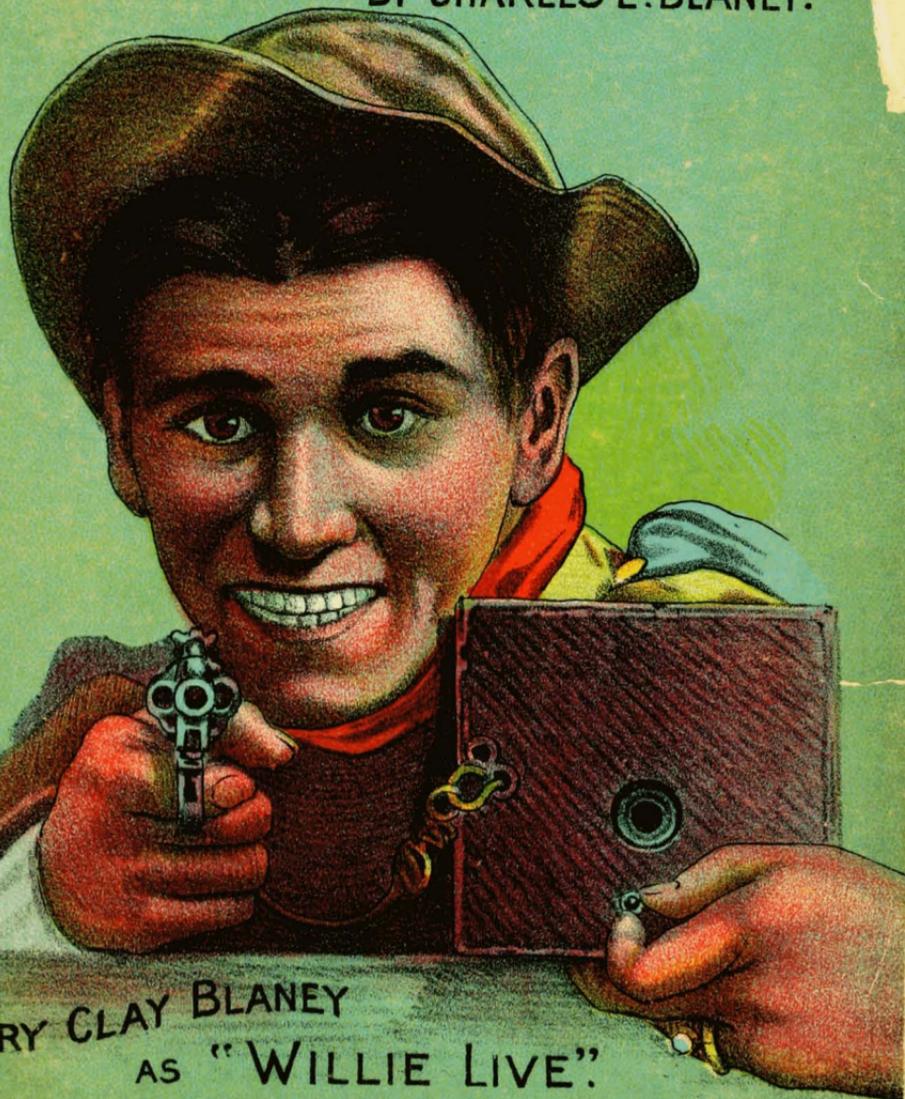


Price 25 Cents.

ACROSS THE PACIFIC

A THRILLING STORY BASED UPON THE PLAY
OF THE SAME NAME.

By CHARLES E. BLANEY.



HARRY CLAY BLANEY
AS "WILLIE LIVE"



CHARLES E. BLANEY,
AUTHOR OF "ACROSS THE PACIFIC."

HARRY CLAY BLANEY,
"WILLIE LIVE."

ACROSS THE PACIFIC.

A NOVEL

Founded Upon the Melodrama of the
Same Title.

BY

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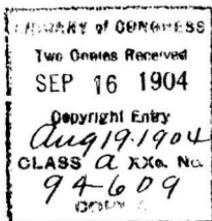
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
A Celebration.....	5
CHAPTER II.	
Willie Live.....	15
CHAPTER III.	
In Which a Villain Appears upon the Scene.....	22
CHAPTER IV.	
The Tempter Thwarted.....	34
CHAPTER V.	
Captain Joe Lanier.....	41
CHAPTER VI.	
Lured into a Trap.....	50
CHAPTER VII.	
In Which Willie Live Finds Comedy for His Play.	59

	PAGE
CHAPTER VIII.	
A Robbery and a Rescue.....	67
CHAPTER IX.	
In Which Willie Live Plays the Detective.....	73
CHAPTER X.	
Willie Live Resorts to Strategy.....	84
CHAPTER XI.	
Block House Number Seven.....	92
CHAPTER XII.	
Willie Live to the Rescue.....	100
CHAPTER XIII.	
Willie Live Discovers a Traitor.....	108
CHAPTER XIV.	
Reunited	115

ACROSS THE PACIFIC

CHAPTER I.

A CELEBRATION.

It was the tenth anniversary of Joe Lanier's coming to Oakwood Valley—a little mining village in Montana—and the miners had congregated on the green, in front of his cottage, to celebrate the event.

“Boys,” said Mike Flannigan, a sturdy Irishman, who was one of Lanier's closest friends, “we're here to jollify. It was just ten years ago to-day that Joe Lanier came among us, with his mother and our little Elsie, who was then but eight years old. Here's to his health!”

While the miners were draining their glasses,

Mrs. Lanier came out of the cottage, accompanied by a beautiful young girl of eighteen.

"Three cheers for Mrs. Lanier!" shouted Flannigan. "Three cheers for Miss Elsie!"

The miners gave the cheers with a zest.

"I thank you, boys," said Mrs. Lanier, with a maternal smile. "Elsie, where are you going?"

"Down to the village," replied the girl. "I'll return before long."

"Elsie," said Mrs. Lanier, gravely, "you are going to meet that fellow, Bud Stanton. No one likes him, dear."

"Well, I like him," returned the girl, with spirit. "What is there against him?"

"Many things. He is a gambler."

"Well, what of that? All the boys in the camp gamble, don't they?"

"Yes; but Bud Stanton does not play fair. He has been caught cheating."

At this the girl's eyes flashed defiantly.

"I don't believe it," she cried. "Here I live among these mountains, with no company, except rough miners, and when a handsome city chap does come along, you always find something

wrong with him. I wish you and Joe had never brought me up, but had left me to die with my mother."

"You had better think what you are saying, Elsie," said Mrs. Lanier, in tones of gentle rebuke. "Joe loves you, dear."

Elsie turned, and embraced her affectionately.

"Oh, I didn't mean what I said," she rejoined. "Joe loves me as a great big brother should, and I love him, too. You won't tell him where I've gone, will you?"

"No, I won't tell him."

Mrs. Lanier returned to the cottage, and Elsie started for the village. A short time afterwards a handsome, stalwart young man appeared upon the scene.

"Boys," said Mike Flannigan, "here comes Joe Lanier."

The miners greeted this announcement with a cheer.

"I thank you, boys," said Joe, going among them, and shaking each cordially by the hand. "What does all this mean?"

"Oh, it's nothing in particular," explained

Flannigan, "only the boys thought it would be the right thing to celebrate to-day."

"Celebrate what?"

"Why, your anniversary, of course. Sure, it's just ten years ago to-day that you came among us, with nothing in the world, save the clothes on your back, and a weary, little child in your arms. To-day you are one of the richest mine owners in all Montana, and we are proud of you."

"Boys," said Joe, sadly, "possibly I am the richest mine owner in these parts; but money doesn't always bring happiness. No, money can't buy the love of a pure, honest girl. But tell me, where did Elsie go?"

"Down to the village," answered Flannigan.

"Come, Joe, tell us the story of how you found her."

"Well, there isn't much to tell," said Joe. "It was about ten years ago, while prospecting in the mountains, that I came upon a broken-down wagon, containing a poor, dying woman, with a little girl in her arms. Her name was Escott, and she came from Louisville, Kentucky.

"It seems her husband had been falsely accused

of robbing a bank, and had fled out here to Montana to escape arrest. The mother and child were trying to join him, but he died before they could reach him. A man named Sam Drysdale followed them to take them back to Louisville, but Mrs. Escott refused to have anything to do with him, because it was he who had brought the false accusation against her husband, hoping to get possession of their fortune.

“Well, before she breathed her last, Mrs. Escott placed the little girl in my arms, and said: ‘Joe Lanier, be her friend, her guardian, her brother.’ I promised her I would, and I’ve kept my word. And, boys, that girl is Elsie, the sweetest flower in Oakwood Valley to-day.”

“You bet she is,” said Flannigan.

“And now, boys,” concluded Joe, “I want you to drink to her health and to mine. You know this is Elsie’s birthday. She is just eighteen years old to-day. So drink, and drink hearty. I will send my Chinese servant, Sing Lee, out with a fresh bottle of whiskey, so that no one need go dry.”

With these words he turned from the miners and entered the cottage door.

He had not been gone many seconds when a young girl walked briskly into the company, and cried out in a voice of remarkable sweetness:

“Hello, boys!”

It was Madge, Joe Lanier’s niece, and the official mail carrier of Oakwood Valley.

“Say,” she continued, saucily, “do you fellows think you are sober enough to read, in case there are any letters for you?”

The miners replied that they were perfectly sober, whereupon the girl drew a number of letters from the mail-bag she carried, and began distributing them around. There was one for “Rattlesnake Pete,” another for “Fog-Horn Eddie,” another for Mike Flannigan, and still another for Sing Lee.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Madge, “you have the permission of Uncle Sam’s representative to read your mail.”

This the four favored ones proceeded to do.

Suddenly, “Fog-Horn Eddie” uttered a loud

cry, that brought his companions flocking around him.

"What's the matter?" inquired Madge.

"Matter?" answered Eddie. "Listen to this!"

And he read the letter he had just received.

It ran as follows:

"FOG-HORN EDDIE:

"HONORED SIR AND BROTHER:

"It is my solemn duty to inform you, three hours in advance, that I will call and demand your photograph, having learned from your many friends that you hold the distinction of being the champion horse thief in Oakwood Valley.

"Yours fraternally,

"WILLIE LIVE."

"Willie Live?" cried Eddie, excitedly. "Wait until I catch him."

At that moment the attention of the company was attracted by an exclamation from "Rattlesnake Pete."

"Damme! What do you think of this?"

"What has she got to say, Pete?" inquired Madge.

By way of answer Pete read the following:

"RATTLESNAKE PETE:

"MOTHER'S ANGEL CHILD:

"INHUMAN SIR: Necessity compels me to call upon you in three hours to take an impression of your canine countenance. Puck, Judge, and other comic papers are in great need of funny faces. Yours will be used for the first page of the next Christmas number. With sympathy for the kodak, I remain,

"Your frightened little friend,

"WILLIE LIVE."

The miners were still laughing at this humorous epistle, when Mike Flannigan cried out, with an oath:

"The rascal! The damned rascal!"

Then he proceeded to read the following to the company:

"FLANNEL-MOUTHED MIKE:

"DISHONORED SIR:

"I do hereby, with pain, notify you that I will

call, in three hours' time, and take one snapshot at your comic valentine countenance. It is a sad duty, I assure you; but, having learned that you are the best judge of bad whiskey in these parts, and that you are the ugliest man in the valley, you will surely make a great character for my new play.

“Yours, with heartfelt sympathy,

“WILLIE LIVE.”

Madge now read the letter that Sing Lee, the Chinaman, had received:

“SING LEE, OFFICIAL RAT CATCHER,

“OAKWOOD VALLEY:

“MY DEAR PIPE: As I am going to deliver a lecture on mixed pills, at the Town Hall, tonight, I will interview you in about three hours. Do not consider me entirely lacking in intelligence because I have noticed you, for I consider you the equal of any dog in the community, that is, if you behave yourself.

“Yours disrespectfully,

“WILLIE LIVE.”

"Well, boys, that's pretty tough," said Madge, with a merry laugh; "but it isn't in it with what I saw down in the village a while ago."

"What did you see?" inquired the miners.

"A funny little dude in a two-wheeled dog-cart, drawn by the swellest little pony in the world."

"What did you do to him, Madge?" asked a miner.

"I invited him here to see you, boys."

While she was speaking the sound of wheels was heard crunching the gravel of the mountain path, and a moment later a dappled pony appeared in view, hauling a dog-cart after him. In the cart sat a smiling youth, dressed in a suit of very loud plaid, and with a camera slung over his right shoulder.

"Well, who the divil are you?" inquired Mike Flannigan, as he drew near.

The youth reined in his pony, stood up in the cart, and took a snapshot of the assembled miners.

"Gentlemen," he said, "with your permission I will introduce myself. My name is Willie Live!"

CHAPTER II.

WILLIE LIVE.

AT this announcement the miners who had received the letters uttered a yell of rage, and drew their revolvers. But Madge recalled them to their senses.

"Hold on, boys!" she cried. "Don't be impolite to an invited guest."

Whereupon the miners returned their revolvers to their belts, and contented themselves with scowling upon the youth who had insulted their dignity.

Nothing daunted, Willie Live jumped down from his cart, remarking coolly:

"I really think I am going to like this place."

Then he took a snapshot picture of Madge, and, turning to Sing Lee, cried out in tones of command:

"Here, Li Hung Chang, take my noble steed

into the stable. Give him a good rub down, three quarts of champagne, and cover him with a seal-skin blanket. Be careful that he doesn't bite you."

As Sing Lee led the pony toward the stable, Willie addressed the company with a bland smile.

"Ah, this is a delightful place, gentlemen," he said. "You may now have the honor of shaking hands with me."

"Do you know who I am?" said Pete, shaking his letter under Willie Live's nose. "I am Rattlesnake Pete."

"Well, Rattle, old boy, I'm happy to know you," said Willie. "I'll make good my word. Your picture, please!"

And bringing his camera into play, he pressed the button.

Another scowling miner now approached him, grumbling:

"Say!"

"Sounds like a boat whistle," remarked Willie Live.

"My name is Fog-Horn Eddie, damme!" exclaimed the miner.



"Any relation to King Edward? Of course not—certainly not. Every time you speak I think of a steamboat whistle, Eddie."

Saying which the youth took a snapshot of Fog-Horn Eddie, and passed him by.

The next miner he encountered was Mike Flannigan.

"I'm an A. P. A., am I?" roared the Irishman.

"I have not the honor of your acquaintance," said Willie Live, loftily.

"I am Mike Flannigan."

"Why, hello, Mike!" cried Willie. "I'm delighted to see you—really."

"I have made up my mind to kill you."

"Then I trust, dear friend, that you lose your mind."

"What's that?" cried Mike Flannigan, assuming a threatening attitude.

By way of answer Willie Live raised his camera into position, and pressed the button.

"The very pose I wanted," he remarked, coolly. "Michael, I thank thee."

At this juncture, Sing Lee came running from

behind the cottage, brandishing a huge carving knife above his head.

"You call me rat-catch—you call me dope. Me vera bad Chinaman—me killa you!" he shouted.

Willie Live snatched the carving-knife from Sing Lee's hand, and proceeded to sharpen it on his queue. Then he put a point to his lead pencil with the knife, and drew forth a notebook.

"Gentlemen," he said, writing in the book, "I am composing a play, and I have found among you some great characters for it. I thank you."

"Boys, do we have to stand for this?" inquired Fog-Horn Eddie.

"No," cried the miners in chorus. "Hang him! String him up!"

Willie Live regarded the angry faces around him with a disdainful smile.

"Oh, that will be pleasant," he said, sarcastically. "Still, it should make a sensational scene for my play. All I ask is that when you pull the rope, for goodness' sake keep your faces turned the other way, and let me die happy.

You're the ugliest bunch of human beings I ever saw in my life."

At this the miners uttered an angry shout. One of them produced a rope, and they started to put their threat into execution; but Madge stepped briskly between them and their intended victim.

"Hold on, boys," she cried. "I'm going to be in on this. We'll draw cards and see who pulls the rope."

This proposition being agreed to, Madge produced a pack of cards and dealt a card to each miner, reserving one for herself.

"Boys," she said, "the high card wins. Now look and see what you hold."

In the show-up that followed it was discovered that Madge held the highest card. Accordingly she took the rope, threw the noose over Willie Live's head, and pulled it off again, saying:

"There, boys, I have pulled the rope, and the lynching is over."

The miners protested loudly at first, but Madge had her way in the end.

"Madge," said Willie Live, gratefully, "if ever

I meet you in San Francisco, I feel there will be something doing."

And turning to the miners, he added:

"Now, boys, if I've said anything I'm sorry for, I'm glad of it—and there is one thing I am sorry for: do you know, if you had strung me up it would have made a great scene for my play? I've got something in my pocket," he went on, producing a flask of whiskey, and handing it around, "that will soothe your wounded pride. Permit me, Michael—and you, Rattle—and you, Foggy!"

The whiskey had the effect of restoring everyone to good spirits.

Meanwhile Mrs. Lanier had prepared a feast for her son's visitors, which was now served upon an improvised table on the green. It included a huge turkey.

Willie Live officiated as carver; but the turkey being too tough for dismemberment, he set the company in good humor by making various witty remarks concerning it, and finally flinging it at Sing Lee's head.

The other dishes were excellent, and were

quickly disposed of, and during the progress of the banquet, Willie Live ingratiated himself so completely into the good opinion of the miners that, when they arose from the table to drink Joe Lanier's health, at a neighboring tavern, they left the green, singing in lusty chorus:

“For he's a jolly good fellow,” etc.

Even Sing Lee was carried away by the enthusiasm evinced, and followed the miners down the mountain path, squawking:

“For he's a damn good fellow.”

When the company had disappeared, Madge turned to Willie Live, and said:

“Say, Mr. Live, do you know what I think of you?”

“I would be pleased to know,” responded Willie.

“Well, you're just about the limit, and a couple of stacks of blues beside.”

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH A VILLAIN APPEARS UPON THE SCENE.

THE following conversation now took place between Willie Live and Madge.

“What is your object in visiting Oakwood Valley?” inquired Madge.

“Well, I don’t mind telling you,” responded Willie. “I have two objects. First, I want to see Captain Drysdale, the recruiting officer of the United States Army in these parts. He is here to enlist volunteers for service in the Philippines, and may fix me as special correspondent for the *San Francisco Call*. Second, I’m writing a play, and want a true story for the plot. Now, I’m going to lay the first act of my play right here. Tell me, isn’t Joe Lanier in love with his ward, Elsie, and isn’t she in love with someone else—a late arrival?”

"How did you know that?"

"Oh, I didn't know. I just guessed at it, that's all."

"You are a pretty shrewd guesser."

"Yes, I am trained to observation. But, as I was saying, if you were writing this play, who would you suggest for the villain? A young man—quite handsome—a Southerner, say—might be from Louisville—and how would the name of Bud Stanton suit him—eh? Well, Madge, I came down here to get a picture of that fellow."

"How would you like to get a picture of me?" inquired Madge, archly.

"Well, I think I could take a chance. Still, this is the only kodak I have."

"There are not many young men whom I'd allow to take my picture," said Madge, with a charming pout. "Well, what about it?"

"If she pouts like that again," thought Willie, "I'll be tempted to sample those Western cherry lips." Then he answered, aloud: "My dear, if you will pose, I will consider it an honor. Now, look happy, my dear, and keep your eyes on the sun."

Madge assumed a graceful attitude, and again pursed her lips into a bewitching pout.

Willie could resist no longer. Stealing up to her noiselessly, he implanted a kiss upon her rosy mouth, and sprang quickly away.

"I suppose you're angry with me now," he said, apologetically. "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Madge feigned to be indignant.

"What am I going to do about it?" she cried; then suddenly softening her tone—"Willie, let's take another picture," she murmured.

Willie was about to kiss her again, when a man, attired in the uniform of a United States captain of infantry, appeared upon the green.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Willie, "but you are Captain Sam Drysdale, recruiting officer for the United States Army in these parts, are you not?"

"I am, sir," replied the officer.

"Well, I've been trying to see you for a long time. I want to enlist."

"Are you twenty-one?"

"If I am not, I ought to be."

"Well, you'll have to be of age."

At this Willie looked disappointed.

"I don't suppose you want me, then," he said.

"Well, I have a job on a San Francisco newspaper as a war correspondent, so I'll go to the Philippines without your old aid."

There was a momentary silence.

Then the officer inquired, shrewdly:

"Young man—confidentially—can you tell me if this fellow, Joe Lanier, is really in love with his ward, Elsie?"

"Well—confidentially—I don't believe that is any of your business," retorted Willie Live.

"Ah, I see you are more than seven," sneered Drysdale.

"Yes, a little too old to give information to a man that looks like a Spaniard."

Drysdale laughed disdainfully.

"I wouldn't go to the war, young man, if I were you," he said. "You might get killed."

To this Willie Live answered, quickly:

"And then I could get a good snapshot of the devil;" and, bringing his camera into play, he added: "That will be hardly necessary, though,

so long as you are here. Thank you! That pose of yours was lovely."

"Impudent puppy," snarled Drysdale.

"Come, Madge," said Willie, "I think you are in bad company."

And taking the girl's hand in his, he led her off toward the village.

Not long afterwards, Sam Drysdale was joined by a dark-complexioned young man, attired in a fashionable riding suit and carrying a whip in his hand.

"Well, have you spoken to them?" he asked, anxiously.

"Not yet," answered Drysdale.

"Insist upon seeing the girl herself," went on the young man. "Make it strong about the fortune she will inherit, providing she returns to her relatives in Louisville."

"You can trust me, Bud Stanton," said Drysdale. "You have known me long enough for that, I hope;" and he added: "But, remember, I am to have my share of the money."

"We will speak of that later," said Stanton. "We must not be seen talking together now. It

might excite suspicion. I will wait for you down the path."

Scarcely had he taken his departure, when Joe Lanier came out of the cottage.

Drysdale approached, and accosted him politely.

"Is your name Joe Lanier?" he asked.

"It is," replied Joe.

"Well, my name is Drysdale. I am the man who wrote you, some time ago, about the young lady who, as a child, fell under your care."

"I am listening, sir. Go on."

"Well, the relatives of her dead mother are willing to make her their heiress, providing she returns to them."

Joe drew himself up proudly.

"She does not need their money, sir," he said.

"I am rich. She is my heiress."

"Well," persisted Drysdale, "I was told to see the young lady herself, because she may have been kept in ignorance of her mother's people."

"Her dying mother placed the child in my arms," said Joe. "It was her wish that the girl

should never live with those who had so wronged her parents.”

“Well, I wish to see the young lady herself, and explain to her.”

At this juncture, Elsie approached them, on her way back from the village. Joe called her to his side.

“Elsie,” he said, “this gentleman is Mr. Drysdale, a friend of your mother’s people, in Louisville. They desire that you should live henceforth with them.”

“Yes,” put in Drysdale, “they are very rich, and will make you their heiress.”

“And Joe—does he go with me?” asked Elsie.

“Certainly not,” answered Drysdale, with emphasis.

“Then I remain where I am.”

“But you will inherit a large fortune.”

“It is not large enough to induce me to leave my benefactor.”

“But—I—I——”

Here Joe interposed.

“You have your answer, sir,” he cried. “Good day.”

When Drysdale had taken his departure, Elsie turned to Joe, and inquired, sweetly:

"Are you pleased with my answer, Joe?"

"More than pleased, my girl," he answered.

But his happiness was short-lived, for, at that moment, Bud Stanton put in an appearance.

"Ah, Miss Elsie," he said, with easy familiarity, "do you remember our appointment this morning?"

Elsie blushed to the roots of her hair.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "I beg your pardon, Joe. This is Mr. Stanton."

Joe took no notice of the hand Bud Stanton extended to him, but turned moodily away. Elsie noticed this, and hurried to his side.

"Joe, you don't mind," she said, soothingly. "I won't be gone long. Do you care?"

"Oh, I suppose not," sighed Joe.

Nevertheless, when Elsie had gone off with Bud Stanton, he sank into a garden chair, and gave way to the most gloomy reflections.

In this mood he was discovered by his mother.

"Joe, my boy, what's the matter?" she inquired,

approaching and laying her hand kindly upon his shoulder.

“Oh, nothing, mother, nothing,” he replied.

“Nothing? Ah, you can’t deceive me with such an answer. It’s that Bud Stanton. Elsie has gone off with him again.”

“Yes, yes, mother, and I could kill him!”

“No, no, my boy,” implored Mrs. Lanier. “Promise me you will do nothing rash.”

“I will but do my duty—my duty,” said Joe, doggedly. “It never shall be said that your son killed a man, except his cause was just.”

Mrs. Lanier was obliged to be content with this vague answer. She returned, sorrowfully, to the cottage, murmuring:

“Ah, I’m sure some misfortune has come to our happy home.”

Not long afterward, Elsie came running toward her guardian, crying:

“Don’t let him kiss me, Joe! Don’t let him kiss me! He lost the bet—I won.”

She was closely pursued by Bud Stanton.

“But the start was hardly fair,” gasped Stan-

ton. "The next time it must be an even one. Come, kiss me, and call it a tie."

Joe sprang to his feet, and motioned Elsie to retire into the cottage. When the girl had withdrawn, he turned to Bud Stanton, and said, sternly:

"Mr. Stanton, I forbid your attentions to that girl."

"You forbid?" returned Stanton, defiantly.

"That is exactly what I said, sir."

"May I ask why?"

"Because I have reasons to believe you to be a dishonorable man, and it is my duty to protect that innocent girl from scoundrels such as you."

"Perhaps Miss Elsie may have something to say about that," sneered Stanton.

"Miss Elsie will never do anything in direct opposition to my wishes, sir."

"Time will tell; time will tell," returned Stanton.

Just then the miners, with Mike Flannigan at their head, came marching toward the cottage.

"Well, boys, what's going on now?" inquired Joe, as they drew near.

"We're going to the recruiting office," answered Flannigan, "to enlist in the company that's bound for the Philippines. If there's any fighting to be done, you can count on us boys—eh?"

"You bet!" shouted the miners in chorus.

"Oh, Joe," continued Flannigan, "if we could only get you to become our captain, we'd go through those Filipinos like a streak of lightning through a gooseberry bush."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure, boys," said Joe.

At this the miners broke forth into a tumultuous cheer.

"But, boys," continued Joe, "I can't go to the war. There's a young girl lives here that I've sworn to protect, and I think she needs my protection now."

While speaking he looked significantly at Bud Stanton.

"Well, Joe," said Mike Flannigan, "in case you should change your mind, we'll leave a place on the recruiting list for you to sign." Then, turning to the miners, "All, about face; forward,

march!" he commanded, and led them off toward the village.

"Mr. Stanton," said Joe, when they had gone, "there is no use of your hanging round here. That girl will never disobey my wishes."

"And your wishes are——?"

"That she has nothing to do with you."

Stanton broke into a scornful laugh.

"Don't be too sure of that, Joe Lanier," he said. "Many a man has staked his all on a woman's love, and lost."

"Which you will do in this case, and you can gamble on it," retorted Joe.

And with that he retired into the cottage.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTER THWARTED.

STANTON hurried down the mountain path to keep his appointment with Sam Drysdale. He found that worthy awaiting him at the place of rendezvous.

“Well, have you spoken to the girl and told her of the fortune that awaits her in Louisville?” he inquired.

“Yes,” answered Drysdale, “but she refused to listen to me. This fellow, Lanier, has plenty of money, therefore money cannot influence her.”

“But her love for me will,” said Stanton, confidently.

“What do you mean?”

“That she is in love with me, and believes I love her.”

“How do you know?”

"I asked her, and she did not deny it. Before another sun-up she will have left Oakwood Valley with me."

"If that is the case," said Drysdale, "you must settle with me on a money basis now."

"Are you crazy?"

"Well, not so crazy as you imagine. I hold a trump card."

"Name it?"

"Nell Hazelton."

Like all men of his stamp, Stanton had had many affairs with women, and at the mention of Nell Hazelton—a girl whom he had grievously wronged—his face blanched. But his customary assurance soon returned to him, and he retorted with a sneer:

"Nell Hazelton? Why, she's dead!"

"On the contrary, she's very much alive," said Drysdale, confidently, "and much closer to you than you imagine. Come now, Stanton, be square. It was I who told you of this fair mountain heiress. Will you agree to settle?"

"Certainly not," replied Stanton.

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Drysdale, angrily.

"You will regret the day you broke faith with me. You will regret it."

And he hurried off, cursing, toward the village.

Left to himself, Stanton retraced his steps toward Joe Lanier's cottage in the hope of obtaining a stolen interview with Elsie. Nor in this was he disappointed. In the garden back of the cottage he found the girl walking alone.

"Elsie," he said, passionately, "your guardian has forbidden me to see you, and there is but one course for us to pursue. We must elope, and get married elsewhere. Make ready at once. I will secure two fleet horses, and we will ride to Coleville in time to catch the evening train."

"Ah, I'm so fearful of leaving Joe," protested Elsie.

"He will forgive us after we are married—when I bring you back to him as my wife."

"But it doesn't seem right to leave him secretly, without a word."

"I will write him a letter explaining everything, when we reach Coleville."

"Bud," protested Elsie, "I've never disobeyed Joe in all my life."

"You are eighteen years old to-day, and your own mistress," insisted Stanton. "He has no longer the right to control you."

"Yes, he has, Bud."

"What right?"

"The right of his love for me."

"But you love me, now?"

"I also love him. He is my benefactor."

"But not the same as you do me?"

"No—no!"

"Then do as I say, dear. Get your hat and come with me. What do you fear? If you loved me you would not hesitate."

"And if you loved me, Bud, you would not ask me to do a wrong act."

Stanton bit his lips impatiently.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "We have a right to happiness."

"Not when that happiness would break the heart of my best friend," returned Elsie, sorrowfully.

"Elsie, trust me."

"But, Joe—what of him?"

"Oh, you do not love me?"

"Don't say that, Bud ; but it doesn't seem right to go away like this."

"Let me be the judge of that. Get your hat, and we will leave this place at once."

There is no knowing how this interview might have ended, for, at that moment, Joe Lanier came tearing down the garden path, his eyes ablaze with rage and jealousy, and, seizing Stanton by the throat, cried hoarsely :

"You scoundrel! I've a mind to kill you."

Then, casting Stanton from him, he turned to Elsie, and inquired in gentler tones :

"Elsie, what does this mean?"

Elsie buried her face in her hands.

"Forgive me, Joe," she sobbed. "I was going away."

Joe now addressed Stanton.

"Why didn't you ask for this girl's hand like an honest man?"

"Because she is eighteen years old to-day," replied Stanton, "and is no longer under your control."

"Elsie, has my control been anything but

kind?" asked Joe. "Have I not always been considerate—granted your slightest wish?"

"Yes, Joe, yes."

"Then why did you not confide in me?"

"She did not think it necessary," put in Stanton.

"Silence, you coward!" thundered Joe. "You with your fine clothes and city manners, have poisoned this young girl's innocent mind and stolen her affections. You are a wolf in sheep's clothing! Elsie, do you love this man?" he added.

No reply.

"He is unworthy of you, dear," continued Joe. "I promised your dying mother that I would guard and protect you, and I'll keep that promise, even if I have to walk over this man's dead body."

"My intentions were most honorable, sir," protested Stanton.

"You lie!"

"Where I come from that means fight," hissed Stanton, drawing a revolver.

"And where I come from it means death," re-

torted Joe, thrusting his six-shooter into Stanton's face.

At this Stanton returned his weapon to his hip pocket.

"This is not the end, by any means," he muttered. "I am a bad enemy."

"Out of my sight, Stanton, before I strangle you!" shouted Joe.

When Stanton had departed, Joe turned to Elsie, and said, sadly:

"I'm sorry, Elsie, you did not trust me. I've been the best friend you ever had, or ever will have. But you have broken my heart. Loving you as I do, I think it best for both that I should go away. Everything will remain the same for you, only I won't be here. This cottage has been your home since childhood. As long as you choose to remain here it will be still your home."

"Yes, it is still my home," sobbed Elsie.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN JOE LANIER.

STANTON had gone but a short distance from the garden when he was met by a handsome, dark-eyed woman, whose well-developed figure was set off by a closely-fitting riding-habit. She carried the long skirt of her gown in her left hand, and in her right a whip.

"Hello, Bud!" she exclaimed, as he drew near her.

He looked at her, and, to his amazement and chagrin, recognized Nell Hazelton.

"The devil! What brought you here?" he growled.

"My health required a change of air," she answered, ironically, "and this mountain atmosphere agrees with me wonderfully."

"Nonsense! You came here to see me," said Stanton.

"That's right, I did," she rejoined.

"What for?"

"My wrongs. Do you want me to enumerate them, Bud Stanton?"

"No; let us end this," he answered. "If money will make us strangers, name the sum."

She broke into a scornful laugh.

"Now do I look like a fool?" she said, bitterly. "No, I don't want your money. I've enough of my own. Ah, that interests you! Well, don't worry, Bud, you can't get it away from me as you did once before. No, I'll keep what I have and get what I can."

"If you don't want money, what do you want?" inquired Stanton.

"You!"

"Me?"

"Yes; you always were so handsome, Bud."

"Oh, be sensible. Why have you followed me here?"

"For you to put a wedding ring upon my finger."

"And if I refuse?"

"Oh, but you won't do that," said Nell, with a confident smile.

Stanton frowned with annoyance.

"Don't be too sure of that," he said, sullenly.

"Now don't get excited, my dear boy," said Nell, twirling her riding-whip carelessly between the tips of her fingers. "Sit down beside me on this bank, and take things cool and quiet, like myself. There, that is better. Say, Bud, how natural you'd look if you only had a faro layout in front of you. Now, tell me, what's all this gossip I hear about you and this country girl?"

Stanton started, and turned pale.

"Ah," continued Nell, "that strikes home. So it's true—eh? See here, Bud Stanton, I've never given you a wrong tip in all my life, either on a horse race, or on a game of cards. Now take my advice, and let this little country girl alone."

"Be sensible, Nell," said Stanton. "She is rich, and I must have money. She is an heiress."

"So am I, now."

"Yes, I know, but——"

"But you don't love me."

“Yes, I do, Nell; but——”

“You lie, Bud Stanton!” exclaimed the young woman; and she added, determinedly: “But you’ll marry me, just the same.”

“Why is a ceremony necessary between us two?” he asked, anxiously.

“Because the world believes all married women to be respectable, and I do so long to be respectable, Bud.”

“Very well, then; come down to the village inn, where we can talk the matter over without fear of interruption.”

And Stanton cast a nervous glance in the direction of Joe Lanier’s cottage.

Nell noticed this, and answered, coolly:

“No, thank you. I’ve just climbed over two mountains to reach this place, and here I shall remain until this matter is settled. I say, Bud,” she continued, in tantalizing tones, “I’m going to spoil this little love affair between you and this country girl.”

“Have you lost your reason?” he inquired, angrily.

“No, just found it,” was her calm reply.

"Be sensible, then, and come away from here. Will you?"

"No; I'm very comfortable where I am."

Stanton's eyes glittered dangerously.

"Don't aggravate me too far," he said.

"Why, what would you do, strike me?"

"If you meddle in this affair, I'll kill you."

At this threat Nell snapped her fingers in his face.

"See here, Bud Stanton, I'm not afraid of you," she said. "You took me from those who loved and trusted me, wrecked my life, then deserted me, and left me to die alone in the world. And now do you think I'll stand idly by and permit you to do the same to this innocent country girl? Well, you shan't do it if I can prevent it, and I rather think I can."

While she was delivering this speech, Elsie stole out of the garden, where she had been left alone by Joe, and approached the place where they were sitting. She saw Stanton raise his riding-whip and strike the woman at his side, and her whole nature revolted at the cowardly act.

"Mr. Stanton," she said, coming forward, and

confronting him suddenly, "I did not think you could strike a woman."

He endeavored to explain.

"There are mitigating circumstances, Miss Elsie," he stammered, confusedly.

"There are no circumstances that will excuse such an act," she replied sternly.

At this juncture a mob came running toward them, headed by Mike Flannigan, carrying a noosed rope in his hand.

"Mob the card sharp! Lynch him! String him up!" they shouted.

Bud Stanton turned white with terror.

"What does this mean?" he asked, hoarsely.

"I'll tell you what it means," answered Flannigan, drawing a number of cards from his pocket, and displaying them to Stanton's view. "Last night, after you had won all the money in the camp, we found these cards under the table. They were brought into the game by you, and they are all marked. Come on, boys!"

The miners laid hold of Stanton, and were about to string him up, when Joe Lanier appeared suddenly among them.

"Why, boys, what are you going to do?" he asked.

"This man was caught playing with marked cards," exclaimed Flannigan, "and we are going to lynch him."

"Stop, boys!" said Joe. "Somewhere in the world there may be a young woman who loves this man. For her sake let him go."

"No, lynch him! Lynch him!" shouted the miners.

"Hold on, boys!" cried Flannigan. "Joe asks us to spare him, so we will let him go; but he must leave the camp at once."

"Do you hear, Stanton?" said Joe. "That's the verdict. Many a man has staked his all on a woman's love, and lost. Go!"

As Stanton passed down the mountain path, he encountered Willie Live, who took a snapshot of him with his camera.

"I beg your pardon," said Willie. "Your picture for the Rogue's Gallery, if you please. Thank you."

Then Willie approached Joe Lanier.

"Joe," he said, "the boys have all enlisted, and want you for their captain."

"No, no," cried Elsie, "don't go. Don't leave me here."

"Mother will care for you," said Joe, tenderly. "Besides, you don't need me any more. No one needs me now, except my country. Thank God, I can fight and die for that!"

"Forgive me, Joe!" sobbed Elsie. "I didn't mean to deceive you."

"I don't blame you, dear," said Joe. "Only after what has happened things can't be the same as they were."

Captain Drysdale now stepped forward.

"Joe Lanier," he asked, "will you be captain of the Montana Volunteers?"

"I will," answered Joe, resolutely.

While he was signing the enlistment paper, his mother came running from the cottage.

"Joe, my boy, what are you doing?" she inquired anxiously.

"Mother, dear," he answered, "there are thousands of sons like me responding to their country's call. And there are thousands of mothers

whose hearts are breaking; but those sons have done their duty, and those mothers——”

“Have bade them go,” said Mrs. Lanier, “as I do now.”

“God bless you!” said Joe, kissing her.

“Captain Joe Lanier!” exclaimed Mike Flannigan, saluting him.

And the enlisted men burst out into a loud “Hurrah!”

Joe pointed to Elsie.

“Mother,” he said, “guard that girl as you would your life. I’m going away to fight for Uncle Sam.”

CHAPTER VI.

LURED INTO A TRAP.

WHEN the Montana Volunteers reached San Francisco they were obliged to wait several weeks for a transport to convey them to Manila. They passed the time in drilling and sight-seeing.

Willie Live took up his residence in their camp, and contributed not a little to their entertainment with his merry pranks and shrewd sayings.

In the course of his wanderings about the town he made three important discoveries. The first was that Sam Drysdale had received the appointment of assistant paymaster in the army, to accompany the troops to the Philippines; the second, that Bud Stanton and Nell Hazelton were in San Francisco; the third, that Stanton and Drysdale were constantly in each other's com-

pany, and that Stanton had succeeded in making an opium fiend of Drysdale.

One evening, while he was exploring the Chinese quarter, Willie Live saw Stanton and Nell Hazelton conversing in front of an opium joint kept by a Highbinder named Quong Hong. He stole into the doorway and listened. And this is what he heard :

“Don’t lie to me, Bud Stanton,” said Nell. “You have some motive for bringing me here. Now, what is it?”

“Step inside, and I’ll explain,” replied Stanton.

“Oh, no, I’m not fool enough to walk into a trap. Tell me here, or not at all.”

“Then, listen,” said Stanton. “This man, Drysdale, has been appointed assistant paymaster in the army, and foolishly carries around with him a large sum of money. He is a constant visitor to this opium joint. He’ll be here to-night, and is very likely to have several thousand dollars with him. Now, I intend to get that money.”

“You propose to steal it, eh?”

"Exactly; and you must help me."

"Bud Stanton," said Nell, scornfully, "I may have fallen; but I've not fallen low enough to become a thief."

"Then you won't help me?"

"No."

"Now, see here, Nell," urged Stanton. "Help me in this affair, and I'll give you half the money."

"Not if you gave me all."

"It seems to me you've grown mighty good all of a sudden," sneered Stanton. "Well, I know a girl who does love me, and will help me. It is the little mountain heiress, of whom you were so jealous."

"Bud Stanton, I don't believe you."

"As you please," said Stanton, confidently. "You know she was willing enough to elope with me that time in Montana. Well, I have sent her a telegram, with Joe Lanier's name signed to it, asking her to meet me here in 'Frisco. She will believe it is from Joe, follow the directions, and come to this place, where she will be completely in my power."

"When do you expect to meet her?"

"To-night, at this very hour."

"You coward!" exclaimed Nell, scornfully.
"She shall be warned of your perfidy."

"And who will do that?"

"I will."

"You can't find her."

"No; but I can try."

And Nell turned from Stanton, abruptly, and departed on her errand of mercy.

Willie Live's first impulse was to leave his hiding place and strangle Stanton; but on second thought he resolved to stay where he was and await the course of events. For, by remaining in ambush, if Elsie came to keep the appointed meeting, he might have a chance to rescue her; whereas, by revealing himself to Stanton now, he would merely warn him to be on his guard.

About a quarter of an hour had elapsed when he beheld the girl approaching the opium joint.

Stanton sprang forward to greet her.

"My dear Elsie," he began.

But she cut him short.

"Stop, Mr. Stanton! We are strangers, now," she said.

"But allow me to explain," he persisted.

"You cannot," said Elsie, sternly. "When you can show me that vice is virtue, wrong is right, then you make me believe in your sincerity; but not before."

At this Stanton laughed triumphantly.

"Well, my little mountain rose," he said, "I've staked my game too high to lose you now. You come in here with me."

He seized her arm, and was about to drag her into the opium joint, when Willie Live sprang out of the doorway of the restaurant, and broke his hold.

"What the devil do you want?" cried Stanton, angrily.

"Your picture," answered Willie Live, bringing his ever-ready camera into play. "You see, I'm writing a drama, and you'll make a great character for the villain."

"You'll get yourself into trouble," growled Stanton.

"It's no trouble, I assure you," responded Willie Live, with a bland smile. "It's quite a pleasure."

Then, seeing Stanton assume a threatening attitude, he covered him with his revolver, and remarked, carelessly:

"Now, if you move, this will go off."

"Damn you!" exclaimed Stanton, fiercely; and with that he turned and entered the opium joint.

When they were alone together, Elsie said to her preserver:

"I thank you, Willie, for your kindness."

"Not at all," answered Willie Live, coolly. "Sorry I didn't have a chance to shoot him. It would have made a great scene for my play."

He now conducted Elsie to a car, and directed her to Joe Lanier's quarters, after which he returned to the opium joint to keep an eye on Bud Stanton.

Meanwhile, Sam Drysdale approached Quong Hong's, shivering in every limb. At the door he encountered Bud Stanton.

"Hello, Sam!" exclaimed Stanton. "Out for another night's fun, I see."

"Fun? You call it fun?" moaned Drysdale. "It was a sorry day for me when you induced me to indulge in the opium habit. Look at me! I'm a wreck."

Stanton clapped him on the shoulder.

"Nonsense, man!" he cried. "Opium is the cure for all human ills. One pull at the pipe and you're in heaven; two puffs, and the world and all its annoyances are forgotten. Life is short. Let's get all out of it we can."

"Mine will be short enough if we don't get out of 'Frisco soon," said Drysdale. "I say, old chap, can I trust myself in there to-night? I am almost afraid. I have a very large sum of Uncle Sam's money in my wallet. If it were my own, I would not care."

"You can trust Quong Hong with your life," said Bud. "Come, we'll have a rousing time to-night. You may be outside the Golden Gate to-morrow. Here to-day, and away to-morrow. Such is life."

"Well, let it go at that," said Drysdale. "But you'll keep an eye on me, won't you, old chap?"

"Oh, I'll keep two eyes on you," said Stanton.
And the two men entered the opium joint.

* * * * *

Elsie had ridden on the car but a little way, when it occurred to her that, since Joe had appointed to meet her elsewhere, he would hardly be at his quarters. She did not know that the telegram she had received was from Bud Stanton. It read :

"Meet me at 490 Sacramento Street. Must see you once more before I sail.

"JOE LANIER."

Fearing that she might miss seeing Joe, if she followed Willie Live's instructions, she got off the car, and retraced her steps to the Chinese quarter.

She found Sacramento Street, and followed it along to No. 490. It was the same house into which Stanton had endeavored to drag her, but she did not recognize it.

Quong Hong stood before the door.

On seeing her approach, he stepped forth and saluted her, saying :

"How de do, lady? You look for somebody? Big soldier boy? I think call him Joe?"

"Yes, Joe Lanier," answered Elsie, eagerly.

"Ah, your name, Elsie?"

"Yes," said Elsie. "Then this must be the place he mentions in his telegram."

"He say you come soon," said Quong, who had been primed for this meeting by Bud Stanton. "You go in house and wait for him, if you like. He come soon."

"Yes, I'll wait for him," said Elsie. "I lost my way down the street, and couldn't find the number."

And she entered the opium den with Quong Hong.

Nell Hazelton, arriving upon the scene at that moment, saw her going to her destruction, and hurried to the door.

It was locked.

"I know what I'll do," she reflected. "I will inform Captain Lanier. Yes, and I'll return here to-night and warn Drysdale of his danger. Bud Stanton, I'll get even with you if I die for it."

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH WILLIE LIVE FINDS COMEDY FOR HIS
PLAY.

It happened that night that the Montana Volunteers got it into their heads to visit the Chinese quarter, and Willie Live, who was well acquainted with the district, undertook to show them through it.

Madge who had accompanied the boys to San Francisco to see them set sail for Manila, begged permission to go along with the party, and Willie reluctantly granted it. After visiting various places, it was suggested that it would be amusing to wind up the evening by dropping in at an opium joint. Accordingly, Willie Live conducted the party to Quong Hong's.

On entering the place, Madge said that she was hungry, whereupon Willie Live called Quong

Hong to the table, at which they were sitting, and inquired:

"What have you got that's good to eat, Quong?"

"Chowman, yaciman, cowman, lop-suey, slop-suey and chop-suey," replied the Chinaman.

"How is your slop-suey to-day, Quong?" asked Willie.

"Velly sloppy," was the reply.

"Well, you may bring the lady some rye bread, a glass of beer, some ice cream and some Limburger cheese."

At the mention of the cheese, the soldiers drew their revolvers, and cried out:

"If she eats that cheese here, we'll shoot."

"We surrender! We surrender!" exclaimed Willie Live, throwing up his hands. "Quong, you may change that order to a plate of beans and some hard-tack."

Quong turned to Mike Flannigan.

"Say, Ilish, who this flesh boy?" he asked.

"Sure, he's a detective in disguise," answered Flannigan, determined to have some fun with

Willie. "Take him down into the cellar and kill him."

"He 'tective?" cried Quong, in alarm. "He tell policeman. Policeman make heap trouble for Quong. Me fix him."

The Chinaman now called three toughs into the joint, and pointed out Willie Live to them.

"You see that fellow over there?" he said. "He 'tective. Well, you go inside door—wait for him. He go in to see pretty China gal—you smash him face, tear him clothes, and beat him good. I give you one dollar—you fifty cents—you fifteen cents."

The toughs hid behind the door of the inside room, and Quong addressed himself to Willie Live.

"I say, come this way, please. You allee same heap smart boy."

"Oh, yes. I'm a lovely piece of work," responded Willie Live.

"You allee same heap nicee boy."

"Yes, mother was always proud of her angel child."

"Little China gal in next room heap likee you. Allee time ask for you. You makee mashee."

"Get out, you don't mean it!" exclaimed Willie. "Tell the boys about it, Quong."

"Be sure you come now. You have a heap nicee time," persisted the Chinaman.

"Oh, you can't lose me, Quong," said Willie, lighting a cigar. "I'll be with you in just a moment. Mike, did you hear what he said?"

"I did," answered the Irishman, adding: "Willie, you like trouble and excitement, don't you?"

"I could die getting into trouble, Mike," answered Willie Live. "It always furnishes great material for my play."

At that moment a pretty Chinese girl appeared in the doorway of the inside room, and beckoned Willie Live to join her. The soldiers started toward her, but Willie pushed them back.

"Stop, boys, stop!" he cried. "It belongs to me. I saw it first."

And the next moment he passed into the inside room with the almond-eyed beauty.

Presently there was heard the tumult of a

scuffle, wild shrieks, and the crack, crack, crack, of a revolver, issuing from the apartment he had just entered.

Then the three toughs came flying through the door, and ran out into the street, howling. They were followed by several Chinamen, and Quong Hong himself, all of them in a state of abject terror.

Lastly came Willie Live, smoking a long Chinese pipe, and carrying a revolver in his right hand.

"Mike, that was really exciting," he remarked, coolly.

Madge now ran up to him with a face pale with alarm.

"What did they do to you, Willie?" she asked, anxiously.

"Not a thing, deary," he replied. "They grabbed—then I grabbed—then we all grabbed. At the finish someone had a switch off. There, my dear, is a nice little souvenir from Chinatown."

And he handed her a long, rat-tailed queue.

"Willie," said Flannigan, "you're a wonder."

"You are wrong, Mike," said Willie Live, "I'm an author. The second act of my play was getting a bit dull, and needed some comedy—that is all."

Quong now announced that supper was served, and they all marched off to the apartment where the tables were set. When his guests were all seated, he returned to the parlor, and going to a bunk that stood in an alcove, called out to its occupant:

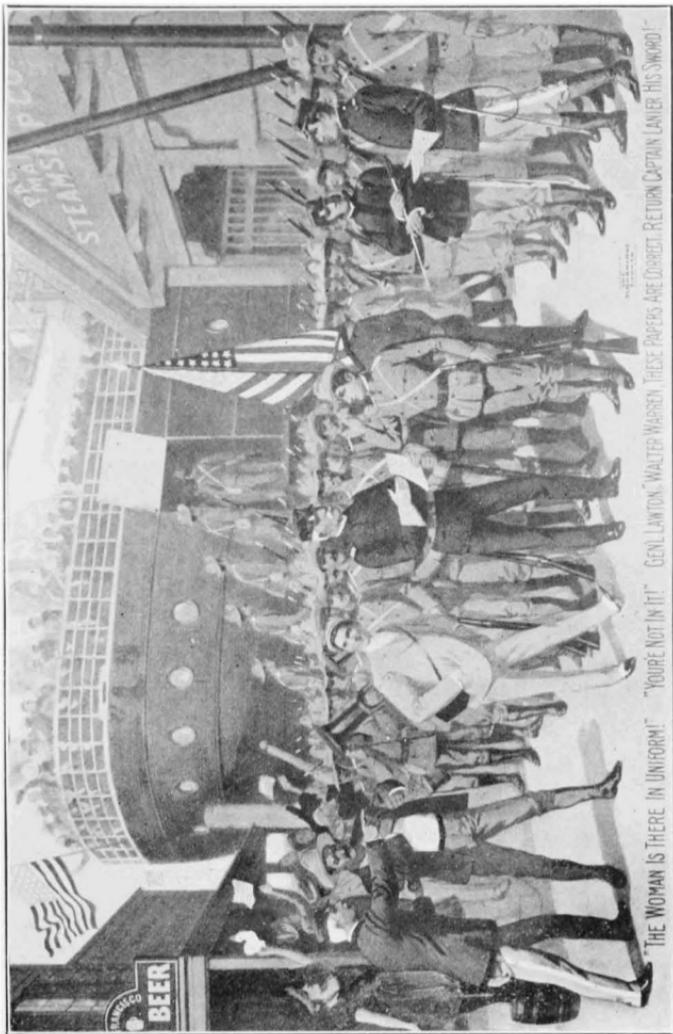
"What's the matter you? Want more opium?"

"No, leave me! Leave me!" groaned the miserable man.

"No, Mr. Drysdale, I no leave you," said Quong. "Come out here and lay on the sofa."

He assisted Drysdale to a divan that stood nearby, and then retired and watched him closely.

"Oh, God, how sick I feel!" moaned poor Drysdale, shivering and shaking like an aspen. "So sick and so cold. Inch by inch I have eaten up my own vitality, and for what?—in God's name, for what? For opium—the little green tears from the gashed poppy's heart, gathered and



THE WOMAN IS THERE IN UNIFORM! "YOU'RE NOT IN IT!" GEN'L LANTON, WALTER WARREN, THESE PAPERS ARE CORRECT. RETURN CAPTAIN LANTON HIS SWORD!

spread broadcast through the world. Why can I not throw off this dreadful habit? Other men have stopped it. Why not I? I will—I will! Oh, God, that I might once more be master of my own soul! I can be—I will.”

A period of utter prostration succeeded this outburst of remorse, and Drysdale fell back upon the divan with closed eyes.

Bud Stanton stole noiselessly into the room.

“Is he asleep?” he inquired of Quong.

“Yes.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I can’t take the money here. It’s too risky,” said Bud. “Entice him into another room.”

Quong retired for a moment, and then returned with a pipe containing a glowing pellet of opium in its bowl. This he placed under Drysdale’s nose, and, presently, the fumes brought him back to life.

He sat up and clutched frantically at the pipe.

Then Quong retreated slowly before him, draw-

ing him on—on—on, until finally he led him, gasping, into an adjoining chamber.

Bud Stanton followed, and helped place him in a bunk.

“I’ll watch him, Quong, until he falls fast asleep,” said Stanton, “and then turn the trick. Give him the pipe, and let him smoke himself into oblivion.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A ROBBERY AND A RESCUE.

QUONG returned to the supper-room, and a short time afterwards, Nell Hazelton entered the opium den.

"This is the place, I am sure," she muttered, looking round her doubtfully. "My revenge must be complete to-night. Captain Lanier's sweetheart stole away my lover; my sweetheart stole away his. I'll double my revenge. I'll save Elsie from the hands of Bud Stanton, but, at the same time, make her suffer. Quong," she cried, seeing the Chinaman across the room, "some wine, please."

As Quong was serving her, Joe Lanier strode into the den.

"Your health, my dear captain!" cried Nell, filling two glasses from the decanter, and beckon-

ing him to join her in the toast. "May you win fame and glory across the Pacific, and may you be as happy there as you have been unhappy here!"

"What do you know about my unhappiness?" inquired Joe, as he drained his glass.

"Oh, I've heard of it often. I am acquainted with a number of your company."

"Go on, my girl."

"Your girl?" said Nell, with a bright smile. "You don't mean that, Captain? I wish I could believe that you do."

"Come, tell me what you know about my trouble?" asked Joe.

"I know Elsie Escott, I know Bud Stanton, and, as I told you, they are here together."

Joe turned upon her fiercely:

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "God! to think that her pure name should be coupled with his."

"Oh, you know, then—you believe me?"

"Know? Yes, I know; but believe you—never!"

"Very well, then," said Nell, in injured tones, "I shan't say anything more about it."

Now this was not at all what Lanier wanted.

He had come there to learn Elsie's whereabouts, and was determined not to be disappointed.

"By heaven, you shall speak!" he cried, wildly. "Tell me what you know."

"My dear Captain, you are excited," returned Nell, soothingly. "Won't you join me in another drink?"

"Drink?" he answered, desperately. "Yes, let's drink and drown our sorrows."

They tipped glasses and drank.

"Captain," said Nell, observing Elsie peering through a doorway, "do you know that your girl is growing sentimental? I am dying for affection, and from such a handsome officer as you——"

"You'll excuse me; I'm going home," said Joe.

"Stay," said the wily woman, "and I may tell you something about your Elsie."

"That name upon your lips is a profanation," returned Joe. "Good night!"

Again he started to go, and again Nell held him back.

"My dear Captain—I—I——"

“Well, speak then, and tell me what you know about her,” cried Lanier.

“Very well, then,” said Nell, coaxingly; “come and sit beside me on the sofa, and I’ll tell you everything.”

When he had sat himself down beside her, she laid her hand gently upon his shoulder, and looked up sweetly into his face.

“Come, sweetheart,” she murmured, gently, “forget the old love. You may discover a new one if you try.”

“A new one? What do you mean?”

“This: don’t you think that, in time, you might learn to love me as well as you do someone else?”

“I might—I might,” said Joe, eager to learn about Elsie. “If you’ll only tell me what you know about her.”

“You’re anxious?”

“Yes.”

“A kiss, then, to prove your love for me, and I will tell you everything.”

And she opened her arms to him voluptuously. And now events came thick and fast.

Elsie, seeing Joe Lanier about to embrace a

strange woman, broke the lamps near her, and plunged the den into semi-darkness.

A second later, Bud Stanton came out of an apartment, and attempted to reach the door to the street.

"You thief!" cried Nell Hazelton, throwing her arms around him.

"Nell, out of my way!" roared Bud.

"You can only escape over my dead body," she retorted.

"Then so be it!" exclaimed Bud.

And drawing a revolver he shot her down, and escaped, hatless, into the street.

The next moment Sam Drysdale came out of the room Stanton had just left, crying:

"I've been robbed! I've been robbed! And there stands the robber!"

And he pointed a trembling forefinger at Joe Lanier.

"You lie!" retorted Joe. "This woman has been shot."

"Shot?" echoed the Montana Volunteers, crowding into the apartment from the supper-room.

"Yes, and will die soon," groaned poor Nell. "But not until I've sworn the oath of a dying woman. May God forgive my past! I was shot by the man who robbed Captain Drysdale. Captain Lanier is—is—inno-cent."

Meanwhile a policeman had entered.

He bent over Nell Hazelton, and inquired:

"Who shot you, lady?"

"Bud Stanton," was the faint reply.

"Officer," said Drysdale, "this is but a story of revenge against the sweetheart who deserted her. The thief stands there!"

And again he pointed at Joe.

Elsie now came forward.

"No. He is innocent!" she cried, passionately.

"Elsie!"

And the next moment Joe and Elsie were in each other's arms.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH WILLIE LIVE PLAYS THE DETECTIVE.

THE day at last arrived when the Montana Volunteers were to set sail for Manila. The City of Pekin, the transport that was to convey them across the Pacific, lay at her dock, getting up steam, and sailors ran hither and thither upon her decks, and swarmed in her rigging, making final preparations for the voyage.

Willie Live was standing on the dock watching them, when Madge approached him, and said:

“Willie, I have something to tell you.”

“Is it about Elsie?” inquired Willie.

“Yes. I went with her to a place where a lot of soldiers are. Elsie was looking for Joe, but he was not there.”

“Yes, yes. Go on!”

“So we went to another place, and, while there, Bud Stanton came in. Some big man measured him, put his name in a book, gave him some papers, and said, ‘Walter Warren, you sail for Manila to-day.’”

“Humph!” muttered Willie Live. “So Bud Stanton sails for Manila under the name of Walter Warren to escape arrest for robbery and attempted murder, eh? I thank you for the information, Madge.”

At that moment Elsie came upon the dock.

“Oh, I’m so glad I’ve found you,” she said to Willie Live. “I just left the hospital where poor Nell Hazelton was taken.”

“Is she likely to recover?” inquired Willie.

“There are hopes of it,” answered Elsie. “Joe had just been there and told them to spare no expense. I missed meeting him by a bare minute. I have been looking for him all day. I must sail with him for Manila. If I don’t succeed in this, there is but one thing left for me—the water.”

“Miss Elsie,” said Willie Live, “to sail with Joe would be impossible. No woman, nor even a

man, would be allowed to board the transport unless duly enlisted."

"But as a nurse—the Red Cross?"

"The Red Cross hospital boat sailed three days ago," said Willie Live. "There is but one thing to be done, and, by George! I'll help you if I can."

"If it requires bravery and determination it will be done," said Elsie.

"I have a plan," continued Willie. "It isn't just the right thing to do, but I guess Uncle Sam can spare one of his boys until the next transport sails. Listen: a number of soldiers are asleep in the hotel, opposite the dock. They are waiting to sail to-day. Now, they don't wear their clothes when they are sleeping. Say no more. I'll try it."

With these words he hurried off in the direction of the hotel.

He had not been gone long, when Bud Stanton put in an appearance. He was disguised. At sight of him, Elsie turned pale and shuddered.

"What is the matter, Miss Elsie?" inquired Madge. "Why do you tremble so? Are you ill?"

"No," replied Elsie. "I am quite well. Do you see that man over there? I fear he suspects what we are about to do. Stand close. Don't let him see me."

"Don't be afraid," said Madge. "I will protect you."

Stanton now stepped forward, and addressed Elsie.

"I beg your pardon. But are you waiting for someone?"

"Yes, a gentleman," answered Elsie, timidly. "He will be here shortly."

"Perhaps I can be of service to you."

At this Madge interposed.

"Can't you understand the United States language?" she said, aggressively. "The lady says she is waiting for a gentleman, and I don't see any around just now."

Stanton bowed, and withdrew.

"Elsie waiting for her lover, eh?" he muttered. "Well, I should like to stay here and take care of her; but that charge of robbery and attempted murder prevents me. The Philippines will be

much safer. My papers of enlistment under the name of Walter Warren will save me."

At this juncture, Willie Live returned. He was disguised as a bootblack, and carried a large parcel under his arm.

"Miss Elsie, your uniform," he said, handing her the parcel. "Go quickly and put it on. You sail in an hour."

Elsie hurried away to put on the uniform, and Madge accompanied her. Stanton started to follow them; but Willie Live stopped him.

"Shine, sir?"

"No, I don't want a shine," grumbled Stanton.

"Oh, yes, you do," said Willie. "You know you want a shine."

And dropping on his knees, he began to polish Stanton's shoes with great vigor. Then he began brushing his clothes with a whisk broom, and, while so occupied, slipped his hand in the inside pocket of Stanton's coat, and secured his enlistment papers.

At that moment Joe Lanier came upon the dock accompanied by General Lawton.

"Captain Lanier," said the general, "it was

fortunate for you that the boys could testify in your behalf. It looked like a strong case against you."

"I know, General," returned Joe. "I had to drown my sorrow somehow. The woman I love—ah, well, General, it's the old story. I'll not trouble you with it."

"Forget her, Captain!" said Lawton. "Those yellow devils over there will give you excitement enough."

"I hope so, for I can't stand the strain much longer."

Bud Stanton now stepped forward and saluted General Lawton respectfully.

"General," he said, "I wish to report that a woman has been making inquiries regarding the departure of the transport. She has offered several of our boys bribes to desert, and allow her to take their uniform."

"Who are you?" asked Lawton.

"Walter Warren, sir."

"Of what regiment?"

"San Francisco volunteers."

"Would you know the woman should you see her in uniform?"

"Yes, General."

"Then you shall watch for her. The troops will pass here in a few moments to board the transport. If you cannot substantiate your report in this matter, it will go hard with you."

"My God! If it should be Elsie," thought Joe.

"Captain Lanier," said Lawton, "I appoint you to arrest this woman in case she tries to board the transport."

"But, General, I beg to be excused," said Joe.

"You will obey my orders."

"General, I cannot."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, General. I will obey orders."

Joe and the general now boarded the transport, to see that everything was in readiness for the troops.

A short time afterwards, Sam Drysdale came staggering along.

"I say, my friend," he said, addressing Stanton, whom he did not recognize, "buy a fellow a drink, will you? I'm broke. I was robbed last night by a scoundrel and a murderer."

"Sorry, old man, but I'm only a private," answered Stanton. "The paymaster hasn't reached me as yet."

"Paymaster?" said Drysdale. "Well, I'm assistant paymaster—that is, I was. But I've been relieved of my duty. Curse drink! Curse opium! Curse the day I ever met Bud Stanton!"

"Cheer up, old man! Why do you curse Bud Stanton? Now, I heard that the man who robbed you was a certain captain of the Montana Volunteers."

"Well, then, you heard wrong," said Drysdale. "Captain Joe Lanier proved his innocence at the court-martial this morning."

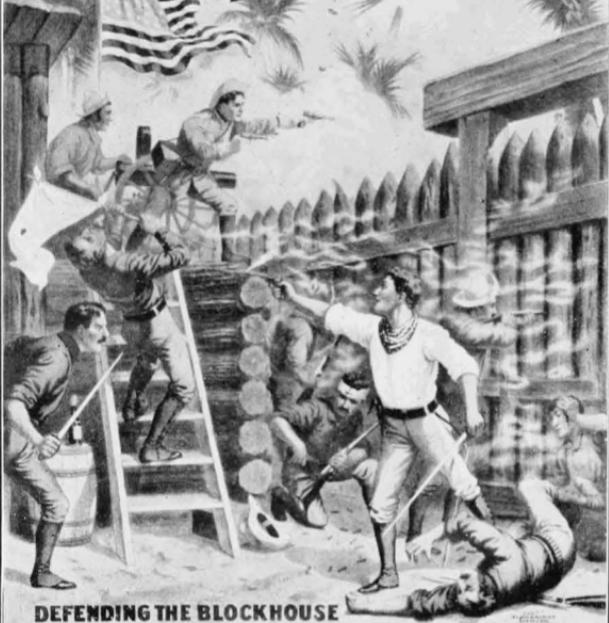
"If I could prove to you that Captain Lanier did rob you, would you accuse him before he sails?"

"It would have to be pretty strong proof. You know he is considered an honest man."

"Why, it's simple enough," said Stanton. "If

BLANEY'S

ACROSS THE PACIFIC



DEFENDING THE BLOCKHOUSE

THEY SAID HE MIGHT LIVE BUT HE SAID HE'D SHOW THEM HIS STOCKING!

he has a large red wallet on his person with your name stamped upon it, he's the thief, is he not?"

"How do you know it was a large red wallet that was stolen?" inquired Drysdale, suspiciously.

"Why, I read it in the newspapers."

"Oh, so you read it in the newspapers, did you? Well, buy me that drink."

While this conversation was in progress, Willie Live sat on a box nearby, pretending to be asleep.

When the two men departed for a saloon, he sprang to his feet, crying, exultingly:

"Willie, the plot of your play is going to have a large red wallet in it. Remember that!"

Just then Mike Flannigan came upon the scene. He was very drunk, and as he reeled toward Willie Live, dropped a large red wallet upon the dock.

"Shine, Irish?" cried Willie Live.

"Shine Irish? That isn't my name," answered Flannigan.

"You'd better get your boots shined for inspection."

"Shure, it's more than me shoes that need shining," said Flannigan. "It's me head. That clarinet punch and that chop-suey make a bad mixture."

"Well, you take my tip and get a bracer before the captain sees you."

"Something to straighten me up, eh? Do you know where I can get a carbohic acid cocktail?"

"I think McGuire keeps them."

"Will that straighten me up?"

"Or lay you out," replied Willie.

"You seem to be a nice sort of boy," said Flannigan. "What's your name?"

"Jimmy Dolan."

"Well, Jimmy, you're an Irish boy," said Flannigan, "and all Irish boys are—are Irish. Here is a dime for you. Now don't spend it foolishly. Go and play policy with it—3, 5, 8 and 12.

"And what will I do with the money if I win?"

"Send it to the secretary of the navy, and tell him to build an airship with it to catch Aguinaldo and his army."

With these words, Flannigan reeled away to McGuire's saloon, to buy a drink.

He had not been gone long, when Willie Live spied the wallet he had dropped. He picked it up, opened it, and read the following, printed upon the inside of the cover:

“MIKE FLANNIGAN—FROM JOE LANIER.”

“Willie,” he said, “the plot of your play is going to have two large red wallets in it.”

CHAPTER X.

WILLIE LIVE RESORTS TO STRATEGY.

A SHORT time afterward Bud Stanton returned to the dock, and accosted him.

‘Here, boy. Do you know Captain Lanier, of the Montana Volunteers?’

‘You mean the handsome captain?’ inquired Willie Live.

‘You may call him handsome if you like,’ said Stanton. ‘Now, here is a wallet. It is to be delivered to Captain Russell, on General Wheeler’s staff, at Manila. It contains some important papers. Tell Captain Lanier that if he will deliver it, Captain Russell will be under many obligations.’

‘All right, sir.’

At that moment Joe Lanier came out of the transport.

"There's Captain Lanier now," said Stanton. "Deliver the wallet at once."

Willie Live approached Joe, and handing him Mike Flannigan's wallet, said:

"Captain, I've been instructed to hand you this wallet to deliver to Captain Russell, on General Wheeler's staff, at Manila. The captain will consider it a favor."

Joe thrust the wallet in his pocket.

"I shall be pleased to do the captain a good turn," he said.

General Lawton now appeared, and said:

"Captain Lanier, go aboard the transport until your regiment arrives, and watch for the woman."

At that moment Sam Drysdale returned from the saloon.

"One moment, General!" he cried. "I have a request to make, before Captain Lanier goes aboard."

"Who are you?" inquired Lawton.

"Samuel Drysdale, formerly assistant paymaster of the army. I was robbed of a large sum of

money recently, and I wish to have Captain Lanier searched before he boards the transport."

"Do you mean what you say?" inquired Joe, angrily.

"Yes," replied Drysdale. "You know—the red wallet. It is now on your person."

"Captain Lanier," said Lawton, sternly, "you are under arrest."

Meanwhile, Mike Flannigan had returned to the dock.

"General," he cried, pointing to Drysdale, "that man was discharged from the service for drunkenness. He has no right to the uniform he wears."

"Nevertheless, he has the right to accuse one who has robbed him," put in Bud Stanton.

General Lawton turned to Mike Flannigan.

"Arrest Captain Lanier," he commanded.

Flannigan took Joe's sword with great reluctance.

Lawton now addressed Drysdale.

"Describe your property," he said, "and, with Captain Lanier's permission, he will be searched."

"It is a large red wallet," explained Drysdale. "It contains papers, my commission, and has the name, Samuel Drysdale, printed on the cover. When I was robbed it contained three thousand dollars in gold certificates."

"General," said Joe, "I have no objection to being searched; but I wish to state that a large red wallet was——"

"Do not commit yourself, Captain," put in the general. "Are you willing to be searched?"

"I am."

"Search him!" said Lawton, to Mike Flannigan.

The Irishman obeyed, and drew from Joe's pocket a large red wallet, which he handed to the general.

The latter took the wallet and examined it carefully. Then he addressed Drysdale.

"Is this your wallet?" he asked.

"It is," replied Drysdale.

"Is your name Mike Flannigan?"

"Certainly not."

"The name here is Mike Flannigan," said Lawton. "How do you account for that?"

"It is a trick," replied Drysdale. "Damn you, Stanton!"

"Hush! or you will betray yourself," whispered Stanton. Then, turning to Lawton: "General," he said, "Captain Lanier must have that property. There is some mistake."

"And how do you know so much?" inquired Lawton. "You, I believe, are the same person who said that a woman in uniform would try to board the transport?"

"Yes, General," said Stanton, boldly. "And I further charge that this woman is Captain Lanier's sweetheart. She was with him the night Paymaster Drysdale was robbed."

"If your information proves correct," said Lawton, "you shall be rewarded. You will make an excellent spy for Uncle Sam."

"And a better one for the Filipinos," added Willie Live.

"Silence, sir!" roared the general.

At this juncture the sound of martial music was heard, and the Montana Volunteers marched out upon the dock, headed by a brass band.

"General," said Stanton, "the woman is num-

ber four, front rank, last squad. I would suggest they go through the manual. You will soon be satisfied then."

"A good idea," said Lawton. "Sergeant, give the commands for the manual of arms!"

Mike Flannigan saluted, and stepped to the side of the last squad.

"Attention!" he cried. "Right dress front! Shoulder arms! Report arms! Charge bayonets! Present arms! Shoulder arms! Port arms! Order arms! Parade rest!"

Elsie—who had attended many drills—went through these maneuvers without a break.

"You still say the woman is there?" asked Lawton.

"I do," replied Stanton. "Number four, front rank."

"Number four, front rank, one pace front, march!" commanded the general.

Elsie obeyed.

At the same moment Willie Live stepped up to her and slipped Stanton's enlistment papers in her hand.

"Courage, Elsie," he whispered. "Your name is Walter Warren."

"Who are you, sir?" cried Lawton, angrily.

"Special correspondent for the *San Francisco Call*," answered Willie. "I was just saying good-by to my friend."

"Stand aside, sir!" commanded Lawton. Then, addressing Elsie: "Your name?" he inquired.

"Walter Warren, sir," replied Elsie.

"Why, General, that's my name," protested Stanton.

"Silence, we'll hear you later!" cried the general. Then he inquired of Elsie: "In what regiment did you enlist?"

"The Montana Volunteers," was the reply.

"Do you know Captain Lanier?"

"I do not, sir."

"Captain Lanier, forward! Do you know private Walter Warren of the Montana Volunteers?"

"I do not know Walter Warren," answered Joe.

Lawton now asked Elsie for her enlistment

papers, and when she had shown them, he turned to Bud Stanton, and said :

“These papers are correct. You have not proven your case. If this man is Walter Warren, then who are you?”

“I will tell you, General,” said Willie Live. “He is Bud Stanton, the thief.”

Lawton turned to a policeman who stood near, and cried :

“Arrest that man!”

Then, after commanding Mike Flannigan to return Joe Lanier his sword, he ordered the soldiers to embark on the transport.

Within an hour the other regiments arrived, and with flags flying and bands playing, the City of Pekin steamed out into the harbor and started on her voyage across the Pacific.

CHAPTER XI.

BLOCK HOUSE NUMBER SEVEN.

ABOUT six months later General Lawton was sitting at a table in his tent in the Philippines, studying a map of the country, when he heard a sentry call out a challenge.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend."

"Advance, friend, and be recognized."

"I am an officer of the Red Cross, and wish to deliver the message of a dying man to Captain Russell."

"I will report to General Lawton," said the sentry.

A moment later he appeared before the general, and said:

"General, an officer of the Red Cross wishes to deliver the message of a dying man to Captain Russell."

"You will find Captain Russell in his tent," said Lawton.

The sentry returned to his post, where the Red Cross officer was awaiting him, and told him where Captain Russell's tent was situated. The latter immediately set out to find it.

On reaching the tent he entered it and saluted. Captain Russell looked up, and the two men recognized each other at a glance.

"Bud Stanton!"

"Sam Drysdale!"

"How did you know I was here?" asked Stanton.

"Nell Hazelton told me," replied Drysdale. "She is now a Red Cross nurse under my directions. She recognized you on the field yesterday. But tell me, Bud, how comes it that you are a captain in the army?"

"Well, after my arrest in 'Frisco," explained Stanton, "I passed several weeks in jail, awaiting trial. Then I bribed a keeper to let me escape, assumed a new name and disguise, went to Colorado, and organized a company of volun-

teers. They elected me their captain, and here I am. But what does Nell Hazelton want of me?"

"She doesn't want anything of you, Bud."

"Well, what do you want, then?"

"I can give you information which, if you report to General Lawton, will win for you instant promotion."

"What information?"

"Within an hour a Filipino spy will pass through these lines bearing important messages from Aguinaldo."

"Oh, no, I cannot report that," said Stanton.

"Why not?"

"Because one of those messages is for me."

"Good! And the other is for me," said Drysdale.

"Explain."

"During one of my visits to Aguinaldo's camp, as an officer of the Red Cross, I was informed that I might work in conjunction with a certain Captain Russell, and make a pot of money. Now we are to assist this spy to pass through our lines to-day."

“And for which we are to receive——?”

“Five thousand piestas,” answered Drysdale.

At this point their conversation was interrupted by the appearance of General Lawton.

“I have learned from one of the prisoners,” said the general, “that it is the intention of the enemy to cut off our water supply. A detachment must be sent to Block House No. 7, at San Juan del Monta, to act in unison with General King’s brigade, who occupy the opposite bank of the Pasig. They must be picked men, as the position will be one of great danger. Let me think—who can I send?”

“General,” said Stanton, “if it is a desperate man with followers of the same kind you need, I think I know of one.”

“Who is he?”

“Captain Joe Lanier of the Montana Volunteers.”

“Lanier, Lanier,” said Lawton. “Isn’t that the man who was court-martialed in the Presidio at San Francisco, in May?”

“The same.”

"I hardly remember the nature of the charges against him. What were they?"

"They tried to show that he had a hand in the robbery of Paymaster Drysdale in the Chinese quarter."

"Ah, yes, and he was proven innocent," said Lawton, adding: "Was there not a woman mixed up in the affair?"

"Yes, an orphan girl, who regarded Lanier as her brother."

"Where can this Lanier be found at present?"

"I think he is in command of the troops that are holding Block House No. 8."

"See if you can communicate with him."

Stanton went to a telegraph instrument in the corner of his tent, and struck off a message upon the ticker. An answer came back almost immediately.

"I have him," said Stanton. "Your orders, General."

Lawton dictated the following command:

"CAPTAIN JOE LANIER:

"Select twenty of your best men and start at

once for Block House No. 7, San Juan del Monta. Hold same at all hazards until relieved.

“LAWTON.”

“There, damn you, Lanier!” reflected Stanton, exultingly, “I’ve sent you to hell at last.”

At that moment a soldier approached with the information that a Red Cross nurse was bringing a wounded man to headquarters.

“What do they mean by such actions?” cried Lawton. “The hospital is the proper place for him.”

While he was speaking two men drew near bearing a litter between them. On the litter lay a diminutive figure covered with an army blanket. The cavalcade was attended by a Red Cross nurse.

“Nell Hazelton!” exclaimed Stanton to himself.

“General,” said Nell, addressing Lawton, “this man is wounded. I await your orders.”

Before Lawton could reply, the blanket was thrown off, and Willie Live slid from the litter to the ground.

"What does this mean?" asked Lawton, angrily.

"I beg your pardon, General," said Willie, "but I am special correspondent for the *San Francisco Call*."

"Your name?" inquired Lawton.

"Willie Live."

"Willie Live?"

"Yes, General; and it has been a very serious question whether I would or would not live."

"I have heard of you before," said Lawton. "It has been reported to me that you have been of great service to our spies."

"Have you been on the firing line?" inquired Stanton.

"I have a slight memory of the same," answered Willie Live. "I have three bullets to remind me should I forget it."

Then he turned to General Lawton.

"General," he continued, "I simply came here to inform you that I have been through the enemy's lines and have some choice photographs of their positions."

"That is important," said Lawton. "I'll look

them over. You may remain here for a while, young man."

"General, I thank you for your kindness," said Willie. "By remaining here I can get the latest news for my paper, and some scenes for my play."

Just then Stanton saw a soldier approaching with a prisoner, and he whispered to Drysdale:

"By Jove! here comes young Walter Warren with a prisoner."

Drysdale looked in the direction indicated, and turned pale.

"It is our spy, Michael Agramonte. We are lost!" he exclaimed.

Elsie advanced, and presented her prisoner to General Lawton.

"General," she cried, "I have kept my word. Your prisoner, Michael Agramonte, Aguinaldo's spy!"



CHAPTER XII.

WILLIE LIVE TO THE RESCUE.

"I'll see that you are rewarded," said the general.

"The only reward I ask," returned Elsie, "is the privilege of serving my country."

"You shall be repaid," said Lawton, adding: "So this is the famous spy and trusted friend of the insurgent chief."

"No, no," whined Agramonte, "me poor man—I lose all—I never see Aguinaldo—never speak to him—never—never."

"He is lying, General," said Elsie, taking several papers from her pocket, and handing them to Lawton. "Here is the proof. These papers were found upon him."

"The papers—we are lost!" moaned Drysdale.

"Hush!" whispered Stanton.

"When I arrested him, General," continued Elsie, "he attempted to assassinate me. I would have been killed but for this young war correspondent, Willie Live."

Meanwhile Lawton had been examining the papers. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"By Jove, youngster, you may have accomplished a great piece of work here."

"Anything wrong, General?" asked Stanton, anxiously.

"Read these!"

And Lawton handed the papers to Stanton, for his perusal.

"I don't read Spanish," said Stanton.

"Nor do I," said Lawton.

"I do," put in Drysdale.

So the papers were handed to him to interpret.

"What do they contain?" inquired Lawton, after a pause.

"Oh, nothing—nothing," replied Drysdale, with assumed carelessness. "They are from Aguinaldo. He merely requests the aid of the

Red Cross to the dying and wounded at Colequa. I see, General, that this is more in my way than yours, so, with your permission, I'll take charge of the affair."

"As you please," said Lawton.

"Shall we allow the prisoner to go?" asked Stanton.

"No," answered the general. "We will await a further investigation. Take him to the guard-house."

"But, General, the man is wounded," put in Drysdale. "He needs the attention of the Red Cross."

"Very well, then, conduct him to the hospital and place a guard about him. I shall hold you responsible for his safe keeping."

"Me gooda Filipino," cried Agramonte. And stealing up behind the general's back, he drew a long knife from his belt, and raised it to stab him.

But Willie Live was too quick for him. Drawing his revolver, he took aim, fired, and shot the knife from his hand.

"You gooda Filipino, eh?" he cried. "Well, my

dark-complexioned friend, the next time you are a bad boy it will be your finish."

When Agramonte had been conducted to the hospital, Lawton turned to Willie Live, and said:

"How can I reward you for saving my life?"

"Your acknowledgment is sufficient reward, General," answered Willie. "All I ask is a few minutes' rest here, and any news you can give me."

"Anything you need, let me know," said Lawton, "and I'll not refuse you."

Just then a telegraph operator approached hastily, and handed the general a message.

It ran as follows:

"Please give orders that Block House No. 7 be abandoned at once, or its defenders will surely be massacred.

"ANDERSON."

Lawton turned to the operator, and said: "See if Captain Lanier has taken possession of Block House No. 7."

"Impossible, General," said the operator. "That wire is cut."

"How unfortunate!" exclaimed Lawton. "A speedy message must be sent at once to Captain Lanier."

"To abandon the Block House?" inquired Elsie.

"No; to hold it at all hazards."

"General," said Elsie, "you said that any favor I might ask of you would be granted."

"I did."

"Then I ask that if a message be needed to acquaint Captain Lanier of his danger, let me be the one to bear it."

"You, a mere boy?" said Lawton. "No, no, that would be madness."

"But I will carry your message, General," put in Willie Live; "that is, if you'll permit me."

"Silence," whispered Elsie; "it is my only chance to see Joe."

Then she again addressed Lawton.

"General," she said, "get me a horse, and I'll take your message to Captain Lanier, or die."

Lawton commanded his orderly to bring his best horse. Then he gave Elsie the following instructions:

“Go to General Anderson’s camp, and give him my compliments,” he said. “Tell him to send reinforcements at once to relieve Captain Lanier, now at Block House No. 7. Then ride to Block House No. 7 and tell Captain Lanier to hold it at all hazards, until relief arrives.”

The horse was now brought, and Elsie mounted it.

“Boy, you have a good Kentucky animal under you,” said Lawton.

“And he’ll have a good Kentuckian on his back,” said Elsie.

“Should you fall,” said the general, “to whom shall I communicate?”

“I have but one friend on earth—Captain Joe Lanier,” answered Elsie.

“Good luck, Walter,” said Willie Live. “Tell Captain Lanier I’ll be with him to-morrow. I want a picture of that Block House for my play.”

When Elsie had taken her departure Willie Live strolled in the direction of the hospital tent. On approaching it he beheld Drysdale and Bud Stanton in close conversation with the Filipino spy.

He crept behind the tent and listened.

"I no understand you," complained Agramonte. "First you bringa me here—then bringa me there—Aguinaldo say you trata me right."

"Stop your whining, and listen," said Stanton. "Go at once to the Filipino camp that surrounds Block House No. 7, and tell the officer in command that Captain Lanier and the Block House are completely at his mercy. Tell him, further, not to begin the attack until I arrive, as I have a personal debt to settle with Captain Lanier. You will find the donkey that brought you here tied to a tree just outside the lines. Now go."

Agramonte hurried away to perform his mission.

"Stanton," protested Drysdale, "this is butchery."

"Call it what you will," said Stanton, grimly, "I am resolved that Lanier shall never live to welcome his sweetheart."

"But Anderson will reinforce Lanier before you reach the Filipino camp."

"You must reach Anderson before Elsie, and

countermand Lawton's order. There is an order to that effect over Lawton's own signature."

With these words Stanton slipped a forged paper into Drysdale's hand.

"I say, Stanton," said Drysdale, "do you mean that Elsie shall never reach Lanier?"

"Never, even if I am compelled to kill her," was the fierce reply.

Willie took a snapshot of the two men, and left his hiding place, humming:

"Willie on the spot
Takes a little snapshot
Of two damned rascals
To help out his plot."

Then he hurried after Agramonte, caught up with him just as he was about to mount his donkey, knocked him down, vaulted upon the animal's back himself, and rode off at full speed in the direction of Block House No. 7.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILLIE LIVE DISCOVERS A TRAITOR.

THE scene of the narrative now shifts to Block House No. 7.

It was early morning, and realizing that with the rising of the sun the Filipinos would advance to the attack, Joe Lanier determined to ascertain the condition of his little force.

So he called Mike Flannigan to him, and said:

“Sergeant, how many men are able to report for duty?”

“They’ll all report,” answered Flannigan; “but few are fit for duty.”

“Call the roll!” commanded Joe.

The roll was called, and it was discovered that but nine men, including the captain and sergeant, were fit to take part in the defense of the fort.

“Captain,” said Flannigan, “don’t you think you’d better have a bit of sleep?”

"Sleep?" answered Joe. "No. Don't you see that daylight is breaking? Well, that means fight."

At that moment a wounded soldier called out from the shed where he lay:

"Water, water! I am dying of thirst."

Joe hastened to his side, and found him in a raging fever.

"Sergeant, this man is burning up," he cried. "Have we any water?"

"A half pint laid aside for you," answered Flannigan.

"Give it to me."

Flannigan brought the water, and Joe gave it to the sufferer who drank it greedily.

"Gone—all gone!" he moaned.

"Gone, yes," said Joe; "but there's plenty more where that came from."

Then he turned to the soldiers, and said:

"One of our comrades lies here dying from a bullet he got while going for water for us. Now, who is the man who will risk his life to get water for him?"

"I will!" cried the men in chorus.

“God bless you, my brave boys!” said Joe. “But the dangerous duty belongs to the man who has neither wife nor children. All he has belongs to Uncle Sam, and that man is myself.”

With these words Joe snatched up a water-bucket and started for the gate of the stockade.

“Stop, Captain!” shouted Mike Flannigan. “To go out there means almost certain death, and what would we do here without a leader? I never disobeyed you on the battlefield, but I’m damned if I’ll see you rush to destruction, when a spalpeen like myself can prevent it.”

While speaking he grabbed the bucket from Joe’s hand and passed out through the gate on a run.

Joe seized a repeating rifle and hurried to the platform where the gatling gun was in position.

“He’s reached the spring, boys,” he shouted, excitedly. “He’s down—he’s up—he’s got the water! Hurry, Mike, hurry! My God! they see him!”

A volley of shots followed this announcement.

Joe raised his rifle to his shoulder and blazed away.

Then he shouted triumphantly:

"Open the gate! He's here! Hooray!"

The gate was opened, and Flannigan came rushing through it, crying:

"Never touched me, begorra! Joe, that's the best shootin' you ever did. Had I the nine lives of a cat, you'd have saved every one of them. I thank you for it."

"Sergeant Flannigan," said Joe, "you disobeyed my orders. You are under arrest. Deliver your rifle."

Flannigan handed him his rifle, with a crest-fallen air.

"Now pass the water."

Flannigan did so.

Joe took a drink himself, and then returned the rifle to his gallant sergeant.

"Take it," he said. "You may need it soon."

"Captain, may I have a drink?" asked Flannigan.

"Yes, from this," answered Joe. And he handed him his whiskey flask.

"Whiskey—man's enemy," said Flannigan. "No, man's best friend, if he knows how to use it."

Well, Captain, here's to you, as good as you are; and here's to me, as bad as I am; as good as you are, and as bad as I am, I'm just as good as you are as bad as I am."

And with that he raised the flask to his lips and took a long pull at it.

"Sergeant, you're wounded," said Joe, noticing a tiny stream of blood trickling down Flannigan's forehead.

"Is that so?" said Flannigan. "Shure, I thought it was the bite of a kissing bug. Well, it may get me a pension, or, perhaps, it will quicken my hearing. Begorra, I think it has already. I can hear the tramp of a horse out there now. Can't you?"

"No," answered Joe, laughing.

"Well, maybe you think I'm crazy; but I'll soon convince you that I'm not."

He mounted the platform, looked over the stockade, and added:

"Boys, shure you're right. It's not a horse at all, at all."

"Then what is it?" inquired Joe.

"A jackass, with a wee bit of a man astride of

him. He's coming this way like the very devil. The insurgents are after him. The plucky little rascal, he fires back. It's Willie Live, begorra!"

"Open the gate, boys!" commanded Joe.

The gate was thrown open, and Willie Live came galloping into the enclosure on his donkey.

"Captain, those Filipinos are bad shots," he said, dismounting and shaking hands all around. "They didn't know which one of us was the jackass."

While Willie and Joe were comparing notes, Flannigan approached with the intelligence that an agent of the Red Cross was outside with a wounded soldier.

"Open the gate and admit him!" commanded Joe.

This was accordingly done, and Sam Drysdale, Nell Hazelton, and two Red Cross assistants entered, bearing a wounded soldier on a stretcher.

"Is this Block House No. 7?" asked Drysdale.

"It is," replied Joe.

"Are you Captain Lanier?"

"I am."

"That is very providential," said Drysdale.

"I have here a paper addressed to you, which I found upon the person of this dying courier."

"Did you learn the courier's name?"

"I did. It is Walter Warren."

Joe staggered back, as if pierced by a bullet.

"My God! if it should be Elsie," he moaned.

"The message, Captain!" said Drysdale, handing him the paper.

Joe opened the paper mechanically, and read the following:

"Abandon Block House No. 7, and report to me at once.

"LAWTON."

Joe handed the paper to Willie Live

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

Willie read the message, and then approached the stretcher, and examined the features of the dying soldier.

"Captain," he cried, "this man is not Walter Warren, and that message is a forgery!"

CHAPTER XIV.

REUNITED.

"You lie!" exclaimed Drysdale, fiercely.

At this, Nell Hazelton stepped forward.

"No, it is the truth," she said.

"Would you betray me?" hissed Drysdale in her ear.

"Yes," she answered, bravely. Then she addressed herself to Joe. "Captain Lanier," she said, "your kindness to me at the hospital in San Francisco saved my life. It is now my turn to befriend you. This man is a traitor and a spy. He did not receive that message from Walter Warren, I swear it."

"No," added Willie Live; "but he did receive it from Bud Stanton, and I'll swear to that."

"Bud Stanton here, in the Philippines?" cried Joe, in amazement.

"Yes, Captain," answered Willie Live. "He escaped from jail, went to Colorado, organized a company of volunteers, and came out here under the name of Captain Russell."

"Russell—on General Lawton's staff?" said Joe. "Impossible!"

"Bud Stanton is a spy in the employ of Aguinaldo," explained Nell Hazelton; "and this man is his accomplice."

"And I can swear to that, my dear Drysdale," added Willie Live.

"Drysdale?"

"Yes, Sam Drysdale."

"I am an officer of the Red Cross," protested Drysdale, boldly.

"You are a contemptible spy," cried Joe, wrathfully, "unworthy of the noble order of the Red Cross."

And tearing the stripes from Drysdale's arms, he gave orders to have him taken to the block house and placed under a strong guard.

At this juncture, Mike Flannigan called down from the platform, to which he had mounted to reconnoiter :

"Captain, a flag of truce from the enemy!"

"Find out what they want," said Joe.

Accordingly Flannigan called over the stockade:

"Well, what is it?"

"Open the gate, and I will tell you."

"The divil an open," returned Flannigan. "If you have anything to say, out with it. If not, just give your heels a warming."

"I come with a message from Aguinaldo," shouted the envoy.

"Then let me hear it."

"He says that if you lay down your arms and surrender, he will spare your lives."

"That's very kind of Mr. Aguinaldo," retorted Flannigan. "Has his mother any more like him? And if we don't lay down our arms, what then?"

"Death to you all!"

"Well, I can see a few of you fellows falling in the soup first."

"Your answer, quick!"

"Oh, drop around to-morrow, and we'll talk it over a game of pinochle."

"Tell him we are soldiers, accustomed to obey,"

said Joe. "Our orders are to hold this block house at all hazards, and we'll do it at the cost of our lives."

Flannigan interpreted this answer to the envoy as follows:

"The captain says you're a damned cowardly set of blackguards, and if it's fightin' you want, we'll give you your bellyful of it. Now run away home, and tell the holy terror with the golden whistle what I'm tellin' you."

"I don't care to parley with a flannel-mouthed Mick," shouted the envoy. "Tell Captain Lanier that I have three thousand well-armed insurgents at my command, and unless he surrenders at once, I shall begin the attack."

"Captain," said Willie Live, "it's Bud Stanton."

Joe's eyes glittered dangerously.

"Then open the gate!" he commanded.

The gate was thrown open in a twinkling, and Bud Stanton entered, carrying a white flag of truce in his hand.

"Close the gate!" commanded Joe.

Then he turned to Stanton, and exclaimed, triumphantly:

“Bud Stanton, you are in a trap!”

“What, you know me?” inquired Stanton.

“Yes. I know you for a thief, a traitor and a spy.”

“Very well; since you know me,” said Stanton, coolly, “you can probably guess the stake I’m playing for. It is the love of——”

“Silence!” thundered Joe. “If you dare to breathe her pure name, I’ll kill you.”

“If I do not return within five minutes, you’ll never live to see your Elsie,” sneered Stanton. “Three thousand insurgents are ready to sweep down upon you like an avalanche.”

Joe turned to Flannigan.

“Sergeant, arrest this traitor!” he cried.

When this command had been put into execution, Willie Live said to Joe:

“Captain, why didn’t you fight him?”

“Because my first duty is to my country,” answered Joe.

“I know you are right, Captain,” said Willie; “but I lost a great scene for my play.”

At this juncture a soldier ran up with the information that the enemy were advancing to the attack.

"That means business," said Joe; and then he shouted the command:

"To your places, men!"

"Captain, where do I fight?" asked Willie Live.

"You are not enlisted," answered Joe.

"No," said Willie; "but I'm an American, and can fight like a son-of-a-gun."

"Very well," said Joe; "you shall have a place on the platform by my side."

As the insurgents advanced against the stockade, they opened a tremendous fire. The defenders responded with spirit, and the report of fire-arms became incessant and deafening.

In the midst of the tumult, Stanton and Drysdale came rushing forth from their prison, pale with alarm.

"Captain Lanier," said Stanton, "you are completely surrounded. There is no hope; you must surrender."

"Surrender? Never!" answered Joe.

Stanton produced the white flag he had brought with him, and continued :

“Your death is inevitable, and we will be massacred with you. Run up this white flag !”

He was about to raise the flag above the stockade, when Joe covered him with his revolver.

“Stop !” he shouted. “Every bullet in this weapon belongs to Uncle Sam ; but I’ll spare one to reach the heart of the wretch who tries to wave that signal.”

“It means death at any rate,” cried Drysdale, desperately. “I’ll chance it.”

Snatching the flag from Stanton’s hand, he ran up the steps of the platform to wave it.

Joe sent a bullet crashing through his brain.

Then he turned to Bud Stanton.

“Stanton,” he said, “we both wear the sword of a captain. I have a long account to settle with you. Draw, and defend yourself like a man !”

“Very well,” said Stanton. “Since you will have it so, come on.”

The combat that followed was of short duration.

Before they had been fencing many minutes, Joe found an opening, made a fierce forward thrust, and ran his sword through Stanton's heart.

As Stanton sank to the ground with a groan, Joe sprang to the platform, and took an active part in the defense of the stockade.

In the battle that followed, Willie Live fought like a demon. He seemed to bear a charmed life. The bullets whizzed about him, yet he remained unscratched.

Hatless and coatless he fought, and every time his rifle cracked a Filipino fell.

In a few minutes his face, arms and hands became so black with powder from his own weapons that he might easily have been mistaken for a negro.

Presently Mike Flannigan mounted to the platform, and whispered in Joe Lanier's ear:

"Captain, our ammunition is almost exhausted. What shall we do?"

"Fight the yellow devils with your bayonets," answered Joe.

"And with your fists and teeth, if it comes to that," added Willie Live.

The situation was becoming desperate, when suddenly the ranks of the enemy parted, and they fled in all directions, like an immense flock of frightened birds.

What had caused this sudden panic to fall upon them, in the very moment of victory?

It was the approach of General Anderson with reinforcements.

The gate of the stockade was thrown open to them, and the first one to enter it was Elsie, mounted upon the horse General Lawton had provided.

"Is Captain Lanier here?" she inquired anxiously.

"Yes," answered Mike Flannigan.

"Is he alive?"

"I am," answered Joe, in person.

"Thank God!"

Joe descended quickly from the platform, and helped her dismount.

The next moment the two happy lovers were in each other's arms.

“If I only had my kodak here,” said Willie, with an approving smile, “I’d take a picture of this charming pair, and call it ‘Reunited.’”

THE END.

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