

men with whom he had so strangely been brought into such close relation swelled in his heart and vibrated through his prayer.

Ike's face never lost its impassive gravity. Whatever may have been his feelings, he gave no sign of emotion. But the lad that kneeled on the other side of Shock pressed his face down hard into his hands, while his frame shook with choking, silent sobs. All that was holiest and tenderest in his past came crowding in upon him, in sad and terrible contrast to his present.

Immediately after the prayer Shock slipped out of the shack.

"I say, boss," said Ike, as he poked the fire, "he's a winner, aint he? Guess he hits the sky all right, when he gets onto his knees. By the livin' Gimmini! when that feller gits a-goin' he raises considerable of a promotion."

"Commotion, Ikey," said The Kid gently. "Yes, I believe he hits the sky—and he says he needs a Keeper."

"Well," said Ike solemnly, "I have a lingerin' suspicion that you're correct, but if he needs a Keeper, what about us?"

XIII

THE PRESIDENT OF GUY'S,
LONDON

DR. BURTON was never quite clear as to how he had found himself in the early morning on the Loon Lake trail, with a man whom he had never seen before, nor how, after he had discovered himself in that position, he had been persuaded to continue his journey, much less to take up with such enthusiasm the treatment of the cases to which he had been summoned by that same stranger. Indeed, he did not come to a clear consciousness of his sayings and doings until he found himself seated at a most comfortable breakfast in the house of the Old Prospector, with this same strange gentleman sitting opposite him. Even then, before reaching a solution of the problem as to how he had arrived at that particular place and in that particular company, to his amazement he found himself interested in the discussion of the cases on hand.

With the Old Prospector he had little difficulty. Inflammatory rheumatism, with a complication of pneumonia; in itself not necessarily fatal, or even dangerous, but with a man of the Old Prospector's age and habits of life this complication might any moment become serious. He left some medicine, ordered

nourishing food, perfect rest and quiet, and was about to depart.

"How soon shall I be up, doctor?" enquired the Old Prospector.

"I wouldn't worry."

"A week?"

"A week! If you are on your legs in a month you may be thankful."

"Doctor," said the Old Prospector in a tone of quiet resolution, "it is vitally important that I should be on my journey sooner than a month. My business admits of no delay."

"Well," said the doctor in his courteous, gentle tone, "if you move you will likely die."

"I shall certainly die if I do not."

For once the Old Prospector broke through his wonted philosophic calm. His voice trembled, and his eyes glittered in his excitement.

"Well, well," said the doctor soothingly, noting these symptoms, "wait a week or so. Follow the directions carefully, and we shall see."

"I shall wait a week, doctor, but no longer. In ten days I shall be on the trail."

"Well, well," repeated the doctor, looking keenly into the old man's face, "we won't worry about it for a week."

"No; for a week I am content."

Leaving the Old Prospector's shack Shock conducted the doctor to the little room at the back of the Stopping Place where little Patsy lay. At the door they were met by the mother, vociferous with lamen-

tations, prayers, blessings, and entreaties. Within the room, seated beside the bed, was Carroll, gloomy and taciturn.

The doctor drew back the blind and let in the morning light. It showed poor little Patsy, pale and wasted, his angelic face surrounded with a golden aureole of yellow curls that floated across the white pillow. The doctor was startled and moved.

"What is this?" he cried. "What is the matter?"

"Just an accident, doctor," said Mrs. Carroll volubly. "It was a blow he got."

"I struck him wid a chair," said Carroll bitterly.

"Whisht, now, darlin'. You're not to be blamin' yourself at all, at all. Sure, you didn't mane to do it. And what's a bit of discoosion between men? The little Patsy, the brave little heart that he is, run in to help his dad, so he did!" And Mrs. Carroll continued with a description which became more and more incoherent and more and more broken with sobs and tears.

"It's a wonder he didn't kill him," said the doctor.

"Arrah, ye may say it. But they do be tellin' me that his riverence there beyant, he stood in under the blow. God bless his sowl! It's a hairo he is—a hairo!"

She ran toward Shock as if to embrace him, but Shock, who had come to know her ways, avoided her, dodging behind the doctor.

"Not at all," he said. "Any man would have done the same."

"Now, God pardon your riverence for the lie ye've told."

"But how did *you* get into the row?" asked the doctor, turning to Shock.

"And ye may ask," interrupted Mrs. Carroll. "It's all av that squirmin' little worm of a Frenchman. May the divil fly away wid him! I'm not sayin' but Carroll there is quick with his tongue, and betimes with his hands, too—the high spirit that he has! but sure, it's a tinder heart he carries inside av him if they'd lave him be."

Meantime the doctor had been proceeding with his examination.

"He has lain a week like this, eh?"

"Yes, a week, with never a move till him, and niver a look out av his lovely eyes."

"But he takes his nourishment, does he?"

"Yes, once in a while a cup of milk with a wee drap av whisky intill it, doctor."

The doctor nodded.

"Won't hurt him. Not too much, mind. A teaspoonful in a large cup."

The doctor stood for some moments after he had finished his examination, looking down upon the little white face, so wasted, so beautiful. Then he shook his head sorrowfully.

"Ah, doctor, darlin'!" burst out Mrs. Carroll.

"Don't say the wurrd! Don't say the wurrd!"

At this Carroll lifted his head and enquired briefly,

"Will he get better, doctor?"

"He has a chance. He has a slight chance."

And with a look at Shock he left the room. After speaking a few words of comfort and hope to the mother Shock followed the doctor from the house.

"It is a case for trephining, I fear," said the doctor. "A clear case. It is the only chance he has, and it ought to be done at once."

"You mean to-day?" asked Shock.

"Yes, to-day. But——" The doctor hesitated. "I am not ready."

"I could get your instruments and anything else you might order," said Shock eagerly.

"No, it is not that," said the doctor. "The truth is, I have not the nerve. Nice confession to make, isn't it? Look at that hand."

He held out his hand as he spoke, and Shock saw that not only the hand, but the whole arm, indeed the whole gaunt frame of the doctor, was all in a tremble. Shock's experience in the city wards made him realise something of the shame and humiliation of the moment to the doctor. He hastened to turn his attention in a happier direction.

"You have performed this operation before?"

"Yes, frequently in the old country, once or twice here. I have seen some practice, sir," said the doctor, straightening himself up. "But there it is," holding out again his shaking hand.

"Well," said Shock, "we must wait till—till everything is ready."

"Yes," said the doctor. "Not before three days would I dare to touch a knife. In three days, sir, I shall return, bringing all the appliances necessary,

and in the interval the time will not be entirely lost. We shall take every means to tone the boy up. By the way, I suppose there is someone in the village with sufficient nerve to render assistance?"

"I do not know. There is only one man in this country whom I can think of as being reliable for an affair of this kind. Do you happen to know of the cowboy Ike?"

"The very man," said the doctor. "He lives on the Stanton ranch between this and the fort. We can see him on our way."

Before the doctor left for home he had called to prepare the Carrolls for the operation. At first Tim would not hear of it. He fiercely declared that he would kill any man that dared put a knife on his lad. His wife was equally determined that the operation should not take place.

"Very well," said the doctor, "then your boy will die, and, Carroll, I shall have you arrested for manslaughter forthwith."

This aspect of the case made little impression upon Carroll.

"If the lad dies," he said hoarsely, "devil a care what happens to me."

But Mrs. Carroll became anxiously desirous that the operation should be performed.

"And sure the good God wouldn't be after takin' him from us, for didn't his riverence there put up a prayer that would melt the heart of the angels, and I did promise God meself a rale fast, with niver an egg nor a bit of a fish to my teeth, if he should lave

him wid us. And Carroll, darlin', ye'll not be after breakin' ye're wife's heart, nor makin' her a widow? Just ye come on, doctor, and niver a word he'll say till ye."

And so it came, in three days that the doctor returned, clean, steady, and fit for his work, with Ike, Shock, and The Kid on hand as his assistants.

"I asked the doctor if I might come along," said the latter, explaining his presence, "and though he did not encourage me, here I am."

"We will make him nurse or outside guard," said Shock. "We will give him full charge of the family."

"Yes," replied the doctor, in his gentle, professional voice, "the family. Let them be removed to some distance. The house must be kept entirely quiet, entirely quiet. An interruption might be serious. Mr. and Mrs. Carroll and the children had better be taken away to some remote distance, so that we may have in the house perfect peace—perfect peace."

But in Carroll they met an unexpected difficulty.

"Not a fut of me will I lave," he announced, and from this position was immovable.

"Let us say no more at present," said the doctor quietly to his assistants. "There are various methods of removing an obstruction. I have found various methods."

And so The Kid, with Mrs. Carroll, Tim, Nora, Eileen, Jimmie, and little Michael, set off for Jumping Rock at the lake. After the procession had formed,

however, another difficulty arose. Michael refused point blank to go, and on being urged threw himself down upon the ground and kicked and yelled vociferously.

"Indade, there's no use of tryin' to make him do what he don't want," said his mother, with a conviction born of long experience of Michael's tempers and ways.

The procession halted, The Kid looking helpless and foolish. In vain he offered his watch, his pistol with the charge drawn. All his possessions availed not at all.

In his desperation he was on the point of proceeding to extreme measures when a voice, singularly sweet and musical, sounded behind him.

"Perhaps I can help," it said.

The Kid swung round, hat in hand. It was Marion, the Old Prospector's daughter.

"I shall be profoundly thankful. And for that matter doubtless he will, too, for I had come to the conclusion that the situation demanded a change of tactics."

The girl sat down beside Michael, and lifting him to her knee began to beguile him from his present misery with promises of songs, and snatches of tales, whose powers of enchantment had evidently been proved in similar circumstances, till finally his interest was diverted, his curiosity excited, and at length Michael was persuaded to join the company with smiling expectation of good things to come.

"I wish you would confide to me the secret of your

power, Miss——" said The Kid, with a most courteous bow.

"I am Marion Mowbray," she said simply.

"Miss Mowbray," continued The Kid, "I know your father very well, and"—looking into the girl's eyes, so very piercing and so very black—"I should like to know his daughter, too."

But Marion devoted herself chiefly to Michael, giving such attention as she could to the older and more active and more venturesome Eileen and Jimmie, and The Kid found his duties to Mrs. Carroll, Tim, and Nora so engrossing that he had little time to bestow any further attention upon the girl.

While Marion with tales and songs held the younger portion in an enthralled circle about her upon the Jumping Rock, The Kid upon the lake shore below was using his most strenuous endeavours to make the hour pass happily for Mrs. Carroll, Tim, and Nora.

Meantime, in the back room of the Stopping-Place Dr. Burton was making his preparations for a very critical operation. All his movements were marked by a swift dexterity and an attention to detail that gave Shock the impression that here was a man not only a master of his art, but, for the time being at least, master of himself. He laid out and thoroughly disinfected his instruments, prepared his lint, bandages, sponges, and explained clearly to each of his two assistants the part he was to take. Shock, who had had some slight experience in the surgical operations attendant upon an active football career,

was to be the assistant in chief, being expected to take charge of the instruments, and to take part, if necessary, in the actual operation. Ike was instructed to be in readiness with a basin, sponge, and anything else that might be demanded.

"We shall not give you much to do," said the doctor, "but what you have to do must be done promptly and well. Now, then," he continued, lifting his scissors with a flourish which did not fail to impress Carroll, who was seated near by, "we shall proceed."

"Will it hurt, doctor?" groaned Carroll, gazing upon the row of instruments with fascinated eyes.

"Before we are finished it is quite possible the patient may be conscious of nervous disturbance, accompanied by sensations more or less painful."

"Will it hurt, blank you!" replied Carroll, whose hoarse voice showed the intensity of his repressed emotion.

"As I was saying," said the doctor in his calm, even tone, and examining his instruments one by one with affectionate care, "there is every possibility that the nerve centres may be——"

"Oh," groaned Carroll, still fascinated by the instruments that the doctor was handling with such loving touches, "will someone shut up this blank, blatherin' fool? He'd drive a man crazy, so he wud!"

"Mr. Carroll, we must be calm. We must be entirely calm," observed the doctor. "Now," continuing his monologue, "we shall remove the hair from the field of operation. Cleanliness in an operation of

this kind is of prime importance. Recent scientific investigations show that the chief danger in operations is from septic poisoning. Yes, every precaution must be taken. Then we shall bathe with this weak solution of carbolic—three per cent. will be quite sufficient, quite sufficient—the injured parts and the surrounding area, and then we shall examine the extent of the wound. If the dura mater be penetrated, and the arachnoid cavity be opened, then there will be in all probability a very considerable extravasation of blood, and by this time, doubtless, serious inflammation of all the surrounding tissues. The aperture being very small and the depression somewhat extensive, it will be necessary to remove—to saw out, in short—a portion of the skull," lifting up a fierce-looking instrument.

Carroll groaned.

"Let me out!" he whispered hoarsely, rising and feeling his way with outstretched hand to the door. "I can't stand this bloody divil!"

Ike opened the door, while Shock sprang to support the groping man.

"Lave me be!" he said fiercely, with a curse, and pushing Shock back he stumbled out.

"Ah," said the doctor, with evident satisfaction, "there are various methods of removing obstructions, as I have said. We shall now no longer delay." And he proceeded to clip away the golden curls from about the wound. "These," he said, holding them up in his fingers and looking at them admiringly, "we had better preserve. These beautiful locks may

be priceless to the mother, priceless indeed. Poor, bonnie laddie! Now we shall prepare, we shall aseptically prepare, the whole field of operation. A sponge—that's it. That will do. Now, let us examine the extent of the injury," feeling with dextrous fingers about the edge of the slight wound, and over all the depressed surface.

"Ah! as I feared. The internal table is widely comminuted, and there is possibly injury to the dura mater. We must excise a small portion of the bone. The scalpel, please." Then, after laying back with a few swift, dexterous movements the scalp from about the wounded parts: "The saw. Yes, the saw. The removal of a section," he continued, in his gentle monotone, beginning to saw, "will allow examination of the internal table. A sponge, please. Thank you. And if the dura mater—" Here the stillness of the room was broken by a sound from Ike. The doctor glanced at him.

"This is a very simple part of the operation," he explained, "a very simple part, indeed, and attended with absolutely no pain. A sponge, please. Thank you. Now the forceps. Yes."

He snapped off a section of the bone. Ike winced.

"Ah, as I feared. There is considerable comminution and extravasation. Yes, and owing to the long delay, and doubtless to the wet applications which the uninitiated invariably apply, pus. Now, the carbolic solution," to Ike, who was standing with white face and set teeth.

"You are doing remarkably well," said the doc-

tor encouragingly to him, "remarkably well. To a novice this at times presents a shocking aspect. Now we shall attack this depression. The elevator, please. No, the elevator, Mr. Macgregor. There it lies. Yes. Now gently, gently. Just hold that in position," offering Shock the end of the instrument which he was using as a lever to raise the depressed portion of the skull. "The other scalpel, please. Now, a slight pressure. Gently, gently. We must be extremely careful of the edges. No, that will not do. Then we must have recourse to the trephine."

He lifted the instrument as he spoke, and gazed at it with every mark of affection.

"This is one of the most beautiful of all the instruments of modern surgery. A lovely instrument, a lovely instrument, indeed. Let us secure our firm surface. That seems satisfactory," beginning to bore.

This was too much for Ike. He hastily set down the basin and sponge on a chair, then straightened up in a vain effort to regain mastery of himself.

"Ah," said the doctor. "Poor Ike! The spirit is willing, but the sympathetic nerve is evidently seriously disturbed, thereby affecting the vasomotor, and will likely produce complete syncope. Lay him down on his back immediately."

"No," said Ike, "I aint no good. I'm going out."

"Now," said the doctor calmly, when Shock and he had been left alone, "I hope there will be no more interruption. We must proceed with the trephining."

Ah, beautiful, beautiful!" his quick moving, deft fingers keeping pace with his monologue.

"There now," after a few minutes' work with the trephine, "the depression is lifted. We shall soon be finished."

With supple, firm fingers he sewed the scalp, dressed the wound, and was done.

"Thank God!" said Shock, with a long breath. "Will he live?"

"It is a question now of strength and vitality. If the inflammation is not too widely extended the child may recover. Young life is very tenacious."

The doctor washed his hands, wiped his instruments, put them carefully away in their case, and sat down.

"Doctor," said Shock, "that is a great work. Even to a layman that operation seems wonderful."

Under the stimulus of his professional work the doctor's face, which but two days before had been soft and flabby, seemed to have taken on a firmer, harder appearance, and his whole manner, which had been shuffling and slovenly, had become alert and self-reliant.

"A man who can do that, doctor, can do great things."

A shadow fell on his face. The look of keen intelligence became clouded. His very frame lost its erect poise, and seemed to fall together. His professional air of jaunty cheerfulness forsook him. He huddled himself down into his chair, put his face in his hands, and shuddered.

"My dear sir," he said, lifting up his face, "it is quite useless, quite hopeless."

"No," said Shock eagerly, "do not say that. Surely the Almighty God——"

The doctor put up his hand.

"I know all you would say. How often have I heard it! The fault is not with the Almighty, but with myself. I am still honest with myself, and yet——" Here he paused for some moments. "I have tried—and I have failed. I am a wreck. I have prayed—prayed with tears and groans. I have done my best. But I am beyond help."

For a full minute Shock stood, gazing sadly at the noble head, the face so marred, the huddling form. He knew something of the agony of remorse, humiliation, fear, and despair that the man was suffering.

"Dr. Burton," said Shock, with the air of a man who has formed a purpose, "you are not telling the truth, sir."

The doctor looked up with a flash of indignation in his eyes.

"You are misrepresenting facts in two important particulars. You have just said that you have done your best, and that you are beyond all help. The simple truth is you have neither done your best, nor are you beyond help."

"Beyond help!" cried the doctor, starting up and beginning to pace the floor, casting aside his usual gentle manner. "You use plain speech, sir, but your evident sincerity forbids resentment. If you knew my history you would agree with me that I state the

simple truth when I declare that I am beyond help. You see before you, sir, the sometime President of the Faculty of Guy's, London, a man with a reputation second to none in the Metropolis. But neither reputation, nor fortune, nor friends could avail to save me from this curse. I came to this country in desperation. It was a prohibition country. Cursed be those who perpetrated that fraud upon the British public! If London be bad, this country, with its isolation, its monotony of life, and this damnable permit system, is a thousand times worse. God pity the fool who leaves England in the hope of recovering his manhood and freedom here. I came to this God-forsaken, homeless country with some hope of recovery in my heart. That hope has long since vanished. I am now beyond all help."

"No," said Shock in a quiet, firm voice, "you have told me nothing to prove that you are beyond help. In fact," he continued almost brusquely, "no man of sense and honesty has a right to say that. Yes," he continued, in answer to the doctor's astonished look, "salvation, as it is called, is a matter of common sense and honesty."

"I thought you clergymen preached salvation to be a matter of faith."

"Faith, yes. That is the same thing. Common sense, I call it. A man is a fool to think he is beyond help while he has life. A little common sense and honesty is all you want. Now, let us find Carroll. But, doctor, let my last word to you be this—do not ever say or think what you have said to me to-day.

It simply is not true. And I repeat, the man who can do that sort of thing," pointing to the child lying on the bed, "can do a great deal more. Good things are waiting you."

"Oh, Lord God Almighty!" said the doctor, throwing up his hands in the intensity of his emotion. "You almost make me think there is some hope."

"Don't be a fool, doctor," said Shock in a matter of fact voice. "You are going to recover your manhood and your reputation. I know it. But as I said before, remember I expect common sense and honesty."

"Common sense and honesty," said the doctor as if to himself. "No religion."

"There you are," said Shock. "I did not say that. I did say common sense and honesty. But now, do go and find poor Carroll. He will be in agony."

"Oh, a little of it won't hurt him. He is rather an undeveloped specimen," said the doctor, resuming his professional tone.

In a few minutes he returned with Carroll, whose face was contorted with his efforts to seem calm.

"Tell me," he said to Shock. "Will the lad live?"

"The operation is entirely successful, thanks to the skill of Dr. Burton there."

"Will he live?" said Carroll to the doctor in a husky tone.

"Well, he has a chance—a chance now which before he had not; and if he does, you owe it to Mr. Macgregor there."

"And if he doesn't, I shall owe that to him," hissed Carroll through his clenched teeth.

For this Shock had no reply.

"I shall go for Mrs. Carroll and the children now," he said quietly, and passed out of the room.

"Carroll," said the doctor with stern deliberation, "I have always known you to be a bully, but never before that you were a brute. This man saved your child's life at very considerable danger to his own. And a second time—if the child recovers he has saved his life, for had the operation not been performed to-day your child would have died, and you would have been arrested for manslaughter."

"Doctor," said Carroll, turning upon him, and standing nervous and shaking, "it is that man or me. The country won't hold us both."

"Then, Carroll, let me tell you, you had better move out, for that man won't move till he wants to. Why, bless my soul, man, he could grind you up in his hands. And as for nerve—well, I have seen some in my professional career, but never such as his. My advice to you is, do not trifle with him."

"Blank his sowl! I'll be even wid him," said Carroll, pouring out a stream of oaths.

"Dad." The weak voice seemed to pierce through Carroll's curses like a shaft of light through a dark room.

Carroll dropped on his knees by the bedside in a rush of tears.

"Ah, Patsy, my Patsy! Is it your own voice I'm hearin'?"

"Dad, darlin', ye didn't mane it, did ye, dad?"

"What, Patsy?"

"To hit me."

"Ah, may God forgive me! but it's meself would sooner die than strike ye."

The little lad drew a deep breath of content.

"And the big man," he said. "He put out his hand over me. Ye didn't hurt him, dad, did ye?"

"No, no, Patsy, darlin'," said the big Irishman, burying his face in the pillow. "Speak to your dad again wid your lovely voice."

"Now, Carroll," said the doctor in a stern whisper. "That is enough. Not a word more. Do you want to kill your child?"

Carroll at once with a tremendous effort grew still, stroking the white hand he held in his, and kissing the golden curls that streamed across the pillow, whispering over and over, "Patsy, darlin'!" till the doctor, hardened as he was to scenes like this, was forced to steal out from the room and leave them together.