by sales for future delivery did their utmost to bring it about for their own profit.

But there were strong influences on the other side. And though each call of stock was followed by an avalanche of offers, I soon observed that every stock after a sharp decline was brought back to something near its former quotations. I surmised that the steadying hand of the syndicate was at work. It was not for nothing that Wharton Kendrick had held his midnight session with the financial barons of the city.

As the session wore away with fierce assault and resolute defense, with detonations of cries and shouts, with surges and clashes of conflicting factions of traders, I thought I saw an air of disappointment settling on the face of Peter Bolton. He spoke sharply to the brokers that from time to time he summoned about him. These conferences were followed by renewed activities and fresh outbreaks of sound among the gyrating, dissolving groups upon the floor; but after a flutter of changing prices the quotations returned to the level from which they started.

The session came to an end at last, and the throng of men poured out of the Exchange, bearing on their faces the record of success and failure, of excitement and fatigue, that had been scored by the morning's work. But so far as the official figures of the session showed it might have been a time of stagnation instead of fierce battle. The closing prices were not a point away from those that ruled at the close of the previous day.

"The El Dorado Bank has run against a snag this time," said one broker to his neighbor, as he wiped his perspiring face and adjusted his limp collar.

"The El Dorado Bank isn't the only one to feel a little sick over the morning's business," said his companion, with a toss of his thumb toward the bowed

figure of Peter Bolton huddled in the seat by the rail and contemplating with vacant intentness the floor of the deserted pit. "Old Tightfist must have dropped a pile of money here to-day."

"He?" exclaimed his companion. "Not much he didn't. He always caught the turn at just the right minute. When the books are made up he's as likely to be ahead as behind."

"He has the devil's own luck," said the first broker.

"He found out what he was bucking against early in the game," said the other, "and after that he didn't need anybody to tell him when to get out."

As the throng passed out, Peter Bolton still sat in his seat by the rail. A grim air of reflection was on his face, the lines of stern determination still drew his chin forward and his lips back, and he studied the floor of the Exchange as though it were a blackboard on which his problem was being worked out. Then at last he slowly rose, and with a sour shake of his head walked toward the door, I turned my eyes on the clock in the hope of escaping his observation; but as he came by my seat he halted.

"So, young man," he said, with the compressed force of anger audible in his sarcastic drawl, "you think you have beat me, do you?–you and that smirking scoundrel you call Kendrick!" There was the concentrated essence of venom in his tone that testified to the depth of his hatred and chagrin.

His words were an admission that I was quick to understand. In a moment my mind flashed to the conclusion that the whole enginery of rumor and riot had been set in motion by this man to serve the purposes of his malignity. He had sought to pull down the commercial edifice of San Francisco in the hope of burying Wharton Kendrick in the ruins.

The design was the worthy offspring of the malevolent mind before me, but it was rather his insulting reference to my client than the wickedness of the thing he had attempted to do that stirred me with anger. A harsh answer was on my lips, but it was checked by the sudden recollection of Wharton Kendrick's advice to "cultivate Peter Bolton's acquaintance."

Accepting this recommendation as a command, I bowed with a smile as sarcastic as his own, and replied cheerfully:

"You do seem to have made a failure of it, Mr. Bolton."

A flash of anger came into the pale blue eyes, a shade of red flamed in the sallow cheeks, and Peter Bolton broke forth into passionate speech:

"Maybe you've beat me this time. Maybe you've had things your own way for once. But the fight isn't over yet. There's plenty of it coming, and I'll see that you get it. Let that scoundrel Kendrick look out for himself. He can hire whipper-snappers"–by this term I judged that Peter Bolton referred to me, and I was pleased to think that he credited his discomfiture in part to my humble

efforts–"he can hire a line of whipper-snappers that would reach from here to the ferries, but he can't save himself. I'll drag him down. I'll strip him to the last rag. When I get through with him he won't have a dollar to his name. There won't be a foot of land or one brick on top of another that he can call his own." Peter Bolton spoke more rapidly than I had supposed was possible to him, and his face flamed with the wrath that had carried his tongue away.

"I'm sorry to hear it," I said politely. "I hope it won't happen before I collect my month's salary."

Bolton looked at me venomously from his deep-set eyes, and his thin lips curled with sarcastic lines.

"You've earned your salary this month," he said, with a return to his harsh drawl, "but it doesn't follow that you'll get it. You beat me this time, but it isn't the end."

"You did make rather a mess of it," I admitted. "You ought to have consulted somebody about it–an attorney, for instance."

I spoke idly, without special meaning; but at my words Bolton's face softened into a glance of sardonic humor.

"Oh," he said slowly, "I don't know but what you are right. Come around to my office in a day or two, and we'll talk about the fee." He jumped to the conclusion that I was ready to accept a bribe, and he continued: "It'll be anything in reason, young man, anything in reason."

CHAPTER XII
THE LOTTERY TICKET

In the midst of the lull that followed the failure of Peter Bolton's assault on the fortifications of commerce, I was surprised to find on my office desk one morning the following letter:

RESPECTFUL SIR:

to yours we this day instructed to remind you that your presence is more than agreeable. Having placed to your credit a money sum drawn according to ticket, should be your worshipful servant to have presented for payment.

As ever your faithful, KWAN LUEY & Co.

This missive, written in a beautiful Spencerian hand, was for some minutes a puzzle. I read over its tangle-worded lines two or three times before it dawned upon me that it must concern the lottery ticket that I had purchased in Peter Bolton's office. The ticket had been handed to me with the promise that I should have "heap big money," and I drew from the letter's flowery but uncertain language the inference that the promise had been fulfilled. If confirmation had been necessary, the letter confirmed the testimony of my eyes when they had assured me that the seller of the ticket was Big Sam. It was impossible that any other Chinese would have known that I was the holder of the paper, or would have procured the sending of the derangement of words that had come over the name of Kwan Luey. As nothing more important called for my attention I indulged my curiosity by setting put at once for Kwan Luey's store.

Kwan Luey showed himself superior to any narrow prejudices in regard to the objects in which it was fitting for a merchant to trade. In one window he exhibited a fine collection of silks, ebony carvings, sandal-wood ornaments, and figured Chinese coats. In the other he had piled all manner of fine porcelain, ivory and lacquered ware. The counters in the front part of the store showed a similar division of salable goods. Farther back could be seen mats of rice, boxes of tea, bags of Chinese roots, and piles of mysterious and uncanny Chinese edibles. In his office clerks were counting Mexican dollars and packing them in stout boxes for shipping to China, the earnings of his countrymen. The closed rear rooms, I surmised, were devoted to the operation of the two or three lotteries he was reputed to control.

Kwan Luey himself stood just outside his office, a short, well-fed, well-dressed Chinaman, whose rounded, dark-brown face denoted a cheerful mind. I called him by name.

"What you wan'?" he asked suspiciously, prepared to deny his identity if my errand were not to his liking.

I introduced myself, and as my name brought no sign of enlightenment to his face, I presented his letter as a card of identification.

He gravely read it with all the pride of authorship kindling in his eye, and as gravely handed it back to me.

"How you like him, eh? Plitty good letteh, eh?"

I assured him that I could not have bettered it myself.

Kwan Luey gave a gratified smile.

"I lite him," he explained. "I go Mission school fo' yeah. I leahn lite, all same

copy-book. I all same beat teacheh, eh?"

"You are a Christian Chinaman, then, Kwan Luey?"

"You Clistian?" he asked.

"I hope so."

He gave me a sly glance, and said:

"I Clistian Chinaman when Clistian man wan' buy goods."

"But not when Clistian man wants money?" I asked.

Kwan Luey smiled the bland smile of China, and made no direct reply.

"You wan' money, eh?" he said. "You heap lucky, eh?"

"Well, I don't know."

"You catch-em ticket?"

I produced the square of paper I had received from Big Sam.

"What does that say?" I asked.

Kwan Luey took the paper, and drew his eyelids together till there showed but two narrow slanting slits between them as he pretended to examine it.

"Him say–him say–I look-em book and see what him say." And with his bland smile still rendering his face innocent of meaning, he retired to his office. He reappeared a moment later.

"Him say you dlaw two hund' fitty dollah," was his announcement.

The comedy of the lottery ticket was being played out to the end. I was convinced that the paper was a direct order from Big Sam to pay me the money, but as I looked into the brown mask of Kwan Luey's face I recognized the folly of attempting to draw from him any word that he was unwilling to speak. But as he counted twelve twenty-dollar gold pieces and a ten into my hand I could not forbear saying:

"And what does Big Sam expect me to do with the money?"

I thought I detected a slight movement of Kwan Luey's eyes–a momentary contraction of the lids, as though a beam of light had flashed across them and was gone. It was the only sign of surprise I could detect.

"You sabby Big Sam?" he asked blandly.

"Yes, I sabby Big Sam."

"And you no sabby what to do with you' money? You no sabby dlink–all same Clistian? You no sabby hoss-lace? You no sabby pokah?" And at this enumeration of the white man's facilities for disposing of superfluous wealth he laughed with the ironic laugh of China.

I suggested that Big Sam might have intended another destination for the money.

"Oh," said Kwan Luey innocently, "you likee Big Sam tell you what do? I likee send letteh to Big Sam. You takee letteh, him tell you what do."

The letter was already in his hand, and he passed it to me as gravely as

though the coincidence was but one of the common events of life.

"I see that you were prepared for me," I said, with a tinge of sarcasm in my voice, and wondered how Kwan Luey would have brought the errand about if I had not served his purpose by introducing Big Sam's name.

The Chinaman smiled placidly.

"I no sabby," he said. "Good-by. Some day you wan' some nice thing, you come Kwan Luey's stoah."

I drew the conclusion that Big Sam wished to see me, and had arranged that Kwan Luey was to find a pretext for sending me to his office. Why he should not himself have sent word of his wish, I could not guess, unless it was a part of his policy to avoid direct paths where indirection could be made to serve.

A few minutes later I walked into the store beneath Big Sam's residence and put foot on the dingy stair that led to his office. A short, stout Chinaman tried to halt me with a "What you wan'?" but I pushed him aside and passed up the steps. I knew my way through the semi-darkness of the passage, and stumbled upward without wish for guidance or thought of danger. I had not mounted half the ascent before I heard something of a commotion above me–the shutting of a door, a scurry of feet, and a rumbling sound as though a heavy table had been moved across the floor. I amused myself with the thought that I had caught Big Sam's household unprepared for visitors and imagined the flight of the feminine portion of his family at the sound of my approaching footfall.

I reached the landing. The hall was deserted, and, turning toward the building's front, I knocked at the one door that led from the passage. There was no answer, and I knocked again. As a third knock brought no response I turned the knob and opened the door for myself. To my surprise Big Sam's room of state had disappeared. In place of the large and handsome office, with its profusion of ornamentation and its oriental furniture, I found myself looking into a narrow passageway between blank walls. I looked about the hall with the thought that I must have mistaken the door. But there was no other entrance to be seen, and I looked again in perplexity at the passage, unwilling to believe the evidence of my eyes. As I turned to make sure of the transformation I heard a click as of a spring lock snapped, a smart push at my back sent me staggering forward, and the door banged behind me.

It took but a moment to recover myself and face about. But I was too late. The door had been securely locked. A few blows on the panels sufficed to assure me that it was of too solid construction to yield to anything less powerful than an ax; and though the frame rattled at my efforts, I saw that I was a prisoner, unless I could find some other way of egress. I spared the door the kicks and blows that were called for by my first impulse. If I had been fool enough to get into this trap, I had at least sense enough to recognize that I should not better myself by

knocking the skin off my knuckles in the effort to attract attention. The persons whose ears I could reach did not need to be informed of my presence. They had attended to the little detail of putting me there, and might be assumed to be aware of the honor I was doing them without further demonstration of the fact.

I turned to look once more at my prison. It was hardly five feet wide, and might have been thirty feet long, and appeared to turn a sharp corner and lead toward the rear of the building. Evidently I was at the entrance of one of the labyrinths of Chinatown, famous in police reports.

Up to this moment I had felt no fear at my situation. It seemed indeed to be something of a practical joke at which I could afford to laugh. I had evidently wandered into the wrong building, been mistaken for a detective, or a tax collector, or some equally unpleasant person, and had been turned in here out of the way of doing mischief. I had but to reveal the object of my visit–provided I could find anybody to reveal it to–and I should be sent on my way with apologies. But some remembrance of the gruesome tales of the deeds that had been done in these labyrinths suggested that the sooner I found speech with some one, the better chance of safety I should have. I was about to venture down the passage in search of a guide when I was startled to hear a voice speaking in my ear in perfect English:

"If Mr. Hampden will have the patience to wait a moment, he will be welcome."

It was the voice of Big Sam, and I looked about me with the thought that I should find him at my side. But I was still the only tenant of the passage, and in perplexity I scanned the walls and ceiling. At a second glance my eye lighted upon a small bull's-eye of glass set in the wall. It doubtless served as an observatory from which suspicious characters might be examined, and some arrangement of speaking tubes gave communication by voice.

"Thank you," I said, as I made these observations. "I am in no hurry."

I had scarce spoken when a part of the wall swung back, and Big Sam stood in the opening.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WISDOM OF HIS ANCESTORS

Big Sam was dressed in a long dark robe figured with fantastic markings in

gold thread, and, as he stood in the opening in the wall, had the appearance of an astrologer who took himself seriously. His face wore a grave smile, and he bowed, as though he were receiving me under the most conventional circumstances.

"Step this way, if you please, Mr. Hampden," he said with quiet dignity.

I hastened to quit the bare and narrow prison, and was astonished to find myself amid the oriental splendor of Big Sam's room of state.

"I ask your pardon for the somewhat unceremonious welcome you have had," said Big Sam, motioning me to a chair, and taking his seat behind the great carved desk.

"Don't mention it," I said. "I suppose it's your customary way of paying honor to distinguished guests."

Big Sam gave my pleasantry a dignified smile.

"We have to be prepared for more than one kind of visitor," he said. "Perhaps it is unnecessary to call your attention to the circumstance that you made no saving of time when you declined to give your name and business to the man who met you at the foot of the stairs. It is a mere detail, but on your next visit you will find a shorter way to this room by sending up your name."

"I shall take advantage of the permission, but I didn't suppose it necessary."

"These are troublous times," said Big Sam, "and I have more than one very good reason to take precautions."

"I might suppose so from the change you have made in the entrance to your rooms," I returned.

Big Sam gave me a quick glance.

"The change is more apparent than real," he said. Then, as if the subject were dismissed, he turned the conversation abruptly. "I believe you wished to see me."

The attempt to put me in the position of seeking him, instead of being the one sought, irritated me more than the rude reception I had met on my arrival.

"I came," I said sharply, "because I had reason to suppose that you had something to say to me."

"I?" said Big Sam in polite surprise.

"Yes. I have just received two hundred and fifty dollars on the order you gave me the other day, and, for one thing, I'd like to know what to do with it."

"On an order from me?" inquired Big Sam suavely.

There was only the blank "no-sabby" mask of China on his face.

"Yes," I replied shortly. "It you've forgotten our interview in Peter Bolton's office, maybe this will remind you." And I laid before him the sheet of paper I had received from Kwan Luey.

Big Sam glanced at it, and I thought I saw behind the veil of his eyes the shadow of a frown. But if it was there, it was gone in an instant, and he replied

blandly:

"Ah, you have proved fortunate in the lottery, then."

"I was paid two hundred and fifty dollars," was my non-committal answer.

"I congratulate you on your good luck."

"Thank you," I said sarcastically. "And now I am awaiting my instructions."

"Why," said Big Sam slowly, "if you have any scruples about keeping it for yourself, you might apply it to the expenses of the girl you have taken in charge."

"That was what I was waiting for," I said. I did not share Big Sam's pleasure in reaching results by indirect roads, and spoke impatiently. "Is that all you had to say?"

"I believe," said Big Sam with ironic courtesy, "that I have some speech still due me. Unless I am much mistaken I have received no report of a certain girl since I delivered her into your hands. Possibly I am wrong in supposing that the circumstances give me any rights."

"I dare say I owe you an apology," I said, with swift repentance of my show of temper. "But I understood from what you said in Mr. Bolton's office that you were in no pressing haste to hear from her."

"Pardon me, if I have no recollection of a meeting in Mr. Bolton's office," said Big Sam dryly. "We shall get on faster if you will kindly assume that it did not take place."

The "no-sabby" mask covered his face, as impenetrable as the blank walls of the passageway itself.

"As you like," I said. "Then, here is my belated report." And I gave a brief account of the events that had followed the rescue of Moon Ying. At the mention of her wound, Big Sam looked grave, and when I had done he said:

"I had received information that something of the kind had happened, but your silence gave me chance to hope that my informant was mistaken."

"No doubt I ought to have reported to you at once. I can only offer apologies for my neglect."

Big Sam gravely bowed in pardon of my remissness.

"It is a very awkward affair," he said. "And it will prove much more awkward if she dies."

"She is now out of danger."

"I trust so. Her death would send the tongs at each other's throats."

"And at yours?"

"I should find it necessary to be absent from the city for some months," he said quietly.

"You might look on it in the light of a vacation," I suggested.

"Unfortunately it is of the last importance that I should be here through the coming months."

"I presume that I am not expected to understand why."

"If you have kept your eyes open, you may have some idea of the reason." He spoke with a tinge of sarcasm in his tone.

"Oh, a man can not always be sure of his eyes," I replied, with a reflection of his manner. "It is true, I know that violence is threatened against your people, and that Chinatown is likely to be burned down before the troubles are over. I know that, for reasons that seem good to himself, Peter Bolton is furnishing money to aid in the campaign of disorder. But what I do not know is the reason why Big Sam is engaged in secret dealings with Peter Bolton. On its face it looks to me like the case of a man joining in a plot to burn his own home."

Big Sam drew down the veils of inscrutability over his eyes as he looked steadily at me, and asked:

"What result do you expect from the agitation?"

"For the first thing, destruction of property and the killing of some of your countrymen."

"Oh," said Big Sam carelessly, "as for the property, it belongs mostly to your countrymen. We prefer to keep our belongings in movable form. And as for my countrymen, if any of them get killed, there are plenty more where they came from."

A shiver ran down my back at this cold-blooded way of looking at the matter, and with some element of repulsion in my thought, I replied sharply:

"But those countrymen may not be able to reach here. The final result of the troubles, in my judgment, will be the shutting of our gates to the Chinese immigrant."

"Even that might not be altogether a misfortune," said Big Sam calmly.

"Not to us, I believe," I said.

"And not to us," said Big Sam.

"I'm glad you take so kindly to the idea," I said.

"Oh, it's very simple," he explained, "a mere calculation of dollars and cents. Shut off the supply, you increase the value of those now here. If no more of my countrymen come, you will find none working for ten and fifteen dollars a month. In a few years the ten-dollar man will be getting twenty; the fifteen-dollar man will be getting thirty; the men who are working in the fields and on the railroads for seventy-five cents and a dollar a day will be getting a dollar and a half and two dollars."

"That's a new view of the matter–to me, at least," I confessed. "But even that calculation will be much amiss if the agitators get the upper hand. They call for expulsion–not merely exclusion. They say 'The Chinese Must Go,' and some of them mean it."

"I have no fear," said Big Sam calmly. "Their violence will overreach itself.

I may say that I rely upon them more than on the justice of our cause to prevent hostile action against my people. The more violent their outbreak, the stronger the reaction, and the less the likelihood of harsh measures to restrict our right to come and go as we please. Come, Mr. Hampden, I will wager you a good cigar that we have a rising in San Francisco that will call out the United States troops, and that there will be no legislation against my people."

I looked into the bland and impassive face before me, and wondered if the considerations at which he had thus hinted could explain his alliance with Bolton. It was in keeping with the principles of oriental diplomacy that he should be planning to prevent exclusion by encouraging the agitators to violence, and be prepared to profit by either success or failure. Yet as I looked into the fathomless brown depths of his eyes, I refused to believe that he had revealed the full measure of his policy or the reasons for it.

"I will certainly risk a cigar on that," I returned gaily.

"Then you consider the exclusion of my people inevitable?"

"I do. It is necessary to the control of this coast by the white race, and I feel certain that it must come."

"I do not recognize the necessity of the white race controlling this coast," said Big Sam dryly.

"Probably not."

"Besides, you forget that there is a class of your own people who will be much injured by an exclusion policy," he said. "The steamship and railroad companies will lose much money. The man who employs a hundred laborers will find his expenses increased by fifty dollars or one hundred dollars a day. Do you think they are going to submit quietly? The exclusion policy will find its enemies among your own people."

"Then you will take no part in the struggle?" I inquired.

Big Sam gave his head a diplomatic shake.

"I am a guest in your country, and I understand the obligations that such a position implies." He spoke the words exactly as he would have said, "I shall protect my own interests," and, by an intangible suggestion, it was this meaning that they conveyed to me. Then he turned the current of conversation abruptly:

"I think," he said, "it is well to bring the girl back here where she can have the care of a doctor of her own race." He spoke with outward calmness, but there was a trace of inward perturbation in his manner.

I stared at him in astonishment.

"Surely," I cried, "you do not believe that your doctors are better than ours! You don't mean to say that an intelligent and educated man like you thinks that there is merit in powdered toads, and snake liver-pills! You don't believe for an instant that incantations to drive away devils can be of the slightest benefit to a

girl with a bullet through her lungs!"

Big Sam looked away from me with something of shame and discomposure in his face. The yellow mask dropped away for a moment, and I could read in his countenance the struggle that was going on in his mind between the veneer of western education and the inborn basic faith in the system evolved by his fathers.

"If you had asked me a week ago, and purely as a matter of theory," he said slowly, "I should have replied that your doctors were far superior to ours–that the medical practice of our people was merely superstition reduced to an absurdity."

"Your good sense would have spoken," I said.

"But now," he continued, "it is not a matter of theory that I have to consider. It is a life and death problem. Immense interests–my future–perhaps the future of the Chinese in this country–are all at stake. And who am I, to throw aside the wisdom of my ancestors and call it folly? There are powers in the earth and in the air that you and I do not understand. There are forces that you and I do not know how to use. I have seen things that science–even your science–can not explain. May not the race know what the common man does not know? Does not the experience of three thousand years count for more than our ideas of what is reasonable? Our ideas! What are they but bubbles blown in air, now seen, now gone into nothingness? Here is a scrap of paper. I crumple it thus, and throw it out of the window. It is blown here and there–up the street, down the street, around the corner–and it comes at last to the rubbish pile and is burned. And because it has found nothing but pavements and buildings in its course it scoffs at the stories of green fields, mountains, forests, the powers of nature and the works of man that it has not seen. Is that not the attitude of civilized man, Mr. Hampden?"

"We must believe our experience, our observation and our intelligence; they are the only guides we have," I replied.

"The savage is much more reasonable," said Big Sam, with the air of one who argues with himself. "He makes allowance for the universe outside his little round of experience." He rose from his seat with a troubled face, as though to relieve his stress of thought by walking. Then, as if ashamed at the loss of his customary calm, he sat down once more.

I brought the conversation back to the concrete case of Moon Ying.

"I can assure you," I said, "that the girl is getting the best medical attention in the city, and is being nursed with the most tender care. You surely have no thought of depriving her of these advantages."

"These advantages? Yes, they may be advantages to your people. But are they so for mine?"

"Certainly; flesh and blood are flesh and blood the world over."

"Each race to its own," said Big Sam. "I can not take the risk of leaving her

to die under the white doctor's treatment."

"She is much the more likely to die if you bring her to Chinatown," I argued.

Big Sam's face recovered its firm determination, and I saw that the superstition and ancestor-worshiping elements imbibed with his mother's milk had overwhelmed education and reason in the crisis at which he felt he had arrived.

"I must look to my own welfare," he said with decision. "A war among the tongs would be fatal to the interests of the Chinese. And if the girl dies–especially if she dies under the white doctor's care–it would be quite beyond my power to prevent an outbreak."

"I have no doubt your interests are important," I began, when he interrupted me.

"Important! they are everything. I must ask you to see that the girl is returned here this morning. I will send for two of our best Chinese doctors to care for her."

"I protest against your decision," I said.

"It is not your place to protest or assent," said. Big Sam, with an air of command.

"Nor to act against my judgment," I added.

"Oh, if you refuse to act, I must find another messenger," said Big Sam calmly. "Permit me to thank you for what you have done, and to say that when I can be of service I am yours to command." The dignity and courtesy with which he spoke were almost regal.

"Oh, I refuse nothing," I replied. "But you will have to reckon with another person than me. I shall take your request to Miss Kendrick; but, whatever I may think about it, the final decision will be in her hands."

Big Sam looked thoughtfully at me for more than a minute before he spoke.

"That was a phase of the problem I had not considered," he said slowly. "I had forgotten that yours is not the ruling sex in the white race." Big Sam's voice was innocent of sarcasm, and he appeared to be considering an impersonal problem.

"If you want to get your girl, I advise you to see Miss Kendrick yourself," I said.

Big Sam looked at me gravely.

"I should not venture to be so rude to Mr. Kendrick as to look upon the women of his household," he said with a trace of rebuke in his tone; yet I felt that this oriental excuse was but a pretense. "I am sure," he added, with a significant glance, "that I could not have a better advocate than the one I send."

Something in the tone rather than in the words sent the blood to my face, and in some confusion I rose.

"An advocate who speaks against his judgment is not likely to be of much

value," I said.

"And you a lawyer!" he exclaimed. He rose and accompanied me to the door, then halted and stamped three times on the floor. "I had almost forgotten," he said with an enigmatic smile.

As he spoke there was again the rumbling as of a heavy table moved across the floor.

"Forgotten what?" was my natural inquiry.

He made no reply, and as the noise stopped he opened the door and ushered me into the hall. I had ceased to think of the peculiar mode in which I had entered the room, but now the remembrance flashed upon me, and I looked about in astonishment. I had passed directly from the office into the outer hall, and the door leading from the hall to the passage in which I had been imprisoned had disappeared.

For a moment I was at a loss to explain the transformation. Disappearing doors were something new in my experience. Then I struck my hand against the wall where the door had been, and my knuckles told me that behind the counterfeit appearance of plaster was a heavy sheet of painted iron. In a flash the explanation came to me. The whole wall could be moved like a sliding door, and with a minute's warning a raid on Big Sam's office would find no entrance.

I carried Big Sam's message to the Kendrick house without delay, and put Big Sam's case with an impartiality that surprised myself. But I was not disappointed in the result.

"Send her back!" cried Miss Kendrick in a great state of indignation. "What can the man be thinking about?"

"Indeed, it is impossible," said Miss Fillmore. "The girl is in no state to be moved, even if it were a question of moving her to a better place."

"And to move her to that dreadful, dirty Chinatown!" cried Miss Kendrick. "I'm astonished that you should think of such a thing."

"I didn't think of it," I urged. "I didn't even want to hear of it. But Big Sam has reverted to primeval barbarism, and when he said he would find somebody else if I wouldn't come, I consented to bring his message."

"Well," said Miss Kendrick, "I never heard of such a preposterous thing in all my life."

"Unfortunately, Big Sam doesn't see it in that light," I said.

Miss Kendrick sat down looking very determined and very indignant. Then she gave a decided nod and said:

"You can tell Big Sam, with my compliments, that if he thinks I am going to be an accomplice before the fact to a murder, he's very much mistaken in the person."

There was more talk to the same effect, when my judicial mind caught the

idea of a compromise.

"I have it," I said. "Why not let Big Sam's Chinese doctor come up here and take an occasional look at Moon Ying, and allay the excitement in Chinatown by assuring them that she's all right?"

"Well, I admire your intelligence," said Miss Kendrick. "I suppose you'd have Doctor Roberts consulting with him, and alternate our medicines with shark's-liver pills and snake-skin powders. Would you set aside certain hours for him to sing Chinese incantations over her? Or how would you fix it?"

The judicial scheme of compromise lost some of its attractiveness, and I said so with the proper degree of humility.

"Well, you are forgiven," said Miss Kendrick. "Now I'll tell you that there's just one compromise we will make. Big Sam may come here once a week to see Moon Ying. He's the only Chinaman who can get past that door."

"I suggested something of the sort, and he took it as though I had proposed an impropriety. I believe that a Chinese gentleman isn't supposed to observe that another gentleman has a feminine side to his establishment."

"Then he can stay out," said Miss Kendrick with decision. "You can go right back and set his mind at rest. He can have Moon Ying when she gets well and he finds a man who is fit to be her husband. It's my private opinion that there isn't such a one in Chinatown. And he can't have her a minute sooner."

I delivered this ultimatum to Big Sam. He had recovered his composure, and showed neither surprise nor disappointment when I reported the result of his mission.

"Am I to understand that this message is from Mr. Kendrick or Miss Kendrick?" he inquired blandly.

"From Miss Kendrick."

"Ah! I presumed that such a matter would be decided by the head of the household." His tone was even, and I looked to his face for the flavor of sarcasm that seemed the proper dressing for the words. But the bland, inscrutable mask of China gave back only the expression of polite attention.

"Her decision would be final in such a matter," I replied with something of resentment.

"Then," said Big Sam in his suave tone, "I trust that she understands the responsibility she is taking."

"I explained the importance you set upon it."

"Oh, I did not refer to my interests," said Big Sam, waving them aside as though they were of no moment.

"Then I am afraid I don't understand you," I said in perturbation.

"It is very simple. If the girl dies I can no longer answer for the conduct of the tongs. And if she dies in Mr. Kendrick's house–"

Big Sam left the sentence unfinished, and I asked:

"Do you mean that as a threat of an attack on Mr. Kendrick or his niece?"

"Oh, I do not threaten. I merely suggest. There are very bad men in these tongs, and they will be very angry. You can not be surprised if they put something of the blame for the girl's death on those who have her in charge. And angry men will go far for revenge."

"This is a serious threat," I said, with more alarm than I cared to show.

"I do not intend it as such," said Big Sam calmly. "I merely state circumstances."

"I am obliged to you for the warning," I said, "but I can only say that the considerations you mention would not move Miss Kendrick. She is convinced that to send the girl here is to sacrifice her life. Miss Kendrick has a woman's courage–the courage that defends the helpless–and I know it would be useless to appeal to her fears."

"Then," said Big Sam, with the air of one dismissing the subject, "there is nothing more to be said. What will happen will happen."

And with royal courtesy he bowed me out.

CHAPTER XIV
BARGAINING

"I thought you would come," said the hard, dry voice of Peter Bolton, as he leaned back in his chair and surveyed me with a sardonic smile.

"Why, yes," I replied cheerfully. "Jim Morgan told me that you wanted to see me, and I took chances on his telling the truth." As Jim Morgan was the prize-fighter who was at the head of Bolton's bureau of private information and defense, I had reason to assume that he spoke by authority.

Peter Bolton looked at me suspiciously, and then gave grudging acknowledgment of Morgan's agency.

"I never write," he grumbled. "You never know whose hands a letter will fall into."

"A very prudent rule," I returned.

He shook his head slowly, drew down the corners of his mouth, and rubbed his hands.

"Well, I suppose by this time you are about ready to take up with my offer,"

he said with a look of shrewd cunning.

"Your offer? I really didn't know that you had made one," I answered.

His cold blue eyes looked searchingly into my face for a minute. Then he said:

"You'll find it best to take up with my terms. I don't know what salary you're getting from Kendrick, but you're going to lose it."

"I didn't expect to keep it for ever. Did Mr. Kendrick tell you he was going to discharge me?"

"Tell me?" began Peter Bolton with a sarcastic leer. "He didn't have to. I've got better information than he can give. Your man Kendrick is going broke within the next thirty days, and he won't have any use for that fine herd of clerks he has been keeping."

As Peter Bolton evidently expected me to comment on this prophecy, I murmured that I was sorry to hear it.

"You needn't be," said he with an attempt to be amiable. "I'll take care of you."

"You are very kind," I said. "But how do you know that Wharton Kendrick is going under?"

"How do I know?" he returned with something of passion under his drawling tone. "Why, I know your man Kendrick like a book. I've known him for forty years. I've watched his business. I've watched him. Oh, he can fool you fellows with his smirking face, and his open-handed way of throwing money about. But I know that it's borrowed money, and the man who makes a show on borrowed money comes to the end of it some day, doesn't he?" Bolton ended querulously, as though he was making complaint against Wharton Kendrick for not having gone into bankruptcy long before.

"Oh, I think you are mistaken," I said. "Mr. Kendrick is known to be very rich."

"Reported to be very rich, you mean," he said in his most sarcastic drawl.

"Oh, there's no doubt about it," I returned warmly. I hoped to provoke him into saying more than he intended.

Peter Bolton took up the challenge.

"Why, young man," he cried, his voice rising into a cracked treble, "he owes money he can't pay. There's five hundred thousand dollars of his notes in that safe there," and he pointed to the solid front of the burglar-defying case. "They fall due pretty soon–some of 'em are due now–and he can't meet 'em."

"Do you mean to say that he has borrowed money of you?" I asked in amazement.

"I didn't say that," he replied cautiously. "But there are the notes. They're signed by Wharton Kendrick, and they call for five hundred thousand. When

they're presented he can't pay 'em, and I suppose I'll lose my money. I have bad luck about losing money." He shook his head ruefully, and drew down the corners of his mouth as sourly as though he saw the almshouse at the end of his road.

"Oh," I said hopefully, "you'll get it, I'm sure. Mr. Kendrick has a lot of property, and if he hasn't the money, he can borrow it."

This assurance was less pleasing than the prospect of loss that had soured his face but a minute before.

"I know what property he has, young man, a good, deal better than you do," he said sharply. "And there's more paper of his in the banks–I guess it's all of two hundred and fifty thousand, maybe more. Money's getting pretty tight now, pretty tight, and Kendrick's about at the end of his rope. When he goes down, you'll want a place to fall on." He looked at me ingratiatingly, and as I said nothing, he continued:

"Now, I want to see that you're taken care of. You shan't lose anything when the smash comes, if you just follow my instructions."

"It's very kind of you to take so much interest in me," I began with an echo of his own sarcasm, when he interrupted.

"Oh, I ain't such a hard man as some people say. I want to do you a good turn, and maybe you'll help me out. I'm a liberal employer to men who give me the right sort of service. Now you're trying to be a lawyer–"

I confessed that I hoped to do something in that line.

"And I've got a little legal business to attend to," he continued, "and I want to know what you'd consider a fair fee."

"Why," I said, "it depends, for one thing, on the work to be done, and for another on the amount of money we think the fellow has."

Peter Bolton looked at me in alarm.

"Oh, I have very little money, very little money," he said quickly.

"Except for such little items as five hundred thousand in Kendrick's notes, that you were just mentioning."

"Oh, them. Well, I'm expecting to lose that money, and a man who loses five hundred thousand feels pretty tight pinched."

"Now, as for the work to be done, if it were overlooking the Council of Nine and the anti-coolie agitation–"

"Anti-coolie agitation!" he exclaimed angrily. "I don't know anything about an anti-coolie agitation."

"Oh," said I apologetically, "I supposed you knew what Waldorf and Parks and Kearney were doing with the money you gave them. Didn't they tell you about it when they were here last night?"

"I don't know what you are talking about!" he cried angrily, but I read in his eyes anxiety and surprise at the accuracy of my information.

"Now if it were looking after them, I should want a larger fee than for looking after your plans with Big Sam."

A shade of gray passed over his face, and he held up one hand and gave me a malevolent look.

"Young Men talk a Good Deal of Nonsense," he said. "Now if you're through with your joke, we'll go back to talking Business." His sardonic voice showed that he was again thoroughly in command of himself, but I felt convinced that he was more eager than ever to secure my services. "Now what's your figure?"

"You haven't told me yet what you expect me to do."

He looked about cautiously, and then studied my face for a little before he replied.

"I'll tell you what it is," he said slowly. "You are in charge of Kendrick's campaign. I want you to stay in charge of it, but to run it according to My orders instead of according to His orders."

"How long do you think I could keep the job on those terms?" I asked. "You've known Mr. Kendrick forty or fifty years. You must have got the impression in that time that he isn't altogether a fool. How long do you think he would stand it? About long enough to kick me out of his office, wouldn't he?"

"He'll stand it long enough to suit My purpose," replied Peter Bolton, his sardonic smile tightening the corners of his mouth. "My orders will be His orders until the day comes that I am ready to put my hand on him." He reached out his long, bony fingers cautiously, and then brought his palm down on his desk with a thump as though he were catching a luckless fly. "When the time comes, an hour will be enough," he continued. "All I want you to do is to bring His orders to Me, before you carry them out. Then do as I tell you." His jaws closed with a snap, as though they were a trap, and Wharton Kendrick were between them.

"That sort of legal advice is worth a good deal of money," I said. "You can afford to pay well for it, for you'll make a big clean-up. I'll have to be paid well for it, for if it were to be found out, I could never do any more business in this town."

Peter Bolton gave me a shrewd look, as though he thought he was sure of me.

"I offered you Ten Thousand Dollars," he said, trying to make the sum sound very large, "but I won't stick at a thousand or two more. I'm not a close man with those I like–"

"It's worth a good deal more," I interrupted. He looked disappointed. Then he studied the desk, and appeared to be making up his mind to some great sacrifice.

"Well," he said slowly and grudgingly, "name your figure."

"I should think fifty thousand dollars was about right."

Peter Bolton gave a shudder, and pondered for a little. Then the shrewd look came again into his eyes, and he said:

"I'll be liberal, and give you more than it's worth. I'll pay you One Thousand Dollars a week for the next four weeks, and on the day that Wharton Kendrick makes his assignment, I'll give you Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars. I wouldn't do it for any one else, but I want to see that you don't lose anything."

I understood from this outburst of verbal generosity how much he overestimated my share in Wharton Kendrick's affairs.

"Well, I'll think it over and let you know," I said, rising to escape. The pressure of my indignation had reached the danger point, and I felt that if I sat there another minute my honest opinion would burst forth in words that would put an end to further hopes of getting any revelations out of him.

"You'd better take it now," he urged, with a shadow of disappointment on his face. "It's a good offer, and I might find some one else to take it up by tomorrow."

"Oh, I'll take the risk," I returned. "I have a monopoly on this business, and you know it, and I can take what time I please."

"Just as you like, young man, just as you like," he said in his sarcastic drawl. "But look out for your own interests. If you don't, I can tell you that Wharton Kendrick won't."

Before he could deliver another homily on the folly of honesty and the importance of pursuing the interests of Number One, I hastened out of the office, with the thought that I had penetrated far into the evil designs of Peter Bolton at the cost of a good deal of self-respect.

I soothed my indignant spirit with a walk that gave me time to assure myself that no spy was following me, and then bent my steps to Wharton Kendrick's offices to lay the case before my client. The accumulation of five hundred thousand dollars' worth of his notes in Peter Bolton's hands seemed to be a matter that might call for very serious consideration.

I found Wharton Kendrick in his private room in converse with General Wilson, and the discussion appeared to have become heated. General Wilson's face gleamed like a great carbuncle, and Wharton Kendrick's ruddy cheeks were ruddier than ever with signs of temper.

"You can't do it, Kendrick," General Wilson was saying, with a wave of the hand. "I've been over every foot of that land that isn't too soft to stand on, and I'll tell you that you can't put in any such works."

"I've had two first-class engineers go over it," replied Wharton Kendrick with equal positiveness, "and they say it can be done."

"Engineers–engineers! What are they worth?" snorted General Wilson scornfully. "I've got two eyes, and they are good enough engineers for me."

"You'll find 'em mighty expensive ones if you try to do business on their estimates," said Wharton Kendrick grimly. "Experts come high, but they are cheaper than your own guesswork. You can count it liberal of me to give you that information for nothing, for it cost me over two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"It's no use talking, Kendrick," said General Wilson positively. "When I'm right I know it, and all creation can't move me. That land of yours is no good to us unless we can get Bolton's piece with it. The two have got to be improved together or not at all. I'll tell you right now that the company won't pay any such price for your piece unless it can get the other, and Bolton won't sell just because he knows we've got to have it to make it a success."

"What's that?" exclaimed Kendrick, looking grave. "Bolton won't sell?"

General Wilson repeated his statement with characteristic vehemence.

"Did Bolton tell you that?"

"He couldn't have made it plainer if he had said it right out in so many words. He raised his price at the rate of a hundred thousand dollars a minute as soon as he heard that we wanted your land."

"Ah, yes. I remember now that Hampden was telling me something of the sort." Wharton Kendrick shook his head over the information, and then turned to me. "Was there something you wanted?"

"Well," I said, hesitating in some embarrassment at General Wilson's presence, "I had an interview with a friend of yours this afternoon."

The intonation in my voice was enough to give a hint of the identity of the friend, and he nodded his head in comprehension.

"Well, come up to the house to-night, and give me the whole story. It'll keep till then, won't it? By the way, what was that hullaballoo around the place last night? It waked me up, but I was too lazy to turn out and take a hand in it."

"Perhaps you heard my men when they caught three fellows climbing over the back fence, along in the early hours this morning. I don't think of anything else that happened."

"Well, upon my soul," gasped General Wilson, "isn't that enough? Good heavens, young man, you speak as though it was something a gentleman might expect as a common attention from his neighbors!"

"It's a first experience," said Wharton Kendrick with a jovial laugh. "But why didn't you tell me about it? If I'm an attraction to burglars, I think I'm entitled to know it."

"I didn't intend to make a secret of it; but you weren't in when I called this morning. Besides, I haven't run the thing down to its source and origin."

General Wilson's red face flamed with wonder and he stared at me from under his bushy brows.

"Are you trying to tell us that they weren't burglars?" He fired the question at me very much as if it were a revolver, with the professional air of a lawyer who has caught a witness trying to deceive.

"To be truthful, I was trying not to tell you," I replied. "But if you put it to me direct, I should say they were not."

"Fire away," said Kendrick, as I paused. "There's nothing about it that Wilson shouldn't hear."

"Well," I continued, "two of them got away, but the boys held on to the third, and hauled me out of bed at three o'clock this morning to find out what was to be done with him. He protested that he was an innocent citizen on his way home from an over-convivial evening. But as he couldn't explain what he was doing in your back yard at that time of night, we took him down to the police station. Instead of finding him in the jailbird class, he turned out to be a small politician out of a job. Just now he figures as sergeant-at-arms of the Twelfth Ward Anti-Coolie Club."

"The Anti-Coolie Club?" said Wharton Kendrick, wrinkling his brows. "I don't see what an anti-coolie club could want to do to me. I'm pretty well qualified for membership myself."

General Wilson's face flamed redder than before, in the frame of his aggressive side-whiskers, and he smote the desk with his fist.

"Good Lord, Kendrick! You don't mean to tell me that you take any stock in such riotous nonsense as these anti-coolie fellows here are getting off! Why, I was listening to one of them last night, and he roared like a bull-calf about the Chinese taking the bread out of the hands of the workmen, and split his lungs telling that the heathen must be driven into the sea. Why, sir, he made my blood boil, and if I was made provost-marshal of this town for one day, I'd bundle him and his crew down to the docks, and have them sailing over sea before night came."

Wharton Kendrick gave a good-humored laugh.

"My dear Wilson, I don't take much stock in the loud-mouthed orators, but I say, with them, that if we are to have the choice of a white or a yellow civilization in California, my vote goes to the white."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried General Wilson, thumping the desk once more. "Why, my dear sir, you challenge the fundamental principles of this government when you say we must shut out these men merely because their skins are yellow. Why, sir, it is to our advantage, not to our detriment, that they work for small wages. The lower their wages, the less money they take out of the country, and when they go home they leave behind them the great works they have accomplished. God has given you illimitable resources, and you are crying out for hands to develop them, and here you are, ready to shut out the most plentiful and

cheapest supply of labor that exists on the face of the green earth. It's against business principles and it's against the principles of humanity, and you can never do it, sir–never."

"Oh, fudge, Wilson, you don't know anything about the problem, and yet you come here telling us old Californians what we ought to think about it. I'll admit anything you say in favor of the coolies. They're industrious and faithful and cheap; but they're more than that. The Chinese can drive us out of any line they want to take up. I've seen that done too many times to doubt it any longer."

"Well, if they can do it, why shouldn't they?" cried General Wilson. "Survival of the fittest–isn't that the law of nature? If the white race can't stand the competition, let it perish. But it won't perish. It'll manufacture things to sell to the Chinese, and trade will go on whether the white or the yellow man settles this coast."

"That may be all right for you fellows in the East; but even there you'll be hit. Just ask yourself which would be more profitable as customers, a million Chinese who spend ten cents a day on their supplies, or a million whites who spend a dollar?"

"Sophistry, sophistry, Kendrick!" puffed the general, apparently impressed by the illustration. "But why go after the Chinese alone? I was in Castle Garden a month ago, and the fellows they let through there are every whit as un-American as the Chinese. Why don't you holler about them?"

"Why," said Kendrick, "we're hollering about the pigs in our corn. You're the fellows to look out for the other side of the continent."

"Why don't we try to keep them out?" cried General Wilson. "Why, it's because we've got to have cheap labor for our mines and mills and railroads. We need it just as we need machinery, and we've got to take the disadvantages with the benefits, and no loud-mouthed agitator can deprive us of the right to get our workmen in the cheapest market. It's the law of trade, the fundamental principle at the bottom of political economy–the science on which the development of civilization must depend–"

General Wilson's oration was suddenly cut short by an outburst of sound from the street below, and with common instinct we hastened to the window to view the cause of the hubbub. On the pavement was a crowd of five or six hundred men, moving slowly up California Street, circling with cries of anger or derision about some indistinguishable center of attraction. The outer fringe of the crowd was constantly breaking into sprays of individuals who ran forward to secure a position in front, while those behind tried to leap on the shoulders of those before them, and the center was an effervescent mass of arms, heads and clubs.

The nucleus of disturbance, I was at last able to make out, was composed

of two policemen dragging a hatless man between them.

"Oh," said Wharton Kendrick, "it's nothing worse than an attempt to lynch some fellow who's been caught at his crime. I suppose he's killed a woman, or something of the sort. But the police will get him to prison easily enough. There's never nerve enough in one of these crowds to take such a fellow and hang him."

"They ought to string 'em up on the spot," snapped General Wilson. Then repenting suddenly of this unprofessional exclamation, he added: "But the majesty of the law must be upheld. It is the shield of the innocent and the sword of the righteous."

"Um-m, yes, I suppose so," said Kendrick doubtingly. "But all this doesn't settle that matter of the tule tract. I'll see you to-night, Hampden. The general and I must talk business now."

CHAPTER XV
A RIPPLE OF TROUBLE

The brawling of many voices filled the air as I ran down the stairs, spurred by curiosity and by a vague, subconscious misgiving that the event was of more than impersonal interest. When I reached the entrance the circling crowd was halted in a mass of struggling men, and the hoarse roar that issued from it vibrated with the indefinable yet definite thrill of savage anger. Police whistles were blowing, men were running from all directions to get sight of the struggle, blows given and taken could be heard amid sounds of curses and exclamations of pain, and the centers of disturbance became pyramids of squirming, struggling mankind.

As I reached the street, Parks burst out of the crowd, his hat gone, his long hair tumbled in aggressive disorder, his face flushed, and his clothing bearing evidences of his violent passage through the mob. Behind him came Seabert, whom I knew for a member of the Council of Nine. Between them they dragged and pushed an old man, white-faced, frightened, who looked in helpless amazement on the turbulence about him. The old man's face stirred vague reminiscence of the familiar, but for the moment I could not trace these promptings of memory to their source.

"Here!" cried Parks, as they burst out of the struggling circle and flung their burden into the hands of a knot of men who stood by an express-wagon near at hand, "get him down to Number Two."

As the old man was sent staggering forward, helpless, trembling, perplexed, the men circled around him, lifted him in their arms, and in a moment had climbed into the wagon and were going on a gallop down California Street.

It had all been done in the time I had taken to pass from the door of the office building to the edge of the sidewalk. I pushed into the roadway and hailed Parks by name. He had snatched a hat from one of the men who climbed into the wagon, and was hastily removing the signs of conflict from his dress.

"What's the matter here?" I cried, when I saw that he recognized me.

"Matter!" he cried. "Matter enough! There has been an interference with the natural right of a man to present his grievance to his fellow-man. It has been properly resented."

"I don't understand you," I said. "Who was the old man you rescued from the mob?"

Parks looked at me in surprise. "Rescued from the mob!" he exclaimed. "Why, the mob–but wait a minute, and I'll tell you about it."

He turned as he spoke.

"Stop that fighting!" he shouted. And at his word a score of men lent their efforts to the task of separating the struggling, wrestling groups, raising the prostrate and quieting the violent.

The efforts of the peacemakers were signally assisted by the sudden appearance of a squad of police coming on the run around the corner from Montgomery Street. As the guardians of order were strong of limb, and were armed with heavy clubs, they had exemplary success in quieting the refractory, and satisfying those whose appetite for fighting was still unsated.

At the sight of the police, Parks took me by the arm and drew me quietly down the block and around the corner into Sansome Street.

"What was the trouble about, and who was the old man?" I asked.

"Why, that was Merwin," said Parks in a tone of surprise. "You ought to recollect him."

At the name I remembered the quiet, dreamy old man of my visit to the House of Blazes, and recalled the history of his life-wreck which was wrapped up in the volumes of legal lore that went under the title of Merwin versus Bolton.

"What had Merwin been doing to get the mob after him?" I asked.

"To get the mob after him!" exclaimed Parks in great indignation. "To get the police after him, you mean."

"The police!" I exclaimed in my turn. "Oh, he was the man under arrest, then?"

"It was an outrage of arbitrary power," said Parks, flushing angrily, "and the people have shown what they think of it. He has been taken out of the hands of those petty tyrants, and it will be a long time before he falls into them again."

"What was the charge?" I asked, at a loss to imagine what crime could have been committed by this inoffensive wreck of a man.

"He was arrested," said Parks indignantly, "for exercising the right of free speech."

"Free speech is rather an elastic term," I said. "What was he talking about?"

"The only thing he knows anything about," said Parks. "That's his case."

"Well, it is a subject that might call out rather strong language, but I don't see just how that could bring him afoul of the police."

"Sir," cried Parks, "it could happen only through the exercise of arbitrary power. The point of the thing is that the Supreme Court this afternoon handed down its sixth decision in his suit against Bolton. The judgment against Bolton is reversed, and the case sent back for a new trial."

"What a shame!" I said, remembering the justice of Merwin's claim, the ruin of his life, and his long fight against the wealth and malignity of Peter Bolton.

"It is outrageous!" exclaimed Parks vehemently; "as scandalous as the open sale of justice to the highest bidder. Those men should be dragged from the bench, and driven through the streets in a cart, with their price for rendering such a judgment placarded on their backs. The judges were bought and justice was sold."

"No, no," I protested. "The men on the bench may be wrong-headed, small-minded, pettifogging, but not corrupt–believe me, not corrupt."

Parks looked at me with a pitying shake of his head.

"You are welcome to your opinion," he said, "but it isn't mine. However, it doesn't matter. The court has driven another nail in the coffin of the present social order."

"But how did this decision get Merwin into the hands of the police? Did he go around to the courtrooms and tell the justices what he thought of them?"

"No, indeed!" said Parks indignantly, "though I shouldn't have blamed him if he had. He got up at our water-front meeting and, for the first time since I've known him, made a speech. It came hot from his tongue, too, telling the plain story of his case to his fellow-citizens. And what did the police do? Why, they arrested him for trying to incite a riot!"

Parks paused as though waiting for my opinion on this exercise of police power.

"Well," I admitted, "the plain story of the case of Merwin against Bolton might very well sound like an attempt to stir the mob to violence."

"It makes my blood boil, Hampden," cried Parks. "It's the stuff that revolutions are made of. The hirelings of Nob Hill know it, and that is why they trampled on the liberties of speech in the attempt to shut the mouth of the injured man."

"Go on with your story. What happened after he was arrested?"

"Why, I wasn't there, so I don't know exactly how it was. But when Merwin was dragged off the cart, one of the boys ran over to headquarters with the news. As soon as I heard what was being done, I hurried over here with such men as I could get together. We found a big crowd following the two policemen who were dragging Merwin between them, but the men didn't know how to do anything but holler and ba-a. So I passed around the word that Merwin was to be taken out of the hands of the police. The crowd was ready to follow if any one would take the lead; so when I gave the signal the police were tumbled over in just one minute by the clock, we hustled our man to the wagon, and now I've had Merwin taken to a safe place."

"My sympathies are with Merwin," I said, "but this rescue is a more serious matter than the arrest. It is resistance to the constituted authority of the law."

"The constituted authority of the law!" said Parks contemptuously. "That's not the last resistance that will be roused against its tyranny and injustice. The day is at hand, sir, when this constituted authority of the law, as you call it, will be overthrown and scattered as easily as it was overturned a few minutes ago in the persons of its petty tyrants. Then a new and better authority will rise, founded on the will of the people, responsive to the people's needs, and protecting the people's interests."

Parks had begun in a low tone of voice, as befitted one who had reasons for avoiding notice; but with his closing words he was once more the orator and prophet of the agitators, and I gave him a word of caution to save his breath for a less dangerous occasion. I saw nothing to be gained by arguing with him the folly of his plans of revolution. I could not hope to turn him from his purposes, and would only shut myself out from the chance of getting further information from him. Therefore I suppressed the remonstrance and advice that rose to my lips, and asked instead how the movement was progressing.

"Splendidly," replied Parks, with an enthusiastic shake of his head. "The cause of the people is advancing by leaps and bounds. Men are awakening to their rights, and responding to the efforts for their betterment. Our organization has gone into every district in the city. By to-morrow we shall be five thousand strong. Next week we extend our propaganda outside of San Francisco, and shall proceed to establish branches in every town in the state. To-night we invade the stronghold of aristocracy. At eight o'clock we hold a meeting on Nob Hill, at the corner of California and Mason Streets, to tell the nabobs what we think of them."

We had reached the corner of Market and Sansome Streets and had halted for a little, when a hot and breathless man overtook us, and tapped Parks on the shoulder. For an instant the enthusiast thought that he was under arrest, for he whirled about with a fierce and determined look. If the man had been a policeman

he would have had a difficult prisoner to handle. But there was no hostile intent in his face, and a look of recognition relaxed the tense lines of determination about Parks' mouth and eyes as he caught sight of him.

"Egbert and Baumgartner are arrested," whispered the man in gasps; and he drew Parks aside.

There was a hurried conversation of which I caught but a word now and then, and I had time to wonder whether Parks would not presently share the fate of the two men he was now called upon to aid. It was not unlikely that a man of such conspicuous appearance had been recognized by the officers when Merwin had been snatched from their grasp. After a minute of whispered conversation, Parks turned to me, his face lighted with decision and excitement.

"I must leave you, Hampden," he said. "Let me see you at the meeting on Nob Hill to-night. The contest between plutocracy and the people may begin earlier than we have expected."

And with these significant words he set off briskly in the direction of the House of Blazes.

I digested Parks' hints with my dinner, and, getting no light from them, I took my way to Wharton Kendrick's house to deliver the postponed budget of information gained from my visit to Peter Bolton.

The sun had just set upon the long July day, and the bright afterglow still forbade the use of lamps. And in the misgiving that I should come upon my client before he had finished his dinner, I was about to continue my stroll past the house when I saw the door open and some one walk in. As the door remained hospitably ajar, I changed my intention and climbed the steps. Before I reached the landing I heard an inner door close, and a moment later the voice of Miss Kendrick asked:

"Well, what do you want?"

"You Miss Kenlick?" came the reply, with an unmistakable Chinese intonation.

"Yes, I am Miss Kendrick. What do you want of me?"

"You sabby China gell–nice li'l China gell?" The voice of the Chinaman was pitched in a fawning tone, offensive in the obsequiousness of its effort to win the confidence of the hearer.

At the words I was startled with the thought that Big Sam had come to survey for himself the situation of Moon Ying with a possible view to her recapture. I was in two minds about my duty in the matter. Had I obeyed my first impulse I should have walked in and expressed my opinion of the attempt in unceremonious terms. But second thought suggested that Miss Kendrick might prefer to manage the affair without interference. A sudden wish to hear her match her wits against the diplomacy of the Oriental proved irresistible, and I determined

to await an apparent need for intervention. Her first words reassured me of her ability to handle the situation.

"No," she replied calmly, with just the suspicion of a tremble in her voice, "we don't want any Chinese girl."

"No–you sabby gell?" insisted the Chinese voice, with its fawning emphasis. "Nice li'l China gell?"

If this was Big Sam, I should be compelled to compliment him on a marvelous control of his vocalization; and in curiosity to see if his bodily disguise was as complete as that of his voice, I peeped about the edge of the door till I caught sight of the oriental figure. My first glimpse of the man assured me that he was not Big Sam. He was small and bent, and gave an inimitable appearance of age. Whatever his capacity for masquerade, Big Sam could not have reduced his bulky form to this figure. The man turned his head a little, and I saw a wizened face, embellished with a mustache of coarse white hair, and scant chin-whiskers that might have belonged to an anemic billy-goat.

Miss Kendrick's face was pale, but its firm expression was an index to her resolve to save Moon Ying from this creature at any cost.

"No," she repeated sharply, "we don't want a Chinese girl–or boy either. We never hire them. You go now." And with a gesture to the man-servant who stood beside her, she turned and was gone without a glance in my direction.

The man-servant, in eager obedience to Miss Kendrick's hint, took the Chinaman by the shoulders, and amid protesting exclamations of "Wha' fo'? Wha' fo'?" ran him out of the hall, and started him down the steps, his speeding word to the departing guest taking the form of: "Get out of here, John, and if you come back I'll kick you out."

Then suddenly catching sight of me, he recovered his breath and his dignity with a sudden effort.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Hampden," he gasped. "I didn't know you was here. Mr. Kendrick is just done dinner. He's gone to his smoking-room. He said if you came I was to show you right in." And with a glance to see that the Chinaman had reached the sidewalk, he shut the door and led the way to the master of the house.

I followed him mechanically, but my thoughts were far from the errand of Peter Bolton's schemes that had brought me hither. An insistent question ran through my mind in endless variations, but when reduced to words it took this

form: "Where have I seen the face of the old Chinaman before?"

CHAPTER XVI
LAYING DOWN THE LAW

Wharton Kendrick sat at his ease in smoking-jacket and slippers, but his brow was wrinkled with thought. The cigar that he held between his teeth gave evidence of his discomposure of mind, for it was unlighted, and one end of it had been reduced to the semblance of a cud. I had just delivered to him a conscientious account of my interview with Peter Bolton, and now observed the perturbant reflections that it had stirred.

"Was that all you could get out of the old rascal?" he said after an interval of silence.

"Why, yes," I replied. "I thought it was a pretty good afternoon's work; and indeed I am surprised that he told me so much."

"Oh, thunder, Hampden, you're as easily taken in as the rest of 'em. Didn't I tell you that Peter Bolton is never in the place you're looking for him?"

"Why," I argued, somewhat piqued at this reception of my budget of information, "I thought he told a good deal about his plans–in fact, showed himself a garrulous old foozle instead of the shrewd fox you'd told me about."

"My dear boy," said Wharton Kendrick with a pitying smile, "I'm grateful for your zeal, but the only thing he exposed was his desire to get you to betray me, and I might have guessed that without his telling it."

"But that half-million of notes–"

"Doesn't it strike you, Hampden, that, as a business man, I might be expected to know something about the notes outstanding against me? You're right about one thing: I didn't know they had fallen into Bolton's hands, and I'll have a score to settle with the men who sold 'em to him. But I've got every piece of my paper recorded up here," and he tapped his forehead, "and I'll be prepared to take care of it as it falls due."

"Well," I said ruefully, "I'm just one more victim of misplaced confidence in Peter Bolton."

"Oh, you needn't feel ashamed of that, my boy," said Kendrick kindly. "Your time wasn't wasted. It's worth while to know that those notes are in the hands of an enemy. But that's a mere detail. Now if he had told you how he expects to

keep me from meeting them when due–"

Wharton Kendrick left his sentence suspended in the air, while he chewed his cigar for a minute or two.

"After all, Hampden," he continued, "I suspect he has pushed those notes forward to draw away attention from his real point of attack. He's figured on the possibility that you would bring me every word, and has found something to gain out of it, whether your final decision is to stand by me or to take up his offer. Now, about that offer? Are you prepared to accept his twenty-nine thousand for that trifling service he wants?"

"If I get it, I'll go halves with you when you're broke," I replied with an attempt at lightness that was far from a success. "But to tell you the truth, I don't like to discuss the thing, even in joke. It makes my gorge rise to hear a hint that I could take money for betraying you."

"That's Dick Hampden's son," he returned, his face softening into a smile. "I could hear your father speaking then. But if you think I am worrying about your loyalty, just set your mind at rest."

I thanked him for his certificate of confidence, and he continued:

"You don't have to tell me that Bolton isn't the most agreeable company, but I'll be much obliged if you'll cultivate his acquaintance a little further."

"Do you mean that you want me to pretend to accept his offer? I couldn't do that. I couldn't take his money."

"Do you think you would get it?"

"He offered a thousand dollars a week. I'd get that as long as the job lasted."

"Well, fix it up to suit yourself. But if you can find some way to keep him talking, you may get the one word that will join the different ends of his scheme together. Here we have his dealings with Big Sam and the Council of Nine, and his battery of notes ready to fire at me. A little more, and we may see his whole plan. Once I get that, I'll fix a scheme to scoop his pile out from under him so quick that he'll think an earthquake has struck him." And with this hint he excused me for the night.

As I went out into the big hall, I looked regretfully at the library door, with a mental vision of the pleasure of spending an evening in converse with Miss Kendrick setting my pulses to beating. But with Spartan resolve, I crushed down my emotions with the notion that it was my duty to attend the Nob Hill meeting of the agitators.

"Oh, you aren't going without so much as saying 'How is Moon Ying?' are you?" said a piquant voice; and at the words, I turned to see Miss Kendrick coming down the stairs. Her light dress and graceful motions suggested the vision of a fairy floating down from some celestial region with the benevolent purpose of cheering the life of mortals–a purpose that met my instant and hearty approval.

At the sound of her voice, the reasons that had drawn me toward the Nob Hill meeting were whisked away like so many scraps of paper before the summer breeze, and I stammered out some clumsy expression of my pleasure in remaining.

"Well," said Miss Kendrick, "I've heard that appearances are deceptive, and now I'm sure of it. You were a very good imitation of a man planning an escape." And she led the way into the library.

"There was something in the appearance," I said. "I was wishing to escape from the duty of going down town."

"Oh, if it's a matter of duty, I shouldn't think of interfering."

"I can't see now why I thought it so," I returned, "but I was suspecting there might be the chance of a fight."

"Well, if there's to be any fighting," said Miss Kendrick in some alarm, "I'll give you a bit of advice, and that is to keep out of it."

"There's to be a meeting of the anti-Chinese clubs to-night up by the Stanford-Hopkins houses, and it may start a riot," I explained. "I didn't know but I ought to go to it."

"The curiosity of these men!" she sighed. "And they talk of the inquisitiveness of women. Why, you might have fifty riots, and you'd never see me going near one of them–not if I heard of it beforehand."

"I hope not. But it isn't altogether curiosity that would lead me to attend."

"You don't mean that you have any crazy idea of trying to stop the fighting if it begins?"

"Well, no."

"Then you just leave the business of the police to the police," she said. "I'm beginning to believe that you need a guardian."

"I believe so, too," I replied, with the thought that I saw a very desirable person for the place. I was tempted to say as much, but Miss Kendrick responded hastily:

"I wouldn't envy him his position." Then she added: "I'm not sorry I interrupted you in your foolishness, but I shouldn't have done so if I hadn't wanted to take counsel with you."

I wished she had chosen a more complimentary way of putting it, but professed myself all readiness to listen.

"There was a Chinaman here a little while ago," she began, and then she described in detail her interview with the little old man in the hall.

As she told her tale my thoughts were busy with the insistent question–where had I seen the Chinaman before?

"Now, what does that mean?" she demanded, when her tale was done.

As she asked the question the problem was solved. A sudden picture flashed

into my mind of the old Chinaman who had posed as the girl's father after she had been stolen.

"It means nothing, I think–some peddler with silk handkerchiefs to sell, perhaps," I replied, with an effort to put a careless indifference into my voice.

"You think nothing of the kind," said Miss Kendrick. "I don't see why you treat me like a child. I'm not a child, and I am wishing that you would discover it." She spoke with a little of wistfulness in her voice and manner. "Tell me honestly what you think about the visit of the Chinaman?" she said pleadingly.

I reflected a minute on her request, and she broke forth in rapid words:

"Do you think, if I am afraid, that you can make me confident by telling me that the dark won't bite me? Perhaps I am afraid–sometimes I do feel horribly scared–but don't you think I counted all the dangers before I made you bring poor little Moon Ying? There's one thing I'm more afraid of than all the rest of things put together, and that is the unknown thing. Let me know of a danger, and I'll be scared, and face it. But when I know it's there, and don't know what it is–that's the time I want to run. Now I saw in your face that you knew, or thought you knew, and were afraid. Please tell me what it is that you think."

She looked into my eyes with such a mixture of pleading and command that my reluctance to confide my fears to her melted away.

"The man," I replied, "was beyond doubt the old pirate who had Moon Ying in charge for the Hop Sing Tong."

"And you think he was on a reconnoitering expedition for his wicked society?"

"I have no doubt of it."

She considered the matter with a grave face and downcast eyes, and I regretted that I had confided my fears to her so bluntly. Then she asked:

"Do you think the highbinders will come here?"

"No, I don't. I do not believe there is courage enough in all the tongs in Chinatown to attack this house. They have a pretty clear idea of the sort of vengeance that would be taken on them, if they tried such a thing. The burning of Los Angeles' Chinatown was a lesson that they will remember a long time."

"Do you think it possible that your wicked tongsters might hire some white men to do what they don't dare do themselves?"

Miss Kendrick spoke in such tone that I demanded sharply:

"What put that idea into your head?"

"I suppose I ought to have told you at first, but the fact is that it's just this minute I've put two and two together and made five out of them. Now this is the way of it: A little while before the old Chinaman was here, a white man came to the back door and asked for something to eat. The cook set out some victuals for him, but he didn't seem to have the appetite of a starving man. What he did

have was a consuming curiosity about the family. After a good many questions, he asked if there were any Chinese about the place. The cook said 'No,' and then he asked if there wasn't a Chinese girl here. I can't get out of the cook just what she did tell him, but I have no doubt he had the whole story out of her. I'm sure the fellow knows this minute just what room the girl is in, and who waits on her, and what she has for dinner, and how many people are about the place, and whatever else he wanted to find out."

I balanced my suspicions between the possibility that the fellow was a spy for the tongs, and the chance that he was an agent of the anti-coolie clubs, and then asked for a description of him.

"Well," said Miss Kendrick, "he's a most remarkable-looking creature, and I'm sure you ought to have no difficulty in finding him. I asked three of the servants who saw him, and took down their descriptions, and all you have to do is to look for a tall, short, middle-sized young man, with yellowish, brown, black hair, and black and blue (or possibly green) eyes, with and without a mustache, wearing a slouch derby hat, and dressed in dark, light-colored clothes–and then you'll have the man."

"I'm sure the police ought to be able to lay their hands on him at once," I said. "But it's no matter. I can hardly imagine the tongs hiring a gang of burglars to steal the girl. However, I'll have men enough around here to give them other things to think about if they come near the house."

"Well, then, I shall sleep easier," said Miss Kendrick with a sigh of relief. "It's a comfort to one's mind to know that there's some one looking after your safety. It's not strong-minded, but it's much more satisfying than having the responsibility one's self." She paid this tribute to the protecting hand of man with an infinitely charming condescension, and then at a sound from without changed her tone to earnest admonition: "And now I hear Mercy coming, and you're not to say a word of worriments."

"Mum's the word," I replied, pleased to enter into the bonds of conspiracy; and a moment later Miss Fillmore entered, breathless, followed by Mr. Baldwin clothed in supercilious indignation.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Miss Kendrick, starting up impulsively, and embracing Miss Fillmore.

"Oh, my dear," returned her friend in a disturbed voice, "it's nothing much, I think–" She hesitated in evident unwillingness to alarm her hostess, but Mr. Baldwin's indignation was repressed by no such consideration.

"It's another demonstration by Mr. Hampden's friends," he said with something of heat in his cold cynical voice. "That blatherskite Kearney has led a crowd of hoodlums up Nob Hill, and it looks as though there would be wild times before the night is over. We passed a gang of the riffraff a few minutes ago, and they

were headed up California Street, yelling like wild Indians about burning down the Stanford and Hopkins places. It's a fine pass that this toleration of the worst elements has brought us to. There's just one way to deal with those fellows, and that's to call out the troops and mow them down. If we were under a city government that had the first notion of protecting life and property, it would have had the whole gang in jail without waiting for murder and arson."

With this threat in the air, the Nob Hill meeting became a matter of immediate interest. If a riot should start at that point, it might be followed by an attack on the Van Ness Avenue district, and it evidently behooved me to judge for myself the temper and designs of the crowd.

"If my friends are engaged in any such desperate business, I'm afraid it's my duty to keep them from getting any further into mischief," I said; "so I'll bid you a good evening."

"You don't mean you are going out into that mob, do you?" cried Miss Kendrick.

"That is my present purpose," I replied with some exultation at the anxiety betrayed in her tone and look.

"Well, I'm sure you're old enough to know better, but I see you are an obstinate man-creature, and it's no use to say anything to you. But when you get there, I hope you'll remember that you're not a regiment of soldiers, and leave the business of the police to the police."

"Send word if you're arrested," said Mr. Baldwin scornfully, "and I'll see what can be done about bail."

I bowed my thanks, and went out into the hall where I found Miss Fillmore awaiting me.

"Do you think Mr. Parks is in that mob?" she asked, with a charming air of embarrassment.

"I don't doubt it," I replied.

"He is so impulsive," she said. "I saw him this afternoon, and he was very much excited over something that happened to Mr. Merwin. I am very much afraid he will let his feelings run away with him to-night."

There was a depth of anxiety in her eyes that Parks ought to have been proud to inspire, and even with the call of conflict urging me to be gone, I spoke a few words of comfort, and reflected on the mysteries of attraction that should draw together the gentle Mercy and the impassioned leader of revolt against society.

"If you find him to-night, try to restrain him," she pleaded. "It is his good heart–his sympathy with the suffering–that brings him into these troubles."

"I shall do all I can," I promised.

Outside the house, I stopped for a few minutes to see that my watchmen

were on duty, and to learn if they had observed any signs of trouble.

"No," said Andrews, the head watchman, "there's been nothing worse than a gang of hoodlums going up toward Nob Hill, and yelling like Comanches. But one of 'em makes me a bit suspicious, for as he passes, he says, 'That's the house.' I says to myself that there's a chance he means this one, so I've cautioned the boys to be wide awake."

"How many are on duty to-night?"

"Four besides myself–Reardon and Selfridge, Hunt and Carr."

"Well, get two more to stand watch with you to-morrow night, and till further orders." And with Andrews' assurance that he knew two trustworthy men for the place, I ran down the steps and hastened up the street toward Nob Hill.

As I reached the plateau, the meeting appeared to have resolved itself into small groups, that now scattered, now coalesced, and then scattered again, with shouts and cries of men. There were roars of anger followed by jeers, and shouted orders, and the elements of disorder circled hither and thither in aimless dispersion. Hoodlums elbowed me from the sidewalk. A policeman caught me by the arm and whirled me around with a curt order to "Git out of this now," and I recognized that the forces of law and order had replied to the challenge of the agitators.

I pressed my way forward, by avoiding the scattered police, and at last reached the corner of Mason and California Streets by the Hopkins mansion. There was still a mob of a thousand or more, struggling about a shouting group, thinning from moment to moment, under the efforts of the police.

I caught a glimpse of Parks, with mouth open and fist raised. Then he disappeared; a company of police appeared in the speaker's place, and the mob melted away with marvelous rapidity. The police formed in company front, swept along the block, and then with a right-about-face returned, and broke up into twos and threes in chase of groups of disorder.

As the upper block was nearly cleared, I caught sight of a policeman with whom I had a nodding acquaintance.

"You've got a handful of trouble to-night," I said, as he paused for breath.

"Throuble by the armful," he said indignantly. "That blatherskite Kearney ought to be in the tanks, with all that gang of fish-horn shouters that follows him. He's making us more throuble than all the haythin divils between Goat Island and Washerwoman's Bay, and that's not sayin' a little."

"I didn't get here in time to hear what he said."

The policeman gave an indignant snort, and paused to order a trio of young men to "git home and out of here now."

"Well," he said, turning to me again, "you needn't lose slape for what you've missed. He told that crowd of howling hoodlums that these houses here was built

with the loot squeezed out of their pockets, whin hiven knows that they wouldn't do enough wurruk in tin thousand years to build wan side of that fince. Thin he says to 'em, 'What's the matter wid yez is thot the railroad hires the haythins instead of puttin' youse on the job'–as if those hoods would lave town and lift pick and shovel on the grade to save their sowls from the Ould Wan himself. An' at last he says, 'I give the leprous corporation jist thirty days to fire their haythin shovelers, an' if they don't, I'll lade yez up here to hang Stanford and Crocker out of their own windows, an' burn their houses on top of thim.' Thin some drunken hood yells, 'Hang 'em now!' An' with that we clubs 'em good and hard. Now we've got 'em on the run, an' we've got ordhers to keep 'em on the run till they've had enough."

"Was Kearney arrested?" I asked.

"I think not, sor, but some of the gang with him was."

"Is there any danger of an attack on the houses on Van Ness Avenue?"

"It don't look so, sor. The hoodlums don't seem to be looking above wash-houses now, an' most of thim are ready to hunt their holes. Well, good night to ye, sor. I must head off this gang here." And he ran up Mason Street flourishing his club in chase of a dozen venturesome boys.

CHAPTER XVII
BIG SAM'S WARNING

With the deliquescence of the elements of disorder, I was relieved of the immediate fear of danger to Wharton Kendrick's place, and my thoughts recurred to Parks. From his sudden disappearance at the rush of the police, I could scarce doubt that he was under arrest, and the remembrance of Mercy's anxious face turned my steps toward the Old City Hall to learn the extent of his troubles, and the chances of securing his release.

Kearny Street was thronged with groups of excited men, and I approached the old municipal building through a surging mob that was kept in motion by the police.

"They've got Kearney in there!" cried a frenzied follower of the agitators, pointing to the Old City Hall. "Let's take him out."

"No, they haven't!" called another. "They didn't dare arrest him."

A policeman brought down a club impartially on the head of the inciter of

disorder and the friend of peace, with gruff orders to "Move on!" And through many difficulties I made my way to the door on Merchant Street that opened to the City Prison. The entrance was well guarded by several stout policemen, but my card secured admission. At the inner gate, however, I was halted for a heart-searching catechism as to my profession, standing, and present purposes; but at last the gate swung open, and I stood by the desk sergeant, and questioned him in regard to the arrested.

A dozen men were being searched, and their torn clothing and hard faces testified to the rough treatment they had received–and earned.

"Parks?" said the desk sergeant, running his finger down his list. "He isn't booked under that name. Look at Cell Three, and see if you find him there." He pointed across the passage where a crowd of prisoners was herded behind bars, like wild animals in the cages at a menagerie. In the cage to which he pointed, a score of rough men had been thrust, and were glaring out fiercely or sullenly according to their nature. Parks was not among them, and I was turning away with a sigh of relief, when I heard my name called with unmistakable Chinese intonation.

"Misseh Hampden!" called the voice once more, and I turned to an adjoining cage to see a mixed crowd of Chinese and whites seated on a bench in sullen dejection. Then the Chinaman nearest me rose and came to the bars, and I recognized the smiling Kwan Luey.

"Why, Kwan Luey!" I exclaimed. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, p'liceman say catch-em play fan-tan my place–bling-em jail–all same fool–bling Kwan Luey."

I recalled that keeping a gambling game was supposed to be a part of Kwan Luey's multifarious activities, and expressed my hope that this would be a warning to him.

"Nev' mind," said Kwan Luey cheerfully. "Plitty soon my cousin him come bling bail–one hund' dollah fo' me–ten dollah piecee fo' them." And Kwan Luey smiled with pride at the distinction recognized in the disparity of the price of freedom. "You catch-em letteh all same I lite-em?"

"I think I kept the letter," I said, remembering the tangled verbiage that had called me to his store to receive Big Sam's money under the disguise of a prize in the lottery, and wondering what he could want with it.

"No–no," he protested, catching the idea in my mind. "I lite-em new letteh. You no get-em?"

"No."

Kwan Luey looked disappointed.

"Maybe you likee see Big Sam, eh?" he said with an insinuating air.

"Oh, Big Sam wants to see me, does he?"

"You likee see Big Sam," repeated Kwan Luey with the air of one stating a recognized fact. "Maybe him show you how pick plenty good ticket, eh?"

"Does he want to see me to-night?"

"I no know–him no say. Too many p'lice–too many hoodlum–maybe you no likee," said Kwan Luey, with a judicial view of the obstacles to an interview with the King of Chinatown.

I decided that I would take the chances, though it was approaching midnight, when my attention was attracted by the voice of Parks, and I turned to see him at the desk. My heart sank with the thought of Mercy's disappointment, when it was buoyed up once more by the discovery that he was not in custody. Instead of standing there a prisoner, he was piling little stacks of gold before the desk sergeant, and I divined that he was producing bail for those followers who had been so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of the police. As he shoved the last of the stacks across the desk and took the receipt that was offered him, he caught sight of me.

"What brings you here?" he cried in surprise.

"I have come, like yourself, on an errand of mercy. But I am the one who has the greater reason to be surprised." I marveled at his rashness in daring to enter the prison, and marveled still more that he was not put under arrest where he stood. Then I reflected that it was most unlikely that the policemen on guard at the prison had seen him at the Nob Hill meeting or at the rescue of Merwin; and if his description was on the books it was not definite enough to serve for identification.

"By heavens! They call this law!" he cried, waving his hand around at the prison. "Do you know, sir, that they have set Baumgartner's bail at five hundred dollars, and threaten to rearrest him as he sets foot out of prison, if I secure his release with that sum!"

"Then I think you had better save your five hundred," I replied.

"You can take it coolly, Hampden, but I can't. It makes my blood boil. If I had my way, I'd be here taking these men out with ax and sledge, instead of with gold. I'd have done it anyhow if they had had the courage to arrest Kearney. They didn't dare!" And he looked threateningly around the prison, and then counted the members of his band for whom the authorities had accepted bail. "Pass out," he said to them, and as he brought up the rear of his party, I followed him. They were of the typical hoodlum class, their insolence curbed for the moment by the shadow of the prison, and they slouched with resentful fear from the watchful eyes of the police. One figure among them stirred a dormant memory, and then, as the band scattered in the street, I recalled to mind the spy whose gift of an overcoat had opened the door of the fates. He was gone before I could speak, and I turned to Parks.

"How did you escape arrest?" I asked.

"Escape!" cried Parks. "I courted arrest, but the coward hounds of aristocracy had not the courage to lay hands on any of the leaders. They know as well as I that the wrath of an outraged people would not leave one stone of the jail upon another, if they ventured to seize Kearney, or even so humble a person as I."

"To tell you the truth, I came down here expecting to find you in custody, and to see what I could do toward getting you out. No, you needn't thank me for it. Give your thanks to a young lady who is paying you the compliment of more worry than you are worth. I came to relieve her anxiety–not yours."

Parks halted as we reached the corner of Merchant and Kearny Streets, and I saw the tense and angry lines soften on his face.

"Hampden, I won't pretend to misunderstand you. You're right. I'm not worth her worry–nor is any man. I am grateful; but I tell you, as I tell her, that our private interests, hopes, affections, are nothing compared with the great cause of the people."

"Well, for her sake, I hope you'll keep out of jail."

Parks took off his hat, and shook his mane with an angry nod.

"A few more days," he cried, "and this cowardly set of time-servers will be begging my protection instead of threatening my liberty."

"Are you ready to strike a blow?" I asked with sudden interest.

"Never mind," he said darkly. "We await only the word from our brethren in the East. You can see the crisis approaching there. The railroad strikes have spread from the Atlantic to the Missouri. The frightened bloodsuckers of society are calling out the troops in the desperate hope of prolonging their hold on the labor and productive resources of the country. When the hour strikes–"

Parks had gradually raised his voice in oratorical fervor, despite the nearness of the police headquarters, but at this moment he was interrupted by a tall, strong-faced man, who seized him by the shoulder and whispered something in his ear.

"Hampden," said Parks, "I am called. Will you be kind enough to send word that I am safe? I shall see your friend to-morrow." And with a nod he plunged into the crowd that blocked Kearny Street and disappeared.

At the drug store on the corner I scribbled a note that should set Miss Fillmore's mind at rest, and with some difficulty found a messenger who would deliver it. Then with misgivings I shouldered my way through the crowd, crossed the Plaza, and entered Chinatown.

The echoes of the Nob Hill meeting reverberated here as well as about the Old City Hall, but with a far different note. In place of the illuminated streets, the gay lanterns and the open doors of invitation of other days, there were barred

entrances everywhere; the lights, where seen at all, flickered behind closed shutters, and the darkened buildings were surrounded with an atmosphere of sullen watchfulness. There was evident fear that the meeting on the hill was but the prelude to an attack on Chinatown, and Chinatown was prepared.

The entrance to Big Sam'e house was closed and barred, like the other doors of Waverly Place, but lights shone through the chinks in the shutters, and there were sounds of men stirring behind; so without hesitation I gave a resounding rap on the panel. The noises within ceased suddenly, but there was no response to my summons. I rapped again, and then a third time, before a singsong voice cried through the door:

"Wha' fo'? What you wan'?"

"I want to see Big Sam," I explained.

"No catch-em Big Sam," returned the voice harshly.

"You tell Big Sam Mr. Hampden here to see him," I cried. "He send tell me come. You sabby tell him now–right away."

There was a sudden outbreak of Chinese voices in argument and protest, and then silence followed for so long that I was about to rap again, when the same voice called through the door:

"How many you come?"

"One man."

There were sounds of a barricade removed, and the door opened cautiously for a few inches while its guardian reconnoitered. Reassured by my solitary figure, he stood aside for me to pass.

At the last moment my lagging judgment suggested the folly of putting myself as a hostage in the hands of the yellow men in such a time of storm. But it was too late to retreat with honor, and I slipped through the opening with all the boldness and self-possession I could assume, and saw the door bolted and barricaded against other intrusion. I looked narrowly about me.

Within the store that formed the entrance to Big Sam's establishment were twenty or thirty Chinese, and in the smoky light of the lamps I could distinguish the expression of suspicion and hatred that had escaped from behind the "no-sabby" mask of the coolie. The passions of the meeting on the hill had stirred an answering passion in the breasts of the yellow man, and I saw that in this place, at least, he was armed and ready for battle. The band pretended to take no notice of me, but the running fire of conversation that followed my entrance told me by its unmistakable accents that my coming had roused the instincts of combat, as the sight of the prey rouses the hunting instincts of the tiger.

Without a word a Chinaman beckoned me to follow him, and with some trepidation I stumbled up the stair in his footsteps. He stood aside at the entrance to Big Sam's room of state, motioned me to enter, and as I stepped in, he closed

the door behind me.

For a moment I was disturbed to find that I was the only person in the room, and looked about with curiosity to know whether I was spied upon from some hidden post of observation. After my experience on the previous visit, I could not doubt that more than one hidden entrance led to the room, and I suspected that more than one pair of eyes watched me from hidden peep-holes. The dark carved wood of the furniture and walls, and the figures in the intricately embroidered hangings glowered at me with something of the repressed hostility of the guards down-stairs. The life and turmoil of the city from which I had just come seemed already at a vast distance from that oriental hall, and I could not but reflect how easy it would be to make certain that I never returned to the modern San Francisco that seemed now to lie so far away.

With a discretion that would recommend me in the eyes of any watcher, I took a chair far enough from the desk to avoid the suspicion of a wish to pry into Big Sam's papers, and surveyed the apartment as I impatiently awaited the coming of its owner.

Suddenly the voice of Big Sam sounded behind me.

"I am always glad to welcome Mr. Hampden–even when he is the bearer of bad news."

I had heard no sound of his entry, and turned with a start at his voice. Then I exclaimed in surprise. Instead of Big Sam, in his Chinese costume, I saw an American gentleman regarding me with an impassive face. His light plaid suit was of fashionable cut, and no detail of costume was wanting. But for the voice, I should have supposed, at first glance, that another visitor had followed me into Big Sam's reception-room, and it was only a closer look that revealed the features of Big Sam himself. A touch of art had lightened the color of his skin, and only the eyes and cheek-bones suggested his Asiatic origin.

"I hope it is no bad news that brings me," I said, as Big Sam advanced to shake my hand. "I think I bring none myself."

Big Sam seated himself behind his desk, looking incongruously out of place–a modern American as master of an oriental domain.

"In this time of broils and alarms, one's first thought must be of sudden evil," he said gravely. "You may guess, by my disguise, I have been observing how your people comport themselves when they assemble to consider the interests of their race. I have been much edified."

In his American dress, and with his perfect command of English, I had no doubt that he might have brushed shoulders with Kearney himself without rousing suspicion of his nationality.

"It has been an inspiring evening," I replied with a gravity equal to his own. "I see you have prepared for trouble."

"I am not insensible to the advantages or rights of self-defense," he said dryly. "But I trust that you have found nothing incorrect in our attitude–if I may borrow a phrase from your diplomats. I would be unwilling to take any course objectionable to the country that is my host–possibly a somewhat unwilling host, if I may judge by the words I have heard to-night." Big Sam looked at me with the inscrutable irony of the Orient.

"I can see no ground for complaint," I replied. "I have come to learn, not to reprove or to warn."

"I am, as ever, at your service."

"I was happy enough to meet our estimable friend Kwan Luey–under somewhat difficult and depressing circumstances, I may add–and he was so insistent in his assumption that I wished to see you that I thought it wise to test his theory before I went to sleep."

The shadow of a smile swept across Big Sam's face.

"Kwan Luey has his moments of divination," he said, and then fell silent.

"May I inquire what particularly I wished to see you about?" I asked at last.

Big Sam's eyes studied me keenly.

"I warned you–not so long ago, Mr. Hampden–that strange events were preparing in your city. May I ask what is now your opinion on them? I am interested to hear."

"I must congratulate you on the accuracy of your information, though I am still at a loss to surmise why you should have been selected for the confidence. And as for the disorders, they are but a temporary effervescence, which will die away, or be suppressed. But there is one thing permanent about them. They are a crude expression of the resolve of our race to hold the continent for itself."

"Crude indeed!" said Big Sam with energy. "And will destroy itself by its own violence. I have here a paper showing the sentiment of your people in the Eastern States. It makes a protest against the policy that would exclude us."

"I shan't begrudge you the pleasure you can get out of that sort of comment. But I can assure you that race feeling will prevail."

"Over private interest? I believe not. And the private interest of your governing classes is with the free admission of my people. But enough of that. Where is your charge–and mine–Moon Ying?"

He threw this question at me as though he hoped to surprise some admission.

"She is still with Miss Kendrick."

"What arrangements have you made to protect her?"

"Protect her? From what? Are the highbinders so desperate as to think of attacking Mr. Kendrick's house? I trust you will warn them that this would be something far more serious than all Kearney's oratory. It would mean the

destruction of Chinatown."

"I understand you," said Big Sam suavely. "I have no doubt that an attack by the tongs on Mr. Kendrick's house would bring a terrible reprisal. Fortunately there are few among my people who do not understand that quite as well as you."

"Nevertheless there is something you fear," I said, as Big Sam hesitated.

"You must understand, Mr. Hampden, that this girl is a very desirable piece of property. There is her money value, which is considerable. And there is the further consideration that the possession of her would give a tong a certain power and distinction. The contest has come to be a point of honor–or perhaps you would say dishonor. At all events the tongs have not ceased to plan to recover her, and I have information that the Hop Sing Tong has devised a plan to seize her by force. It would, of course, be suicide for them to carry out the plan themselves. But what they can not do themselves can be done by white men. Your race is not more scrupulous than mine, Mr. Hampden. I have reason to believe that the Hop Sing Tong has found a gang of white men who are ready, for a money consideration, to break into Mr. Kendrick's house and carry off the girl."

This warning struck me with the force of a physical blow. It was scarcely possible that Big Sam could be mistaken, and I must reckon on the attack as an imminent danger. And in swift imagination I could hear the screams of Laura Kendrick and Mercy Fillmore joining those of Moon Ying, as they struggled in the grasp of ruffians, and could see the crackling flames as the raiders left destruction behind them.

"I have had reason to-night to surmise that something was afoot," I said, "but I did not suspect this." And then I retailed to Big Sam the story of the visit of the old Chinaman, the attack of the three raiders of the early morning, and the questioning of the mysterious tramp.

"The old man is Chung Toy, sometimes known to your people as 'Little John.' He was, you will remember, the custodian of the girl. He is now in the employ of the Hop Sings. The white men I can suppose were spies, sent to reconnoiter, though I am puzzled about the morning raiders."

"Does your information go so far as to suggest when the attack will be made?"

"No."

"And have you any word of advice?"

"Advice? Yes. I should advise that you return the girl to my custody. I confess that she would be an embarrassment–"

"You will not be put in any such awkward position," I interrupted. "I can speak for Miss Kendrick, and say that she will keep the girl till the conditions are fulfilled."

"Then," said Big Sam composedly, "I leave to your best judgment the way

to meet the danger." And with a bow that signified the end of the interview, he clapped his hands, and a young Chinaman appeared to conduct me down the stairs. And as I passed the sullen guards, and heard the door bolted and barred behind me, I admired the diplomacy with which Big Sam had washed his hands of his responsibilities, and left them to me.

CHAPTER XVIII
LITTLE JOHN AS A MAN OF ACTION

Big Sam's warning was enough to drive me once more to the Kendrick house to make certain that all was secure. I could suppose, from his words, that he did not expect an immediate attack, yet it was by no means unlikely that Little John's ruffians would take advantage of the disorders of the night to make their attack. But all was quiet in the neighborhood, and Andrews reported nothing more threatening than a few disorderly hoodlums who had gone shouting past an hour or two before.

I confided to Andrews the warning of an intended attack, and directed him to engage six men instead of the two I had previously ordered.

"I think I can find the right sort," he said. "There's some boys I used to know up in Nevada when we were holding down some claims against big odds. Six of 'em would chew up a hundred of these cigarette-smoking hoods." And he told with keen enjoyment of the adventurous days of the claim-jumpers, when a man's life and property depended on his strength and courage and sureness of aim.

I paced the watch with him till the stars began to pale before the coming day, and then gladly sought home and bed. My sleep was troubled with vague, indefinable dreams of coming danger, and it was late when I rose with the presentiment that a crisis was approaching.

It was a Sunday morning, yet the apprehensions roused by my dreams found abundant reinforcement when I was once more astir. The echoes from the Nob Hill meeting were still to be heard in the city, rousing apprehension among the orderly. The newspapers treated it as the sensation of the day, yet, from their comments, I saw that they had no conception of the real designs that lay behind the activity of the anti-coolie agitators. Clark reported to me that the Council of Nine had been in session till long after midnight, and that the anti-

coolie clubs had been ordered to hold daily drills. One of the two spies who were detailed to keep watch on Peter Bolton came at noon with the report that Bolton had reached his office before seven o'clock in the morning, where he had received a visit from Waldorf, Parks and Reddick, the three most active members of the Council. As they left Bolton's office, Reddick had been heard to say, "Before the week ends, we shall be masters of the city." And as a final fillip to anxiety, I found at my office a tangle-worded letter, which I recognized as the product of Kwan Luey's pen, that recalled the warnings I had received from Big Sam.

With this accumulation of mental disturbance, I took my way at last to the Kendrick house, to lay the tale of impending dangers before my client, and to give hint to the young ladies of the need for caution.

On my arrival, I found the house in confusion. There was sound of excited voices within, and, as I touched the bell, a servant rushed out and down the steps without taking time to close the door. I entered without ceremony, and a moment later met Laura Kendrick coming down the stairs, her face clouded with fear and indignation.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come!" she said with a gasp of relief, and the look of fear faded out of her eyes. "We've been scared out of a year's growth, and it's one of the mercies of Providence that we haven't lost Moon Ying. It's not often I've wanted to be a policeman, but I did to-day."

"Well, I'll be your policeman, if you'll only tell me what it's all about."

"It's a comfort to have you say so, but I'm afraid you're too late. He must be ever so far away by this time."

"Who is it? What has happened?" I demanded eagerly.

"Somebody tried to steal Moon Ying–that's what has happened," said Laura Kendrick indignantly.

"Who did it? When? Did they attack the house?" I cried, startled at the promptness with which my warnings had been fulfilled.

"Come right up-stairs," said Laura, impulsively seizing my arm and leading me. "You shall hear at first-hand for yourself."

This sudden captivity gave me so pleasant a thrill that for a moment I forgot Moon Ying and my responsibilities, and betrayed such inclination to loiter that I was sharply ordered to "walk faster." So in a minute or two I found myself entering a room where Moon Ying, with pale and frightened face, leaned back among the pillows that covered a reclining chair, and Mercy Fillmore, at Moon Ying's side, looked at us with anxious eyes.

"This is Mr. Hampden, Moon Ying–the man who rescued you from Chinatown," said Laura. "Tell him what happened to you."

Moon Ying's resources of English were scant at best, and between fright, excitement and shyness, it took much prompting and explanation from Laura

and Mercy before her story was fairly begun. But when all the tangled threads were straightened out the tale ran thus:

Moon Ying had of late spent an hour or two in the middle of the day, taking the air and the sun, on the lawn behind the house. An hour before she had been assisted to her sunny corner by Mercy, who had, after a time, returned to the house. Suddenly the back gate had opened, and a Chinaman had slipped in.

"How many?" I demanded.

"One–jus' one," replied Moon Ying.

"How him look?"

"Him small man–old man–all same Chung Toy you one time see," said Moon Ying in her plaintive voice.

The picture of Little John with his wizened face, his white, horse-hair mustache and his scant chin-whiskers, rose before me.

"Did he come alone?" I asked, incredulous of his boldness in venturing thus by himself.

"Him say two men come 'longside him, but I no see. Him talk velly soft–say I come Chinatown, him makee me velly nice dless–get velly fine house–find me velly good husband. I tell him go 'way, I too muchee sabby him. One time I thlink him good man–now I heap sabby him tell big lie–no got nice dless–no got fine house–no got good husband–I all time stlay Miss Kenlick. Him get velly mad–him say velly bad thling. Then him say I no go alongside him, two men come takee me so–" and Moon Ying raised her pretty little hands and gripped fiercely at the air, with the motion of one throttling a victim.

"What you do then?"

"I cly velly loud–likee so–" and Moon Ying let out a feminine screech that caused Laura and Mercy to cover their ears. "Then Chung Toy catchee me, so–," and she seized her arm roughly,–"put hand so–," and she covered her mouth with her palm. "I cly one time again. Miss Kenlick come. Miss Muh See come. One man come. Chung Toy him lun away."

"Did you see him?" I asked of Laura.

"Indeed I did; and I could have caught him, too, if I hadn't been such a goose as to be scared into a graven image. But by the time I came to life he was out of the gate. But it was the same man who was here last evening; and if he had any one with him, they took precious good care not to show themselves. He went in such a hurry that he left behind him a peddler's basket. It had a few silk handkerchiefs in it. I suppose he was going to make them an excuse, if he had been stopped on coming in."

"Where were my men? There should have been two of them on hand to stop such fellows. I must look into this." And the spirit of judgment rose stern within me.

"Well," said Laura, "there was one of your men here, and the other was sick, so you needn't look so cross. This one was at the front of the house, and he ran around to the back at Moon Ying's scream. When he got there that awful creature was out of the yard, so I got him to help us carry Moon Ying into the house. Then he went out the back gate, but by that time there was no heathen in sight anywhere. But I've sent one of the servants for the police and the doctor, and I want your miserable Chung Toy put in jail where he'll be out of mischief." And she gave her head a determined nod, as though his fate were settled beyond recall.

"I'll have a warrant out before night," I said, with anger tingling in my nerves, "and he'll be laid by the heels in the City Prison if he dares show himself on the street."

"I don't think jail is a very good place, even for bad people," said Mercy, "for it makes them worse; but I shall feel easier if that man is locked up. It is too dangerous to have him at large."

"I suppose you don't need any instructions," I said, "but I'll venture to suggest that Moon Ying had better take the air from an up-stairs window for a few days."

"I hope we have sense enough to know that much," returned Laura soberly, "though I don't blame you for thinking we haven't. I shan't dare let her out of doors unless there's a regiment of soldiers about the house."

"I'll have a few more men here to-morrow; but you'd better keep her in till I give the word that all is safe."

Laura Kendrick looked sharply at me.

"You needn't try to hide it," she said. "I see in your face that there's something more you're afraid of, and you'd better tell it now rather than later."

"I wasn't intending to conceal it. In fact, I was going to warn you against letting strange white men into the house. I've had a warning that leads me to believe that the fellow who was here asking questions yesterday is one of a gang hired by the highbinders to recover Moon Ying. They are much more dangerous than Little John, but if we don't give them a chance they won't hurt us."

Moon Ying had followed our conversation with eager attention; and though many of the words were beyond her understanding, she had caught the meaning of what we said.

"Too bad–too velly bad," she said, with sudden resolution evident in her face. "Bad man come, makee you 'flaid, maybe shoot. I go 'way, bad man no come."

"Indeed you shan't go away," cried Laura. "There's no place on earth you could be safe, even if we did let you go."

"I go Big Sam. Him velly big man. No bad man catch-em me in Big Sam's

house. No bad man catch-em you when me-gone."

At these words, Laura impulsively flung her arms about Moon Ying.

"You dear creature!" she cried. "Nobody shall hurt you here–and nobody will hurt us, either. My uncle can protect you much better than Big Sam, and Big Sam himself has said so."

Moon Ying tried to express more fully her fear that her presence brought danger to the household, but her language was unequal to her thought, and Laura and Mercy both talked at once to assure her that they feared nothing, and would refuse to give her up, even though all the tongs of Chinatown should come in force to demand her; so Moon Ying at last with a sigh of grateful content said:

"I likee stay–I likee you." And Laura on one side, and Mercy on the other, twined their arms about her with a laugh that was almost a sob.

It was a pretty picture of the sisterhood of Occident and Orient, and I admired it, with something of the feminine emotions raising a lump in my throat, when I was observed by the lady of the house.

"Go away," she said. "This is no place for men." And in spite of my remonstrance that I was in perfect harmony with my surroundings, I was driven forth, and went down-stairs to find Wharton Kendrick taking a Sunday afternoon nap in his den.

He gave me a sleepy greeting, but roused himself to attention at my account of the Nob Hill meeting, the midnight session of the Council of Nine, the morning meeting in Bolton's office, and the warning from Big Sam.

"Hm-m! Well, put on enough watchmen to see that we don't wake up to find our throats cut," he said. "I dare say P. Bolton is egging them on all around to do something for their money. But so far as the business goes, I think I've got everything shipshape and ready for storm. The syndicate is strong enough to protect the market, and the police can handle the Cheap John revolution, and I don't believe anybody is going to attack the house; so there's nothing to worry about. But you'd better keep in touch with your anarchist friends a little closer than you've been doing. If we can get warning over night of any particular deviltry they are going to start, it might be worth a hundred thousand dollars. Hallo! what's this?" he cried as a servant brought him a card. "Show him in." And before I could escape, General Wilson bustled through the door, his ruddy face aglow in the frame of his bristling yellow-gray side-whiskers, and his short stout frame radiating energy at every step.

"Why, God bless my soul! Kendrick–Hampden–I find you with your heads together like a pair of conspirators in the theater. Hope I don't interrupt. It does me good, Hampden, to see you youngsters pulling along in double harness with the war-horses like Kendrick and me; and you can't find a better one to pull with than Kendrick; he's the salt of the earth."

I professed myself glad to see the general, and Wharton Kendrick greeted him jovially.

"I don't believe in doing business on Sunday," said General Wilson. "In fact, I lost a million-dollar trade with Jim Fisk once, because I wouldn't sign the contract on the Sabbath, and on Monday Jim was chasing after something else. But I thought you'd like to know that I got a telegram from my people about that swamp-land deal. Here it is, and you see they'll come up to that eight hundred thousand dollar offer. That's the limit, and it won't last long at that. I don't like to boast, Kendrick, but I'll tell you that there isn't another man on the footstool that could have got 'em up to that point–I'm the only one that could do it; and, by George, I'm astonished at my own success, the way things are looking in the East with those confounded railroad strikes and rumors of riot. Now, I want you to understand that I'm not asking you to take up with the offer to-day, for of course you remember the Sabbath just as I do. But you can have a good chance to think it over. You know well enough that you're going to take the offer, so I'll warn you that I'll drop around in the morning and get your acceptance."

"Hold on, hold on, Wilson. You're running as wild as a mustang colt. I'm not so sure about this thing. I've got to have more time to consider it. I said I'd let you have the land for eight hundred and fifty thousand, but I believe I'm a fool to let it go for any such figure. However, I'll let it stand for a couple of days. I've got some affairs booked for to-morrow that will take all my time. But if you'll come in on Tuesday with your eight hundred and fifty thousand you can have the land. After that it'll cost you more."

"Kendrick, I'll wait another day for you, if I have to telegraph that I've broken a leg. Business, sir, is, next to war, man's most important pursuit; but even business must give way to the call of friendship. You'll see me coming into your office on Tuesday morning, Kendrick, like a conquering hero, ready to receive your sword–or your pen, which is mightier yet–but at eight hundred thousand, mind you."

"Come, come, Wilson, you're getting ahead of your horses," said Kendrick with a laugh. "I'm thinking of getting up a company to reclaim those lands, and if I conclude to do it, I won't sell for double the money."

"Talk as long as you like, Kendrick; but I've got a sixth sense that tells me when a bargain's made, and it never fails me. I can tell, nine times out of ten, when the other fellow has concluded to take my figures before he knows it himself, and that gift has saved me a pretty penny more than once. Why, when the Ohio Midland was enlarging its Chicago terminal, there was one piece we had to have–but the story's too long to tell. However, I made a hundred thousand dollars the best of the bargain by knowing what the other fellow was going to do before he knew it himself."

Wharton Kendrick gave a hearty laugh at General Wilson's diplomacy.

"Well, I shall take warning by that and hold out for my hundred thousand–or, I should say, fifty thousand, as I've given you a price."

"You're getting your extra hundred thousand with the price I'm offering you," said the general testily, "and I know well enough you'll not be fool enough to refuse it, especially after such a row as you had on Nob Hill last night. I hope my New York clients don't hear of it, or everything will be off. I was there, sir, and of all the howling mobs I ever saw, this beat anything since the draft riots. Why, sir, that blatant beast, Kearney, shouted arson and manslaughter, and another fellow called for the overturn of society, and if it hadn't been for the police, I believe they would have worked up the crowd to the point of blood-letting." Then General Wilson went at such length into the proper methods of handling mobs that I seized upon a favorable moment to slip out the door.

As I left the boom-boom of General Wilson's voice behind me, I caught sight of Mercy Fillmore's perplexed and anxious face.

"Oh, I thought you had gone," she said, "but I'm glad you haven't, for I want to thank you for your thoughtful note of last night. And now Mr. Parks has sent me word that he is too busy to come up this afternoon, and I was wondering how I could get a few lines to him. I am so afraid he is planning something very reckless–something that will get him into trouble. If I did not fear that he would be angry, I should go down and speak to him myself."

"If that is all that's worrying you, I'll see that he gets your letter–that is, if you can give me any idea where he is to be found."

"He wrote that he should be detained all the afternoon at Mr. Blasius' place, with some very important committee meetings." The idea of Mercy's seeking Parks in the House of Blazes struck me as slightly amusing, but I forebore to enlighten her as to the social position of H. Blasius, and she continued: "Now if you know where that is, you might send one of your men down there with this note." And she handed me an envelope addressed to "Mr. Gerald Parks." "You are sure it is not asking too much of you? I hope you are enough interested in him to wish to keep him from trouble."

I assured her that I was glad to be of service, and she thanked me with a dash of color in her pale face.

CHAPTER XIX

MISCHIEF AFOOT

My first thought in accepting Mercy Fillmore's commission had been to intrust her letter to one of my men. But once outside the house, it dawned upon me that I held in my hand a provident excuse to seek the conspirators in their lair. The hint by which Parks had roused such enviable anxiety corroborated the information I had received from my spy service. The campaign of action was evidently at hand, and I might possibly learn from a personal visit what I could not learn through others–provided I could pass unchallenged through the doors of the House of Blazes. The letter I held was a card of admission certain to be honored, if Parks were there. For the rest, chance must serve to expose or to conceal the plans that were keeping the agitators' committees in prolonged session.

H. Blasius received me with reserve born of suspicion, and his bleary eyes searched my face coldly at my name and my demand for Parks.

"Meestaire Park? Why do you want him?" he inquired at last.

"I have a very important message for him," I replied.

"Gif to me ze message," said Blasius. "When Meestaire Park he come, he shall have it."

"I couldn't give it to you," I said. "I am to deliver it into his hands only. And I can tell you that he will be very angry if there's any delay about it."

H. Blasius' pasty face took on an expression of dismay at the thought of an angry Parks, and with a grumbling of French interjections that suggested the cracking of his ill-regulated internal machinery, he waddled to a doorway at the end of the bar, and disappeared up a box stairway.

I looked around the saloon at the dozen or more men who lounged about in varying degrees of alcoholic stupefaction, and had just noted a group of men half concealed at a table at the farther end of the L of the room, when a rapid step descended the stairs, and Parks appeared.

"Hampden!" he cried, shaking my hand. "What can I do for you? It is a surprise to see you here."

"If I need an apology for intruding, here is a good one." And I held out Mercy's letter.

Parks seized it with a start of emotion as he recognized the handwriting, looked about with apparent thought of the profanation of reading Mercy's words in that place, and then giving me a nod to follow him, strode to a secluded table and opened the letter. His face lost something of its aggressive resolution as he read and re-read the pages.

"Hampden," he said in a softened voice, "did you ever realize that the sympathies of women are individual and concrete? The welfare of the masses is but a shadow to them, except as they see it through some one they know and care for. Here my petty personal welfare is put before the interests of the whole people!" And he laid a monitory finger on the letter. "I am asked to give up an enterprise

of the greatest moment lest I shall get my head cracked or be thrown into prison."

"Would you have her think otherwise?"

He looked at the letter without answering. Then he thrust it into his pocket, gave his head a shake, and his face was once more dominated by the aggressive spirit of the agitator.

"I don't deny it is pleasant to be considered worth a moment of anxiety; but it is weakening to the resolution. It is something that must have no part in my life."

"Good heavens, Parks! You don't mean to say that you would give up the chance to get a girl like Mercy Fillmore, just for the sake of making speeches about–" It was on the tip of my tongue to say "the riffraff," but in deference to the prejudices of my listener, I ended weakly with "–people who don't care a snap of their fingers for you?"

Parks was silent for some seconds, and he studied the table with a far-away look in his eyes.

"Do you think I have a chance?" he asked.

"Great Scott, man, how much encouragement do you want? Why, if a young lady I could name–and won't–showed half as much interest in my personal safety as this girl is showing in yours, I'd be down on my knees at once."

He looked in my eyes, with something of frank boyishness, for the first time, showing under the enthusiast and dreamer.

"I don't mind confessing to you, Hampden, that I've been in love with that girl ever since we were school children together. But I think you overestimate her interest in me. She is a very sympathetic person, and–" He did not finish the sentence, but gave his hand a wave that made her anxieties include the entire circle of her acquaintance. "It was her work among the suffering poor that led me to the studies that have shown me the rights of man and the wrongs of society. But, I have resolved, Hampden, before I say a word, to accomplish something–to make myself known–to strike a blow for the regeneration of mankind that shall make the nations ring."

His voice had risen in the oratorical fervor of his last sentence, until it attracted attention from the group at the lower end of the room, and a chorus of voices called "Parks! Parks!"

"Here!" responded Parks. "What's wanted?" And rising, with a wave of the hand that summoned me to follow him, he strode to the farther end of the L where a group of five or six men sat around a table.

Dominating the group, I recognized Denis Kearney, talking with grandiose bonhomie to his companions. There was a self-satisfied look on his face, and something of arrogance was added to his bearing. A brief experience of public applause had banished the simplicity from his countenance, and in its place had

[image]

Five or six men sat around a table

come the indefinable lines of calculation, ambition and authority. He was leaning back in his tilted chair, but came to his feet as we approached. He shook hands warmly with Parks, and remembered me as though he were conferring a favor.

"I've shaken thousands of hands this day," he said as he gave me a grip. "It's harder worrk than hefting barrels, but it's worrk in a good cause. We'll drive the haythins into the say in a month."

Parks introduced me with a wave of the hand to the men about the table, and Kearney continued:

"Well, we'd better be thinkin' of the program for to-morrow night, and how to get our tarriers out. I've got something to say about the police interferin' with our meeting last night that ought to raise the timperature about forty degrees."

"I've been thinking about the speeches," said Parks, "and I've concluded it's time to swing 'em round."

"Swing 'em round to what?" demanded a tall man with a black mustache, who had been introduced to me as Enos.

"The overthrow of capitalism," responded Parks, his face aglow. "The Chinese cry is a good thing to rouse 'em with, but the Chinese question is only a little corner of the real issue before the people. Capitalism, plutocracy–these must be put down before the people can come to their rights, and it's time we told 'em so."

There was a minute of silence, and the agitators looked about the table as if each sought to read the others' thoughts.

"That's all well enough, Parks," said Kearney at last, "but we've tried 'em on that, an' it's no go. Whin I tell 'em the haythin is taking the bread out of their mouths and ivery pigtail ought to be driven into the say, they holler till I can't hear me own voice. But whin I tell thim that society has got to be reorganized, an' that times will niver be right till the collective capital of the nation is administhered by the nation's ripresintatives–those are the worrds, aren't they, Parks?–they shake their heads and say, 'What th' divil is he dhrivin' at?' I can git five thousand men to follow me to Chinatown to-night to burn the haythin out if I but say th' worrd, but I couldn't git fifty to follow me to the City Hall to turn th' mayor out."

The others nodded assent to Kearney's words; but Parks' face had been growing blacker and blacker, and now he broke forth impetuously:

"By heavens! If they don't see their own interests, they must be made to see them. What are our tongues given us for but to tell them of the things they can't see for themselves? The wrong, degradation and poverty we see about us are no more due to the petty evils of Chinese competition than to the wearing of machine-made shoes. They are due to the control of industry by capital–to the system that puts a thousand men to work for the benefit of one man instead of for the benefit of all men. The Chinese now do injure the white man. But you put the capital and labor of the nation under control of the nation's representatives, and the labor of the Chinese would injure nobody–would help instead of hurt. The more the Chinaman produced, the more there would be to divide, and the less the Chinaman lived on, the more there would be for the rest of us. We must make capital the servant, not the master, of mankind. Wipe out the old system! Bring in the new!" Parks had grown more and more excited as he talked, and his hair stood out aggressively from the emphatic nods with which he had pointed his declamation.

"Do you mean that you want us to start a rebellion?" growled Enos.

"Successful rebellions are revolutions," cried Parks, "and it is a revolution that society demands."

"Well, society isn't demanding it out loud," said Kearney.

"We must work through the ballot-box," said Enos, "we must keep within the law."

At this word there was a harsh croak behind me, and I turned to see the white pasty face of H. Blasius gloating over us, his fat forefinger pointed at Enos.

"Law!" he cried. "It is ze superstition of *politique* imposed on us by ze capitalist, as ze superstition of moral is imposed on us by ze priest. When we say *Non*–no more for us–zen it is gone–we are free. Let us say *Pouf!* away! we make laws to suit ourself. Eh, *mes braves*?"

"Pooh!" said Enos. "You're talking nonsense."

"Nonsense? *Poltron*!" answered Blasius with contempt. "It take but a few barricade and two free t'ousand men to defend zem, and–*boum*! We have ze city. I was of ze Commune, and I tell you so. And instead of *Marchons*, you say Nonsense. Eh-h, cowarrd!"

Enos jumped to his feet, his dark face flushing angrily. His fists were doubled, and if Blasius had been a younger man, I should have witnessed the beginning of civil war in the camp of the agitators. But Enos held his arm before the gray hairs of the ex-Communard, and before the quarrel could be warmed by further words, there was an interruption that turned all thoughts from private disputes. A man burst through the swinging doors of the saloon and ran down to our table.

"Waldorf!" cried Parks.

I looked with interest at this leader of the Council of Nine–a tall, large-faced man, whose square jaw, spare cheeks, and bulging brows gave promise of force.

"It has come!" he cried.

"What?" cried Parks, springing to his feet. "The word from the brethren?"

"Just as good," said Waldorf, waving a newspaper excitedly before the group. "See this!" And as he unfolded the sheet we could see the printed announcement of an extra edition.

Parks seized the paper, and cried out the headlines:

"Riot and Bloodshed–Pittsburgh in Flames–Railroad Shops Wrecked by a Furious Mob–Troops Cooped up in the Roundhouse and Compelled to Surrender! Fighting in Baltimore. Mob Law Rules a Dozen Cities."

The men about the table looked at one another in silence, and the pallor of fear or excitement spread upon their faces.

"That's the signal," said Waldorf. "I wish we were better prepared."

"Prepare'!" cried Blasius scornfully. "We need no more. We have arrms. We can make ze barricade. We have leaders–plans. All we need is ze brave heart, and–*boum*!–we arre ze government!"

"What are you going to do?" asked Kearney uneasily. I saw that he was not in the full confidence of the Council of Nine, and was disturbed at this glimpse of its plans.

"Here's what we are going to do," said Parks, who had resumed his seat and scribbled a few words on a sheet of paper. "This news settles the plans for to-morrow night's meeting, and this is the way we'll call it." And he read out his composition with fervor:

NOTICE OF MEETING

The working-men and women of San Francisco will meet en masse this (Monday) evening, at 7:30, on the City Hall lots, to express their sympathy and take other action in regard to their fellow workmen at Pittsburgh and Baltimore. Prominent speakers will address the meeting. By order of

COMMITTEE.

"Hm-m!" said Kearney, with no evidence of enthusiasm in his tone. "That'll bring 'em out, I suppose."

"Just the thing!" said Waldorf, with warm appreciation of his colleague's

work. "It should call out every man and woman who is in sympathy with the oppressed toilers. 'To express sympathy and take other action in regard to their fellow workmen.' That's well put, Parks."

"What other action are you going to take?" asked Enos suspiciously.

"Come to the meeting and see," said Parks.

CHAPTER XX
ON THE SAND-LOTS

City Hall Avenue and the vacant lots below it bustled with the activity of an arriving circus. Two bonfires blazing fiercely sent the crackling sparks flying skyward, and cast so warm a glow on the faces of those who approached them, that even the small boys, who dared one another to feed the flames, shielded their eyes with uplifted arm, and made their bows before the altar of the God of Fire in reverse of the customary attitude of respect.

A wooden platform had been erected near the lower end of the triangle of vacant lots, and a row of gasoline torches blazed about it. Groups of men were gathered here and there about the sandy space, listening to impromptu orators arguing in dissonant chorus over the significance of the eastern riots, or denouncing the Chinese as the source of all industrial and social woes.

The groups were in a state of flux, swelling where the voices rose loudest, and melting away where the discussion sank to a conversational monotone. But the most active elements of the crowd were the bands of young men, hardly more than boys, who formed into gangs of ten to twenty, and roughly pushed and jostled their way through the crowd with cries that indicated their disesteem for the Chinese, their regard for Kearney and for the Pittsburgh rioters, and their especial disapproval of the police.

Behind the bonfires and torches, the dark groups and eddying streams of men, rose the half-built New City Hall. Touched here and there with the red glow of the bonfires in front, and framed in silhouette by the dying shimmer of the sunset behind, it looked like some ancient, majestic ruin–far different in outline from the ruin it was to become, when thirty years later it was racked by earthquake, and swept by a mighty conflagration–yet one that furnished a striking background for the turbulent scene enacted before it.

As I entered the crowded space from the Market Street side, I had noted

these details before I discovered Parks standing by the platform and glancing impatiently about him.

"Hampden," he cried, "I am glad to see that you have joined this great outpouring of the people. You shall have a seat with me on the platform."

"I wouldn't miss the fun for fifteen cents. But what are you going to do? What's your plan?"

"We shall follow the wishes of our fellow-citizens," said Parks, with a nod of mystery, importing designs that could not be revealed until the moment of execution. "But the first thing is to have the speeches delivered, and we are away behind time. The meeting ought to have been called to order twenty minutes ago, but the procession is late, of course. I never knew one that wasn't." And he looked irritably into Market Street, and made some unfavorable comments on the marshals of the parade.

"Here it comes now!" exclaimed another member of the group, as a blare of horns, the thump of a drum and a confused sound of cheering disturbed the air.

The procession soon came into sight as it advanced up Market Street and turned into the sand-lots. At its head marched a brass band, and scattered here and there in the trailing line were a few hundred torches–spoil from the election campaign of the preceding year. While the attention of all was fixed on the manoeuvers of the marching clubs, I felt my sleeve plucked, and turned to find Clark beside me. Without looking at me he slipped a piece of paper into my hand, and moved away. I held the paper under one of the gasoline torches, and read:

Some mischief ahead. Jim Morgan has been hiring men. Had 20 or 30 young fellows cooped up near hdqrs. this p.m. They are marching up with the clubs.

I puzzled for a little over the particular variety of mischief that was imported by this activity of Bolton's agent, and then stepping behind Clark, said:

"Keep as close to the gang as you can. If you find out what they are up to, bring me word at once. I'll be on the platform here."

Without appearing to notice me, Clark gave a signal that he understood, and as he moved away Parks tapped me on the shoulder.

"Here! We must start this thing now," he said. "We're over half an hour late. Come up on the platform. Where in the name of Halifax can Kearney be? He hasn't come up with the clubs, and he hasn't sent any word."

I suggested the theory of sickness.

"He's sick of the job–that's my opinion," said Parks savagely. "He's full of fighting talk when there's no trouble in sight, but when there's a chance to strike

a blow for the people, he's for hanging back. He hasn't had any ginger in his talk about this meeting. You heard him last night. He was about as warm as a fish then, and his pulse has been going down ever since. Well, we can't wait any longer, so here goes." And pushing to the front of the platform, he pounded on an improvised desk and called for order.

It was by the eye rather than by the ear that he caught the attention of the throng, for in the babel of amateur oratory that filled the square, his voice was lost. But at his appeals, silence spread in concentric rings about the platform, until the arguing groups melted into the mass of humanity that pressed toward the speakers' stand.

I paid but perfunctory attention to the speeches. Under Parks' guidance a man named D'Arcy was chosen chairman of the meeting, and speaker vied with speaker in expressing sympathy with their brave brethren of Pittsburgh, in declaring admiration for the courage with which they had beaten down the hireling soldiery of the brutalized money lords, in denouncing the policy that had called out the troops to settle a mere business dispute between workmen and employers, in bewailing the hard lot of the workmen of San Francisco, and in assailing the Chinese as the cause of the local industrial woes. It was not the inflammatory speeches that drew the major part of my attention, nor even the riotous applause that followed those speakers who expressed their approval of violence as a cure for low wages or no wages. Some subtle sense of divination drew my eyes and thoughts to certain currents and eddies in the crowd, where lines of men appeared to move with common purpose through the great gathering. The lines would grow in length as they proceeded, then would swirl into a group, and break or unfold into two or three new lines that would push out in different directions to form new centers of excitement. Some plan of action was evidently preparing.

In the midst of a speaker's appeal to the sacred rights of labor against the wrongs of coolie immigration, a man swung himself over the back rail of the platform and whispered to Parks.

"What's that?" demanded Parks incredulously.

The man repeated his statement.

"When did it happen?"

"About seven o'clock."

Parks' face grew black with suppressed storm, and the man continued:

"He said you could rouse the town about it if you thought best, but for himself he didn't want the course of the law interfered with."

"What do you think, Hampden?" said Parks, in my ear. "Kearney's arrested!"

"What's he been doing now?"

"Oh, it's his Nob Hill speech. He threatened to hang Stanford and Crocker, you know; and they've jailed him for that."

"Well," I said cheerfully, "are you going to follow your example by leading the mob to rescue him?"

"I'd take five thousand men down to the City Prison and have him out in half an hour, if I was sure he hadn't contrived this arrest himself," replied Parks darkly.

"What put that into your head?" I asked in surprise.

"Never mind," said Parks with an angry shake of his head. "I've a right to my suspicions." Then he turned to his messenger and growled: "Don't say anything about this. I'll announce it later if it seems best. I'll have to think it over a little. I'll wait till Reddick has spoken, anyhow."

Reddick, as the mouthpiece of the Council of Nine, gave a speech filled with denunciations of social and industrial conditions, and with the roars of applause that he evoked, the currents and eddies of men grew stronger. As he drew toward the close of his address, I felt a touch from behind, and turned to find Clark beckoning for attention. As I bent to him, he whispered in my ear:

"Those fellows of Morgan's are trying to stir up a rumpus. They are going through the crowd now passing the word that it's time to burn out the rich fellows that have brought in the Chinese, and that the place to begin is on Van Ness Avenue, and finish with Nob Hill and Chinatown. There's going to be trouble as soon as the meeting breaks up."

This alarming information revealed Bolton's purpose, whatever might be the plans of the Council of Nine, and though the meeting seemed likely to be prolonged for an hour or two more, I scribbled a note on the back of one of Wharton Kendrick's cards and handed it to Clark, saying:

"Get down to the Old City Hall, see Chief Ellis, or whoever is in charge, and tell him that Kendrick's place is to be attacked. Ask him to send as many men as he can spare to keep the avenue clear. That card will get you a chance to speak with him, and you can tell him what the gang is doing. I am going up to Kendrick's before the meeting closes and get ready for trouble."

"I'll do the best I can, sir," said Clark, with evident doubt of his power to influence so important a man as the chief of police, and in a moment had disappeared into McAllister Street.

While I had been engaged with Clark, Reddick had ended his speech with a fiery peroration that brought a roar of applause, during which a stout, red-faced man climbed to the platform and took his place.

"This is all wrong, men," were the first words I heard from the new speaker. "We can't help the cause of labor by getting into a row with the police. We can't get more wages by hunting a fight with the militia. We can't even get a better

job by punching a Chinaman's head."

"Who the devil is this?" cried Reddick angrily. "He's a hell-hound of plutocracy. Who asked him to speak?"

"Stop him, D'Arcy," said Parks. "He'll be a wet blanket on the meeting."

So far from being a wet blanket, the speaker had a remarkably enlivening influence on the crowd. The elements that had been roused to enthusiasm by fiery speeches, culminating in Reddick's red-pepper harangue, were in no mood to listen to this sort of talk, and catcalls, hoots and cries of dissent drowned his words.

"This agitation don't do us no good," shouted the volunteer orator. "It hurts us. It scares away capital. I lost two jobs by it myself."

"Sit down! Dry up! Get off the platform!" came in volleys from the audience, and the chairman, with a pull at the speaker's coat tails, paraphrased the demand.

"I won't sit down!" shouted the unknown. "I'm an American citizen and as good as any of you."

"Throw him off!" cried Reddick; and suiting action to word, he seized the speaker about the waist.

The unknown resented this interference by whirling about, and planting a blow on Reddick's face that sent him to the floor with a thump. But the militant friend of order was seized by a dozen men before he could make another movement, and with a struggle was hustled to the side of the platform and dropped over the rail.

The scene of violence was contagious. During the altercation on the platform the signs of disorder in the crowd had multiplied, and at the sight of the blow that laid Reddick on his back, a mighty roar rose on the air, and the whole throng appeared to break into tumultuous motion. The great mass was shaken to its confines with a sudden blind impulse of conflict, the thousands of faces tossed and eddied about like sea waves ruffled by cross-currents, and a surge of men broke against the platform.

"Hold on," shouted Parks, springing to the front. "There's four more speakers to be heard, and the resolutions to be passed." But in the uproar his voice was overwhelmed, and in a moment the hoodlum mob was upon us. A conflux of wolfish faces centered upon the platform, and with cries of "Kill the Chinese! Down with the coolie-lovers!" they tore at the supports. The platform went down with a crash of breaking boards and screaming men, and the flaming gasoline torches that lighted the stand fell forward with the uprights to which they were fastened, only to be raised in the van as the standards of the hoodlum mob.

The downfall of the platform sent half the group sprawling on the ground among its ruins. But at the first warning crack I had seized Parks as he was about

to be pitched forward under the feet of the attacking forces, and dragged him to the back rail. This frail support held for a space against the wrench of the falling front, and offered us a moment's safety.

"This is an outrage!" cried Parks, as we scrambled to the ground. "The money of the railroad or the Six Companies has paid for this assault on a peaceable meeting. But I am not going to be silenced by a pack of hoodlums. Come up to the City Hall steps, and we will finish our speeches and pass our resolutions."

"Better let bad enough alone," I said. "You'd much better come with me to see to Miss Fillmore's safety."

But Parks had not waited to hear the end of my words, and was already on his way to the Hall of Records, shouting at the top of his voice, "Follow me, all members of the International Clubs!" while I struggled to press my way through the division of the mob that was sweeping up Leavenworth Street. As I reached the corner I heard one of the leaders shout:

"Come on, youse fellows! We'll burn out Millionaire's Row on Van Ness Avenue. They's the ones that gets rich by bringing in the coolies!" And his suggestion was approved with a roar.

This was, I could no longer doubt, a part of the scheme that had been hatching in the fertile brain of Peter Bolton. It was for this that Jim Morgan had hired and trained his ruffians, and the objective point of the mob in front of me was the home of Wharton Kendrick.

It was of this that my sixth sense had warned me, even before Clark had spoken; and yet I had loitered in the belief that there was plenty of time to reach the place before the close of the meeting should loose the forces of disorder. And now, with a sudden gust of passion all evil things had thrown away restraint, the mob with roars of rage was swarming in different directions, smashing doors and windows, and shouting its war-cries with cheers and curses, while I was still by the City Hall, trying to force past the throng that streamed up Leavenworth Street.

I had got as far as Tyler Street (later to become famous as Golden Gate Avenue), when I found the way blockaded. The crowd had halted, packed into a dense mass about the corner, and shouts and yells, the crash of breaking wood and the tinkle of falling glass told that the wild beast had found an object on which to vent its rage. By the light of the street-lamps and the flare of the torches carried by the mob, I saw that the point of attack was a low, wooden building, and a painted sign above the door told that therein Ah Ging did washing and ironing.

I had barely discerned so much when the sign disappeared, and a moment later the form of a Chinaman was framed in the doorway above the crowd, amid a gang of hoodlum captors. For an instant I could see the wild, terror-stricken face, its brown skin turned to a sickly yellow, its eyes rolling in the red glare

of the torches with the instinct of the animal seeking despairingly some path of escape. Then at a blow from behind the Chinaman gave a scream and plunged headlong down the steps.

The end was shut out from my sight, but I was shaken by the qualms of deathly sickness at this wanton barbarity, as the maelstrom of struggling bodies closed in upon its victim, and his death-cries were drowned in the chorus of yells, jeers and animal ejaculations of rage with which the collective beast accompanied the murder of Ah Ging.

CHAPTER XXI
BATTLE

As I came within sight of the Kendrick house, breathless, shaken with scenes of brutality, and torn with apprehensions, I found that my fears were realized. A disorderly mob of two or three hundred men had gathered in front of the place, their groans and hoots filling the air, and the score or more of torches they carried throwing a smoky glare on the buildings.

The mob had not yet ventured to attack the place, and I was relieved to see that Andrews and his men still held the steps and guarded the walls; but the riotous elements were lashing the crowd into the courage to attack the little band that looked down upon them.

Suddenly, as I reached the confines of the crowd, a silence fell, and I started with surprise to see Wharton Kendrick walk down the steps to the level of the garden, and then advance to the iron fence that surmounted the retaining wall. From this point of vantage he surveyed the mob with a good-humored smile and waved his hand in cheerful greeting. I trembled with anxiety at his rashness, but something in his personal magnetism held them for him to speak.

"Well, boys," he cried in his full hearty voice, "what can I do for you? Have I been nominated for mayor, or is this just a serenade?"

A laugh here and there showed the good impression he had made on his audience, and a hasty voice from the leaders of the mob shouted:

"We want you to fire your Chinese!"

"The Chinese?" he said, affecting to misunderstand the cry. "You've come to the right shop if you want a good little talk on that question. As I told Senator Morton the other day, I'm the original Chinese exclusionist–not excepting Bill

Nye and Truthful James. Ask the reporters to take a front seat."

I had never suspected Wharton Kendrick of oratorical ability, but he showed all the arts of the stump speaker, and with a few pat anecdotes stated his position, and appealed to the men to trust the settlement of the problem to the substantial men of the State.

The leaders of the mob were quick to see the danger to their schemes, and tried several interruptions, which Kendrick blandly ignored. At last one of them shouted as comment on his profession of faith:

"Then why don't you discharge your Chinese help?"

This thrust renewed the cries of anger from the mob, and a wolfish look came on the faces about me.

"Why," returned Kendrick with a jovial laugh, "for the same reason that the rabbit couldn't cut off his tail–because he didn't have one. I don't know any reason why I shouldn't hire a Chinese cook if I wanted one, as long as they are permitted to come into the country; but I don't want one. My servants are all white."

The reply raised a laugh, and a few enthusiastic rioters shouted "Hooray for Kendrick!"

"Shut up, you fools!" cried the leaders; and the voice that had called on Kendrick to discharge his Chinese shouted:

"It's a lie about there not being any Chinese in de house!"

"The honorable gentleman has forgotten to speak the truth," retorted Kendrick good-humoredly. "I keep no Chinese."

"Aw, what's de use talkin' like dat?" shouted the voice. "There's a Chinese girl in de house dis minute."

"Quite true," admitted Kendrick candidly. "The poor creature was wounded, and we took her in to save her from the highbinders. You surely wouldn't have us turn her out. She's not a servant. She's a guest."

The explanation was lost on half the crowd in the clamor that had been raised. One of the mob leaders shouted:

"Where there's a Chinese girl there's a dozen Chinese men,"–an opinion that renewed the jeers and catcalls.

"Aw, the place is full of coolies! Smoke 'em out!" cried another, waving a torch.

Even with this renewal of hostile sentiment, the leaders of the mob would scarce have been able to spur their followers to violence but for the arrival of a reinforcement of another hundred hoodlums, shouting, swearing, and laden with the spoil of looted wash-houses. They came straight for the Kendrick house, and I had no doubt that they were directed thither by the same mind that had sent the first company to the siege.

While the play between Kendrick and the mob had been going on, I had edged my way toward the steps by those alternate arts of diplomatic and aggressive pressure which enable one to make progress through a crowd. The arrival of the hoodlum reinforcement brought me assistance as unwelcome as it was unexpected.

Wharton Kendrick faced the new-comers with a confident smile, and appealed with a jest to "the gentlemen in a hurry" for a hearing. But the hoodlum arrivals had not fallen under the spell of his personality, and their courage and wrath had been inflamed by their success in their wash-house raids. With shouts of "Gangway! gangway! Smoke out the coolies!" they charged forward in a wedge that struck the standing crowd directly behind me. There was a shock of meeting bodies, a grunt that might have come from a giant in sudden distress, and the crowd crumpled together like the telescoping cars of a railroad collision; the men in the center were lifted off their feet, and the crowd was forced forward and scattered in disorder.

Standing directly in the line of shock, I was thrown forward with amazing force, scraped against the stone wall, and flung headlong on to the lower step of the flight that led to Wharton Kendrick's garden. At the same moment there was an outburst of wrathful yells, and a shower of stones rattled about me. I felt a smart crack from a falling stick on my shoulder as I scrambled to my feet, and looking upward I was just in time to see Kendrick struck by a flying missile, reel backward, fling up his arms with a whirling motion, and fall heavily on to the grass.

I faced about and whipped out my revolver, when:

"Stand back there!" came from above in a determined voice.

"Stand back there!" I repeated. And at the command and the show of revolvers, the advancing hoodlums swerved aside into the street with a sudden cooling of their ardor for battle.

"Is that you, Mr. Hampden?" came from above, and I recognized the voice of Andrews, the head watchman for the night.

"Yes," I replied. "Be ready to shoot if I give the word." And walking backward I climbed the steps till I stood on the landing and looked down on the mob. Then with an eye on the tossing, circling array of faces below, I knelt over Wharton Kendrick. He was limp and still. A long cut extended from his forehead well back into his hair, and the blood flowing from it had moistened his face and dyed his thinning locks.

I glanced at the mob, noted the signs that it was gathering courage for another attack, and was calculating on the risk of weakening our defense by ordering the men to carry Wharton Kendrick into the house, when I heard the door open behind me. There was a swift patter of footsteps on the walk, and

Laura Kendrick flung herself on her knees beside me with a cry of grief and fear, and lifted her uncle's head in her arms.

"Oh," she cried with a choking voice, "have they killed him?"

"No," I replied, "he's alive. He will be all right in a little while." I hoped I was telling the truth. "We'll get him into the house, and have a doctor to look after him as soon as we can drive this mob away. Please go in now. You may be hurt yourself if you stay."

She had been wiping away the blood with her handkerchief, to the soft accompaniment of a crooning utterance, as though she were quieting a sick child.

"Indeed, I shall not go in till he does," she said. "Do you think I shall leave him out here to be killed by those dreadful creatures?"

"Please go," I said. "You can do nothing here, and the mob may begin firing at any minute."

At the apparition of the girlish figure the rioters had hushed something of their wrathful cries, but I felt none the less apprehensive of their next act.

As I spoke, with something of peremptoriness in my voice, Laura Kendrick started to her feet, but instead of returning to the house she walked hurriedly to the wall, and stood resolutely facing the crowd.

"Come back!" I cried with dismay, and restrained my impulse to rush before her with the thought that I should be much more likely to incite than to prevent an attack.

But instead of heeding my summons she began an indignant appeal to the men before her, trying to shame them at their errand. As her piquant voice rose on the air a terror gripped my throat at the thought of the response that her call might bring, but at her first words the crowd hushed to stillness, and I saw a man cuff a young hoodlum who uttered a catcall. The appeal of the slender figure facing the mob in the glare of the torches that had been brought to burn her house was a better protection for the moment than the revolvers of my men.

"Do you think it manly to strike at the sick or at women? Do you think it right to try to murder your friends? You have struck down a man who never had an unkind word for you–who has done more than all of you put together to keep the Chinese out of the country. Do you think that is the way to help your cause? I don't."

The mob preserved an admirable silence, and she turned to me and said in low, excited tones, "Carry him into the house while they are behaving themselves."

I had already given the order, and four of my men bore the stricken magnate up the steps and through the doors, while Laura spoke once more to the mob.

"I'm sure," she said, "you ought to see by this time that you've done enough harm to your cause for one day, and I hope you'll go quietly home before you do

anything worse."

"Three cheers for the leddy!" came in strong Hibernian response, and the mover of the resolution led off with such a will that a hundred more voices joined in the tribute.

"Thank you," she replied, "and good night." And with a courtesy to the uninvited guests, she turned, crossed the garden, and mounted the steps with dainty grace. At the door she turned, gave another bow, and waved her hand in farewell, and then slipped through the open door as another cheer was raised.

I had followed her with the purpose of keeping between her and possible missiles and my misdirected solicitude was rewarded. As she put foot within the hall, she staggered and would have fallen had I not caught her. For an instant she clung to me with a convulsive gasp of fear. Then her grasp relaxed, her head sank back, and her full weight rested on my encircling arm. At the sight of her white face, and the crimson stains on her hands and dress that had come from her uncle's blood, I gave a cry of alarm, and lifted her limp form as carefully as one takes up a sleeping child.

For a minute of tumultuous joy and fear I held her in my arms, as I carried her to the room into which her uncle had been borne. But before I reached the door she opened her eyes languidly. Then with a startled look, full consciousness returned.

"Put me down," she said, and struggled to her feet. But so unsteadily did she stand that she was forced to reach out for support, and I put a sustaining arm about her.

"What is it?" she asked in a whisper. "Did I get knocked down? My head is going round and round."

"No, you are all right," I said soothingly. "There was a little too much excitement outside for you, I'm afraid."

"Oh, I was goose enough to faint, was I?" she said, disengaging herself with a swift movement. But once more in full command of herself, tears of apprehension gathered in her eyes, and she asked, "Where is uncle?"

And as I motioned to the door, she turned and ran into the room where Wharton Kendrick lay white and still upon a couch. Mercy Fillmore's deft hands were washing the wound, a servant was assisting, and the four men who had brought the wounded master into the house stood about in wait for orders. With a word I sent three to rejoin the line of defense, and directed the fourth to slip out the back way in quest of Doctor Roberts.

Laura Kendrick took her place quietly at Mercy Fillmore's side and with tense self-possession assisted at the dressing of the wound. And in the calmness and practised touch with which they played the part of surgeons I had demonstration of the skill they had acquired in the weeks of service which they had

devoted to Moon Ying.

"I don't see why he doesn't come to himself," said Laura, when the bandage had been adjusted. "I wish we could get the doctor."

"I have sent a man after him," I said.

"Do you think he can get through that howling mob of savages? I'm afraid he will be killed; and if he isn't, the doctor can never get in."

"Oh, there's the back gate. I hope the doctor's not above taking it." I had hardly spoken when I was checked at seeing my messenger standing in the hall. Before I could exclaim at his sudden return, he had beckoned me out with a warning finger on his lips.

At his signal I left the room with an attempt to disguise my disturbance of mind under the pretense of idle restlessness.

"What's the matter?" I asked, as soon as I got the man away from the door.

"There's a gang over in the next yard," he said, "and I couldn't get through. I'm afraid they're getting ready to set fire to the house. I smelt kerosene when I climbed on the fence. One of 'em says something about 'smoking 'em out,' an' I guess they're fixing up some sort of fire-balls."

"Where are you going?" asked Miss Kendrick, coming to the door. "You are not meaning to venture out among those savages again?"

"I think it's time I told them to go home," I said. "They are making a good deal of noise out there."

"You must not do anything of the sort," she said, catching my arm. "I told them to go, and if they won't go for my telling, they won't go for yours."

I bent over her with more tremors than I had felt in the midst of the mob.

"I shouldn't go unless I thought it would help to protect you," I said.

"Well, if you must go," said Miss Laura, "please be careful and do not go out the front way. Take the side door, where there's nobody likely to see you." And leading the way down the passage between the library and the dining-room she slipped a bolt and opened the door enough to let us out. She held out her hand to me.

"You're not to get hurt," she murmured, as I paused.

"That settles it. I shall preserve a whole skin." And with a pressure of the hand, I hastened out the door.

The yells from the front came with renewed distinctness, but no sounds of attack were to be heard. The mob appeared to have resolved itself into a disorderly debating society. I hurried to the rear of the house with my messenger.

"Are any of our men back here?" I asked.

"One–Reardon is at the kitchen steps," replied the man.

Reardon proved to be awake and ready for any enterprise, and we advanced to the fence and reconnoitered. The dim light showed a band of fifteen or twenty

men gathered a few yards away in the vacant lot behind the Kendrick place.

"Aren't they ready yet?" asked one impatient conspirator. "I could have fixed forty fire-balls in the time you've taken to fix those three."

"Why didn't you come and do it then?" was the resentful and belligerent answer. "I'll have them ready in a jiffy."

With a few whispered words of direction I stationed my men by the fence, a dozen yards apart, and took my place between them. Then climbing up I gave a blast on a police whistle, and cried:

"Now, boys, gather them in. Don't let one get away." And at the word I fired three or four shots at the group and my men followed my example.

The surprise was complete. At the fusillade there was a scattering of the gang, and with a sudden realization of the importance of their personal safety they took to their heels and ran into Franklin Street.

"That was a foine job, sor. We must have hit a power of thim," said Reardon, with an exemplary faith in our marksmanship.

"I hope so," I said. I had been roused to fury by the deliberate preparations to burn the house, and had shot to do mischief. "It looks as though we had got one fellow, anyhow," I added, as I discovered a dark heap on the ground, and heard a whimpering groan.

We jumped down from the fence, and an advance of a few steps confirmed my guess. A man lay writhing on the earth, giving utterance to suppressed sounds of pain. Reardon knelt over him.

"Why, it's Danny Regan!" he cried. "What th' divil are ye doin' here, Danny?"

"Go 'way, ye murderin' spalpeen!" replied the stricken Danny. "Me leg is bruk. 'Tis a bullet sthruck me knee."

"'Twas me that give it to yez, Danny," said Reardon with a chuckle. "I picked ye out, me lad–an' whin Pat Reardon takes aim he niver misses. If he don't hit wan thing he hits another–an' it's dollars to dimes the other thing's jist as good."

The wounded man replied to this boast with an outbreak of curses.

"Yer timper's been soured, Danny," said Reardon. "That comes of mixin' in bad company. "Tis evil communications corrupts a good disposition,' says Father Ryan; an' if you'd listened to him you'd a-been home an' in bed now wid two sound legs instead of wan."

"Well, take me home, Pat," groaned the wounded conspirator; "though maybe you'd like to make a clane job of it by puttin' wan iv yer bullets t'rough me head."

"Faith, I wouldn't waste another wan on yez. Bullets cost money. If I did me dooty I'd settle yer case by mashin' yer head in wid a rock."

"We wouldn't get so far as that," I said. "We'll compromise by holding him

prisoner of war. Up with him now."

Our inexpert handling brought whimpers and curses from the prisoner. And in a few minutes we had him bestowed as comfortably as possible in the little room that the watchmen had used as a lounging place.

"Now," said I to my messenger, "get over to Doctor Roberts' house as fast as you can. Tell him Mr. Kendrick is hurt, and bring him back with you. Hurry!"

The messenger had scarce disappeared when Reardon exclaimed:

"Whist! There comes some more of 'em."

Above the excited hubbub of the besieging crowd in front could be heard a swelling roar that became more distinct with each moment. The significance of the sound was unmistakable. Another reinforcement was approaching, and in fear lest the assailants who had been beaten off were returning to attack us from the rear we ran back to the fence. All was quiet in that direction, and the hostile sounds now came so plainly from the front that I doubled speed to the threatened quarter just as a scattering crackle of pistol-shots punctuated the inarticulate language of the mob, and a volley of stones hurtled against the house with the explosive tinkle of breaking windows.

I reached the front yard just as another volley took out every window that faced the street, and saw that a concerted rush was being made against the place. A body of men was being pushed up the steps between the flanking walls by the pressure of the mob behind, and immediately before me–at the side of the garden–two young men were mounting the wall on the shoulders of their companions, the vanguard of a flank attack that would capture the place if they once got a foothold. I fired a shot at one, who disappeared with a surprising suddenness, and then bethinking myself of the unwisdom of wasting bullets, I ran forward and brought down my revolver on the head of the other invader. He had just got his knee on the railing, but he went down the eight-foot drop with a yell of pain and a torrent of bad language. At the same moment the men who were defending the steps threw the assailing column into confusion by a fortunate volley, and the attack gave back. A score of answering shots came from the mob, and a bullet whistled so close to my ear that I clapped my hand to the spot with the thought that a piece had been taken off. The agreeable disappointment of finding that I was mistaken was overshadowed a moment later by the discovery that the wall at the farther side of the garden had been scaled by a dozen of the mob, and that others were clambering up in their path.

"Look out there on your right, Andrews!" I cried, hastening to join the company. "They are on the terrace."

Before I reached the steps the dozen had increased to a score, and it looked as though we were to be overwhelmed by numbers. For an instant it seemed that our best chance lay in retreating into the house in the hope that it would serve as

a fortress until the police arrived. But as the house was only a wooden structure, and it was the expressed purpose of the mob to burn us out, I felt it was to be regarded as the last resort of resistance.

"Shoot them down!" I cried.

"Not much chance," said Andrews as I reached him. "We're down to our last cartridges."

This was a sickening bit of information, but it assured me that prompt action was of the last importance. I took one of my men by the shoulder and pushed him over toward the position I had just left.

"Here," I said, "see that nobody gets over that wall. You two," picking out a pair of the guards, "hold the stair. Come on, the rest of you. We must clear these fellows out. Double quick, now."

At this command the men sprang forward by my side, and we ran to the invaded quarter, firing off our remaining cartridges as we charged.

The mob was mostly of but poor stuff, after all. Half of those who had been bold enough to climb to the terrace halted at sight of our advance, and dropped over the wall to the sidewalk in panic. But we were, nevertheless, greatly outnumbered by those who stood their ground, and a scattering though harmless fusillade gave evidence that they were armed.

In a moment we were in the thick of it. Fists, clubs and revolvers were flying, and the thud of body blows could be heard under the cries and curses that formed the dramatic chorus to the struggle. We used our empty revolvers as clubs, and we appeared to do more execution with them handled thus than with all the bullets we had fired. A bullet has a way of wandering from its mark, but a pistol-barrel brought down with a vigorous arm on a man's head never fails in execution, and has a tendency to turn the most ardent warrior into the ways of peace. But in spite of good luck, discipline and desperation, we were far from having the battle all our own way. I had envied the ease with which my favorite heroes of romance bowled over half a dozen enemies with fist or sword, and I envied them still more when I found myself in a place to put their lessons into practice. I had not been in the conflict more than a minute when a knock on the head from a bony fist and a thump on the shoulder from a club sent me to the grass with a realization of how much better it is to give than to receive. But I was fortunate enough to be up again in a moment, and laying about me with a savage hope of repaying with usury the men who had sent me to the ground.

How the battle would have gone if we had been left to our unaided strength, I shall leave to less partial historians to say. But just as I had been thoroughly impressed with the fact that seven men have their work cut out for them when they are called on to attack a score, I heard a roar from the mob that finally separated into an articulate cry of–

"Here come the cops! Look out for the police! Knock their heads off!" And a company of the guardians of order could be seen charging down the avenue.

The pugilistic activities of the mob in the presence of the police, however, appeared to be purely vocal. So far as I was able to observe, the head-knocking business was wholly on the other side.

At the warning cry there was a sudden slackening of activity among the invaders of the terrace. Then they began to drop over the wall to rejoin the retreating main body, and in a minute, with a panic rush, they were all gone. And while I caught my breath once more I had the satisfaction of seeing the mob driven like sheep before a company of some twenty-five policemen, who were savagely rapping with their clubs at every head they could reach. The crowd was flying from a body of men that it could have swallowed up, smothered, annihilated, by sheer force of numbers, awed less by the physical force represented by the clubs than by the moral force of law that lay behind them.

I hailed the police captain as a brother and a preserver, and hastily explained the state of affairs.

"It's a bad night for us all," he said. "We're fighting 'em from North Beach to Tar Flat. They've killed a dozen Chinamen, an' I'll bet my straps there isn't a Chinese wash-house left with a window in the whole city."

"I'm afraid we aren't much better off here," I said, with a rueful look at the vacant sashes of Wharton Kendrick's windows.

"It's bad–it's bad," said the officer. "We got word they were coming here, and the chief sent us up to clear the avenue. Then we heard that they were settin' fire to Stanford's and Crocker's so we rushed over to Nob Hill. It was only a small crowd there, though, and after chasin' them out, we hurried up here."

"You were just in time," I said. "We were hard pressed."

"I'm sorry I can't leave you a few men," said the captain, "but we've got too much work ahead of us. I don't think they'll try it again. But we'll look around this way again in an hour or two."

CHAPTER XXII
I BECOME A MAN OF BUSINESS

I was a sorry sight when I entered the house once more, with one sleeve torn from my coat, a large and growing lump over my right eye, and my clothing an

impressionist study in grass-stains and earth colors.

In the excitement of the moment I was not aware of the picturesque figure I made until I saw the horror-stricken look that swept over Laura Kendrick's face as she met me in the hall.

"Oh," she cried, "you did go and get yourself murdered, after all!"

"No, indeed. I had a day's work crowded into a few minutes, but we got them driven off, and I'm as sound as a dollar." I spoke with the exultation of victory; but with the reaction from the excitement and fatigue of the battle I felt the need of a place to sit down and pull myself together.

"Then you're very well disguised," she returned anxiously. "Are those dreadful wretches all gone? Come into our hospital here–right away–and we'll wash the blood off your face, and try to put you to rights."

"How is Mr. Kendrick?" I asked, as she led me toward the "hospital."

"He has opened his eyes and said a few words. Doctor Roberts is here, and has stitched up his head, and says he will be all right in a week or two if we take good care of him."

The room set aside for the hospital had a highly professional look. Wharton Kendrick lay on the same couch on which I had left him. Doctor Roberts was bending over him, carefully adjusting the bandage on his head. Near them I was surprised to see Danny Regan of the broken leg, attended by Mercy Fillmore, while at the other side of the room, propped up in an easy chair, was Moon Ying, looking on the scene with passive wonder.

"Sit here," ordered Miss Kendrick, wheeling a big chair to the table, and I was glad to obey. "Yes," she continued, noting my scrutiny of Danny Regan and Moon Ying. "The cook complained of the groans she heard from the men's room, so we found out what had happened and had the man brought here. And just before the rocks began to fly I had run up to see about Moon Ying, so I had her carried down. It was lucky I did, for we had hardly got out of the room when bang-cling! went every window in the front of the house. I thought she had best be on the ground floor in case of fire, and this room was as safe as any in the house. My! what a bump you did get. A riot is 'most as bad as falling downstairs, isn't it?"

With deft fingers she had wiped away the stains of battle, and now she wrung out a cloth in cold water, folded it into a compress, and bound it skilfully over my swollen forehead.

I leaned back luxuriously, and gazed with admiration on my nurse.

"It's quite worth while, after all," I said.

She colored, but looked steadily at me as she worked.

"Don't get too appreciative," she said.

"Impossible!" I interrupted.

"Because," she said, "I'm coming to believe that you're not so badly hurt as your poor head looks. The blood on your face isn't yours at all, but came from somebody else–"

"You ought to see the other fellow," I murmured softly.

"–and you've been getting sympathy under false pretenses, and I really think I ought to call Jane to look after you while I attend to uncle."

"I shall sink into the last stages of dissolution," I protested, "if you turn me over to an incompetent nurse."

"Incompetent! Why, Jane is twice as competent as I."

"It depends on the complaint. I'm sure she wouldn't understand mine at all."

Laura smiled indulgently as she adjusted the last knot on the bandage.

"There," she said, "you're quite picturesque, and you'll be all right in the morning. And I don't think you need anybody to look after you at all."

I was about to protest that my condition was most serious when she was called to Wharton Kendrick's couch, and I caught Moon Ying's eyes fixed on mine. I smiled and nodded, and she beckoned me, so I wheeled my chair to her side.

"What I tell-em you?" she said. "I no go 'way, bad man come, all same shoot, fight, tly bu'n house, eh?"

"This not for you, Moon Ying," I reassured her. "Bad man come, anyhow. Plenty of that kind outside of Chinatown."

Moon Ying shook her head and pointed to Danny Regan.

"Him Li'l John's explessman–I sabby him many time come Li'l John's place."

I looked at Danny Regan's low-browed countenance, and realized that an attack of the highbinders' mercenaries had been made under cover of the larger attack of Bolton's hirelings and the anti-Chinese mob.

"I think you're right, Moon Ying," I said. "But just you sabby this: bad men in front of house, they no come from Little John; they were after Mr. Kendrick. You can claim those fellows behind the house. But you see we are no worse off for having you here. 'Twas the other fellows who broke the windows."

I was just on the point of interrogating Danny Regan as to the inspiring cause of his raid when I heard Wharton Kendrick's voice rise in querulous tones:

"Here, I must get up," he said with evident effort. "Is the city on fire?"

"After a while," said the soothing voice of the doctor. "The city is all safe, and you'll have to wait till to-morrow before you get out."

"I must look after things to-night," said the patient, his voice rising complainingly. "I must look after things."

I got to my feet and walked softly to his couch. He was vainly trying to rise, and beating the air helplessly with his hands.

"I must get out–help me, somebody!" he cried in an appealing voice. He tried to lift himself, but his body refused to obey his will.

The doctor uttered a soothing protest.

Miss Kendrick added her voice to the authority of the doctor and at her quieting words Wharton Kendrick closed his eyes. Then on a sudden he opened them widely, and again attempted to raise his head.

"It's the business–it's the business!" he cried with the voice of one who had brought a forgotten thing from the depths of his memory. "It's all upset. I must see to it, or it will be too late."

She patted him again with gentle hand.

"There–there," she said, in the comforting mother-tone. "It will be all right. You can't do anything to-night. It's after ten o'clock."

He gave a groan.

"The markets will go to smash in the morning unless we get ready for them to-night. It's all up," he moaned. "It was all in my head, and it's all gone. There'll be a smash in the market to-morrow, and I can't help it." Then he broke into passionate sobbing, while Laura Kendrick knelt over him, wiped away his tears, and made above him those murmuring sounds with which the mother comforts the hurt child.

It was with something of the awe with which one meets the earthquake that I witnessed the collapse of the fortitude and self-control in Wharton Kendrick. The foundations of the earth seemed breaking up when I saw this type of self-reliant manhood whimpering and weeping like a whipped schoolboy.

Doctor Roberts had been attending to Danny Regan of the broken leg, but he now returned to his more demonstrative patient.

"Come, come," he said in his most cheerful professional tone. "This is no way to get well. If you want to be out to-morrow, you must be quiet." And he motioned us away.

"It's all going to smash–I can hear it going," sobbed Kendrick, "and I can't remember what to do." He lay looking anxiously from side to side and repeated over and over, "I can't remember what to do."

As Doctor Roberts motioned us away again, I took him aside.

"Is there any chance of his getting down to business to-morrow?"

"Not the slightest. And he must not be excited by talking of it."

"I think I can ease his mind somewhat," I said. An idea had been slowly forming in my brain, and now it sprang forth complete. I sat down by him and took his hand to help his wandering attention.

"I'll look out for the business," I said. "I'll see Mr. Coleman to-night. We'll get the syndicate together, and protect the markets to-morrow."

"That's it–the syndicate–that's it," he cried with a visible relief. "That's

what I was trying to think of–the syndicate. Coleman will know; Partridge will know."

I called for paper, pens and ink, and wrote out in duplicate a formal authorization by which Wharton Kendrick gave Arthur Hampden, his attorney, the power to act for him in all his business affairs.

In the meantime I had despatched one of my men to summon a notary who lived down by Polk Street. The official was at home, up, and dressed, and he hurried to the Kendrick house, hot on the scent of the liberal fee that the name called up before his imagination. When he had come, I read aloud the power of attorney I had drawn.

"That's it, Hampden; you won't see me go down, will you?" said my client in a pleading voice. And with some difficulty he attached his signature, and Doctor Roberts and Mercy Fillmore signed as witnesses, while the notary affixed his official acknowledgment.

Armed with this evidence of power, I started for my hat, when Miss Kendrick stopped me.

"You aren't going out in that fix, are you?" she demanded. And at her gesture I remembered my torn and one-sleeved coat, and the chiaroscuro of soil and grass stains with which I had been decorated.

"I was thinking that I should be all right if I got a hat, but I'm afraid it will take more than that to fit me out," I said ruefully. "Come to think of it, my hat is out on the lawn with the other sleeve of my coat. There's quite a collection of second-hand clothing out there, but it's rather dark to find one's own."

"Men are so fussy about their hats," said Miss Laura, "but I'll have the collection brought in from the lawn, and maybe you can make yours do for to-night. As for the coat, I'll bring down one of uncle's that's too small for him, and you won't look so very ridiculous, after all."

My headgear, when recovered, bore evidence that it had been worn on a militant heel; but when I had brought the torn edges together, I flattered myself that in the darkness it would look almost as good as new. And although the coat hung loosely upon me, and the stains of battle refused to yield to the brush, I was consoled by the thought that these departures from the rules of polite dress would add corroborative details and a livelier interest to my tale of Wharton Kendrick's undoing.

"Now, leave that bandage alone," commanded Miss Laura, as I raised my hand to complete my toilet by removing that badge of battle. "You have to wear it. And you have no idea how becoming it looks."

I submitted ruefully to this edict of petticoat tyranny, and Miss Kendrick rewarded me by escorting me to the door. She gave me her hand, and there was a look in her eyes that was near to carrying me off my feet as she said with the

suspicion of a tremble in her voice:

"I hope you don't think we are not appreciating what you have done–and are doing."

"It is nothing," I said, looking into the magnetic depths of her eyes, until she dropped her glance to the floor, and blushed divinely.

"It is nothing," I repeated. Then bending, I touched my lips to her hand, and with no other word ran down the steps in a tumult of elation.

The Coleman house was alight as I rang the bell, and William T. Coleman himself appeared close on the heels of the suspicious servant who took in my card. He was able to recall the circumstances of our introduction as he gave me a cordial greeting and shook me warmly by the hand.

"I was in hopes Kendrick would come himself," he said; "but as he hasn't, I am glad he sent you."

"Mr. Kendrick didn't come because he couldn't come. He was badly hurt in to-night's riot."

"Kendrick hurt? How badly?"

I described the extent of his injuries as well as I could, and Coleman's eyes took on a troubled look.

"I wanted to consult him about affairs. A number of our leading men have been here this evening, and General McComb has agreed to issue a call for a citizens' meeting at the Chamber of Commerce to-morrow afternoon. We must devise some way to assist the authorities, and I looked to Kendrick to take a leading part."

"It will be some days before he can be out. But he is very anxious about the state of business. He is afraid there will be a smash in the markets to-morrow."

William T. Coleman smiled, and the calm sense of power that shone in his eyes gave me renewed courage.

"Kendrick was always one of the men who think that nothing will be done if they don't attend to it themselves," he said with good-natured raillery.

"Well, it's usually true, isn't it? Most things don't get done."

"A very just observation, Mr. Hampden. Most things don't get done. The man who has the brains and will to accomplish things is the invaluable man. It's our main trouble in every branch of the world's work–to find the man with ideas and the force to carry them out. But we must show Kendrick that he isn't indispensable in this crisis. Did he explain to you the state of affairs?"

"No. He could only refer me to you for details. He gave me the authorization to represent him in the syndicate, and in his business generally. It was all he was able to do."

"Well, the syndicate brought together a capital of ten million–I suppose you know that."

"Yes, but I believe it was heavily drawn on in the raid of last month."

"We had to put out close to three million six hundred thousand of loans that day, but some of it has come back since."

"Then the syndicate must have between six and seven million at its disposal."

"Over seven, I think. Kendrick could give you the figures out of his head–that is, before his head was broken–but I'll have to get them from my memoranda."

"How long do you expect that to last in a storm?"

"It ought to see us through any crisis that can arise."

"But this is a more serious occasion than the other. See our riots, and the explosion of violence in the East. Will not these frighten our business men far more than the rumors that set off the hub-bub of last month?"

Coleman leaned back in his chair, his face expressing confident cheerfulness, and his eyes magnetic with power.

"Very true," he said. "But on the other hand, the flurry of last month shook out the weaklings. Stocks and bonds are shifted into strong hands. Doubtful accounts have been closed out. We are in much better shape than before the squall struck us."

"I'm glad to hear it," I said with some relief, though the thought of Peter Bolton's malign activities weighed on my mind, and I was tempted to confide in William T. Coleman. But as Wharton Kendrick had kept the matter to himself, I followed his example, and continued: "I believe the interests of Mr. Kendrick can best be served by sustaining the markets and preventing failures. But as to details, I should like your advice."

"Well, I will read you the memorandum made at our meeting of the other night of the men and firms who are likely to need help, and the amounts it would probably be safe to lend them." And Mr. Coleman brought a sheet of paper from his desk and interpreted the cabalistic signs that covered it. The freedom with which the names of banks, business houses and individuals had been handled would have created a sensation if the paper had been published. "And here is a list of the men who have had advances," he said, taking out another sheet and reading off names and figures.

I noted down the list for reference and study.

"Do you think," asked Coleman, "that Kendrick will be able to get down to-morrow?"

"No, the doctor said it would be impossible."

"That is very awkward. The syndicate's money is deposited in his name, and he is the man to sign our checks."

I saw the advantage of keeping this power in Wharton Kendrick's hands,

and suggested:

"Possibly he can attend to that part of the business at the house. I can have a line of messengers to carry the checks back and forth."

Coleman wrinkled his brows, and gave his head a forceful shake.

"That won't do. The arrangement would lose us forty minutes on every transaction. You had better get Kendrick to make out a check for the whole amount in favor of Nelson, and Nelson will look out for the details."

I was far from satisfied that this was the best way out of the difficulty. It eliminated Wharton Kendrick as a factor in the operations of the syndicate, and I had a vague but controlling feeling that this would fit badly with his plans. But I could give no sound reason for dissent from the suggestion, and at last Coleman said:

"Go to Kendrick, and ask him for the check. I'll have Nelson and Partridge here by the time you get back, and we can talk the business over more fully."

The Kendrick house was bright with lights as I reached it, and I was more annoyed than pleased to find Mr. Baldwin busily assisting Miss Kendrick, and directing the servants in the work of clearing up the broken glass and securing the open windows with boards.

Mr. Baldwin recognized me in his most superior way, and assumed his most magnificent airs of proprietorship from the top of the ladder, as he waved a hammer as his baton of command.

"Ah, Hampden," he said with a cool nod, "this is a fine mess your friends have made of things."

"Gracious, me!" exclaimed Miss Kendrick. "Is that the way friends act? I've seen men play some pretty rough pranks in the name of friendship, but I'm sure I never knew them to go so far as they did with Mr. Hampden. It's a mercy he wasn't killed. You should have seen him when he came in from the fracas!"

Mr. Baldwin appeared to be put out of countenance by this railing acknowledgment of my share in the defense of the house, and I judged by his tone that he considered it a reflection on him for being absent in the crisis.

"I had been out of town," he said stiffly, apparently for my enlightenment, "and got in on the eight o'clock boat. Later I heard that your friends were on the war-path, and threatening to burn Nob Hill and Van Ness Avenue. Then I came up here to see if I could be of service, and found that it was all over–except the repairs." And with this attempt to set himself right, he resumed his air of importance.

"Well, it's very lucky you weren't here," said Miss Kendrick. "I don't doubt you would have got your head broken, and you'd never be able to stand up on that ladder if it was going around the way Mr. Hampden's is. Oh," she cried suddenly, "what have you done with that bandage I put over your bump?"

"It came off," I said weakly, bringing the damp and offending rag out of my pocket.

"I believe you took it off," she said with an air of reprimand.

"You can put it on again," I pleaded with meek submission.

"No–it can stay off," she said. "You're getting on entirely too well to be fussed over any more. And now if you'll go in and see uncle, I'll be obliged. He has been dozing, but he comes to with a start every few minutes and asks for you. I'm hoping you can quiet his mind, for his worry isn't at all good for him." And her voice quivered with a pathetic note of affectionate anxiety.

Wharton Kendrick lay on the couch with his eyes closed, but opened them vacantly as I came in. Mercy Fillmore sat by his side. He collected himself with an effort, and said:

"I've been wanting you, Hampden! What was it you were to see about? Some business, wasn't it?" His eyes wandered, as though he were seeking for some lost thread of memory.

I gave him a condensed account of my visit to William T. Coleman. He heard me listlessly until I came to the request to make out a check for the syndicate's balance in favor of Nelson. Then he started violently, and half raised himself.

"I'll see 'em damned first!" he cried. "How can I protect myself if the money is turned over to Nelson?" He looked about wildly, fiercely; then sank back and closed his eyes.

Mercy Fillmore shook her head at me, and her eyes expressed reproach.

"You are exciting him," she whispered. "Isn't this business something that can be put off?"

He heard her and answered:

"No, it can't be put off. There'll be a smash in the market in the morning, and I shan't be there to stop it!" He had begun with energy, but his voice trailed off into a querulous tone as he added: "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Then suddenly a look of resolution came into his face. "Bring me my check-book," he cried with feverish impatience. "There's one in that coat pocket. Be quick about it!"

The book was produced, and after looking at it helplessly for a little he handed it back to me. Then he seemed to collect his faculties and asked:

"What was the balance? Why can't I remember?"

I read the figures from the memorandum Mr. Coleman had given me.

"Seven million three hundred and twenty thousand," he repeated. "Well, make out a check to yourself for that amount. Now help me up while I sign it. What are you waiting for? Give me that pen."

I was somewhat dashed by the responsibility that was being thrust upon

me, but I could think of no better course. So we propped him to a sitting posture, and he signed his name somewhat unsteadily to the check.

"Now take it, Hampden," he said. "You won't see me go down, will you? Look out for my interests. They're yours, Hampden. Stand by me this time, and I'll stand by you always." His voice trailed off into indistinctness as we laid him back on the pillow, and after a struggle to speak, his face flushed a startling red, he mumbled a few incoherent sounds, and was lost to his surroundings.

Mercy Fillmore uttered a cry at this sudden change.

"Oh, I wish Doctor Roberts was back!"

"Here is Doctor Roberts," said the quiet professional voice, as the physician entered the room and stepped to his patient's side. "No more business to-night," he continued sharply. "I am afraid there will be no more for many days. I must ask you to retire, Mr. Hampden; the atmosphere is too exciting for Mr. Kendrick."

I denied myself the pleasure of interrupting Mr. Baldwin's conversation, as I went out, and hastened to the Coleman house.

Partridge and Nelson had already arrived, and I found them earnestly discussing the situation with Mr. Coleman. They greeted me with condescension, inquired civilly of the condition of Wharton Kendrick, and warmly expressed their indignation against the mob.

"Was Kendrick able to sign the check to Nelson?" asked Coleman, coming abruptly to the matter of business.

I explained, as diplomatically as I was able, the arrangement my client had made.

"Well, then," said Nelson, "it is very easily settled. All you have to do is to indorse the check over to me." And he looked at me with the self-satisfied air of the business man whose word is law to his employees.

The calm assumption that I was to be eliminated from the proceedings without so much as saying "by your leave," roused my combative instincts, and it was only by drawing a firm rein on my temper that I was able to reply calmly:

"I do not think I am justified by my instructions to take such a step."

"What do you propose to do, then?" asked Partridge shortly.

The tone in which the question was put added fire to my resentment, and I replied with emphasis:

"I shall be guided by the wishes of my client, and where he has not expressed a wish, I shall follow my own judgment."

Partridge and Nelson looked at each other.

"I think I shall go and see Kendrick," said Partridge.

"Mr. Kendrick is in a stupor, and the doctor would not permit him to be seen, even if he could be roused," I replied.

"This is very awkward," said Nelson, drumming on the table with his fin-

gers.

"Not at all," said Coleman, in calm and tactful voice. "Mr. Hampden has the money that was intrusted to Kendrick. He has Kendrick's power of attorney. For all practical purposes he is Kendrick. He will sign the checks just as Kendrick would have signed them. Is not that your idea, Mr. Hampden?"

"You have stated exactly my understanding of my instructions, Mr. Coleman. I am ready to sign any checks that Mr. Kendrick would sign if he were here."

Partridge nodded his assent to this construction of my orders, but Nelson still looked sourly at me.

"What checks do you think he would sign?" asked Nelson.

"Why, in general, I should say that they would be any that are approved by you three gentlemen."

Nelson's face cleared and he stopped drumming on the table.

"That is satisfactory," he said. "Then we had better make our headquarters again in Mr. Kendrick's office. It is the most central location. We shall be there a little before ten o'clock."

"You had better see the bank about transferring the money to your account before the opening," said Partridge, as we rose to go. "When the fun begins, you'll have no time to waste."

CHAPTER XXIII
THE COMMITTEE OF SAFETY

I came out of the bank from my morning visit in a daze of emotions. The street was thronged with hurrying crowds. The air was electric with the tension of social storm. The echoes of the mob's outburst could be heard in the indignant comments that passed from mouth to mouth; the fears that it inspired could be read in the tense lines that it had written on men's faces. But it was all one to me. I saw and I saw not. I heard and I heard not. I walked the street stunned, overwhelmed with the conviction that an irreparable blunder had snatched the control of events from my hands, and doomed Wharton Kendrick to swift and certain ruin.

I had found the president of the Golconda Bank in his private office at a few minutes after nine o'clock, and Wharton Kendrick's card had secured me prompt

admission. I had known the president slightly for several years, and he received me with brusk kindness as I stated my errand and exhibited my credentials.

"Oh, we'll arrange that for you in two minutes," he said, after he had examined my papers, and questioned me on Wharton Kendrick's condition. "Just indorse that check, and I'll have the account put in your name."

When he had sent his messenger to the cashier with his directions, he continued:

"That is a heavy responsibility you have on your shoulders to-day. There is plenty of trouble ahead. We look to the syndicate to do the work of a commercial fire-patrol." And he favored me with a few words of advice for which I professed myself grateful. He was still giving counsel, when the cashier reappeared with a troubled face.

"There's something wrong about this," he said, laying my check before the president.

"That is Kendrick's signature," said the president, scrutinizing it once more.

"But look at the figures," urged the cashier.

"Seven million three hundred and twenty thousand dollars?"

"Yes; but there is only six million eight hundred and twenty thousand in the special account on which this check is drawn."

The president drew his lips into a whistle, and then said:

"Well, we can't do anything with it, you see. You'll have to go back to Kendrick and get him to correct it."

If I had been as wise at the moment as I became by subsequent reflection I should have summoned all my powers of eloquence to convince him that the safety of the bank as a part of the commercial structure of the city lay in getting that fund promptly released for use in the coming crisis. The arguments with which I could have supported such a thesis came to me in abundance a day later. But at the moment I was stricken dumb and my wits were scattered by the thought that Wharton Kendrick had used for his own purposes a half-million dollars of the syndicate's money, and was to be dishonored before the world.

Before I could recover myself the president had bowed me out of his room, and I was mechanically guided by my subconscious self to Wharton Kendrick's office. In my bewilderment I came into collision with a man who stood by the door, and begged his pardon without getting an impression of his personality.

"Why, God bless my soul, Hampden! What's the matter with you? You run over a man without even the politeness to call out 'Hi there!' and then you look at him as though it was the first time you'd ever set eyes on him. Is this the day you pick out to send your wits a-wool-gathering? Where's Kendrick? I see by the papers there was a row up at his house last night, and he got a nasty knock on the head."

It was General Wilson, looking more fiery and self-important than ever.

"What's the matter?" he continued, slapping me jovially on the back. "Is Kendrick worse hurt than the papers say? You look as though the bank had broken."

I told the general of the assault on Kendrick and of his perilous condition, and the general puffed out his red cheeks, blew out his breath with a noise like a porpoise, and cursed the mob with a heartiness and good will that was inspiring.

"Put me in charge of this town for twenty-four hours, and I'd hang every mother's son of those agitators higher than Haman," said the general, when the ready stock of curses ran out. "That's the way to deal with 'em. But cheer up! Kendrick will be all right in a few days."

I felt an inward shrinking from telling General Wilson the rest of the woeful truth. But the truth would be the property of the street within an hour, and it could not be made worse by trusting it to even so garrulous a confidant as he. Perhaps I had a faint hope that the old campaigner might make a suggestion that would help me out of my difficulties; but the overmastering thought in my mind was that I held the position of a conductor of a runaway train that was plunging down a mountain grade to certain wreck, and it did not matter what I did or said. So taking the general into Wharton Kendrick's office, I told him my tale of the dishonored check.

He took it more calmly than I had expected. "How much did you say he's overdrawn?" he asked in businesslike tones.

"Five hundred thousand dollars."

"That was the deuce of a mistake for Kendrick to make. Can't you get him to correct it?"

I groaned out a miserable negative.

"I left there at half-past eight this morning," I returned, "and he hadn't come out of the stupor that I left him in last night."

General Wilson drew a prolonged whistle, and looked grave. Then he said:

"There's just one thing to do. Get some of Kendrick's friends to advance the half-million. Deposit it to his account. Then the bank will pay your check. Then you'll have the money, and can pay back the advance inside of one minute."

"Half a million is a big sum," I said doubtingly. "I don't know anybody who will put that up at short notice."

General Wilson threw himself back in his chair with an air of marvelous self-importance.

"Hang it, man!" he cried. "Why don't you ask me? You don't suppose that General Wilson would let his friend Kendrick go to the wall for want of a trifling favor like that, do you? I've a notion to be insulted at not being asked–hang me if I haven't!"

I grasped his hand, and expressed my opinion of his offer in dumb show. There was a painful task before me, however, and as it could not be postponed, I hastened to perform it.

"You're a trump, General Wilson, but I can't take up with your offer."

"Why not?"

"Because," I said slowly, "I can't pay back the five hundred thousand if you advance it."

"What do you mean?" demanded General Wilson in bewilderment.

"Well, I am afraid that the figures on the check are correct."

"Correct? How's that?"

"They are the figures of the balance of the syndicate's fund deposited in Wharton Kendrick's hands. They show the amount of money that ought to be in the bank–and it isn't there."

General Wilson drew another long whistle, and his face suddenly became grave again.

"Then he has used half a million of the syndicate's money?"

"I suppose so."

"What in the name of common sense did he do that for?" demanded the general irritably.

"I suppose he was sure he could make it up when the time came," I said in feeble defense.

"They always are," said the general grimly.

"Oh, I have no doubt he had everything calculated out to the last dollar," I returned. "The only thing he didn't calculate on was this knock on the head. If he was on his feet he would have the money in five minutes."

"Well, I suppose he would," said the general. "But he isn't on his feet, and what's the result?"

"The result is smash," said I with grim despair. "Partridge, Nelson and Coleman will be here inside of twenty minutes. When they set foot inside that door, Wharton Kendrick had better be dead."

General Wilson studied vacancy for a minute. Then he said slowly:

"You said you got a power of attorney out of Kendrick, didn't you?"

I handed him the paper I had drawn and Wharton Kendrick had signed.

He studied it carefully, and then nodded his head as though it met his approval. At last he said:

"Well, then, there's a way out. I was coming in this morning to put through that swamp-land deal. Why, you were at Kendrick's on Sunday when I told him that he was going to accept eight hundred thousand for that land, and he hemmed and hawed, and told me to come in this morning. Of course I could see in his eye that he was going to take me up, but he was playing coy. Now I'll make you the

offer I would make him if he was here. I'll pay you five hundred thousand down, balance in thirty days, or when deed passes." He looked at me with a mixture of business shrewdness and bluff friendship.

"I'll take the responsibility of accepting that offer," I said promptly. And General Wilson drew his check and scribbled a few lines on a sheet of paper.

"Here, sign this receipt and memorandum of agreement, and give me that power of attorney; I'll have it recorded," he said. "Now take that check and get over to the bank as quick as the Lord'll let you. We'll make out the contract in due form this afternoon, and I'll get that on record, too." Then he chuckled jovially, and gave me another slap on the back as he added: "Stick to me, and I'll make a Napoleon of Finance out of you yet, Hampden."

Until I felt the sudden rebound of my spirits when I saw the check in my hand, I did not realize how horribly I had been scared. I was in a position to appreciate the feelings of a man who felt his house tumbling about his ears in a mighty earthquake, and had waked to find it only a nightmare. But I thanked General Wilson calmly, and rushed hurriedly over to the bank. I had small difficulty in impressing the president with the importance of haste; and the account was cleared and entered in my name before the opening hour.

As I returned to the office I met William T. Coleman coming away. His face was calm with resolute strength, and his eyes carried the magnetic inspiration of courage.

"I just looked in to tell you that I can't sit with your committee for an hour or two," he said. "I have some other irons in the fire; but I'll be in later. Partridge and Nelson are there now, and whatever they approve will be satisfactory to me. If you get at loggerheads, send for me, and I'll come."

His manner more than his words put me in heart with the assurance that I should not have to stand alone in battle, and I hastened with fresh confidence to take my place in the council.

"They're hammering things pretty hard on the exchanges," said Partridge after greetings had been made. "Prices are holding up well, so far, but I guess we'll have to put a brace under some of those fellows inside of half an hour." And with a clouded brow he studied the strip that came from the ticker.

"Carey and Son are shaky," said Nelson. "So are Benbow and Johnson, and a dozen others. And worst of all we've got to put some more coin into those confounded banks."

"It's like throwing the money away," groaned Partridge. "They can't put up collateral that a gambler would look at."

Nelson adjusted his gold-rimmed eye-glasses to look at his list of suspects, and gave his head a shake.

"Well, we've got to keep them afloat till these troubles are over," he said

with decision.

"And the infernal part of it is," said Partridge, "that those fellows know it. I'd give a thousand dollars out of my own pocket, if we could let them drop without hurting any one else." And he resumed his study of the ticker with an irritated face.

The noise of the shouting crowds that filled and surrounded the exchanges floated up through the windows, rising and falling like the roar of ocean breakers. There was a curious variation of quality in the swelling volumes of sound. Now it expressed apprehension; now desperation; and again there was the tonic roar of exultation rising above the lesser cries.

We had not been in consultation ten minutes when the first application for support came from a pale but assertive man who tried to conceal his desperation under an air of bluster.

"Manning, of Smith and Manning," whispered Nelson to me, as the man entered the door.

He began to explain his business in roundabout phrase.

"Never mind that, Manning," said Partridge. "You're in the door, and you'll be squeezed if we don't help you. That's the long and short of it. How much are you in for, and what security can you offer? Let's see those papers. They tell the story, don't they?"

Manning wiped his forehead, with a sigh, and looked relieved rather than hurt at Partridge's abruptness.

"Five thousand will pull us through," he gasped.

"No it won't," said Partridge, running over the papers. "Here's another note for thirty-five hundred. Einstein and Company won't wait. This is a pretty poor showing. No wonder the bank wouldn't carry you any longer!"

"We can get along all right if we get out of this hole," pleaded Manning.

"Well, we'll take up these two claims on your note for thirty days," said Partridge after a telegraphic glance at Nelson and me. "Sign here."

I made out the checks, and Manning, once more putting on his blustering air as he would have put on an overcoat, went out to face his enemies.

From this time on, there was a steady stream of applicants, some frankly admitting their desperate condition, some trying to conceal their fears under an assumption of confidence. But whatever of pretense a man had covered himself with to enter our office was ruthlessly stripped from him as soon as he made his request for money. For one minute of the day, at least, he had to face the truth, and to see himself as he was. I soon discovered that Partridge's judgment of commercial paper was quick and sure. Nelson and I recognized our inferiority and promptly deferred to his opinions. Only once during the day did we overrule him, and in that instance we acted rather on an inspiration of mercy than on our

commercial judgment.

"His paper is no good, and he wouldn't carry anybody else with him if he went to the wall," objected Partridge, when the man we had insisted on saving from ruin had gone out.

"The paper is bad," admitted Nelson, "but the man is all right. I like his looks."

"Yes," I added, "we have double the chance of getting the money back from him that we have of getting it from that fat, oily-tongued fellow who stood us up for twenty thousand a few minutes ago."

I was pleased to remind Partridge of the incident a few months later when our protégé redeemed his obligation in full at the same time that the oily-tongued heavy-weight compromised for thirty cents on the dollar.

But despite this temporary disagreement I was none the less ready to follow Partridge's judgment on the cases that came before us. And after the cross-questioning of the applicant was over, Nelson and I rarely refused a nod of assent to his inquiring glance. His comments ran something like this, as the stream of the financially lame, halt and blind passed before us:

"That's all tommyrot–you don't need the half of that. Seven thousand will pull you through. Here! what do you mean by coming to us? Any bank in the city would take that collateral. No. Not a dollar unless you will make over your stock to Nelson as trustee. Here! you'll have to get your brother to sign that note. Take it now. He'll do it, when you tell him that we won't touch it without. That collateral is no good; I know you've got better. Don't waste our time, unless you're willing to show it. See here! you'll need more than that. What do you mean by telling us that you owe only ten thousand when your balance-sheet here calls for eighteen? Come now, do you think we are running a charity soup-house? You've got unencumbered real estate; raise your money on that."

We had been at this work close upon two hours when William T. Coleman returned. He brought a list of merchants who would need assistance, and the amounts that we might safely advance them.

"There's a very scary feeling outside," he said. "There are all sorts of rumors about plots to burn the city, and some men are foolish enough to say that San Francisco is going to be worse than Pittsburgh."

"That's not impossible," said Nelson.

"I know there has been plenty of talk in the anti-coolie clubs about burning the Pacific Mail steamers," I said. "But I don't think they will have the courage for it."

"It's only a question of leadership," said Coleman, "and that may develop at any minute. A mob is a queer creature. You can't tell what it will do. It is a coward by itself, but it is often capable of great courage when it has a leader–sometimes

when it thinks it has a leader."

"What we need is troops," said Nelson. "I hope, Coleman, that you will use your influence with Bryant and Governor Irwin to get the militia called out. They ought to ask for Federal troops. There'll be no nonsense where they are stationed. They shoot to kill."

"You might bring your plans before the citizens' meeting this afternoon," said Coleman shortly.

Partridge had been studying the ticker intently, and now growled:

"There's somebody raising the devil out there in the stock-market. He's got the El Dorado Bank behind him by the looks of things, and he's whacking at prices with a sledge-hammer."

The name of this modern practitioner in the black art was on the tip of my tongue, but I kept it from escaping. If Wharton Kendrick had not revealed it in the course of the previous raid, it was evidently my cue to keep still.

The contest grew hotter as the day advanced. The waiting-room was filled with anxious men, and we watched with concern the growing total of advances we had been compelled to make. The Sundown Bank had to be rescued twice from imminent failure, and two other banks called upon us for loans. We had groaned at the character of the collateral offered by the Sundowners, but there was no help for it. We had to advance enough to keep their doors from closing, or the wreck would have begun; and once under way at this troublous juncture we saw no limit to the ruin ahead. But at last it was over. Three o'clock came, the banks closed, and rumor and fear could only threaten of trouble to come.

"Well, there's a hard day gone," said Partridge with a sigh of relief.

"And another one just beginning," said Coleman placidly.

"How do we stand now?" asked Nelson.

"We paid out three million seven hundred and ninety-eight thousand," I returned, glancing at the figures.

"That leaves us–?"

"Three million five hundred and twenty-two thousand."

"That is too small a margin for safety," said Coleman with decision. "This thing isn't over yet. I thought we would have enough to carry us through, but I see we must have more. You'll have to get out, Partridge, and you, too, Nelson, and see what can be done in the way of raising more money."

"I suppose it has got to be done," said Partridge. "We can't afford to go broke now." And Nelson nodded assent.

Coleman then turned to me: "It's time we were going over to the citizens' meeting," he said. "I've promised to preside. We are to meet in the Chamber of Commerce rooms, over here." And taking me by the arm, he led me out of the office.

During the stress of the day's business, we had come into close relations, and I had been more than ever impressed with the vigorous sense of this man. He displayed on that small field all the qualities of leadership demanded in the management of a nation. His resource and calm strength of mind inspired me with an unwonted warmth of admiration, and I could even then think only with regret of the ruler and statesman who had been smothered into the habit of a painstaking merchant. The generous emotions of hero-worship thrilled within me, and I was delighted to find that my admiration was repaid with a show of liking and confidence.

"There is one thing I am apprehensive about," he said, as we climbed the stairs to the Chamber of Commerce. "This meeting is a necessary thing, but it seems to have roused anxiety rather than allayed it. I hope that the speeches will be of a character to inspire confidence in our ability to handle the situation. If we don't inspire that confidence, we shall do more mischief than good."

As we entered the hall, we saw that it was already well filled with the solid men of the city. Mayor Bryant was there with the chief of police. General McComb nodded to me, and hastened to speak to Coleman. Members of the state and city governments, bankers, merchants, and a sprinkling of other classes of society were to be seen in the groups about the room.

There was more of cheerful calmness about the meeting than I had expected to find. The fact that these men were present was proof that they felt the emergency to be grave; but their talk was flavored with the saving salt of American humor that no calamity can suppress, and inspired by the optimistic American sentiment that "it will all come out right somehow."

I had scarce found a seat when General McComb with his most impressive military air called the meeting to order. When the company had been reduced to silence, he continued:

"I have taken the liberty of sending out the circulars that requested you to meet here for the purpose of considering the safety of the city. The people see in Monday night's outbreak the dangers that come when the passions of the mob are given full sway. An honored citizen has been struck down, property has been destroyed, and threats of worse things to come are heard on every side. In this emergency we should organize to give the city the protection essential to its preservation. We have with us a man who has twice come forward to lead the loyal citizens in the task of putting down the lawless and criminal elements of the city. I ask that William T. Coleman be chosen as chairman of this meeting."

The response left no doubt that Mr. Coleman was the assembly's unanimous choice. The men who had gathered there looked toward him with as unquestioning confidence as ever soldiers looked to their captain. And at the shout that answered General McComb, he walked to the chair with the assured step of

a man accustomed to command.

"I thank you for your confidence," he said. "I have not thought, I do not think, that there is any pressing danger. But I recognize the moral value of organization in times of disquiet, and I am here to assist in putting the physical force of the city at the disposition of the authorities. I have not seen any need for augmenting the military or police forces of the city. But General McComb and Mayor Bryant, who have had better opportunities than I to observe the situation, have thought differently. Therefore let us take precautions. The people of this city have proved through many trials that they are essentially law-abiding. But there is a dangerous element here–an element of lawless young men who do not think of results, and who do not shrink from violence. If I had not realized this fact before, I should have been forced to acknowledge it when one of my closest friends fell a victim last night to their anger. But I have full confidence in the manhood of San Francisco. If the city is threatened by a rising of the disorderly elements I am ready to assure the authorities that a force of twenty thousand men can be raised, if need be, for the defense of our homes and property."

A silence followed the applause evoked by this speech. If the speaker expressed more confidence than he felt, his words accomplished their purpose of rousing the courage of the assembly before him. Then a mild-faced man rose, and in halting voice asked the privilege of putting a question.

"Mr. Chairman," he began, "why are not the constituted authorities sufficient to cope with this outbreak? We have police. We have a militia. They are the lawful arm of government to chastise the evil-doer. Why are they not competent to handle the hoodlum mobs?"

General McComb was touched to the quick by the question thus put, and rose with an air of military dignity.

"I can answer for the militia," he said with some asperity. "There is no more loyal and competent body anywhere than the one I have the honor to command. But the troops must be supported by the assurance that they have the moral and physical backing of law-abiding citizens. That is why I have asked you to meet us here. I have no doubt you would like to hear from our worthy mayor on the needs of the city in this emergency."

Mayor Bryant got to his feet at this indirect appeal, and a much troubled mayor he appeared. I doubted not from his expression that he would have welcomed some plan by which his office might be administered on the model of those German newspapers whose editors delegate to some hireling the responsibilities that lead to *lèse-majesté* and the jail, and pursue their way undisturbed by thoughts of consequences.

"I approve the proposed organization of citizens to coöperate with the municipal authorities," he began in halting and anxious tones. "It will help us to keep

the peace. But there wasn't so much violence last night as some have thought. The body of the meeting was orderly. The trouble came only from the hoodlums who broke off from it in droves to commit violence. The responsible men of the labor organizations who were present have called on me to say that they had no idea that the hoodlums would take advantage of the meeting to create disorder."

Several military men followed the mayor with speeches of a fiery nature, and advocated stern measures to subdue the riotous elements. At these outbursts of martial ardor I could see Coleman's mouth tighten imperceptibly into lines of disapproval and determination. At last his growing impatience could be restrained no longer, and he interrupted a resplendent militia colonel who was in full flight of an oration calling for "action at once."

"I understand this subject," said Coleman with decision, "and you don't. This is a matter that should not be discussed too fully or too publicly. But since so much has been said, I will inform you, gentlemen, that you don't know the mine you are standing on. The safety or destruction of the city hangs on a pivot. There must be more spirit shown by the law-abiding elements, or the balance will turn toward destruction. There must be action, not talk. I do not want to accuse anybody of lethargy, but the fact is there are too many men who call for the suppression of disorder, and then go home and leave somebody else to attend to their protection. The men who most deserve protection are those who are ready to take arms in their hands to get it."

"Well, what course would you advise this meeting to take?" asked General McComb.

"Organize at once," said the chairman in vigorous tones. "Appoint a central committee–say of twenty-four. Then open rolls for men to sign, pledging their persons and their money to protect the wives, children and fortunes that are now at the mercy of the mob."

This inspiring counsel brought the assembly to its feet. In a tumult of enthusiasm it was agreed that the chairman should appoint the committee, and that the work of organization should begin at once. It was over in another ten minutes. Coleman named the committee without hesitation, and after it had held a brief session he announced that it had reported in favor of immediate organization, and added:

"You are invited to put your hands to this instrument:

"'We, the undersigned citizens of San Francisco, do hereby enroll ourselves as a General Committee of Safety, subject to the requirements of the Special Committee of Twenty-Four, of which William T. Coleman, Esq., is President, and we do hereby bind ourselves to act with the committee to preserve the peace and

well-being of the city with our money and persons.'

"You will be given directions where to assemble, and what duties you are to perform. I hope no able-bodied citizen will fail to give us his services and support."

At a significant gesture from the president, these solid men of the city crowded about the secretary to sign their names, and the Committee of Safety was born.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE JUSTICE OF BIG SAM

"You seem to have done a good day's work," was Miss Kendrick's comment on my brief account of the commercial struggle, "and you'll make a business man yet if you keep on. I wish you could tell uncle about it, but he's still unconscious." And her lip trembled at the sudden remembrance of Wharton Kendrick's peril, until I thought for the moment that she was going to burst into tears. But she commanded herself, and continued in steady voice: "And now that you've done so well, I'll give one of those reward-of-merit cards you used to get in school. It came this afternoon, and I'm dying to know what's in it." And she brought out a letter addressed in fine Spencerian copperplate script to "Mr. Hampden, the Lawyer of Mr. Kendrick's House on Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco."

I read the address with some wonder, and Laura Kendrick continued:

"Moon Ying says that funny little sign up in the corner is Big Sam's seal; but he surely never wrote that remarkable address. I suppose it is by one of his clerks."

At this, I hastily opened the envelope, and found within a formal note:

Kwan Sam Suey requests the pleasure of Mr. Hampden's company, at his office in Waverly Place, this evening, at as early an hour as convenient.

I passed the note over to Miss Kendrick.

"It looks as though there was going to be a party," she said, "or a supper at

the very least. I hope you won't overeat–or worse."

"Big Sam has never suggested such an idea as eating or drinking, though I don't put it beyond him. But he surely hasn't picked out this season of alarms to give a reception. So if you'll excuse me, I'll run down to his place. It may be something important."

"Of course you must go–and you must come back, too. I'm sure I can't sleep till I know what it's about. I shall be up most of the night, and so will Mercy; so you needn't have qualms about ringing the bell, even if you are later than late. There will be somebody to let you in."

"As I'd rather be here than anywhere else, I shan't miss the chance to come back," I said boldly.

She ignored my words, and evaded my devouring glances, and with a sage nod suggested that the sooner I was on my way, the sooner I should have a chance to come back.

As I went down the steps I was stricken with a jealous pang to see Mr. Baldwin coming up with the air of a conquering army. He gave me a cool "Good evening," and then asked, in his most superior manner, if I were on my way to stir my friends to further exertions.

"I have but one object in life," I returned in a confidential tone, "and that is to put your particular friend and client inside four stone walls where he can't do any more harm. And you can tell Mr. Bolton so with my compliments, too."

From his muttered response, I gathered that my reminder of his connection with Peter Bolton did not give him unalloyed pleasure, and pleased with the consciousness that I had given more than I had received in the way of irritation, I went my way to Chinatown.

There were abundant signs of unrest in both the white and the yellow city. Bands of hoodlums still ranged the streets, and fought runaway actions with the police. Householders seemed in fear, and windows that were customarily cheerful with lights now looked with darkened shades upon the streets.

Chinatown was as forbidding as on the night of my last visit, and such lights as were to be seen shone through closed shutters and barred doors. But despite the atmosphere of sullen hostility that lay like a fog upon the district, I made my way without interference to Waverly Place and rapped on Big Sam's door. My name secured prompt admittance. The door was unbarred for a moment for my entrance, and promptly barred once more, and I was led through a crowd of sullen, hostile-faced hatchet-men to Big Sam's reception-hall.

The King of Chinatown sat by his desk in his flowing robes of state, but rose and offered me his hand as I entered.

"I thank you for your prompt attention, Mr. Hampden," he said, motioning me courteously to a high-backed chair at his side. I thought I could detect a trace

of worry in his eyes, but his face was as impassive as ever.

"I am flattered to receive your invitation."

"It is not an idle one."

"I should be slow to believe so–especially after the prompt fulfilment of your last prophecy."

"You have the eye of the reader of thoughts," said Big Sam with a faint smile. "You speak of the very point I wish to ask about. I note by the papers that you were attacked–or Mr. Kendrick, to be accurate."

"Oh, I was fortunate enough to share in it," I said nonchalantly.

"Hardly a matter for congratulation, Mr. Hampden. Kindly let me know what happened. Was it by my people, or–"

He paused, and I replied:

"We were attacked in front by the anti-Chinese mob, three hundred or more strong, and in the rear by a score or so of ruffians that I have reason to suppose were hired by your people."

"I should be obliged for your reasons."

"They are at your service." And I gave the accumulated facts from Little John's attempt to drag away the Chinese girl, to Danny Regan's identification by Moon Ying.

As I set forth my tale, a certain fire of rage kindled in Big Sam's face without disturbing the impassivity of his features. He seemed to grow larger, and I could understand how great monarchs cause men to tremble by something more than the physical forces at their command. Some subtle force irradiated from the man, and only a strong will could refuse to yield to the fear that he inspired.

As I ended my tale, he muttered, "The dogs–to violate their word–to cross my orders–to risk everything at this crisis!"

Then he clapped his hands, and two men appeared, and after a few words vanished.

"I hope you will not object if I detain you for a time," said Big Sam, relaxing something of his anger.

"Not at all, if I can be of service."

"You mean that you would not stay as a social diversion," he said with a faint smile. "Well, you can be of service, Mr. Hampden, and permit me in the interval to offer you the hospitalities that should pass between friends." He gave his hands another clap, and in a moment a servant entered bearing a tray with a teapot and cups, and placed it before Big Sam. My host poured the tea as I exclaimed at the beauty of the porcelain in the highly decorated pot and the thin cups.

"I presume you prefer sugar and milk," said Big Sam, hesitating.

If I had possessed an insatiable appetite for these luxuries, the note of scorn

in his voice would have forbidden me to confess it. But I had been dealing with Chinese clients long enough, and had drunk tea enough in Chinese fashion, to make it a matter of indifference to me, and I gave him a cheerful negative.

"What an exquisite flavor!" I exclaimed, as I sipped from the dainty cups. "Where do you get such tea?"

"I have it brought over by a special agent. It is not such as you can buy in the stores. That you may realize that you do not see all of China in the externals we present in San Francisco, I will remind you that you consider that you get a very good tea when you pay two dollars a pound for it. It is a good tea. But this that you are drinking costs eighty dollars a pound in China. You see we have a few luxuries–possibly some that you would not recognize. This is the tea of the gods, and I am pleased to see that you do not profane its flavor." The servant had brought in another tray, and Big Sam pressed me to eat of some preserved fish, which he praised more highly than I thought it deserved, and a fowl deliciously cooked with strange seasonings, ending with Chinese sweetmeats and a dash of fine Chinese brandy. I ate without hesitation, for all my suspicion of Chinese dishes, for I could believe that the man who drank tea at eighty dollars a pound would have nothing below the best.

And as we ate, Big Sam questioned me with a devouring curiosity of my views on the relations of China and the United States, on the future of the Orient, on the possible waking of China, on the destiny of the races, on the results of the anti-Chinese agitation; and though he gave little expression to his own views, he let drop many statesmanlike observations that showed how deeply he had thought upon these problems. Then at a sound from without, he had the trays cleared away, and the look of stern anger came back to his face.

"Now, Mr. Hampden, is the time for your assistance," he said. "I did not, as you may assume, invite you here to talk politics. That pleasure might have waited till a less troubled time. Matters of more importance await us. With your kind permission, we shall hold a high court of justice."

I had ceased to be astonished at anything that might happen in Big Sam's apartments. I bowed assent, and at a sharp rap on the desk, a score or more of sullen-faced Chinese entered, and formed in line along the walls. Apparently they bore no arms, but I judged from their expression that they belonged to the notorious hatchet-men, and carried all the paraphernalia of war under their loose blouses. Then entered two men of stern aspect, who walked with an air of command, and after greeting Big Sam they were introduced to me as the presidents of the Sare Bo and the See Yung tongs and were given seats beside us. Then at a curt order from Big Sam, another door opened, and two men entered dragging a protesting prisoner between them.

It was Little John, and by the fear that gleamed in his eyes and set his chin a-

tremble, his forecast of the judgment of the high court of justice was most grave. He dropped to his knees, as he was dragged in front of the desk and made to face us, and beat his forehead on the floor with exclamations of protest and appeals for mercy. At a word from Big Sam the guards brought him to his feet, and Big Sam spoke briefly in Chinese. Then he turned to me.

"Is this the man, Mr. Hampden?"

"I have no doubt it is," I responded.

"Please repeat your story to these men," and he indicated the two Chinese presidents who looked with stern, impassive faces upon the trembling wretch before us.

"You will understand that this is not evidence," I said. "It is nothing that could be received in court, as I speak for the most part by hearsay."

"Proceed," said Big Sam. "Our justice is not pinioned in the bonds of your rules of evidence." And I repeated the account of the first visit of Little John, of his attempt to capture Moon Ying, of the assault on the Kendrick house by Danny Regan's ruffians, and Regan's identification by Moon Ying as Little John's expressman. From time to time Big Sam acted as interpreter, though in the main the Chinese appeared to understand me well enough.

The prisoner shook as with an ague at my disclosures, and his coarse goatee fluttered in sympathy with his flying heart. A few questions were put to him, and after admitting that he had visited the Kendrick place, he turned to denial, and became glib in his own defense. Big Sam translated to me in an undertone, and I could feel the anger in his voice rising higher and higher at each prevarication. At last Big Sam sprang to his feet, and pointing at me, thundered a question at Little John.

Little John hesitated, stumbled in his speech, hastily denied his words, then stopped and looked about him with evident realization that he was lost; and with a scream of terror he would have fallen had not the guards caught him and brought him roughly to his feet.

"Mr. Hampden, what shall be done with this man?" asked Big Sam.

"I have a warrant out for his arrest for disturbing the peace. I'm afraid I haven't evidence enough to satisfy our courts on a higher charge."

"Well, this court is satisfied–you believe him guilty, Mr. Hampden?"

"He is certainly guilty of attempted abduction."

He apparently put the same question to the two stern-faced men beside us, and they gave assent in brief phrases.

"The court is unanimous," said Big Sam. "Guilty of attempted abduction, violation of the bargain between the tongs, sacrificing the interests of his race to the interest of his tong by challenging the white vengeance. What should the penalty be, Mr. Hampden?"

"I think in our court he would get two years for the attempted abduction, assuming that he was convicted."

"A mild punishment, Mr. Hampden. I do not wonder that crime flourishes in your country with justice so feeble. But we have no prisons at our command. Death or exile or fine–these are the punishments we can enforce."

I shuddered at his words and tone, but it seemed impossible that we were discussing more than a theoretical case.

"Do you mean to say that our judgment will be carried out?" I cried.

"Certainly. An example is necessary; an offense has been committed; the guilty is before us for sentence."

"I should be satisfied with exile," I said, as Big Sam's eye demanded my choice.

He spoke to the two stern-faced men beside us, and at their answer turned to me.

"All but you, Mr. Hampden, favor death. It is less costly, and more effective."

"But he has not committed a capital offense," I protested.

"It is a capital offense by the laws of his own land. And if he had succeeded in burning Mr. Kendrick's house and killing Mr. Kendrick's family, I understand that it would have been a capital offense, even by the emasculate laws of your country. Is he the less guilty that his accomplices failed in the parts he had arranged for them?"

"Our laws give a lower punishment to the attempt than to the completed offense," I objected.

"Thereby making the suffering of the innocent and not the wickedness of the criminal the measure of guilt," said Big Sam. "It is enough. Let the sentence stand." And with a few words to the men who held the hapless Little John between them, the prisoner was dragged protesting through one of the mysterious doors of Big Sam's apartment, and disappeared at a turn of the labyrinth. Then with ceremonious bows, the stern-faced presidents of the tongs took their leave, and lastly Big Sam's retainers filed out.

"Do you mean that this man is to be killed?" I cried, when the doors had closed behind the departing. "Why, he is not even the principal in the crime. You have told me yourself that he is the representative of the Hop Sing Tong."

"When we can not catch the shark, we catch the pilot-fish," said Big Sam.

"But this is murder."

"Mr. Hampden," said Big Sam calmly, "this has been a very unpleasant affair, but, believe me, necessary. Let us not discuss it further. I have put it from my mind. I advise you to do the same. Do you believe that the organization of the Committee of Safety will have any effect on the troubles in the city?"

"I have every confidence in the man at the head of it. I believe it will be of

material assistance in suppressing disorder."

"The revolutionary elements are strong," said Big Sam. "I have information that there is to be an armed outbreak to-morrow night. Will the Committee of Safety have its organization completed in time to check it? After that, it may be too late."

I wondered whether this warning had come from Peter Bolton, but I saw the futility of asking such a question of the man before me. I could merely express the hope that the huge task of enrolling, arming and instructing the men who were flocking to the Committee's leadership would be far enough advanced to make it of service before a serious outbreak occurred.

"If the Committee is overpowered, I presume we shall be left to our own defense," said Big Sam. "Well, we shall try to be ready. Permit me to thank you again for the pleasure of your company; and good night."

The retainers who held Big Sam's store in force looked at me impassively from their slant-eyes as I went out, and they appeared undisturbed at the scene that so many of them had witnessed. But as the door was closed and barred behind me, their voices broke forth in a chatter of singsong tones that revealed the excitement they had repressed to the eye. Big Sam's justice had at least impressed his followers.

Once more in the streets, the scene in Big Sam's hall seemed impossible, far away, of another world. I studied my duties to the laws of my own land, as I made my way through the darkened thoroughfares. Should I interfere, and try to save the life of Little John–even supposing that it was possible to find him in the Chinese labyrinths? Why? Did he not deserve his fate? And as the picture of Laura Kendrick crushed in the burning ruins of her house rose before my mind's eye, I could not deny that the world would be better off without the man who had planned such a deed. And with the conclusion to leave Chinese justice to the Chinese, I made my way back to the Kendrick house.

As I came up the steps, I was struck by the coincidence of meeting Mr. Baldwin coming down, and wished him a polite "Good night." He halted in evident anger, as though my words had been a personal insult. Then with a muttered "Go to the devil!" he strode up the street.

These signs of perturbation upon the cold and unemotional Baldwin were a portent to wonder at, and I suspected that his visit had not been as happy as he considered to be his desert.

Inside the house, I discovered some reflection of the perturbation displayed by the retreating Baldwin. Miss Kendrick's face was flushed, and I thought I discovered traces of tears on her cheeks, and a tendency to hysteric laughter, very foreign to her nature. Miss Fillmore was embracing her with sympathetic attention as I entered.

"Men are such queer creatures," said Miss Kendrick sagely, "and they do make themselves ridiculous when–"

Then catching sight of me she uttered a cry of dismay, and said:

"Why, what is the matter? Is the house in danger again from those shocking hoodlums?" But she recalled herself as soon as she spoke, and said: "Oh, I remember now. I am Miss Scatterbrain to-night. What did Big Sam want?"

"He wished to assure me that there was no further danger from Little John," I returned, with prudent reserve.

She looked at me suspiciously, as though she detected something behind my words.

"Do you believe him?"

"I have no doubt of his good faith."

"Well, that's one relief. But just the same Moon Ying doesn't go outside this house till all the troubles are over."

"Is there any fighting to-night?" asked Mercy anxiously.

"Only a few hoodlums. I think we shall get through the night without serious trouble, and to-morrow the Vigilantes will be organized. Then the city can sleep in peace."

"Well, I hope so," said Laura, and Mercy breathed an assent. "I feel as though I hadn't slept for a week. And now you go and get some sleep yourself, for you're going to have a hard day to-morrow."

Between the recollections of business, of Big Sam's justice, and of Laura Kendrick, sleep was long in coming. Yet of all problems that kept my mind in ferment, the most disturbing was "What happened to Baldwin?" And after arguing myself to the pleasing conclusion that he had, in his most superior manner, put his fate to the test, and had fallen from the full height of his self-esteem to the bottomless pit of rejection, I fell into dreamless slumber.

CHAPTER XXV
FACING A CRISIS

As I neared the office on the following morning in some depression of spirits at the reports from Wharton Kendrick's bedside, I heard my name called, and turned to find Parks signaling me. His face was alight with self-importance, his hair stood out with electric aggressiveness, and he seemed to tremble with su-

perfluous energy, like a superheated boiler.

"You should have stayed to the rest of our meeting on last Monday night," he said abruptly. "We succeeded in strengthening our cause among the working-people, even though the misguided violence of a few young men interfered with our plans for freeing the people from their oppressors."

"I had other business than listening to speeches."

"Sir," he cried, "you do wrong to speak with contempt of those appeals that rouse men to a knowledge of their rights and their powers. I want you to be with us again to-night. We are to hold another meeting on the New City Hall lots, as you will see by this circular." And he waved a number of sheets that called upon all men to "Rally, Rally!" at the "Great Anti-Coolie Mass Meeting" at eight o'clock.

"Another meeting!" I exclaimed. "You are very indiscreet to hold it at this time."

"Not at all," returned Parks enthusiastically. "Now is the time. We must take advantage of the roused feelings of the people. The outbreak the other night came to nothing because it was but an ebullition of misdirected energy. But it was prompted by a generous desire for action that would free the people, and had we been prepared to take advantage of the opportunity, the strength that for want of intelligent leadership was wasted in profitless attacks on Chinese wash-houses would have put us in possession of the city government."

"Do you think you are prepared now?"

"We are ready to seize the opportunities that fortune may offer."

"Why, you're not so absurd as to suppose that you can seize the government now," I said. "Even supposing you might have done something the other night–which I don't think you could–the time has gone by. The city is roused. The Committee of Safety is organized. The militia is under arms. You will certainly land in jail if you make a move, and if you're locked up, there will be one very unhappy girl in this city. For her sake, Parks, keep out of this affair."

"Sir," said Parks, his aggressive manner a little softened, "I am committed. I can not in honor draw back, even to please the best of women. But you underestimate our strength. The Committee of Safety itself springs from the people, and will assist, not hinder, our movement. The militia is recruited from the same class, and will not fire on the people at the command of plutocracy. We shall meet and we shall triumph. Be with us to-night, at eight sharp." And he hurried on.

A second warning of the intended meeting came from Clark, who was lying in wait for me at the office door.

"Parks just told me about it," I said. "What are they going to do?"

"Why, the men of the Council are talking about taking possession of the

city government, but the talk of the men around town runs to burning the Pacific Mail docks and the steamers, and running the Chinese out of Chinatown."

"Burning the Mail steamers!" I cried.

"Yes. We've got word that the *City of Tokio* is in with a cargo of a thousand coolies, and the men say that the only way to stop them from landing is to burn them in the steamer, and make an end of the docks. Anyhow, if they don't do that, they'll do something else that's likely to be as bad. Waldorf and Reddick held up Bolton in his office last night and got more money out of him–ten thousand or twenty thousand dollars, I don't know which–so they are in funds to organize trouble."

This information seemed to call for action, but I could think of nothing better to do than to order Clark to engage a dozen more stout fellows to be on guard at the Kendrick place in case the mob should pay it another visit. And this done, I walked with some perturbance of mind into the office.

Nelson soon arrived, carefully groomed, fresh-shaven, his side-whiskers trimmed, and his eyeglasses heightening his air of authority, and greeted me with more consideration than he had shown yesterday. A few minutes later Partridge followed in more free and easy fashion.

"I met Coleman on the street just now," said Partridge. "He's too busy with his Vigilantes to do much with us to-day."

"I hope he'll get his twenty thousand men and drive every hoodlum out of town," said Nelson. "Is it true that Kendrick is going to die?"

My heart climbed into my throat at this disturbing question. The business as well as the personal reasons that would make his death a calamity had led me to put this thought rigorously out of my mind, and it was an emotional shock to be compelled to face it.

"I can't think so," I replied, as soon as I could command my voice. "But I'm sorry to say he is no better. When I left the house this morning, he was still unconscious."

"I heard he had no chance," said Nelson, "but I hoped it wasn't so."

For a moment I lost the firmness of mind that had supported me in the trials of the situation. Between the affection I had conceived for Wharton Kendrick and the thought of the confusion in which his affairs would be left, the apprehension of his death threw me into mental distraction. I was recalled by the voice of Partridge:

"Well, we must get down to business. Here's a list of men who will call for loans. There'll be plenty of others. By the way, Hampden, I got pledges of seven hundred and twenty-five thousand more to go into the pool. You can deposit it, if you like, with the rest of the syndicate fund." And he tossed me a bundle of checks.

This simple act of confidence pleased me more than words. These men treated me as one of them. I was trusted as Wharton Kendrick would have been trusted under the same circumstances, and at this certificate of confidence I was warmed by a pardonable glow of pride.

The morning was a repetition of its predecessor, as the elements of the city's commercial woes trickled in concentrated form through the office. It was a depressing business, as the line of embarrassed merchants, brokers and speculators passed rapidly before us. Some were snatched from the brink of ruin. Some were sent about their business as frauds, seeking to use the syndicate's funds in speculation. Some–too unimportant to affect the commercial fabric in their failure–were left to stand or fall as their own strength should determine.

"I never supposed there was so much rotten timber afloat," said Partridge.

William T. Coleman joined us at the lunch hour, and the sight of his face, masterful and calm, renewed our spirits.

"You are keeping things pretty near even in the markets," he said. "We shall weather the gale if there isn't another outbreak."

"Well, that's on the cards," I said. "The circulars are out for another meeting on the sand-lots."

"Come with me, and tell what you know about this, while we have a bite of lunch," he said.

I was more than pleased at this request, but looked doubtfully at the accumulation of papers before us with the feeling that I was the indispensable man at the desk. Coleman interpreted my unspoken thought, and said:

"Oh, sign a dozen checks in blank, and Partridge and Nelson can attend to everything necessary while you are gone."

I was reluctant to surrender my place as dispenser of fortune, even for a brief space of time. The position of a financial magnate in a period of storm and stress was not one that I could conscientiously describe as free from anxieties and perturbations. But it was clothed with power, and power possesses a fascination of its own. Monarchs do not abdicate, except under compulsion; and even among minor office-holders, whose mastership is far more limited than that of a millionaire in business, we have the word of a president that "few die and none resign." But at the compelling glance of William T. Coleman I signed my name to twelve checks, and said that I was happy to attend him.

During our hasty luncheon I told of the warning of coming outbreak that had been given me by Big Sam, of the words of Parks, and of the information I had received from Clark. Then, at his inquiries, I told all that I knew of the Council of Nine–its organization from among the anarchists, socialists and communists, its visionary idea of seizing the city government, and the manner in which it was using the anti-Chinese agitation to secure the physical force to bring about its

revolutionary ends.

"You think the anti-Chinese leaders are being used without their knowledge?" asked Coleman thoughtfully.

"To a large extent, yes. They know, of course, that these men have wider designs, but they do not take them seriously."

"Nevertheless," said Coleman, "they may prove dangerous in a crisis like this. They have the reckless courage of leadership that may turn a mob into a destroying body. We must do everything we can to hasten the enrollment and organization of the Committee of Safety's forces. By the way, have you signed the roll yet?"

"No. I haven't had time to think of it."

"This will never do. You are a leading citizen now and must set a good example. Come with me. We have our headquarters in the Chamber of Commerce rooms for the day, but at night we shall assemble in Horticultural Hall. We are going to have a big force, and must have a big armory."

The assembly hall of the Chamber of Commerce was fitted up with desks, and a score of clerks were busy with books and papers. Two or three hundred men had gathered in the hall, and the clerks were surrounded by confused but orderly groups. Coleman led me to one of the desks, and I signed my name while he himself pinned on my coat the badge of the Vigilantes.

As I wrote, I was astonished to see a dozen lines above my pen the signature of Peter Bolton, and it struck fire to my anger that the arch-conspirator–the man who had inspired the disorder that threatened the city–should have enrolled his name among those who pledged their lives and fortunes to its defense. I gave a quick look about the room with the thought that I should discover the spare face and sardonic smile of the curmudgeon enjoying the flutter into which he had thrown the solid men of the city. But he was nowhere to be seen, and I debated whether I should call Mr. Coleman's attention to the matter; but as I remembered that Wharton Kendrick had checked a mention of Bolton's name in Coleman's own house, and saw no present purpose to be served by the discovery, I followed the sound rule of keeping my mouth shut. And as William T. Coleman retired to the office of the Committee of Twenty-four, I returned to my duties.

On entering the door of my office I was given a shock of surprise. A man of spare figure, tall, with bowed and narrow shoulders, sat facing Partridge and Nelson, and presented only his back to my view; but the back was unmistakably the back of Peter Bolton. Nelson leaned forward, watching him with close attention, while Partridge was running rapidly through a bundle of papers.

"I've got to have the money," were the first words that came to me in Peter Bolton's complaining voice. "Here are the securities–pretty good securities, too–better than you took from Packenham, or Hooper, or a dozen others–ten times

as good as you took from the Sundown Bank."

Partridge swiftly sorted the papers into two packets. The larger one he threw across the desk to Bolton.

"The banks will take those," he said with crisp brevity. "We can advance three hundred thousand on the others, if necessary. What do you want to do with the money?"

Peter Bolton gave his head a slow shake.

"I've got to save myself from going under," he said in a whining tone. "I've got notes to pay, and three hundred thousand dollars won't cover them. I ought to have a million."

"Let's see the statement of your liabilities," said Partridge.

Peter Bolton fumbled in his inside coat pocket, brought out a large pocket-book, untied the string with which he had secured it, and then looked through its bulging compartments.

"I don't like to show it," he complained. "It's Private Business, and I don't like to trust any one with my Private Business."

"Suit yourself," said Partridge. "Try some other place if you like."

Peter Bolton's trembling hand brought out a sheet of paper from one of the recesses of the pocket-book, and passed it over to Partridge.

"There it is," he said. "You can see I've got to have money right away. If I don't pay them notes, I'll be posted on the Exchange; and you can't afford to have that happen. If I go down, there'll be such a smash in the markets as you've never seen. I shan't go down alone."

Partridge rapidly drew his pencil through several of the items of Peter Bolton's statement.

"Those will renew," he said. "You can get four hundred thousand from the banks on the securities you have in your hand. Three hundred thousand will be enough for us to let you have. It will see you through."

"I don't see how I am to get along without more than that," said Peter Bolton, with a slow shake of the head. "But I'll do the best I can with it." He gave the outward evidences of dissatisfaction, but there was an undertone of triumph in his voice, inaudible to any ear but mine.

I had listened thus far without an attempt to interrupt. I was curious to see what plea Peter Bolton would make in support of his audacious attempt to turn the syndicate's money against the syndicate's objects; and it had not occurred to me as possible that Partridge and Nelson would fail to penetrate his scheme. I forgot for the moment that my colleagues were not informed of the purposes of the arch-plotter, and it was therefore with something of a shock that I heard Partridge consent to put three hundred thousand dollars into Bolton's hands, and saw Nelson dip his pen in ink to fill out the check.

"I beg pardon," I said, stepping forward, "but I think it will be better to hold that money."

At the sound of my voice Peter Bolton gave a violent start, and for a moment his face turned ashy gray, as he seized the arms of the chair to support himself. Then with an effort he recovered his self-possession, and gave me a nod that was meant to be ingratiating.

"Well," said Partridge, "if you'd like to look over Mr. Bolton's papers, here they are."

I waved them away.

"I don't doubt your judgment on the securities. It is beyond question. I merely object to making the loan at all."

Peter Bolton raised his hand, threw back his head with open mouth, and spoke in his most sarcastic drawl.

"Some Young Men like to interfere with Other Men's Business. But all that has been discussed. The matter is settled."

I took up the signed checks that lay before Nelson and replied:

"Oh, no; there are several points to be explained before we go further."

"We haven't time to run a debating club," said Nelson, a little huffed by my strategic move in securing the checks. "We have consented to the loan for excellent reasons. Mr. Bolton's failure would be certain to start the panic we have been staving off for two days."

"Very true. But Mr. Bolton is unduly anxious. He is in no more danger of failing than the Bank of California."

Peter Bolton turned on me with suppressed anger glowing in his eyes, and drew down the corners of his mouth in a sarcastic snarl.

"Maybe, young man, you know more about My Business than I know."

"I shouldn't put it that way," I retorted. "I should say that I know more about your business than you are ready to tell."

Peter Bolton drew down the corners of his mouth again and turned to Partridge with the air of putting me aside.

"Young Men have Strange Ideas," he drawled, "but you are Men of Experience, and you know what it means to refuse this loan. If you are sure a Panic would help your Business, why, all you have to do is to say I can't have the money. If I don't get it, I'll be posted on the Exchange this afternoon."

"And I warn you that Mr. Bolton is perfectly solvent," I said.

Partridge rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and Nelson studied the floor in perplexity.

"I am inclined to overrule Mr. Hampden in this matter," said Partridge; "but he represents Mr. Kendrick, and I don't wish to go in flat opposition to his judgment."

Peter Bolton gave me a malignant glance.

"Judgment! judgment!" he exclaimed in his most sarcastic drawl. "The Young Man knows that Kendrick and I haven't been on good terms, and he thinks he can Curry Favor by ruining me. But if I can have a word with him, I can convince him it's to Kendrick's interest to keep me afloat this time." And seizing my arm, he attempted to draw me to the other end of the room.

"I don't care to hear anything you can't say before these gentlemen," I replied.

"Come just a minute," he persisted, with a wheedling tone in his voice, and drew me to a farther corner. Then he said in a low, eager tone: "It will be fifty thousand dollars in your pocket if you say yes."

"No!" was my curt reply.

"It will be cash," he urged. "You can hold the money out from the advance from the committee. You'll be perfectly safe."

"No!" I repeated, with the emphasis of disgust, and walked swiftly back to the desk. For an instant I had the resolve to explain to my fellow-members the offense that Peter Bolton had proposed. But an uneasy conscience reminded me that I had brought it upon myself, and instead of revealing the shameless offer, I said sharply:

"I ought to have saved time by telling you at the first that nothing could serve this man's profit so well as a panic. He above all other men is responsible for the present troubles, and any money advanced to him will be used against the interests we are here to protect."

Peter Bolton's hand trembled, and a look of desperation came into his eyes. Otherwise he gave no sign of lessening self-possession.

"It's a lie, it's a lie!" he cried. "I shall be ruined." Nelson turned to me.

"That is a very serious assertion. You should be certain of your ground to make such a charge."

"He can't prove it. It's a lie!" repeated Peter Bolton eagerly.

"Mr. Bolton is the father of the present crisis," I said. "He is the financial backer of the agitators that the Committee of Safety has been organized to put down. It was not so much as two weeks ago that he paid thirty thousand dollars to the Council of Nine."

Peter Bolton attempted to resume his sarcastic air, and drew down the corners of his mouth into his sardonic mask, though his lip trembled with the effort.

"You can't believe lies like that," he said, in appeal to Partridge and Nelson.

"And last night," I continued, "he received two members of the Council of Nine in his office, and paid them a sum of money that I believe was ten thousand dollars. It may have been twenty. An armed outbreak is planned for to-night. If it comes, there stands the man who furnished the money for it." And I pointed an

accusing finger at the spare, bent form of the arch-conspirator.

At this evidence of the accuracy of my information, the sallow face of Peter Bolton once more turned to an ashy gray, and he looked from side to side as though seeking some avenue of escape. Then he faced me.

"You're talking nonsense," he cried with tense determination in his voice. "Nobody will believe you. You ought to be sent to the asylum."

I looked into his eyes.

"Waldorf and Parks are within call," I said with calm and assured mendacity. "Shall I bring them in?"

Peter Bolton dropped his eyes, trembled as he stood silent for a moment, then seized his papers and walked to the door. As his hand was on the knob, he turned and shook his fist at us.

"I'll smash you yet!" he cried in a harsh voice, his anger getting the better of his fears. "I'll smash you and that scoundrel Kendrick. I'll grind the whole pack of you down into the dirt." And he went out with unexpected nimbleness, and slammed the door behind him.

I looked at my associates with a word of self-congratulation on my tongue. But the shamed and apologetic air with which they studied the documents before them stopped my mouth. It was evident that they needed no one to inform them that they had been gulled by Peter Bolton, and I had the discretion to perceive that the temper of the office would not be improved by discussion of the circumstances. So I took my seat without a word.

The stream of imperiled merchants again trickled through the room, and for an hour we worked rapidly and with exemplary harmony. The self-esteem of Partridge, cut down by the treacherous hand of Peter Bolton, spread and blossomed once more as his skill in estimating the value of securities and the needs of borrowers was put to the test and proved without flaw. The phlegmatic Nelson had shown his discomposure for but a moment, so we were again upon a footing of close confidence.

It was half-past two when Brown, Wharton Kendrick's head clerk, peered in at the door and beckoned to me with a face full of trouble. I made some excuse, and followed him to his office. He closed and locked the door and looked at me in silent dismay.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"We're ruined!" he gasped.

"What's that?" I cried.

"We must close the doors–unless you have three hundred and fifty thousand," he whispered slowly.

He looked at me with the white face and colorless lips of a man in the final stages of nausea. The misfortunes of Wharton Kendrick were taken to heart by

at least one man.

"It's some of Mr. Kendrick's notes," he said. "They've just been presented. There's four hundred and fifty thousand of them altogether–lacking a few hundreds, and all the money we've got is a little over one hundred thousand."

"Where do these notes come from? Who presents them?"

"They are made out to different persons; but they are presented by the El Dorado Bank."

"Didn't Mr. Kendrick make any provision to meet them?"

"Maybe he did–I suppose so, for some of them are three weeks overdue. But he never said anything to me about them."

"Let me see them."

The bank's messenger was brought in, and I scrutinized the notes he presented. They were on their face made payable to a dozen or more men–some to one, some to another–but all had been indorsed to Peter Bolton.

There was no time to waste in lamentations, and there was but one resource in sight. I bade the messenger wait a minute, and hastened back to the syndicate's office.

"Here are three checks for you to sign," said Partridge. "The men are waiting for them in the anteroom."

They were for but small amounts, and I hastily added my name to the slips.

"I have something more important yet to lay before you," I said boldly. "I want three hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"What's that?" cried Partridge.

Nelson looked too shocked for words, and I repeated my request.

"What do you want it for?" demanded Partridge.

"Gentlemen," I replied, "I am sorry to say that we are face to face with the greatest danger we have yet met. Peter Bolton has made good his threat. He has struck quick and hard. He has presented for payment through the El Dorado Bank nearly four hundred and fifty thousand of Wharton Kendrick's notes, and there is only one hundred thousand in the house to pay them with. I must ask you for the balance."

Partridge drew a whistle of surprise, and Nelson turned pale.

"The old fox!" cried Nelson. "We might have known he was up to mischief."

"And he put them in through the El Dorado Bank," said Partridge reflectively. "I wonder if he is with the bank's wrecking combination."

"He is at the head of it," I said.

Partridge drummed on the desk with nervous fingers, and his face took on a grim look. As neither of my associates spoke, I said:

"Well, there can be no doubt of our duty to support Wharton Kendrick in this emergency."

"Of course not," said Partridge. "What security can you offer?"

"Haven't the least idea," I replied curtly.

"You'd better make us a general assignment," said Nelson. "I suppose that will cover it."

"I couldn't think of doing such a thing," I replied, restraining my indignation with an effort. "A note will have to do."

"It's a very irregular proposition," said Nelson. "Even the Sundown Bank has put up a pretense of collateral."

"Well," I returned, "as a business proposition, wouldn't you rather hold Wharton Kendrick's note than the Sundown Bank's collateral?"

"Yes, of course–provided Wharton Kendrick lives. But Wharton Kendrick is likely to die. The question we have to consider is, What will his note be worth in the Probate Court?"

"You see how it is," said Partridge, with the patient air of one instructing a novice. "If you haven't anything to pledge, why, an assignment is the thing."

I faced my associates with the determination to yield nothing.

"I act on the assumption that Wharton Kendrick will get well," I replied. "And if he gets well only to find that I have made a general assignment of his business, how much further do you suppose he will trust me with his affairs?"

"That's all right for you," said Partridge. "But how shall we look when we present our account to the syndicate and show that we have loaned one of our members three hundred and fifty thousand without security? How long do you think it would be before we got a chance to handle any more of their money? We'd be waiting till the next day after never, I guess."

The knot of circumstances seemed to be pretty firmly tangled, and I saw no way but to cut it by a bold stroke.

"I don't want to act without your consent–" I began.

"You have no right to act without our consent," interrupted Partridge, with quick insight into my resolve.

"Right or not, I have the power. And you will be relieved of responsibility if I pay the money without your consent."

"You wouldn't do that!" cried Nelson and Partridge in a breath, their faces showing signs of rising temper.

"I certainly shall do it before I see Wharton Kendrick's notes go to protest and a financial panic start in San Francisco."

Partridge and Nelson looked at me with concern and anger pictured on their faces. But before either could speak, the door opened and William T. Coleman entered.

"You're just in time, Coleman," said Partridge explosively. "See if you can't put reason into this young man's head."

"What's the trouble?" asked Coleman, looking calmly at the flushed and angry countenances before him.

Partridge and I attempted to explain our positions at the same time, but Coleman picked out the facts from the confusion, and with a few tactful questions had the situation clearly in his mind.

"The solution is very simple," he said. "Wharton Kendrick subscribed five hundred thousand to the syndicate. Mr. Hampden will assign us three hundred and fifty thousand out of that sum, and we shall be perfectly protected."

Coleman's plan was so logical and businesslike a way out of our difficulties that I breathed a sigh of relief, and the anger of my associates evaporated in a laugh at our stupidity in not thinking of it for ourselves.

"How much does that leave in the fund?" asked Coleman, when I had taken up the notes, and sent the clerk on his way.

"A trifle over twenty-three thousand."

"Gentlemen," said Partridge, rising with a theatric gesture, "the syndicate retires from business. Thank Heaven it is striking three."

"And what of to-morrow?" I asked.

Partridge shrugged his shoulders.

"I wish to God I knew," he said.

CHAPTER XXVI
ON THE PRECIPICE

The air of gloom that enveloped Wharton Kendrick's home was almost physical in its intensity. It was with apprehension that I awaited the opening of the door, and it was with anxious eagerness that I looked to Mercy Fillmore as she stood behind the servant who answered my ring.

"Oh, Mr. Hampden," she exclaimed, as she advanced and gave me her hand, "I have been wishing you would come."

I was gratified at the tone of relief and confidence with which she spoke, but my response was to ask of the condition of Wharton Kendrick.

"He is still out of his head," she replied, dropping into a seat. "Sometimes he talks a little–a few broken words–but most of the time he lies there silent, with vacant eyes. If it were not for his heavy breathing we should hardly know that he was alive." Her sympathetic face was filled with concern as she spoke.

"What does the doctor say?"

"He tries to look cheerful and speak confidently, but it is such an effort, I am afraid. Yet for Laura's sake I hope, and try to be convinced by the doctor's words." Then she added quickly: "I said I wanted to see you. Mr. Parks was here to-day. We had a long talk, and truly, Mr. Hampden, I want you to believe that he is a man of noble impulses. He is so unselfish, so eager for the good of others."

"I don't complain about his instincts. His heart is in the right place, as the saying goes, but his head is upside down."

"Oh, Mr. Hampden, you do not understand him!" said Mercy in a pained voice.

"Perhaps not; but surely he has not convinced you that he is wise to engage in such desperate enterprises as the overthrow of the government?"

Mercy was silent a little, and then she said:

"I should be glad if he could see some other way to work for the good of the people, but I am not wise myself, so how can I judge him? He tells me that it is not right to reason from womanly fears. Do you think he is in danger, Mr. Hampden? He is planning some important enterprise for to-night. Is there anything we can do to save him?"

My private opinion was that Parks would end by getting shot or thrown into jail. But I could not pain Mercy with any such brutal statements, so I soothed her fears as best I could. "We can't influence him to keep out of the movement," I said, "but ten to one it won't amount to anything but a lot of oratory, and hard words break no bones. You have no cause to worry about him."

"Well, I'm glad to hear you say so," said Mercy, looking relieved. "And now I want to tell you about Danny Regan. You know that Moon Ying recognized him as that old Chinaman's express-man?"

"Yes. She told me."

"Well, I talked to him until he confessed the whole plot to me. It began last week, after a good deal of bargaining, when he agreed to steal the girl. He came late one night with two others, and thought there would be nobody watching the house. But your men surprised them coming over the fence, and caught Danny's friend. He is the sergeant-at-arms of an anti-coolie club, he said. Danny and the other one got away. Then Danny came around in the daytime, and pretended to be a tramp, and got something to eat and talked everything out of the cook. She told him all about Moon Ying, and where she slept, and Danny raised a company to attack the house. He was going to set it on fire, and capture the girl as we all ran out, and when the hoodlums came in front, he thought it would be easy. I asked him how he could do such a thing, and his excuse was that he was drunk. He wants to know if you are going to have him arrested, and tries to lay the blame on the Chinaman he calls Little John. Do you intend to put him in jail?"

"I can't think of a better place for him. How soon can he be moved?"

"I suppose he ought to be punished. But he has suffered much for his crime, and now appears to be truly repentant. And at best he can not well be moved until next week. Don't you think we might forgive him?"

"No, I don't. You and Miss Laura might have been killed. I am angrier every time I think of it. Where is she now?"

"She is with Mr. Kendrick. She has hardly left his side to-day. She gave ten minutes to Moon Ying–it's a blessing that our little protégée is getting able to help herself–and she gave about as much more to looking after the house. The rest of the day she has spent with her uncle."

"I should say, then, that it was about time she took some rest."

"Well," said Mercy, rising, "I hope you can convince her of it. I'll tell her you are here." And she left me alone.

It was ten minutes before the door opened and Miss Kendrick entered. I greeted her with some surprise, for she was dressed as though she had just come in from the street.

"Oh, you needn't look so astonished," she said, as she gave me her hand with a tired smile. "I haven't been out of the house to-day, so I thought I'd enlist your services as cavalier. I'm dying for a breath of fresh air."

"I'm glad to find you with some spirit left. I was afraid you would be dead."

"I am," she returned, leading the way out of the door. "But I shall be alive after a little walk. I don't like being a ghost, but it's much more tolerable than one would suppose before trying it."

She was in no mood to make conversation, and walked by my side for a while without speaking. But there was such an air of confidence in her manner, such unspoken expression of comradeship in her attitude, that I was content to follow her example and find satisfaction in the silent communion and feel delight at the pressure of her hand upon my arm. We had walked a few blocks thus before she said, with an abruptness that startled me:

"Tell me about to-day."

I had been thinking of far more agreeable things than business, but I recovered myself from the momentary confusion into which I was thrown, and replied:

"It was a very lively day indeed." And, once started, I described, with such entertaining details as I could recall, some of the incidents of our struggle to keep the car of commerce on the track.

"I didn't mean all that," she said at last. "It's very amusing, but I'm not in the mood to be amused. Neither are you. What I want to know about is uncle's business."

"Well, as for that," I replied, "we got through another day safely. We had

one or two exceedingly tight pinches, but we wriggled out all right. I guess the worst of it is over, and we shall pull through in good shape."

She dropped my arm with an impatient gesture, and I felt a sudden breaking of the current of silent communication that had drawn us together.

"Won't you tell me just what happened at the office to-day, and just how we stand? Didn't I tell you that I find nothing so terrible as uncertainty? It is the unknown that scares me. Let me see what is before me, and I'll have the courage to face it. Tell me the truth as you would tell it to uncle if you were talking to him instead of to me." Her tone was so pleading that my heart melted within me, and I was shaken with the desire to take her in my arms and tell her that it would be the business of my life to shield her from harm. It was a minute before I had a firm grasp on myself. Then I laid the whole account of Wharton Kendrick's business before her, as fully as I knew it.

She heard me soberly, with only a question here and there to clear up the points she did not understand. Then she asked:

"The troubles aren't over yet, are they?"

"No."

"And what shall you do to-morrow?"

"I wish I knew."

She reflected a little, and then said:

"You can't perform miracles every day. You could not get through another day like to-day, could you?"

"Not without help from somewhere. But I hope that the worst is over."

"Oh, you needn't think I'll blame you if everything goes to pieces. You've done ten times as much as anybody had a right to expect. But there is a limit to the things that can be done, and I know it very well."

I tried to speak, but she continued quickly:

"Oh, I haven't given up hope. Not a bit of it. But I have to look ahead. That's a part of me. But I won't talk about it if you don't like."

At the thought of her anxieties my feelings over-mastered me and I said:

"I do like. But I want you to look ahead to something else–to another future than taking care of your uncle's house." My heart thumped in my breast, and I felt a throb in my throat playing strange tricks with my voice. In the instant I thought of all that I had put at stake, and wished I had not begun. But with an effort of will I continued: "I want you to think of another future. I love you more than all the world, and I want you to be my wife."

She walked silently by my side, neither increasing her distance nor drawing nearer to me. But she walked on and spoke no word, and I fell into a panic over the boldness that had inspired me to my avowal. We had proceeded thus for two or three blocks before I plucked up the courage to ask:

"And what is the answer?"

She kept her head down, but replied with a trace of drollery in her tone:

"It wasn't a question. And there isn't any answer."

"I'll make it a question then."

She looked quickly up into my face.

"It wouldn't do any good if you did. Anybody can ask questions, but it takes a very wise person to answer them."

"But," I pleaded, looking into her eyes till she cast them down once more, "it means everything to me, and–"

"I know all that you would say," she interrupted. "But how can I think of such a thing when I have so much that must be done–so many uncertainties to face?"

She laid her hand appealingly on my arm, and looked up into my face again. Then she continued:

"My uncle is perhaps dying. I don't have to tell you how all his affairs are in confusion. And you are the friend I have most to look to for help and counsel. You won't take my chiefest reliance away from me, will you?"

Her appealing look and tone were too much for me. It was a very quiet place on a very quiet street, and the dusk had fallen almost to darkness; so I yielded to the impulse and stopped and kissed her. She did not resist, but drew a quick breath that was almost a gasp, and lowered her eyes. Then she said quietly:

"There–all that is to be put away with the things that were. And you're to think of all you have said as something that came in a dream. And now we'll wake up and look to the serious business of life. It isn't such a very pleasant season of life is it?"

Her voice broke a little as she ended and my heart smote me.

"I hope," I said, "that I don't have to tell you that you can depend on me for every service that I have power to give."

She took my arm again with an air of confidence.

"You are always to be my good friend," she said. "And now we'll go back. It's getting dark, and maybe the fresh air wasn't what I wanted after all. I'm a bit upset."

I felt somewhat upset myself. I was certainly left hanging in a most uncertain and unsatisfactory position; but I saw no way to better it, and held my tongue, and wondered with a jealous pang if Baldwin had, after all, won the prize I coveted.

We walked on in silence for a time, but at last she suddenly said:

"Oh, there was something I was near forgetting to tell you. I've been sitting by uncle, almost all day, and for the most of the time he has lain there more like a log than a man. But sometimes he has talked–not to know what he was saying,

you understand–but some ideas are bothering his poor head. I am supposing that they have to do with his business. A dozen times in the day he spoke your name, and seemed to be trying to tell you something. He told it over and over, but the only words I could make out were 'notes,' 'million,' and 'five hundred and sixteen.' The figures seem to mean something to him, for he has repeated them oftener than anything else."

She paused for comment, and I submitted my guesses:

"The notes are probably those that Peter Bolton presented to-day. The million is roughly the amount we are short in the business, counting the deficit in the syndicate fund. I can't imagine what the 'five hundred and sixteen' can mean. It is not the number of his office, for that is in the four hundred block. There doesn't seem to be anything in the business that it could signify."

Laura Kendrick halted me, and looked up in my face.

"I am not given to intuitions," she said, her tone thrilling with earnestness, "but I have one now. As sure as you stand there, uncle made provision for paying the notes and raising the rest of the money you have had to find, and the number 'five hundred and sixteen' has something to do with it. Find the five hundred and sixteen and you'll find the million dollars." And with a nod of conviction she walked forward once more.

"It may be one of the banks," I ventured to suggest, "but I can't remember that any of them are at that number."

"Mightn't it be the place of business of some friend, where he has left this money?"

I shook my head at this improbable guess, and turned the problem over in my mind without result. Then I ventured to propose that I should see Wharton Kendrick.

"My presence might stir his thoughts to some more definite speech," I argued.

"Well, I'll let you in for just a minute. But Doctor Roberts said that nothing must be done to excite him, and I don't know as it is right to take the risk."

In a few minutes we were in the sick-room where Wharton Kendrick lay. His large frame was motionless, except for his breathing. His face was flushed, and the lines of strength and power that it bore in health had faded into expressionless weakness.

"He is like this for the greater part of the time," said Laura; "yet I have the feeling that under it all he is conscious of what is going on about him, and I do everything just as if I were sure that he could hear and see."

It was beyond all bounds of probability, yet at the conceit a sudden thought came into my mind.

"If you should be right, he must be horribly worried about his affairs. I'll

just say a word to relieve his mind." Then speaking slowly and distinctly I gave a brief account of the course of the markets, dwelt on the success of the syndicate in sustaining the business fabric, and hinted at the need for more money on the morrow.

There was no physical response. If there was an intelligent brain in that inert body, it found no servant at its call among the flaccid muscles, and not even the moving of an eyelid gave sign that I was understood. Yet as I spoke, there came somewhere in my consciousness the conviction that I was heard, and that my words had brought relief to an overstrained mind.

Laura Kendrick looked quickly from the face of her uncle to mine, and a sudden light sprang into her eyes.

"You felt it, too," she said.

"Yes."

"You have done good; but you mustn't stay here any longer. Don't leave the house, though, unless you have to. I shall be afraid when you are gone."

As she opened the door to banish me from the sick-room, a servant had just raised his hand to tap at the panel.

"What is it?" she asked.

"A man to see Mr. Hampden. I took him into the library."

CHAPTER XXVII
A CALL TO ARMS

I followed the servant and was surprised to find Clark uneasily seated on the edge of a cushioned chair, nervously twisting his hat, and looking as though he was afraid he was going to break something.

"I'm sorry to bother you here," he said awkwardly, "but things have come to a head."

"What is it now? Do you think that to-night's meeting is going to make more trouble than the other one did?"

"Well, no, sir. The meeting don't amount to much. To tell you the truth, sir, the meeting is only a blind. Parks got out the notices, and he's going to make a speech. But he's the only one of the Council's people who will be there. The others are down at headquarters getting ready for the real work of the night."

"The real work? What do you mean by that?"

"Well, the truth of the business is," said Clark, "that the rifle clubs are to be called out to-night. Orders have gone out to all the Council's clubs to assemble at eleven. At twelve they will be given their guns, and then they will be sent out to seize the city. One company is to take possession of the City Hall; another will take the Committee of Safety's headquarters; and others the National Guard Armories, the Mint, the Subtreasury, and so on."

"Are they crazy? Why, the Committee of Safety has fifteen thousand men enrolled by this time."

"Crazy? Not a bit of it," protested Clark warmly. "The Committee of Safety won't have any leaders or any guns left by to-morrow. Coleman, and Mayor Bryant, and General McComb, and every man of the Committee of Twenty-Four will be under lock and key before morning if something isn't done about it. They all go home to sleep, and there isn't a man of 'em that's thought of having a guard about his house. They'll all be taken like rats in a trap. Then where's the Committee of Safety and the militia? They'll be without leaders and without guns, and what'll they do? They'll scatter like sheep. The whole scheme has been worked out like the plans for a building, and if the Council isn't stopped before twelve you'll wake up to-morrow morning under a new government."

"Nonsense!" I said. "They can't do that."

"All right," said Clark, with a hurt and offended look, "they can't, then. But it was my duty, sir, to warn you, and I've done it, so I'll be going."

"I beg your pardon, Clark," I said hastily. "I didn't mean to doubt your word or hurt your feelings. You've done quite right in coming here, and it's my business to see that they don't carry out their crazy schemes. Wait a minute, and I'll walk along down with you."

I had a hurried word with Laura Kendrick, and explained to her the importance of the information Clark had brought, and the necessity of laying it promptly before the Committee of Safety.

She looked up at me with some apprehension in her eyes.

"Well, if you must, you must," she said. "But don't you get into any mobs or into any fighting. Just remember that it's the man who orders somebody else to do his fighting that gets the glory out of it. If there's any trouble, see that you're one of the orderers instead of one of the ordered."

I laughed at her anxious counsel, and promising to use all the caution with which nature had endowed me, I joined Clark and left the house.

Directing Clark to attend the sand-lot meeting and to get word to Andrews at once if the mob should head for the Kendrick house, I caught a car and rode to the headquarters of the Committee of Safety.

Horticultural Hall resembled a beehive on swarming day. Wealth and poverty were represented side by side. Merchants, workmen, lawyers, doctors,

laborers rubbed elbows, and their stern and serious faces testified to the depth of feeling that had brought them out to the defense of the city. It was an outburst of the same spirit that had given birth to the nation, and had again called forth vast armies to preserve it when its existence was threatened by civil war.

At the end of the hall a number of desks had been arranged where enrolment was still in progress. Behind the desks was a platform, and as I approached it I saw William T. Coleman walk briskly to the speaker's stand.

"Three cheers for Coleman!" came the cry from a strong-lunged Vigilante, and three cheers were given with a will.

The president of the Committee raised his hand to command silence.

"Fellow-citizens:" he cried in a full, resonant voice. "You have come here to fight–not to talk or cheer. We find a mob spirit abroad, very dangerous to the peace and order of the city. It is your business to put that spirit down. For this purpose you are clothed with all the powers of police officers. The mayor has issued his proclamation, commanding disorderly persons to disperse, and it is our part to see that this proclamation is obeyed. You have behind you the armed force of the State and Nation. But it should be a part of your pride as San Franciscans that this force should not be needed for your protection. The people have shown on former occasions that they were able to protect themselves. Show now that your courage and self-reliance have not degenerated in twenty years."

There was a warm response to this exhortation, and, at a sign from Coleman, the adjutants began calling forward the companies, and despatching them to their work.

"Captain Korbel!" called the commanding voice of the adjutant at the desk nearest us.

"Here!" came the reply in a strong German accent, and a man with energetic face stepped out from a company of twenty men.

"You will patrol Mission Street, from Sixth to Twelfth. Keep the street clear of all persons having no business there. If they resist, put them under arrest, and turn them over to the police at the Southern Station. Get your arms from that pile."

"So ist righdt," said the captain, and giving a salute he marched his company to the west side of the hall where a great number of pick-handles that had been sawn in two, base-ball bats, and wagon spokes, had been arranged in convenient stacks. Each man of the company picked up a club, balanced it in his hand, and brought it down on the head of an imaginary hoodlum with the solemnity of a prepared ritual. Then at the word of command the company marched out while others were receiving their orders from the desks of the adjutants.

I had observed this lively scene with but half an eye, shouldering my way forward to meet William T. Coleman as he descended from the platform. He had

talked for a little with some member of the Committee, but as he came down the steps on his way to the side room that served as a private office, I hailed him. He looked up quickly, and his face changed as he caught sight of me.

"Is Kendrick dead?" he asked anxiously.

"No. He is still unconscious, but living."

"What is the trouble, then?" he asked, looking keenly into my eyes. "You have bad news."

Then before I could reply, he said, "Come in here," and led me into the private office. "Now let's hear about it," he said.

"The Council of Nine is ready to use its rifles," I replied. And I gave with rapid phrases the tale of the imminent revolution as it had come from Clark.

William T. Coleman listened with a rapt attention that showed he took the warning more seriously than I had taken it.

"Then we have till midnight," he said, after he had digested the information.

"My informant said that the rifle clubs are ordered to assemble at eleven o'clock."

He looked out of the window into the darkness; then he turned to me again.

"It will never do to let those men come together with arms in their hands. That would mean bloodshed–terrible bloodshed. I am using every effort to prevent an appeal to arms. I have refused to call for the militia. The National Guard is under arms, but I have a promise from Bryant that he will not ask for it until I give the word. I have refused an offer of Federal troops from the Presidio. I have a note from the admiral that the marines and sailors at Mare Island have been put under arms, and that the Pensacola is ready to take a position that will command the city. But I have refused to permit them to be summoned. I shall never summon them except as a last resort. It is an awful thing to have men shot down, and the memory of such an affair would be a lasting stain on the city."

"It would be sad to have innocent men killed," I said; "but I shouldn't weep over the loss of some of those demons I saw raiding wash-houses and trying to kill Wharton Kendrick. The world would be better off without them."

"Do not judge them too hastily," said Coleman quickly. "Civilization is at best only skin-deep. Scratch the civilized man, and you find the wild beast. It takes a little deeper scratch to find it in some men than in others; but it is there. You and I think ourselves well-balanced, Hampden, yet I have seen men of our nature turn into ferocious beasts. I pray God I may never see the like again. These men you saw in the shape of demons the other night may be good citizens in quiet times. Thank God, young man, for government. It is the blessing of organized society–of organized government–that keeps the wild beast behind bars." He spoke with feeling, yet with the philosophic calm of the lecturer on law, and he impressed me profoundly with his momentary unveiling of a broad

and tolerant mind. Then he became the man of affairs again.

"Do you know where to find the headquarters of the Council?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Do you know these men by sight?"

"I believe I can recognize eight of the nine."

"Well, then, I shall have to ask you to go down to the Council's headquarters at once, and arrest the leaders of the movement. You will have the honor of ending the uprising before it has begun."

CHAPTER XXVIII
WITH THE PICK-HANDLE BRIGADE

If I had stopped to consider how fully the safety of Wharton Kendrick–to say nothing of his niece–depended upon me, I should perhaps have found courage to decline the dangerous mission. But William T. Coleman's commanding eye was upon me; and after a gulp to moisten my dry throat, I replied with an attempt to put a cheerful spirit into my voice:

"Very well; but I'd like to take a man or two along–merely as a guaranty to the Council that I'm not joking."

Coleman smiled.

"Oh, I didn't expect you to go alone. Take as many men as you like. Will twenty be enough?"

I thought so.

"Well, then, here are a dozen John Doe warrants. They will be your authority for whatever you may find it necessary to do in arresting these men. Now come out here and pick your company."

He led the way to the main hall, glanced over the throng that still pervaded it, and cried in a resonant voice:

"Volunteers wanted for dangerous service."

His discouraging form of statement did not dismay all of the company before him. At least fifty men stepped forward at the call.

"Take your pick," said Coleman with a wave of his hand. "If they haven't revolvers, I will supply them. You'd better take the clubs for ordinary service."

I selected a score of men whose faces showed vigor and determination, looked to their arms, directed them to the pile of pick-handles, and when each

man had satisfied himself of the virtue of his weapon by knocking down an imaginary enemy, I led the way to the street.

"Where are we going?" asked one of the men with the easy familiarity of the volunteer.

"Secret service," I replied. "Don't make any more noise than you have to." If we were to arrest the conspirators without bloodshed it was necessary to take them by surprise, and we approached their meeting-place with as much caution as I could contrive.

The House of Blazes blinked more furtively than ever on the darkness. The outer door was but half opened, and the lights within burned but dimly. Yet a faint murmur that thrilled the air gave warning of many voices in converse, and stray gleams of light from the shuttered windows above bore ample witness to the fact that there was hidden activity in the den of the revolutionists.

I posted a number of men in position to prevent escape through the windows, and instructed the remainder to await my signal outside the main entrance. Then pushing open the swinging door, I entered the saloon.

The long room was almost deserted. A man in an apparent stupor sat with his head on a table in the dim light at the farther end of the place. Another lay on a bench snoring in drowsy intoxication. A short, round-faced young fellow with a dirty white apron stood behind the bar, and looked up with cheerful expectancy as I entered.

"Take me to the Council," I said peremptorily. "I am just from Mr. Parks."

"The Council!" stammered the man. "I don't–I don't know what you mean."

At the sound of my voice, the fat pasty face of H. Blasius appeared through the doorway at the right of the bar.

"Ah, Meestaire–Meestaire–friend of Park," he said, recognizing me and coming forward. "I salute a brozaire in arms." And he would have embraced me but for my nimbleness in avoiding his odious clutch.

"I have come for orders," I said. "I must see the Council."

"Ah," he cried, "you have come to give your ar-rms to ze inauguration of ze gr-rand r-revolution." And he rolled out his "r's" in a way to make the revolution very grand indeed.

"I have brought more than my arms," I said. "I have the first company of our troops outside."

"*Mon Dieu*!" he cried, his pasty face growing paler, and his blinking eyes opening wider in alarm. "*Mon Dieu*! You have come mooch too soon. Ze police will cast ze blow of an eye upon zem, ze alar-rm will sound, and Zip! away goes ze chance of winning by surprise."

"That's so," I exclaimed, with the accent of one overwhelmed at conviction of a lack of judgment. "I will bring my men in and march them up to the Council-

room where they can lie hid till the hour comes."

"*Non! non!*" cried H. Blasius in alarm. "No one can go to ze Council-room. Zere is no Council-room." His old distrust had overcome the alcoholic enthusiasm with which he had received me, and his eyes blinked cunningly upon me. Then he gave an apprehensive glance at the door by which he had entered, and I was confirmed in the suspicion that it led to the rooms of the conspirators.

"Well, if you won't take me up, I must go by myself. My business must be laid before the Council at once." And I moved with determination toward the suspected door.

H. Blasius placed himself in the way with arms outstretched.

"*Non–non!*" he cried. "You can not *entrez* wizout ze *mot d'ordre*–ze password."

"Give it to me, then," I demanded. "You are delaying the Council's business."

He was overawed a little by my authoritative tone, but before he could bring his tongue to answer me, the barkeeper accidentally dropped a glass on the floor, and the men whom I had stationed at the door, mistaking the crash for the sounds of conflict, rushed in to my rescue.

"The Vigilantes!" cried the barkeeper in dismay, at the sight of the badges and the pick-handles.

"*Mon Dieu!* we are betrayed!" cried H. Blasius, whirling around with a step toward the door that led to the Council-room.

I divined his purpose. He was bent on warning the conspirators. With one bound I had him by the collar, and with a fierce wrench dragged him back and flung him against the bar, spluttering inarticulate protests.

The barkeeper had seized a revolver, but before he could raise it, he was in the hands of my men. He submitted without resistance and with the cheerful spirit of one to whom the outcome is a matter of small importance.

"Keep that man quiet," I said, with the hope that the noise of struggle had not reached the Council-room. Then I gripped H. Blasius by his fat throat.

"Give me the countersign!" I demanded.

He gave a scream of terror and dropped to his knees.

"Have pity–do not keel me. *Mon Dieu*! I am one good citizen. I make no plots wiz ze r-revolutionists."

"The countersign," I repeated grimly, tightening my grip on his throat, while two of my assistants reinforced my argument by prodding him in the sides with their sticks.

"Leeberty–leeberty or deat'"–Mr. H. Blasius pronounced it "debt"–"zat is ze countersign," he gasped through his constricted windpipe. And assured by his eyes that he was telling the truth, I flung him into the arms of my men.

"Shut off his wind if he tries to give a warning," I said, and with a word I

picked a squad from my company and gave them brief instructions:

"Follow me up the stairs. Don't make a noise. And when I give the signal push me through the door."

A dim illumination filtered through a ground-glass transom at the top of the stairway, and the murmur of voices that floated down gave evidence that a busy meeting was in progress.

I walked up the stairs with bold step, and my men crept cautiously after me. At the top was a landing, large enough to hold my squad, and I signed to them to collect behind me. Then I gave three resounding blows on the door–a compelling summons that I had learned as a lawyer's clerk in serving papers on unwilling defendants. There is some mystic virtue in the slow triple knock that brings the most wary from their holes. At my rap there was a sudden hush of voices. Then some one by the door cried:

"Who is there?"

"A friend you are expecting."

"If you are a friend, give the countersign."

"Liberty or Death."

At this reply the door opened cautiously for a few inches, and a man peeped through the crack.

"Now!" I cried. And with the force of six men behind me I shot forward, flung the door wide open, and sent its guardian sprawling backward, as I was projected a dozen feet into the Council-room. The room was large, and around a large table in front of a pulpit-like platform sat twelve or fifteen men. The Council and its advisers were in session.

At my unceremonious entrance the conspirators gave a prompt exhibition of their qualities. Waldorf, Reddick and Seabert sprang to their feet, and their hands went to their pockets with the evident purpose of drawing their revolvers. Others ran from side to side of the room, wildly seeking some way of escape. Two crawled under the table. The rest remained motionless in their chairs, looking with dull apprehension at our sudden irruption.

There were more of the conspirators than I had reckoned on meeting. But we had the advantage of surprise, and signing to two of my men to hold the door, I walked calmly forward with the others.

"Gentlemen," I said to the startled group, "you are under arrest."

"The devil we are!" cried Waldorf, snatching a revolver out of his pocket and snapping it at me.

There was a deafening report, and a bullet clipped my ear, but before Waldorf could raise the hammer a second time a rap from a pick-handle laid him sprawling limply across the table. Reddick's weapon was knocked from his hand with a blow that broke his wrist. Seabert was seized and thrown before he could

get his revolver out of his pocket, and a fiery little German in spectacles, who shot a hole in his coat in an excited attempt to draw his weapon, fell limply to the floor and squirmed like a shot rabbit at a skull-cracking stroke from a Vigilante's club.

It was after all but a tame affair. For men who were planning to seize a city and overturn a nation, there was an absurdly small supply of fighting blood among them. The sprawling figure of Waldorf, lying face upward on the table with the blood trickling over his forehead, the fiery German in a limp heap on the floor, and the sight of Reddick and Seabert disabled, took all the fight out of the rest of the company. They submitted without resistance to be searched, disarmed and bound.

"Where are the rifles?" I demanded, when these preliminaries had been completed.

"Don't know of any rifles," said Seabert sullenly. "Never had any."

The arrested company at once became unanimous on this point. There were never any rifles in their possession. They became so insistent in the denial that I jumped to the conclusion that the arms could not be far away, and looked about for their hiding-place. The ornamental work behind the platform and about the hall gave opportunity for concealed doorways and false partitions, but when they were sounded none could be uncovered.

"There's room for them under that platform," I said at last; and by the falling countenances of the conspirators I saw that I had hit upon the hiding-place.

The flooring was ripped off the platform, and we uncovered something more than four hundred rifles with a well-filled cartridge-belt strapped to each. Encouraged by this success we ransacked the place to discover the rest of the Council's armament, but had at last to give it up with the conclusion that the remainder of the thousand guns had already been distributed to the clubs.

A messenger sent in haste to the headquarters of the Committee of Safety brought a train of express-wagons with orders to hurry the arms and ammunition to Horticultural Hall, and send the prisoners to the City Prison and Receiving Hospital. And stationing a guard to receive any of the revolutionary spirits who might come seeking the Council's instructions, I set off for the headquarters of the Committee of Safety. The House of Blazes, as I took my last look at it, seemed smothered in an atmosphere of angry discomfiture, as it scowled at us from its blinking windows, fit tomb of the evil purposes it had harbored.

CHAPTER XXIX

A TONGUE OF FIRE

We had reached Union Square on our return to the Committee's headquarters, when the night air burst into a clangor of alarm. There was a sudden chorus of shrieking whistles, a distant tintinnabulation of gongs, and the great bell in the fire house on Brenham Place thrilled the air with its tolling vibrations.

"Box fifty-nine!" cried one of the men who had counted the strokes. "Where's that?"

"It's the Mail docks, I'll bet!" cried another. "They've been threatening to burn 'em."

I turned to look, and the guess was confirmed. A glare of red had flamed up in the southeastern sky, and the fire was already under good headway.

"It's the third alarm," said a sentinel who stood by the corner. "The Committee's been sending men down there already."

The sharp cry of commanding voices echoed from Horticultural Hall, men were climbing into express-wagons and hurrying off on the gallop, and our way was blocked for a minute by a company that marched rapidly out of the building, quickened its pace to a run, and sped down Post Street. Instead of clubs they carried rifles, and I surmised that the armament of the Council of Nine was being turned against the Council's purposes.

Within the hall all was excitement; cries of command rose sharply as companies were assembled by zealous officers, and squads were marching out as rapidly as they could be armed.

William T. Coleman met me by the door of the office.

"Well, it seems to have begun at last," he said. "The Mail docks have been set afire, and the report comes that the Chinamen down there are being killed by a big mob."

"There was talk of burning the *City of Tokio* with the thousand coolies it has brought," I said, with a shudder at the thought of the barbarities that were perhaps being enacted on the threatened dock.

"The *Tokio* isn't in yet," said Coleman. "The report of her arrival was a mistake."

"I don't believe there's any real fight in the mob," I said. "We have just cut the head off the beast."

Coleman grasped my hand.

"I'm obliged to you for the work you have done," he said. "The guns you sent in will be put to good use. And now would you mind taking a company down to the docks?"

"Not at all," I returned unhesitatingly, resolved to live up to the figure I had

assumed in his eyes.

"You have something of an interest down there," he added. "Kendrick's lumber-yards are right near the docks, and you may want to do something to protect them." Then turning to the despatching officer, he said: "Put Brixton's company under command of Captain Hampden. Brixton won't be back to-night."

"I should like," I said, "to add to it the men I have brought back from the House of Blazes. In affairs of this sort it's some advantage to be acquainted with your men, and we've rubbed shoulders to-night in a way that is better than an introduction."

Coleman looked at the dozen men who lined up at my call, and gave a nod of assent.

"Enroll Captain Hampden's volunteers with the company," he said. "That will give him about sixty men. Now get down to the docks on the double quick. Remember that the first thing to be looked out for is the fire-hose. In times like this it carries the life-blood of the city. If any one tries to cut it, shoot him." And with this curt direction he waved us forward.

The rosy glow that illumined the southeastern sky had spread and deepened since we entered the hall. The ruddy light rose and fell in sudden tides, as the eddying-clouds of smoke reflected or obscured the fierce flames that leaped below them.

The sound of the fire-bell and the reddened sky had been a signal to other ears and eyes than those of the Vigilantes. Market Street was a hurrying stream of men and women and children, carried along by a common impulse, like wreckage on flood waters. Bands of young hoodlums rushed down the street with blackguardly cries, rudely jostling those who neglected to make way for them. A sibilant clamor of excited voices filled the air,–hoarse shouts of men, yells from the hoodlums and shrill chatter from the women and children, roused by the thrill of them.

At the corner of Beale and Harrison Streets we were halted by a densely packed mass of people striving vainly to press forward to a point from which they could get a closer view of the conflagration, now but a block away. The roar of flames could be heard above the volume of rattling sound that came from the massed confusion of firemen, rioters, Vigilantes and spectators. A ruddy glare illumined the great throng. Waves of heat reached us even at this distance, and farther down the street we could see men protecting their faces from the burning effulgence by holding their arms before their eyes. The great furnace sent up swift peaks of flame that fell as suddenly as they rose, and gave place to rolling clouds of smoke that turned the blaze to a dull red glow.

Before I could give the order to charge a passage through the crowd, a fire-engine dashed up with the clatter of galloping horses, the wild shouts of the

firemen, the ringing of gongs and the cries of the frightened spectators. The throng pressed aside, and by some magic of contraction made a lane for the swift horses as they drew the engine up to the hydrant. At this moment the engine across Harrison Street, that had been whirring away with convulsive energy, gave vent to a splutter of steam, slowed down, and came to a stop. A fireman came running over to the newly arrived engine from its fellow across the street, scattering in his train an eruption of oaths that gave a verbal effect that was comparable to the shower of sparks from his engine.

"Look out for your hose!" he shouted wrathfully. "They've just cut ours again."

"Where's the police?" cried the captain of the new engine, as he gave orders to couple the hose to the hydrant.

"There's one policeman to the block, an' if he ain't dead he ought to be," returned the wrathful engineer. "They was talking about what the Vigilantes was a-goin' to do, but I ain't seen none of 'em. I reckon they's a-holdin' a promenade concert up to Horticultural Hall, and ain't got time to come down here. If you want your hoodlums knocked out, you'll have to do it yourself." And running back to his engine he suited action to word by seizing a stick and clearing a space about it with fierce flourishes and fiercer words.

"Here are your Vigilantes," I shouted. "Now lay your lines of hose side by side, and I'll see that there's no more cutting."

"Well, clear the track for us then!" cried the captain with a volley of excited oaths. "Can't you see that my men are blocked there?"

I stationed half my company by the engines, formed the other half into a wedge, and rushed them down the hill. They plowed a wide lane through the massed throng, and the firemen ran behind them hauling the lines of hose, and howling orders and encouragement at every step. Along the path I dropped out man after man, with instructions to keep the crowd back, and shoot the first person who attempted to touch the hose. When I was satisfied that the lines were secure, I followed the advance guard down the slope to the corner of Beale and Bryant Streets.

Here I could for the first time see the full extent of the conflagration.

A bold bluff nearly one hundred feet high at First and Bryant Streets diminishes gradually till it permits Beale Street to descend by a moderate grade to the level of the wharves. Between the face of this bluff and the docks lay a medley of warehouses, coal-bunkers and lumber-yards, all now involved in a conflagration that turned the amphitheater between the bluff and the bay into a furnace filled with tossing, leaping flames of weird diversity of color. The warehouses were filled with sea stores and the spoil of commerce from many lands; one was stocked with barrels of whale-oil and other products of the Arctic trade;

and over them all flickered red, green, orange and yellow flames, in endless confusion. The coal-bunkers gave off great clouds of smoke, while the fiercest flames shot up from the oil warehouses and the blazing lumber-piles. Now and then a dull explosion, followed by a temporary dimming of the light at the eastern end of the furnace, pointed out the location of the oil; then a black cloud would roll up and drift away, and in a moment red and smoky flames would leap three hundred feet in air with a vicious eagerness that made them seem almost a sentient agent of destruction.

The wharves appeared to be yet untouched by the fire, but they were visibly in imminent danger, and, above the roar of the flames, the shouts of the firemen and the clamor of the crowd, we could plainly hear the cries of the sailors as they strove to move their vessels from the perilous neighborhood.

At the foot of the hill the heat was blistering. Planks a hundred feet from the blaze were smoking; the light was blinding, and even the boldest of the spectators had retired half-way up the hill. Yet two engines had been pushed forward almost to the border of the flame-covered area; and the firemen, attacking the conflagration with reckless energy, could be seen dragging their hose over planks that still glowed with half-extinguished embers.

At the entrance to this inferno my eye was caught by a reminder of difficulties that stirred my heart to a leap of apprehension. A long sign-board that had been set across the gate to the lumber-yards, now twisted and ready to fall from the half-burned uprights that supported it, bore across its face the words, "The Kendrick Lumber and Milling Co." Another of Wharton Kendrick's activities was destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of his property was now represented by a few acres of roaring flames. For a minute I was struck motionless with the fear that this loss might prove the final blow, and bring down in one avalanche the accumulated difficulties that I had evaded or postponed.

Then I was roused to attention by the words:

"Here is the man who can tell you all about it; he's the one that turned in the alarm."

The speaker wore the badge of an assistant chief of the fire department, and he was addressing two young men who held pencil and paper in their hands and looked eagerly at a roughly dressed man who seemed to be dazed at the destruction that was going on about him.

"Yes, I'm the man," he said slowly. "I'm a watchman. I was over there on the wharf–the Beale Street wharf. A while ago–it was a long time ago–"

"Never mind the long while ago–tell us about to-night," interrupted one of the young men impatiently.

"That's what I was telling you about," said the man in an injured tone. "It was a long while ago–to-night. I looked over here just the other side of that oil

warehouse–there's only one wall left to it now–an' I saw a fellow strike a match. I thought he was goin' to light his pipe, but he took a box from under his arm an' stuck the match in it. The box flared up as though it was full o' shavings, an' then he stuck it under a lumber-pile. I hollered at him, an' he ran. Then the fire started up, an' I got to the fire-box an' turned in the alarm. Then there was hell to pay." The man made this announcement in a dull, matter-of-fact way that gave a touch of comedy-in-tragedy to his words.

"What sort of looking man was he?" I asked.

"Oh, he was an oldish man–an old man–tall, an' sort of stooped."

"Stout or thin?"

"Thin, I guess–he was too far away for me to say for sure, an' bein' as I was kind of flustered by the fire, too."

At his words an illuminating light came to my mind. The fire was not directed at the Pacific Mail docks. It was set to destroy the yards of the Kendrick Lumber and Milling Company, and it had succeeded. It was the crowning stroke of Peter Bolton's assault on Wharton Kendrick's fortune.

I wondered whether Peter Bolton had himself set the match to the lumber-pile. The description by the watchman fitted him, and he did not lack the will for the deed. But it was so foreign to his cautious temper to take the risks of committing such a crime with his own hand that I hesitated to believe. Yet when he had once resolved upon such a step, it might well have seemed safer to him to perform the act himself, than to confide it to an accomplice who might betray him.

I was turning over this problem in my mind, and watching with unconscious eyes the bold and resolute efforts of the firemen to fight back the flames, when I was roused by a flight of stones. Two of them struck the nearest engine; one knocked the hat off a man of my company; and a fireman was struck down, only to jump to his feet in a moment with a torrent of oaths. The fire chief roared a profane but vigorous condemnation of the assault, and devoted its authors to an even warmer place than the furnace that blazed before us.

"That's the fifth time we've got it," said the engineer, backing up his chief with a contribution of blistering words.

I looked about for the assailants.

"It's those fellows up there on top of the bluff," said the fire chief. "They've been pelting the firemen and the police for half an hour. They can't reach this end of the line very well, but they've made it hot for our men up near First Street. I hear they've killed some of the Vigilantes up there. The Vigilantes tried to rush 'em, but it's up a hundred foot of narrow stair, and they had to give it up. I wish the whole gang up there was pitched into the middle of the fire."

I looked up at the bluff, and saw a black mass lining its upper edge. Two or

three hundred men and boys were clustered along its front, yelling and throwing stones. It was evident that their position could not be taken from the front. In no place was there less than fifty feet of sheer ascent. But I recalled that the bluff was open to attack from the rear by the way of First Street.

"I'll settle those fellows," I said.

"I'll see that you get the department medal, if you do," returned the fire chief. "But you can't get up there without wings."

After stationing guards along the line of hose, I still had twenty-five men who could be spared for other service. Most of them were still standing by the engines at the top of the Beale Street hill. So I made my way back to the corner, and with a few words explained the purpose of the expedition we were about to undertake. They had heard the report that a number of the Vigilantes had been killed by the hoodlums, and burning with indignation they welcomed the chance to inflict vengeance on the rioters.

"Keep together," I cautioned them, as we pushed our way through the mob of sightseers and mischief-makers up Harrison Street to First. Evil faces in the crowd gave us savage glances of dislike. But the white band on the arm that marked the members of the Safety Committee, the warning word of "Here come the Vigilantes," and the display of pick-handles, served to discourage the thought of molesting us. There was mass enough among the rough element in that crowd to swallow us ten times over, but they knew that we represented the force of law and government, and the rage for mischief fell to a muttering of threats as we passed.

When we had forced our way through the mass of sightseers to a distance of fifty yards from the edge of the bluff, there was a sudden shot, followed by an answering rattle that sounded like the firing of a pack of giant fire-crackers. Screams of women and shouts of men reinforced the noise of the guns, and we were borne backward in a terrified rush of the crowd. The infection of panic was hard to resist, but I succeeded in giving a steadying word to my men, and they breasted the current till the ground cleared before us. Then I saw that my manoeuver had been anticipated. A company of the Vigilantes had made a flank attack on the hoodlum position from the west by way of Bryant Street. We ran forward to reinforce the company, and I offered our services to its captain.

"They fired on us," he said, "and we've cleaned 'em out, I guess. Here's one fellow shot, anyhow. They've been throwing rocks down on the firemen below, and knocked out half a dozen of them–killed two of 'em, I heard. The cowardly brutes! Hunt 'em out, boys! There's some of 'em left in those yards along the bluff."

I made a dash along the edge of the bluff, and was rewarded by flushing a half-dozen hoodlums who rose from behind an outhouse, like quail from a clump

of bushes, and hastily scrambled over a fence. I called to them to halt or we would shoot, and was over the fence after them in an instant. Most of my men were too old for fast work of this sort, but a glance behind me showed that half a dozen had followed me.

The hoodlums had led the way to a cul-de-sac of buildings, and were cursing as they scattered here and there in the effort to find a way out. The form and voice of their leader, and his running stride stirred faintly the chords of memory. I tried vainly to recall where I had seen him before, and the elusive recollection multiplied my desire to capture him. In this resolve chance favored me. A stumble sent him to the ground, and before he could rise I was on top of him, and held a revolver against his head.

"Damn you!" he cried, puffing hoarsely in the effort to regain his breath.

"Take it quietly," I advised him, "or you'll lose what little brains you have."

"Damn you!" he repeated. "Let me up, or I'll kill you."

This time his tone and words stirred memory to definiteness. I had in my hands the fellow whose knife-thrust had been near ending my career, and whose gift of an overcoat had led me to Big Sam. and the train of events which followed upon my visit to the King of Chinatown. Here, then, was an agent of Bolton, and perhaps of Big Sam as well, leading one of the hoodlum gangs in its career of riot and arson. And I felt, as I gripped his throat, that I had within my hand the proof of Bolton's criminal conspiracy. If this man could be got to talk, the jail would close on Peter Bolton in the hour of his triumph; and the furnace that roared and glowed below us would bring ruin to his plans as swiftly as it had consumed the property of his enemy.

CHAPTER XXX

THE END OF THE FEUD

At last the night of alarms was over, and the forces of law and order held San Francisco firmly in their grasp. The police and the Vigilantes were fagged out but triumphant. And though the warehouses and lumber-yards in the amphitheater before the Mail docks were but a smoking mass of ashes and charcoal, the dangers of the conflagration were over. The exhausted firemen were withdrawn to fling themselves down to rest, and only a few hosemen were left to guard the smoldering ruins.

The great conspiracy of the Council of Nine had come to nothing. Parks was the only leader out of jail, and, in the absence of its active heads, the revolution had deliquesced into a series of scattered and objectless riots. The Committee of Safety had proved strong enough to handle the emergency, and the militia companies, held all night in their armories without a call for their services, were dismissed with the dawn.

The first gray of the morning was lightening the eastern sky as I disbanded my company. I had landed my captive in the City Prison, stubbornly uncommunicative, and jauntily confident that he was to be protected from harm. And when at last I had made my report at the Vigilante headquarters, I was driven to Wharton Kendrick's home, consumed with anxiety lest some of the wandering bands of rioters, or another gang of bravoes sent by the highbinders, had been inspired to attack it. Peter Bolton had succeeded in one of his schemes of vengeance, and I trembled lest in the wreck of his conspiracy against the peace of the city he had struck another blow at the person of his enemy.

As we turned the corner into Van Ness Avenue my mind was relieved of one anxiety. The Kendrick house still stood untouched by fire, and the gray dawn showed no sign of further attack.

Andrews received me with composure.

"Oh, yes," he replied to my eager questions, "there was some of them hoodlums come along here–gangs of ten or twenty at a time–and they yelled a good deal. But when we showed our teeth they went by on the other side. There was some shooting a block or two away, but they didn't even throw a rock around here."

At this soothing report I flung myself down in the men's quarters for a hurried sleep, dog-tired, but gratified to feel a reviving spring of courage. It seemed but a moment later that I saw Laura Kendrick threatened by the largest dragon I have ever met–in Dreamland or out. The uncanny monster had the face of Peter Bolton, marvelously magnified to fit a hundred-foot body, and he opened his mouth in sardonic laughter as he moved forward to crush the slight figure that stood in his path. At this sight I was oppressed by a modest but terrified conviction that I would cut but a poor figure in a contest with a dragon. But spurred by fear for the life of the most important girl in the world I ran forward shouting out such threats as I could summon, in the hope of communicating some of my own terrors to the monster, when on a sudden his boiler blew up, and he was scattered into nothingness. The shock of the explosion waked me, and I started up to find Andrews at my side.

"I didn't mean to knock the chair over, sir," he said apologetically, "but you told me to call you at seven. And Miss Kendrick says you are to go upstairs to breakfast, as soon as you're ready."

I collected my faculties sufficiently to make myself presentable, and was received at the door by Laura herself.

"I'm afraid," she said, as she ushered me into the breakfast-room, "that it doesn't agree with you to stay up all night. I don't believe you've had a wink of sleep, but I've made some coffee that's warranted to bring you wide awake before you can shut your eyes."

"If that's the way I look, my personal appearance is a libel on a peaceful citizen. I have slept for close on three hours, and have dreamed of acres of fires, and enough fighting to fill a book."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Miss Laura. "I don't see why men so like to fight. Do you take two lumps in your coffee or three?"

"The explanation is very simple," I returned. "They don't like to fight. One lump, please."

"Then what do they do it for?" she asked. "You had better take more than one chop; they're pretty small, and you've got a big day's work ahead–and behind."

"Why," I argued, "they fight for power, or reputation, or money, or a pair of brown eyes–or blue, as the case may be–for fear somebody will think them afraid–for anger–for almost any reason but enjoyment. I saw ten thousand men in a scrimmage last night, and there were not twenty of them there because they enjoyed the fight. At any rate, I can assure you that the man in the crowd I have the best right to speak for wished himself anywhere but in the front rank of battle."

"Humph!" sniffed Miss Laura incredulously. "I know very well that you couldn't have been hired to keep out of it. You haven't been doing much else but fighting since I got to know you."

"It wasn't from choice," I pleaded.

"Just tell me what happened, and how," she said. "I was scared blue last night with fire-bells and hooting whistles, and men shouting in the streets; and when I peeked out I saw a glare down town as though half the city was going up in smoke."

Laura listened with a grave face as I gave a succinct account of the night's adventures.

"And do you really believe that Mr. Bolton set fire to uncle's lumber-yards?" she asked.

"In person or by proxy," I replied.

"Well, there doesn't seem to be any end to his wickedness," she said. "I suppose he's prepared to finish us to-day."

"I don't think we can count on repentance–not from him. We shall have to find something a great deal safer than that to pull us through. Has your uncle

dropped any more hints about that million dollars?"

"He talked of it more than ever, last night. He went over the word 'million' hundreds of times. Then he would call your name and say 'five-sixteen' as though he was trying to make you understand the meaning of the figures."

It was an incomprehensible mystery, and we had to leave it so.

"Do you know what you are going to do, then?" she asked.

"Sell all the unpledged stock in the house, see what Partridge and Coleman can do for us, and try to stand up the banks for the balance."

Laura Kendrick shook her head, with a business-like expression on her face:

"I wish I could think of something better than that," she said with an attempt at cheeriness. "We shall never get through the day at that rate. But I suppose it's the best that's left us."

The door opened, and Mercy Fillmore appeared. The sudden intrusion of a third person brought to my consciousness a realization of the fascinating breakfast I had been conceded. But if I was so ungallant as to feel disappointment at her interrupting presence, it melted away under the soothing influence that surrounded her.

"What a night we have had!" she said, with an anxious note in the gentle harmonies of her voice. "We were worse frightened at the fire-bells and the shouting of men in the distance than at the drunken hoodlums who passed by the house. Was there much fighting?"

"Enough–but nothing to be frightened about."

"If there was violence," said Mercy, with a trace of anxiety in her tone, "I am afraid that Mr. Parks was among the misguided men. Did you see anything of him?"

"No," I replied. "He escaped arrest when the Council of Nine was gathered in, for he was making a speech on the sand-lot. I inquired for him at the City Prison and the Receiving Hospital, but he wasn't there, so I'm sure he must have escaped."

Mercy breathed a sigh of relief.

"Well, Mercy," said Laura Kendrick, "if you expect men to have any sense about such things, you are going to be disappointed. They are fighting animals–at any rate some of them are–and the best we can do is to have a good supply of lint and arnica on hand, and read books on the best way of treating wounds and bruises."

But a few minutes later she had forgotten this sentiment of resignation, for when I set out for the office to prepare for the onslaught that must come with the opening of the business hours, her parting injunction was to "Leave the business of the police to the police, and don't let the Kendrick family go to ruin by getting yourself knocked on the head in some harum-scarum expedition."

I found Brown already at work, and his haggard face showed that he shared in the keen anxieties of the day.

"This is a bad business, Mr. Hampden, a bad business," he sighed. "Four hundred thousand dollars' worth of lumber went up in that fire last night."

"Didn't we have any insurance on it?"

"Why, yes–we had one hundred and fifty thousand on it. But we had borrowed that much on the stock, and the bank holds the policy. I was hoping to get some more money on the lumber to-day, but that chance has gone." Brown shook his head and sighed as though his courage had fallen to a low ebb, and added: "I'm afraid every creditor we have will be down on us now."

"How much shall we have to meet?" I asked.

"I wish I could tell," he groaned. "Mr. Kendrick has been so careless about giving out his notes without having them entered on the books that I can't say. I think there are about two hundred thousand of unsecured notes out, but there may be a million, for all I know."

"How much money have we in hand?"

"It's not much. Not over twenty thousand."

"How much can we get if we drop that confounded load of stock we are carrying?"

"Oh, if we could unload it without breaking the price it would stand us something like two or three hundred thousand dollars, after paying off all loans on it. But it's a ticklish market–a ticklish market. If we start to throw the stock out, there will be a slump that will wipe out our margins and leave us on the wrong side of the ledger."

"I'll see what can be done about it. Perhaps Partridge can get the stock taken into stronger hands. Can you think of anything else that we can turn into money?"

"There's just one thing I have remembered since yesterday. The Oriental Bank let us have a hundred thousand on those Humboldt lumber lands a while ago. The lands ought to be good for as much more if the Oriental is lending at all."

"That sounds as though there might be something in it. I'll see the Oriental Bank people at once–Partridge, too. If we can get a hundred thousand from the bank, and get our margins out of those stocks, we shall have, a fair chance of weathering the storm." As I turned to go, I bethought me to say, "Don't pay out a dollar that you can possibly hold on to."

Brown gave his head a deprecating shake.

"That won't do, Mr. Hampden. You see, we're tied up to our open-handed way of doing business. Now, if we were acting for Peter Bolton, it would be different. When he tells a man to call again for his money, nobody thinks anything

about it. They just say he's a skinflint, who could pay and won't. But you know how Wharton Kendrick has run his business. Whenever a man wants his money, he gets it as fast as it can be counted out. There's the trouble now. If we go to asking for time, or putting them off, why everybody will say: 'Aha! Kendrick is in difficulties; I always thought he would go under.' And every account that stands against us would be in before noon."

I had to admit that he was right, and sallied forth to the Oriental Bank. The president received me genially, when I announced myself as the ambassador of Wharton Kendrick, and threw up his hands in good-humored refusal when I told what I wanted.

"You couldn't get a cent on that property to-day, if the trees were made out of gold, Mr. Hampden," he said. "Property outside the city is worth nothing to us. To be frank with you, we should feel easier if we had the money out of the last loan we made you people. I'll make you a first-class offer: Pay the principal, and I'll strike off the interest."

Partridge was hardly more encouraging than the president of the Oriental Bank. He promised to bestir himself to find some one to take the stock, but confessed that he was unable to suggest a buyer. And I was forced to turn toward the office once more with a feeling akin to desperation.

The atmosphere about the business district was not of a quality to reassure the despondent. Although the banks and exchanges had not yet opened for business, I could hear everywhere the buzz of apprehension. Frightened traders hurried along the streets with eyes eloquent of their fears; anxious holders of stocks gathered in groups about Pine and Montgomery Streets, with pale and troubled faces, as they began their curbstone trading; and there were signs of storm indicating that we should have a worse day before us than any that we had weathered.

As I reached the Merchants' Exchange, I came upon William T. Coleman, and he greeted me with an air that warmed my spirit.

"That was a good piece of work you did last night, Hampden," he said. And I blushed under the commendation as proudly as though I were a soldier of the Grand Army called out to receive the ribbon of the Legion of Honor from the hands of the Great Napoleon.

"We suppressed the riots last night," I replied, "but the people don't seem to know it. I see more anxiety among the business men this morning than at any time yet."

"It's absurd," said Coleman abruptly. "I can't understand why they should take that tone. The danger is over. We have the situation perfectly in hand. Men are signing the rolls by the hundred now. We shall have the city so thoroughly guarded to-night that not even a rat can come out of the sewers. It's nonsense to

talk of panic conditions, as some of these fellows are doing. By the way, how are Kendrick's affairs? He had a bad loss last night."

I did not hesitate to describe the difficulties of the position.

"I'll see if something can't be done for you," he said. "If I had a little more time I could arrange it, I am sure, but I have my hands pretty full now. As it is, I can't be of much help to you till to-morrow." And he passed on.

There was a stimulating influence in his tones, and, though I had little confidence in his power to arrange for aid, his words sent me back to the office in better spirits. I had need of all my courage, for Brown met me with word that the money was going out rapidly, and that without a turn in the tide we should not last beyond noon.

"God bless you, Hampden!" cried a familiar voice as I entered the waiting-room. "I was wondering whether some of your long-haired Bedlamites hadn't got you and hanged you to your own lamp-post." And the fiery face of General Wilson beamed at me with lively interest as he hastened forward to grasp my hand. "How's Kendrick coming on? I see by the papers that you've been having the devil of a time here."

I admitted the plutonic nature of the city's recent activities, as I led General Wilson into the private office.

"I've been in Stockton," said General Wilson with explosive energy. "To tell the truth, I went up to file that contract for the sale of the tule land. I didn't know how Kendrick's affairs were going to turn out, so I didn't lose any time getting it on record. I've never been caught napping yet, and it wouldn't do to begin at this late day. Now, how are things going? Will Kendrick pull through, or is he up against the wall?"

My heart misgave me at having Wharton Kendrick's business on the tongue of this loquacious boaster, and I was of a mind to deliver to him the same cheery lie that I had poured into the ears of a dozen inquisitive acquaintances. But I remembered the substantial proof of friendly interest that he had already shown, and thought it better that I should once more be frank with him.

General Wilson shook his head with sympathetic concern when I had finished my tale.

"That has a bad look," he said. "You can't get through, unless you get help. Now if it was only fifty thousand, why, I would strain my authority so far as to let you have it—or, by Jove, I'd advance it out of my own pocket, to help Wharton. But the chances are that you'll want ten times that amount, so I can't risk it. You can count on my services, though, if you have to call a meeting of the creditors. I'm famous for managing such affairs, and in Chicago they have a joke about Wilson's Elixir Vitæ for Broken-down Corporations. If the business stops, I can put it on its feet, if anybody can. Why, I've managed twenty big failures if I've

managed one, and I brought 'em all through with flying colors. It wasn't three years ago that I was called in to help Seymour, Peters and Blair. They had failed for four million, and their affairs were in the devil of a tangle. I wouldn't have touched the thing for money, but I couldn't resist the pleading of my old friend Seymour. He came to me crying like a baby, and was ready to blow his brains out if I failed him. So I took hold, worked like a beaver for three weeks–night and day–got the creditors to scale their claims and take six-, nine- and twelve-months' notes, and had the concern going smoothly inside of thirty days. To-day you'll find Seymour, Peters and Blair one of the soundest firms in Chicago. Why, I've reorganized three railroads, and–"

General Wilson's flow of reminiscence was interrupted by the sudden entry of Brown. I saw by his distressed face as he beckoned me that a crisis had arrived.

"What is it?" I asked. "You can speak before General Wilson. He is our counsel now."

"The El Dorado Bank has just presented notes for a hundred and fifty thousand," he gasped.

The El Dorado Bank! I had no need of second sight to tell me from whose hand the blow had come. Peter Bolton had brought together another packet of Wharton Kendrick's paper, and had put it through the bank for collection. My heart sank, and my face must have grown as long and white as Brown's. Was the game up at last? Had the struggle ended in defeat?

"I'm afraid you're going to need my services," said General Wilson with a shake of his head. "Send out a hurry call to Kendrick's friends, and if they don't come to time, I'll see you through a meeting of the creditors." General Wilson spoke with professional cheerfulness, as though he would convince me that a meeting of the creditors was one of the pleasurable experiences of life.

As he spoke, the door opened, and I was startled to see Laura Kendrick enter. Her face was flushed, and excitement sparkled in her eyes. She paused irresolute, as she saw the two men with me, and I jumped to my feet and hastened to meet her.

"Am I too late?" she gasped.

"Too late?" I echoed in wonder.

"For the money–uncle's money, you know!" she cried impatiently, as she saw no sign of comprehension on my face.

"Why, I guess we can let you have whatever you need," I said. "It had better go to you than to the creditors' attorneys."

"No–no!" she cried, grasping my arm and looking up in my face, "I don't mean that. I mean the money that uncle put away. It's in the safe deposit vaults."

"The safe deposit vaults!" I cried, grasping her meaning at last. "Why didn't I think of that?"

"I ran as soon as I heard the words," she said. "Am I in time?"

"To the minute," I said. And at the words she sank into a chair with the reaction from the stress of anxiety.

Brown knew nothing of any safe deposit vault, so with a hasty word of explanation to General Wilson, I seized my hat, and said to Laura:

"You had better come over with me."

"I suppose I'd best go," she said. "It's a feeling I have, and as I don't have such inspirations very often I'd better obey this one."

"How did you find out about the money?" I asked as we descended the stairs.

"Why, uncle got dreadfully uneasy this morning, and I couldn't quiet him. He went over and over his words–'million,' and 'notes,' and 'five-sixteen'–and sometimes he called your name, and sometimes he called for Mr. Brown, and he was much vexed that you didn't understand him. Then about half an hour ago he cried out angrily, 'Go over to the safe deposit and get it. Why don't you do as I tell you?' At that I flew, and here I am." And she looked up in my face with an anxious smile.

The safe deposit building was but half a block away, and we were soon in the office. There was a minute or two of consultation between the officials when I had delivered my credentials as the representative of Wharton Kendrick. Then one of them asked:

"Have you the key number of the box?"

I was nonplussed for the moment, but Laura Kendrick whispered:

"Remember the number he has been calling out for the last two nights."

"Five-sixteen," I replied confidently.

The guardians of the treasure-house bowed, led me to the vaults and at my demand unlocked the box.

At the top of the miscellaneous papers that the box contained were two book-like packages, both marked with the inspiring figures "$500,000." I tore off the wrapping of the larger package. It was filled with gold notes of large denominations, and the slip that bound them was indorsed "For the Syndicate." The other package proved to be filled with United States bonds. It was all clear now. Wharton Kendrick had deposited his contribution to the syndicate's fund in this box instead of in the special account in the Golconda Bank, and had provided here his reserve of securities with which to meet the outstanding notes.

Laura Kendrick exclaimed with delight at the sight of this wealth.

"Is it all there?" she cried.

"Yes. Here is the full million he has been talking about, and there seem to be more securities in the box. You have saved the day for us. We should have gone to wreck without you," I replied.

"Well, I've been fuming and fretting all these days because I was so useless, but now if you'll take me to the carriage I'll go home with my self-respect quite restored."

"It was you that made the battle worth while," I murmured.

My return to the office brought an outburst of joy. At my announcement of the result, Brown jumped up with an enthusiastic whoop, and lumbered about the room with awkward capers. Then he checked himself suddenly, and very shamefacedly begged my pardon.

"I haven't done that since I was a boy, sir," he said. And I believed him.

With the business once more on a solid basis, I walked over to Partridge's office to relieve his anxiety on the subject of Wharton Kendrick's solvency. He had gone to the Exchange, and I followed him thither.

Pine Street was still thrilling with the energy of a steam-engine working at high pressure. Waves of excitement agitated the crowds that hung about the entrance of the Stock Exchange, and there was the familiar succession of roars and barks with which the traders in stocks find it necessary to transact their business. Yet I thought I saw a weakening of interest among the speculators–a lessening of the tension among the excited men who were following the course of the market. I leaped to the hope that the crisis was passing.

As I reached the steps of the Exchange the confused roar of the crowd was interrupted. Three short, sharp explosions crackled upon the air with staccato distinctness and the clamor hushed for a moment with a suddenness as startling as the shots themselves. A dozen yards down Pine Street a thin cloud of blueish smoke rose and drifted away on the morning breeze.

For a moment the crowd surged back as though in fear, and I saw a bent, white-bearded man standing with a revolver in his hand, looking down at a prostrate something on the pavement. A few trailing threads of smoke floated up from the revolver's muzzle. Then there was a forward rush, and the crowd closed in; but in that momentary glimpse I had recognized the bent form and dreamy face of Merwin.

The hush gave way to shouts. Men were running from all directions. The crowd pushed closer. Windows overlooking the place were suddenly filled with excited observers, questions were eagerly exchanged, and the cry rose:

"Peter Bolton has been shot!"

At the name of Bolton the blood bounded through my arteries with suffocating force, and I pushed my way through the throng with feverish energy. When I broke through the ring that surrounded the prostrate form, a policeman was just laying his hands on Merwin, and raising his dub as if to strike him. The old man handed his revolver to the officer, and cried:

"I am Merwin. He has robbed me of my money for twenty years, and he

said I should die a beggar. And I shot him!"

On the pavement lay Peter Bolton. His hands were pressed to a reddening circle on his coat, and his face was drawn into an expression of anxious fear. As I bent over him, a look of recognition flashed into his eyes. And even in the pangs of dissolution a sardonic smile drew down the corners of his mouth, while has sarcastic voice, reduced in volume till it was scarcely more than a whisper, drawled painfully:

"You've missed your chance, Hampden. You'll never get rich now. I fought–you all–and I've beat–you all."

He paused in weakness, and the murmur of voices about me filled my ears. There was scarce a sympathetic tone to be heard, and thrice the words floated to me:

"It's a wonder he didn't get it before."

Peter Bolton had lived without good will to man, and he was dying without man's regret. He summoned up his failing energies and continued:

"If I had another day, your–man–Kendrick–would–be–smashed!" The last word was spoken almost as a hiss. Then the blood welled up in his throat, and with a convulsive effort to rise he fell back and was still.

The Bolton-Kendrick Feud was over.

CHAPTER XXXI
THE BROKEN WEB

With the death of Peter Bolton there was an immediate slackening of the tension in the commercial exchanges. The shock of his sudden end turned men's minds for a little from the market-place, and when they turned back it was not the same. The enginery of evil that he had set in motion to crush Wharton Kendrick ran slower and slower, and at last came to a stop.

"The El Dorado Bank has thrown up the sponge," said Partridge when I met him at noon. "They were acting for Bolton more than for themselves in this deal. Now that the old fox has gone, they have lost stomach for the fight."

And with this assurance, I walked the street with the buoyancy of heart that follows a hard-won victory.

I was still in exultant frame of mind when I came a few minutes later upon the personification of Gloom. It was Parks. His mouth was drawn down into

an expression of somber weariness of the world. A piece of court-plaster ornamented his cheek; and his right eye was swollen and discolored until it resembled nothing so much as an overripe tomato.

"Why, what's the matter?" I asked with exuberant spirit. "You look like the day after the fight."

He looked resentfully at me, with a sad shake of the head.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "it is unfair to jest. I have suffered the burial of my hopes. I am done with the affairs of life."

"What!" I cried. "Have you given up the revolution? Have you abandoned the battle for the rights of the people?"

"The people be damned!" responded Parks angrily. "Why should I give my life to fight for those who won't fight for themselves? Why should I scheme for the slaves who have not the sense to follow the leaders who point the way to emancipation? We perfect our plans to free them from the oppressions of a capitalistic government, and when we call on them to take arms and follow us they fall to robbing Chinamen. When I appeal to them to follow me to the City Hall instead of the wash-house, the response I get is a black eye. That's my reward for devotion to the rights of the people."

"It must have been a most demonstrative meeting," I replied without a trace of sympathy, "and it did one good thing, for it knocked some sense into you."

"Hampden," said Parks, with a lofty air that made a comic contrast with his flaming eye, "I forgive you the expression. But I assure you I retract nothing of my views. What I have learned is that the great era for which I have worked can not be brought about by men who understand neither their wrongs nor their rights. We must educate them until they see the truth."

"Oh, then I suppose you are on your way to the City Hall to get your leather-lunged orator out of jail to resume his teachings?"

Parks flushed angrily.

"Kearney?" he cried. "He can rot in his cell for anything I will do to get him out. I refuse, sir, to voice the suspicions that I have been forced to entertain, but he is a hindrance, not an aid to the cause of the people. They must be taught the large truths, not the little truths, if they are to act wisely. Let us not mention his name."

I left Parks at the corner of Kearny and Merchant Streets, and walking down to the door of the City Prison, applied for permission to see the prisoner I had captured in the final riot above the Mail docks. The death of Peter Bolton made it likely that I could induce him to answer the questions he had flouted the previous night.

I was admitted without difficulty, and found the cages filled with scores of men herded together into brutal contiguousness.

It was impossible to examine the prisoner before these cell-mates, but by the exercise of diplomacy I secured the privilege of talking with him in the comparative quiet of the Receiving Hospital. The man was brought shambling in, cast an impudent glance at me, and then looked sullenly at the floor. His pale face and sunken eyes and cheeks betrayed the opium smoker, and his manner was that of the hoodlum.

"You had better make a clean breast of it," I exhorted him. "I suppose you know that Bolton is dead."

"Yep," he said uneasily. "The old rooster that done for him was in here. He didn't look like he'd nerve enough to kill a cat."

"Well, I warn you that you have no one to protect you now, and your only chance of getting off with a light punishment is to answer my questions and tell the truth."

"Ask what you like, cully," he replied with an impudent leer. "You can bet I'm too fly to give up anything I ain't wanting you to know. I ain't a-goin' to split on the man that paid me, even if he has gone to the morgue. I'm game, I am." And he straightened himself with a pitiful exhibition of the criminal's pride.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of giving away Bolton's secrets," I said. "I know more about them than you do." And I mentioned several incidents of his employment that made his eyes open and his face pale with the fear that he was caught beyond escape. "What I want you to tell me is what Bolton was doing with Big Sam?"

The spy looked sullenly at the floor, and shook his head. And it was not until I had threatened to put a charge of attempt to murder against him that he replied:

"Well, I don't see as there's any harm in tipping it off to youse on that. The old rat's game was to get Big Sam to put up money for them crazy bunko-men on the Council of Nine. He done it, too. I'll bet he got the coolie to put up as much as he gave himself."

"Did you take the money from Big Sam to Bolton?"

"Me? Not much! They was too fly to let me get my nippers on it. I was plain messenger-boy–that's what I was–and I carried a lot of talk about what the Council was going to do. You knows all that game. If youse want it, I can give youse a yard of it now."

I could well believe that this creature was not trusted with any of the purposes that these men had in their alliance. So I turned to the question:

"What was that Chinese paper in the pocket of the overcoat you left with me that night you tried to kill me when I chased you out of Mr. Kendrick's yard?"

"Oh, youse is the feller that got that coat, are you? Well, that paper was just an order or ticket that would let me into Big Sam's tong house when the tong

was meeting–so as I could see him without losing time. It wasn't no use to me; but Big Sam let on he was giving me first cousin to the Mint when he passed it over."

Nothing more was to be got out of this man, so I left the fetid prison, and followed up the line of inquiry by seeking Big Sam.

I found him just entering the store that led to his dwelling. He received me with courtesy, but there was a trace of suspicion in his eyes as he invited me to follow him to his office.

"I suppose I do not bring news in telling you that our mutual acquaintance, Mr. Peter Bolton, is no more," I said, as we entered the oriental hall. In that room with its intricate ornamentation, its grotesque carvings and garish hangings, Peter Bolton and the troubled city of San Francisco seemed thousands of miles away, and I felt like a traveler in Cathay, who had come overseas bearing news of distant countries.

"You are not the first to tell me," said Big Sam. "I had the regret of hearing it some hours ago."

"It was a sad loss to the Council of Nine," I said, watching narrowly if the name brought any change of expression to his face. But no shadow crossed the yellow mask with which he concealed his thoughts.

"I am not familiar with Mr. Bolton's relations with society," said Big Sam blandly. "But I'm sorry to have lost a good customer."

It was hopeless to study that changeless mask–hopeless to seek to match the Oriental in guile. So I abandoned the task and asked bluntly:

"Now that Peter Bolton is dead, and the Council of Nine is in jail, and the conspiracy is smashed beyond repair, would you mind telling me why you contributed money to such a harebrained scheme?"

"Your question makes an unwarranted assumption," said Big Sam dryly. "I know nothing about contributing money to Councils of Nine, or other harebrained revolutionists."

"Oh," I said, "you need not fear that I am asking this in the character of a public prosecutor. It is merely a feeling of private curiosity. In protecting Mr. Kendrick's affairs I have learned most of the inside history of the movement. And I should really like to know what led a man of your intelligence to further a cause that was apparently so opposed to his interests."

Big Sam looked at me in silence with calm and unflinching gaze for two or three minutes, and I suspected that the expediency of my mysterious disappearance was canvassed behind the inscrutable veil of his eyes. Then a sarcastic smile stole about the corners of his mouth, and he said:

"I am sorry to disappoint you. I must plead ignorance of the circumstances you mention. If Mr. Bolton was the representative of criminal or treasonable

designs, I do not know it. But if it will be of any assistance or satisfaction to you, I will describe a hypothetical case. Let us suppose that an harassed race had found an insecure footing–say in Sumatra. Suppose that the head man of this harassed race had been approached by the leader of a revolutionary party, with whom he had been in business relations. This leader, or backer, or whatever you wish to call him, we may suppose, insists on the prospects of success of the revolutionary movement–enlarges on the certainty of disturbances to come among the classes of the people most opposed to this alien race, and urges its head man to raise up friends in the revolutionary party by a contribution of money. I put it to you, Mr. Hampden, would it be worth this man's while–in Sumatra, you understand–to pay enough to secure toleration for his race, in case its enemies came into possession of the government?"

"Candidly–since you ask my opinion–it was the most unpromising investment I could have suggested."

Big Sam was so far nettled by my judgment on his hypothetical case that he dropped his diplomatic pretense, and said:

"A judgment after the fact, Mr. Hampden, when it is easy to be wise. Yet even now it is not difficult to see that bitterness and division have been sown among the enemies of my race. Action against us has been postponed for years–perhaps for all time. The mass of your people–especially beyond the mountains–are shocked at the excesses of the past week, and will oppose the demands made by your disorderly classes. Like all the weak, we must conquer by the division of those who could harm us. The division has come."

"I think you mistake its extent," I said. "The riots may have roused a prejudice in the Eastern States against the demand for the exclusion of your race. But it is only a temporary check. It will not be five years before there is a law on the statute books forbidding the coming of your people."

Big Sam looked over my head, with the far-away gaze of one who was looking to the distant future. Then he sighed and spoke:

"Perhaps you are right. You must understand the temper of your people much better than I. But it will be as it will. If we are permitted to come unchecked, we shall build up on this coast a great Chinese State that will change the face of the world. We are adaptable, as you know. We are arming ourselves with the methods and machinery of western progress. Put a state of ten million of Chinese on this coast, and from this vantage point we shall break down the barriers between Orient and Occident, put the productive forces of the West into the hands of my people in China, add what is best in your life to the superior qualities of our institutions, and make China the leader instead of the hermit of the world."

Big Sam's face was calm with the self-possession of his race, as he described this vision, but his eyes glowed with magnetic fire, and his voice thrilled with

enthusiasm as he spoke.

"A magnificent plan–but there are difficulties," I said.

"Difficulties, yes–but only such as the intellect and energy of man may overcome. The old order in China is tottering to its fall. The dynasty of usurpers is held in place only by the arm of the foreigner. Its strength is typified by its head–a child and a woman!" Big Sam spoke thus of the baby Emperor and the Empress Dowager, with an infinite scorn. "It needs but the man with the resources behind him to rouse China to herself–to show to the nations a new and magnificent civilization–more splendid and solid than the world has ever seen."

I was stirred to admiration at his dream.

"I believe," I said heartily, "that you are the man to do it, if it could be done by a single man. But I warn you now that the white race will never surrender California, except at the compulsion of arms."

Big Sam sighed again, but his face retained its impassive calm.

"In that case I shall live and die a Chinese merchant–Big Sam, the King of Chinatown, as your people are kind enough to call me."

There was something of pathos in this descent from the heights of his great projects. He had given me a glimpse of the purposes nearest his heart, had shown me something of the real man that lay behind the disguise of his impassive face and every-day pursuits. But he closed the door of his soul with a sudden contraction of his eyes, and said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"And now are you tired of the girl I intrusted to you? Is she still a convalescent?"

"Why, we have no thought of surrendering her," I said, in some surprise that he should renew the subject. "She is improving rapidly. She is able to walk about, and is considered a most tractable patient."

"That is very satisfactory," began Big Sam, but I interrupted:

"There is only one question agitating us about her. She seems so much above the women of your race we see about us that we should like to know something of her history."

Big Sam bowed courteously, as though I had offered him a compliment.

"I see that you are looking for a romance," he said. "Well, possibly I can gratify you. I had supposed myself that she sprang from a low parentage–or at highest from the shopkeeper class–though, as you say, she seems much above the Chinese women you are privileged to see. She came hither from an orphan home in Canton, and was said to be of unknown parentage. I have made further inquiries, however, and have just received a letter from a friend in Canton with a few details that may please you. The girl is the daughter of a mandarin, descended from a long line of scholars. But her father, mother, brothers and all known relatives perished in the plague, their fortune was confiscated, and the girl–then

an infant–was turned over to the keeping of the orphanage."

"That is very interesting. Is there any chance of establishing her rights?"

"Not the slightest. But you will be glad to hear that I shall soon have a home for her among her own people." Big Sam was, as usual, coming to his point by indirection.

"I trust it is one you can recommend," I said bluntly.

"It is one that exactly fills the conditions under which the girl was taken," he responded dryly. "A reputable man of her own race–a merchant–wishes to make her his wife."

"He is well-to-do, I assume."

"Naturally, or he would not be able to meet the demands of the tongs."

"Has he another wife?" I asked, with mistrust of the Chinese domestic arrangements.

"None."

"In that case, I think he may be ready to offer his credentials in something less than a month."

"He will find it difficult to repress his impatience," said Big Sam gravely. "He is a widower."

And with a bow of ceremony he dismissed me.

CHAPTER XXXII
THE ANSWER

The duties of the day were at last done, and I turned toward the Kendrick house with a lively sense of my obligation to relieve the anxieties that might still be felt in that household. The afternoon had been taken up with the fag ends of our business complications, and darkness had set in before I could leave the office. The streets were quiet, and, except for the Vigilante patrols, were almost deserted.

As I neared my destination a large man halted me with a raised pick-handle, and said:

"Vere go you, mine vrendt? Don'd you petter go home?"

I laughed and showed him my committee badge.

"That's where I'm going. And I hope you will have a quieter time than they gave us last night."

"Oxcuse me," said the Vigilante. "I mine orders obey, and mine block of

hoodlums kept swept." And with a good night, I hastened on my way to the Kendrick place.

I found Laura and Mercy together.

"Well," said Laura graciously, "I'm glad to see that you have kept out of the fighting for one little while. I was supposing that you were down on the Barbary Coast getting your head smashed. Take that big easy-chair; it's the softest, and I'm sure you ought to appreciate it after all the knocks you've had."

"Oh, it looks as though there was no more fighting to be done. The hoodlums have taken to their holes, and the Vigilante pick-handles rule the city."

"Well, if it's all over it will be a great relief to my mind," she replied. "And I suppose you'll be glad to hear that uncle is better. He has come to his senses again, and I've set his mind at rest about the business, and Doctor Roberts says he will be out in a few weeks."

"Well, all our troubles are coming to an end at once then," I said with a lightened spirit.

"Yes, I got your note saying that the worst was over, and the business safe. It was good of you to send it. That was a shocking thing about Mr. Bolton. He was an old–well, I won't say what, for he's dead and gone–but I believe I feel sorry for him, after all."

"Yes," said Mercy, with a grave nod, "whomever he injured, we know that it was himself he injured most of all. What will they do with Mr. Merwin?"

"They've turned him loose already. The committing magistrate called it justifiable homicide, which is bad law, though there's some elemental justice about it, and the crowd carried Merwin out of the court on their shoulders. The Grand Jury may take it up, but Bolton was not a popular character. At any rate Merwin is free now."

"Well, he is a much injured man," said Laura, "though I don't see that he has bettered himself. And now what did you mean in your note about having a very important communication from Big Sam? I have some curiosity left after all the excitement."

"It's highly interesting. Moon Ying turns out to be the long-lost daughter of a Somebody. Also Big Sam has a suitor for her hand."

"Who is he? What is he?" came in a breath from the two girls.

"A merchant, a Chinaman and a widower," I replied. And then I gave them the information that Big Sam had confided to me.

"Well," said Laura decisively, "that's very interesting about Moon Ying's family, but I don't see that it can do her much good. And that widower can come up here, and we'll look him over. I can tell you right now that he will have to pass a very rigid examination, and he shan't have Moon Ying unless she wants him."

"Hm-m! I suspect he will have to acquire some new ideas on the qualifications of an expectant husband, and I'm afraid he's rather old to learn."

"Well, if the ideas are new to him, it's time he learned 'em," said Laura, "and if he's too old to learn, why, so much the worse for him. He can go back where he came from."

"Yes," said Mercy quietly, "if it is to be worse for him or worse for her, why, he is the one who must give way."

"I'm afraid you are in a fair way to upset the whole scheme of Chinese domesticity," I said.

"Well, it's high time it was upset," returned Laura. "And if I'm not much mistaken, Moon Ying has learned a thing or two since she has been here that will upset it for at least one household. So Mr. No-Name Chinaman had better be preparing his credentials and studying up to pass his examinations." And she thereupon gave such a list of qualifications for a possible husband for Moon Ying that I was disposed to condole with Big Sam's candidate on his chances of election to the blessed state of matrimony.

Mercy Fillmore expressed a somewhat less exalted ideal of the suitor who would fill the measure of Moon Ying's maiden fancies, though I was certain that it was one that would astonish the celestial widower. And then in sudden concern, lest her patients should be in need of her attention, she excused herself, and Laura and I were left alone.

For a little time she was silent, gazing dreamily at the floor, and I was content to watch her without speech. The storm and stress of the past few weeks had given something more of womanliness to the delicately cut features, and, to my eyes at least, there was an added grace to the attitude and movements of the small figure. It seemed as though the woman in her had suddenly bloomed into the strength that the girl had only suggested.

At last a little smile dimpled the corners of her mouth, and without raising her eyes she said:

"Don't you know it's rude to stare at one so?"

"I beg your pardon," I returned impenitently, "but it's impossible to help it."

"Oh," she said, with a quick return to her matter-of-fact tone, "that's ruder yet. And now I want to know how much longer you're going to keep this pack of men around the house. They're rather a responsibility for a housekeeper, and it's something like living in a public square."

"I'm going to cut the force in half to-morrow, but the rest of them will stay till Moon Ying is out of the place. I'm taking no more risks."

"I suppose you are right," she said slowly. Then she looked up impulsively, and added: "How good you have been to us! I don't see how we should have got through without you. We are through, aren't we? I'm hoping you feel that you

have our thanks, at least."

I stepped to her side and took her hand.

"I've asked for much more than that," I began. I intended to say a good deal more, but a diabolic click in my throat interfered with my voice, and a whirl of brain cells tangled my ideas into such inextricable confusion that I was able only to gasp out: "I want an answer to my question. I want you, and I'm going to have you."

She had risen to her feet, and I was panic-stricken with the fear that she was going to run away. Then, while I was struggling to get my ideas and my vocal organs into subordination that would make them of use in this emergency, the hereditary instinct coming from some ancestor with, more courage than I–may Heaven bless him for coming into the family!–inspired my arm, and I clasped her in close embrace. She struggled for a moment. Then she looked up at me, and, my ancestor's courage inspiring me once more, I bent down and kissed her.

"Oh, it isn't fair," she whispered in protesting accent; and I repeated the offense. "How can I answer?" she added. "You know I can't."

"There's only one answer," I whispered in return, "and you might as well give it now."

At this moment I heard a gasp, and Mercy Fillmore's voice exclaimed in consternation:

"Oh, I beg pardon–I hadn't any idea–"

At the sound, Laura whirled about and was out of my clasp, with a strength and quickness marvelous and unexpected.

"You may come in, Mercy," she said with an enviable self-possession, though her face bloomed into a most admirable variety of rose-colors. "You shall be the first to congratulate us. We–we didn't intend to announce it yet–but we are engaged to be married."

Mercy gave her good wishes most prettily, and though I suspected that she considered Mr. Baldwin a more suitable match, she was kind enough not to give any hint of it, and kissed Laura, and assured me that I had won the greatest prize in the world.

EPILOGUE

Big Sam was as good as his word. As soon as Moon Ying was pronounced in

a state to receive callers, his Chinese merchant abated so much of his dignity as to pay a stately visit to the Kendrick house. He fell several points below the standard of eligibility set by Miss Kendrick and Miss Fillmore. But Moon Ying asserted her individuality to the extent of approving him with such earnestness as to weep at unfavorable comments. At this demonstration of affinity, Mercy Fillmore promptly surrendered her doubts. Miss Kendrick went around with her nose tip-tilted for a full day, but as Moon Ying continued to weep, she finally said:

"Well, I suppose you couldn't expect to get anything better out of Chinatown."

This form of approval was not resented, either by the enamored merchant or the fair Moon Ying. So the marriage was celebrated in double form: First, and with many protests, one of which went even to the length of a temporary rupture of the marriage negotiations, there was a lawful Christian ceremony at the Kendrick house. On this point the protectresses were inexorable. Therefore, before the Reverend Doctor Western, appeared Lan Yune Yow, portly, shiny, erect, dressed like a rainbow and looking convinced that he was making a fool of himself; and Moon Ying, radiant in silks, dazzling with pearls and embroideries, and beaming with celestial happiness; and in lawful form they were pronounced man and wife. Secondly, there was a wedding in Chinatown, which was reported to be the most magnificent celebration ever witnessed in the oriental quarter. We were not favored with an invitation to this part of the marriage ceremonies, but we were participants in the wedding-feast, for there descended on the Kendrick house such a shower of Chinese confections and nuts and fruits that it seemed impossible that any could be left for the bidden guests.

So Moon Ying went out of our lives, and carried with her our lasting gratitude for the services she had unconsciously rendered.

Mr. Baldwin affected not to see me the next time we met, and then repenting of his churlishness gave me his congratulations; but he never called again at the Kendrick house, and presently consoled himself by marrying the heiress of the Bellinger fortune.

Wharton Kendrick recovered strength slowly, but at last resumed his place at the head of his business. He enlivened his convalescence by telling me how much better he could have managed certain details of our campaign if he could have been in command; but when he was wholly himself again he made more handsome acknowledgments of his approval–both verbal and financial–than I had a right to expect. While he was still on his sick-bed, I asked him if he would mind telling me the origin of the Bolton-Kendrick feud, now that it was all over.

"I'm ashamed to tell it," he said. "But if you will have it, the whole thing started with a blackboard caricature that I drew of Bolton when we were barefoot boys together at the old school-house. He retaliated by drawing attention to a

caricature I had made of the teacher, and I can feel the tingle yet from the licking I got. It went on from one thing to the other, like a fire spreading from a little match, until even San Francisco wasn't big enough to hold both of us. Sounds foolish when you tell it, doesn't it? But it's been serious enough."

When the subject of an approaching wedding was broached to Wharton Kendrick, I had an indistinct impression that he thought his niece could have done better. But as the date drew near, I had no fault to find with his growing enthusiasm, and indeed had to enter into conspiracy with Laura to curb his extravagance. He gave away the bride with exemplary dignity, made a speech that set the wedding-table in a roar, and as we drove away, sent a farewell shoe after me with such unerring aim that I spent the first part of the honeymoon in an odor of arnica and opodeldoc. And even now a whiff of liniment carries me back in fancy to that happy time.

Mercy Fillmore made a most charming bridesmaid at our wedding, and General Wilson was so loud in her praise, and so frank in telling what he would do if he were thirty years younger, that she went through the evening with an unwonted color in her face. But a few months later she was married–at our house, and with many misgivings on our part–to Parks. But we were happily disappointed in our fears. Whether from the calming influence of Mercy, or the black eye bestowed upon him by an ungrateful constituency, Parks ceased to be a militant reformer, and turned his energies to the prosaic but more remunerative business of selling groceries. He cut his hair, and though on occasion he delivers addresses before numberless clubs, in which he declares that the remedy for the evils of society is to be found in socialism, he is careful to insist that this panacea is to be applied in the distant future, and is not adapted to present conditions.

It is a good many years since I married my wife, and it is my candid opinion that she is prettier than ever. I can join the children in testifying that her talent for managing a family is unsurpassed. Perhaps there is a little more of it than is absolutely necessary, but it is some time since I ceased to offer that suggestion. As for me–well, I've grown stouter than in the hurrying days of old; but Mrs. Hampden affects to believe that a portly form is highly becoming in a man, and I shouldn't think of being the one to contradict her.

POSTSCRIPT

The author offers his apologies to the Muse of History for a few liberties that have been taken with chronology in the tale. Kearney's rise to prominence followed instead of preceding the riots of 1877. Otherwise, the history of the time, where touched on, has been faithfully followed, and, I hope, the spirit of the self-reliant men who organized a city for its own defense has given some inspiration to these pages.

The city of which the tale is told is gone. Such buildings of the era as had survived the march of time and progress were swept away by the mightiest conflagration of history, and all that is left of the old San Francisco is a memory. That the new city that springs from its ashes may prove as picturesque as the old, and be animated by the same spirit, is the hope of the author of these pages.

* * * * * * * *

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