

THE SPOT THAT TOLD BY HEADON HILL "BY A HAIR'S BREADTH"

THE unwonted emotion of excitement had come to flutter the tropic business that is the normal atmosphere of St. Helena. The flabby aggressiveness of the sold fruit on the beach believed that the melonism had arrived, an brisk was their trade with the relays of ragged prisoners, who, after being landed on the transports, waited too briefly before being formed to climb the weary hill to the camp. The soldiers, too, who guarded them had money to spend, though not as much as the beetle-browed Dutch captives, the ebony ladies were quick to notice.

Under the alleged conditions which the echo of war had wrought in their narrow circle, the white residents offered calmness, but the efforts to preserve it were only marked by indifferent success. On the plantations in the interior the heart of many a dreaming maiden had been set throbbing by the influx of officers on guard duty, and even the planters would shake off their sun-baked languor and ride down into sleepy Jamestown when a transport was signaled.

So it was that on a certain cloudless day in June Senator Antonio Alvarez found himself one of a crowd of gaping spectators lined up on either side of the steep track to see the latest batch of prisoners pass. He did not look particularly interested in the new arrivals, nor, indeed, was he, and the fact of his having so disturbed himself may be taken as a tribute to the melodrama of the scene. It would be uncharitable to attribute his presence to a desire to gloat over the misery of Kruger's victims, though such a sentiment would not have been belied by a lurking shade of cruelty in his snarling face. For, as his name betokened, Antonio Alvarez had not the excuse of patriotic fervor like the planters of British blood, who had also been attracted by the signal gun, and from whom he had himself most ardently abstained. Ages back, somewhere about the discovery of the island, his ancestors had come from Portugal, and by always going to the mother land for their wives their successors had contrived to preserve a true sequence of Portuguese descent. It promised, however, to cease with the present holder of the name, since Antonio was the last of his race on the island, and he had shown no disposition to visit Portugal.

The procession of prisoners marshaled into some sort of order by a platoon of British majors, started at last, and the spectators craned their necks. As usual, the Boers were a scratch lot—graybeards and striplings, with a leaven of sterner manhood mostly comprised of foreign adventurers. Each man seemed to have brought as much rubbish as he could carry, and at the point where the beach ended and the hill began oaths in every European language told of the cosmopolitanism of England's enemies.

Senator Alvarez had taken up a position under the lee of the courthouse—just where the steep slope first dragged at the knees of the heavily laden convicts, and the narrow vista of the main street towering upwards gave prospect of worse to come. The head of the tag-rag column had long passed, and already bored, Alvarez was beginning to yawn, when he started, rubbed his eyes, and fixed them in a searching glance at one of the Boers trudging by.

The object of his scrutiny was a man whose age it was impossible to read under the tangled mass of hair that shrouded the unshaven face, though there was a hint of youth in the lithe figure and springy step. The eyes—those unflinching witnesses to the flight of years—were kept steadily downcast as if, in strange contrast to his comrades, their owner felt degraded by his position. Not even when Alvarez coughed significantly in an attempt to gain his attention did the prisoner relax his close study of the dusty road.

"And yet I will swear by all the saints that it is Bert Kennedy," the senator muttered under his carefully waxed moustache. "A fine flash to the young scaperoogie's career. I wonder what my proud neighbor and his prouder daughter will have to say when they hear, as hear they shall, that their son and brother has returned to his native island as the captive foe of his own countrymen."

Alvarez did not wait to see the rest of the column go by, but, slipping out of the crowd, made his way to the foot of Ladder hill, so named from the flight of wooden steps which runs up the sharp ascent, giving a short cut to the uplands of the interior from the ravine skirt town. As he climbed up the steps his brow was knit in thought, and once when nearly at the summit he indulged in soliloquy again—

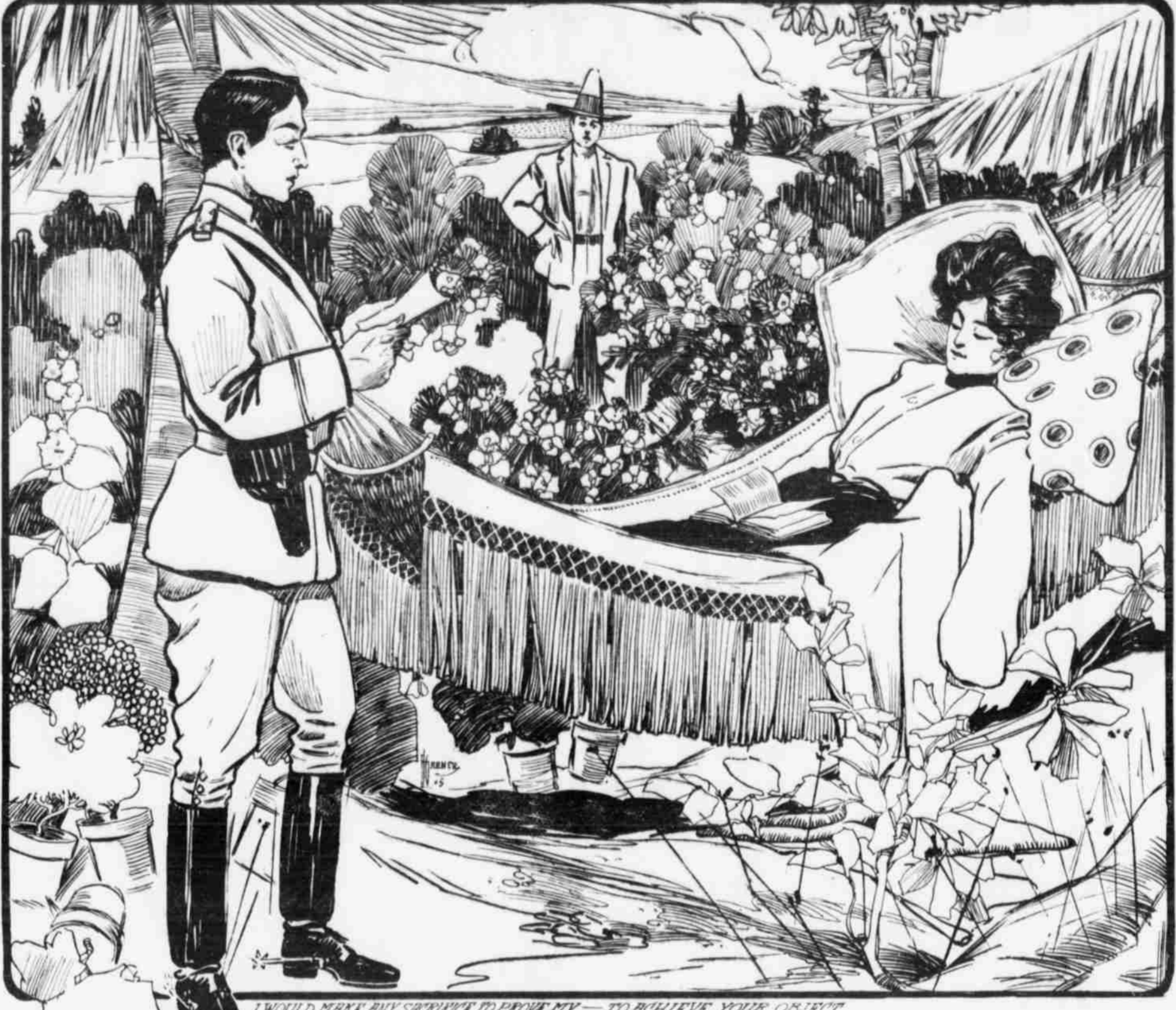
"There should be more in this than mere empty triumph. It should be used to reestablish me with my heart's queen, and for the overthrow of Capt. Angus Holden. Yes, I see my way. With courage and adroitness I may yet snap my fingers at my beef-fod rival."

Arrived at the summit, Alvarez stood for a minute looking down to where the string of closely guarded Boers was winding slowly upwards by the longer route of the rock-hewn "side path." Then, smiling darkly, he turned and struck inland across the plateau towards a country of lush pastures, of luxuriant orchards, and of houses deep hewn in timber shaded gardens. It was to one of the largest of the latter that the senator bent his steps, striding as a man with a purpose that will brook no denial.

In the garden of the house which Alvarez was approaching a girl lay in a hammock slung between two Scotch firs, against one of which leaned a man with a bronzed yet singularly boyish face. The one was Miss Kennedy, only daughter of the wealthiest planter on the island; the other was Capt. Angus Holden of the Fifeshire rifles, who had come from South Africa with the first batch of prisoners. Having been shot in the leg he had been attached temporarily to the battalion on guard duty at St. Helena, so that his tedious might have a better chance of healing than if he had returned to the continent.

Angus Holden had groined at the enforced inaction at first, but that was before he had seen Lulu Kennedy. Now, after six weeks of the lavish colonial hospitality at "White Ladies," and of fathoming the depths of Lulu's blue eyes, he was more than resigned, and blessed the bullet which had given him rest in a paradise where the only serpent was a scowled one—Senator Antonio Alvarez by name. From the trifle of insular gossip that had reached him Holden had the best of reasons for regarding the Portuguese planter as an outcast and beaten rival.

He had further strengthened his position by endeavoring to render Lulu's services in obtaining news of her brother, who had been in South Africa during the Boer war. Mr. Herbert Kennedy, it seemed, had made the island too hot to hold him by his youthful escapades, and had departed to try his luck at Johannesburg, St. Helena having proved too small a place for his prodigious spirits, especially after his father had stopped supplies. Despite his faults,



I WOULD MARK ANY SIGNIFICANCE TO PROVE MY — TO RELIEVE YOUR OBJECT

which by all accounts were numerous and glaring, the young girl's dark well-slit eyes occupied a strong place in his sister's affections. A letter from him, dated a few days before Kruger's ultimatum, had reached her, announcing that he had a prospect of being drawn into the war, which was on the point of breaking out, but not mentioning the corps which he proposed to join. No word had come from him since, and his people could only suppose that he was fighting for the old flag in one of the colonial recruited troops of irregular force.

It so happened that Angus Holden's present call was to inform Miss Kennedy of his failure to obtain release of the senator. He had been reading aloud the letter from an official friend at Cape Town to whom he had addressed his inquiries.

"So I am afraid it is no go," he was saying. "If Melliss cannot trace your brother no one can, for he has access to all the recruiting records. One thing is certain—if your brother is serving under his own name you may rest satisfied that he is all right. Had he been wounded or missing his name would have figured in the returns."

Lulu was an imperious little person, prone to petty tyrannies, and it was a relief to Holden that she took the bad news, or, rather, lack of news, better than he had expected. But that she was bitterly disappointed the droop of her pretty mouth showed plainly.

"You will try again, won't you?" she pleaded. "You see, Bert and I were everything to each other, but boy though he was, he was so brave and reckless that I am fearful that something has happened to him."

"I have never ceased trying, for I have written to Melliss by every mail urging him to pursue the search," Holden replied. And then, prompted by the rush of greatest tears, he added, "I only wish I could do more than sit down and write letters for you, Miss Kennedy. It seems such a lame way of helping, when I would make any sacrifice to prove my—to achieve your object."

Lulu glanced up quickly at him, wondering why he had substituted such a lame ending to the sentence which had promised a watered culmination. The same glance showed her the sufficient reason in the person of Senator Alvarez, who was advancing from a jungle of giant camellias, his darkening face shown up by the waxen blooms. The Portuguese doffed his broad straw hat and made a deprecating gesture which Holden didn't like. It was too servile to be genuine.

"The beggar has got some card up his sleeve, I wonder what it is," the young officer said to himself as he stiffly returned the other's salute.

"I have to apologize most humbly for this intrusion," Alvarez began in the perfect English of which a lifelong residence in a British colony had made him master. "Only an event of the highest importance would have led me to such a breach of good manners. Miss Kennedy, I regret to be the bearer of ill tidings which I would rather die than have to tell you. Yet it is imperative that you should be informed."

Lulu leaped lightly from the hammock and stood facing him eagerly. "There is no one about whom bad news could come to me."

The senator bent his head. "It is of your brother that I would speak," he replied with a solemnity that made Holden long to kick him. "I was at Jamestown when the Boer prisoners were landed today. I regret to say that among them I recognized Mr. Bert Kennedy. He is now being marched with the rest to the camp at Deadwood."

"My brother a Boer prisoner?" cried the girl, shrinking. "There must be some mistake. If you saw him at all he must have been among the escort—not among the prisoners."

"I am sorry, but there is no mistake; this is not such a pleasant errand that I should have undertaken it unless I was quite sure," said Alvarez sadly. "Your brother was unarmed in the ranks of the Boers, carrying his own kit, and dressed in plain clothes. Doubtless he fought with them under compulsion."

Lulu gave her informant a grateful look for that last sop to her pride, though she was by no means sure that it would prove well founded. Bert Kennedy had gone away smarting under many fancied grievances and he was wild enough for anything that mattered little now, since he was in his native island, taken in arms against the flag.

The disgrace would be just the same. They, the Kennedys of "White Ladies," who had always held their heads so high, but of unshrinking loyalty. There might yet be time to stop the scandal if only—had not Angus Holden just spoken of "any sacrifice."

She glanced appealingly at her English admirer—the one whom she admired so much more than the other three named ones who had sprung this bolt on her.

"Capt. Holden," she began nervously, the tremor in her voice proving that she was aware of the magnitude of her request. "You were wishing just now to distinguish yourself in my service, and the chance has come. It would be easy for you to allow my brother to escape on one of the days when it is your turn to command the guard at Deadwood. He could come straight here and no one would suspect us of harboring the runaway—that is, if you alone recognized him, wouldn't you?"

Alvarez, who had been listening with every appearance of sympathy to the appeal, was quick to answer the interpolation. "I am certain that I only, being so familiar with Bert's face, recognized him," he said. "Your brother showed every desire to conceal his identity, and his beard is a good disguise. Miss Lulu's plan seems feasible, sir."

The question, coming from this quarter, cleared the air and lightened Angus Holden's task. It was easier to remind this sallow faced Portuguese that British officers have a code of honor than to fling back Lulu's request direct in her own face.

"On the contrary, I regret that it is quite impossible," he replied firmly, looking at Alvarez rather than at the girl who was hanging on his words with dawning indignation. "It is my duty to keep the prisoners corralled, without favor or affection," as the red book says, and I am sorry—but private considerations cannot weigh in a matter of military discipline."

"In that case," said Lulu deliberately, "the only thing for me to do is to put an end to what you are good enough to call 'private considerations.' Please understand that nothing of the kind is required of you for—the Kennedy family in future, and—O, go away, please, with your private considerations that are of no use to me."

Her voice shook with anger now—not only because her request had been rejected, but because it had been rejected in the presence of a third person, who might have private enjoyment in her defeat. The demeanor of Alvarez was irritatingly correct—he walked a few paces and affected to admire a camelia bloom—but in her then mood she would have preferred that he should have openly espoused her cause by glaring at Holden.

When that unhappy young officer had taken the only course open to him and had made as dignified an exit as was possible, the Portuguese was prompt to appease her rising wrath with himself by explaining his quiescence.

"Pray do not think ill of me for not speaking up boldly to him, my dear Miss Kennedy," he said. "My tongue turned in my mouth to accuse him of false friendship, but I had good reason for preserving a neutral attitude. To have quarreled with Capt. Holden on your behalf would have done me no higher honor, but it would also have put him on his guard. It would have warned him that my active collaboration was at your disposal for obtaining the result which his childish inhumanity would prevent."

"You will aid my brother to escape," said Lulu, eyeing him a little doubtfully. She had been rude to this man in her time and she was afraid that he was going to make conditions. He was much too clever to attempt anything of the sort.

"I am glad to hear that," said Alvarez, "and I am glad to hear that you are so good enough to call 'private considerations.' Please understand that nothing of the kind is required of you for—the Kennedy family in future, and—O, go away, please, with your private considerations that are of no use to me."

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"This is Tuesday; I will promise to have Mr. Bert Kennedy out of Deadwood camp and safe at White Ladies at midnight tomorrow," replied Alvarez with a brave show of confidence. "I only stipulate that in fairness to myself you keep my name out of it in the improbable event of awkward discoveries."

The stipulation was certainly a fair one, and Lulu, who had expected it to be of more vital import, assented readily and even gratefully. Alvarez, however, allowed her thanks, and then proceeded to unfold the plan by which he proposed to secure her brother's escape. His own plantation was close to Deadwood camp, and he anticipated no difficulty in communicating with young Kennedy through one of the fruit sellers, who had a permit to traffic with the prisoners.

That done, the rest should be easy. As a neighboring landed proprietor it would be quite natural for him to offer some small refreshment to the sentries near his own grounds, and then the thing would be as good as done. Of course, it would have been all much simpler if Capt. Holden had lent his help, but they would have to do the best without him, and he, Alvarez, was the only one who could get into trouble over the business—if the authorities were smart enough to connect his hospitality to the sentries with his escape.

Having thus sketched his program, Alvarez made haste to take his leave, for his reward was not even to be hinted at that day. That would come later, in the natural sequence of things when the service, which was to cost him a few bottles of whisky and his rival his commission, had been rendered. For the chance of the amiable senator's scheme was that Bert Kennedy's escape should take place while Capt. Angus Holden was in command of the camp guard and therefore responsible for the safe custody of the prisoners. He had made himself familiar with the duty roster of the officers and knew that Holden's turn was due on the following night.

And the beauty of it is," he told himself as he walked homewards, "that the gallant captain will be the first man to be suspected by the commanding officer of having had a hand in it—after darning about White Ladies for the last six weeks. The only witness on the other side is Lulu, and her lips are sealed, O, yes, as the English say, I win, I win."

A crescent moon hung over the second dome of the "barn," barely relieving the darkness that enshrouded the sleeping prison camp. It wanted an hour of midnight when young Kennedy raised his long limbs from among the snoring Boers who shared his tent and stole through the lines to the barred wire fence that stood between the sons of the veil and a limited liberty.

Arrived at a certain point indicated in a note duly received from Alvarez, he crouched low and reconnoitered the situation—a function which six months' service in the Boer ranks enabled him to perform with the skill of a practiced scout. He had not been at the boundary fence two minutes before he had informed himself that fifty yards away to the right the sentry who should have been patrolling the beat was lying on the ground cuddling his Lee-Metford in a maudlin embrace, while to an equal distance to the left another sentry was in a similar attitude.

At the moment of this discovery a shadow glided from the trees that clustered down the hillside, flitting towards the fence. A whiff of cool sea breeze parted the prisoner's unkempt hair and disclosed a grin on his mobile lips.

"By George, but the beggar is keen," he muttered, and went cautiously to the section of fence which the shadow flung. The shadow, growing rapidly by the way, was the face of the struggling moonbeams into the flesh and blood of the sentry. A whiff of cool sea breeze parted the prisoner's unkempt hair and disclosed a grin on his mobile lips.

"Good, indeed," exclaimed Alvarez, producing a pair of snippers, "then I will have you out of this in no time." He began to cut the wires, but young Kennedy stopped him.

"I shouldn't do that if I were you," he said. "It's waste of time and energy, and besides, you'll give yourself away. I only came down to the boundary fence to thank you for your trouble and to say that I am not coming."

"Not coming?" gasped the astonished Portuguese.

"No, it isn't good enough—because, you see, I am in a fair way to get my release respectively and above board," replied Kennedy. "A good chap, Holden, one of the officers in charge of this show, sought me out yesterday and offered to do anything in reason for me. He knows Lulu, it seems. After he had heard my story of how I had been forced to fight for these dirty Dutchmen, under pain of death, and when I had put him in the way of obtaining proofs of my statement, he said he had no doubt that I should be set free as soon as he could cable to a friend of his at St. Francis Capetown. I never could get any one to listen to me in Africa."

From the other side of the fence Alvarez heard him to the end with lured breath, his dark eyes blazing.

"I know all about Capt. Holden," hissed the senator. "He has told you this because he wants to curry favor with your father. He refused to help in your direct escape, and this is meant to smooth her over. You will find yourself sold if you decline the chance I have made for you."

"Also to curry favor with Lulu, eh, Alvarez?" returned the prisoner with a suggestion of laughter in his whisper.

"No, no, my friend; I know you of old, you see, and I can guess what your father will take as soon as you had the whip hand of us. To place my faith in an English gentleman's word will be better than skulking in hiding at White Ladies, with the risk of bringing a real disgrace on my people. I have no doubt that Lulu will reward my benefactor in the way that he most desires when she hears how good he has been to me. Good night, Alvarez."

He went on his head to return to his tent, followed by a loud oath wrung from the Portuguese at the dashing of his hopes. In the calm quiet of the tropic night the bitter curse struck other ears than those of its object and quickly it came home to roost.

"Halt! Who goes there?" challenged the soberest of the sentries.

FOR OTHER EYES.

How Two Burglars Missed Their Opportunity.

TWO burglars are the heroes, or the rascals, of this romance. Detective headquarters know them as Billy Shaves and Jack. Doubtless, but that has nothing to do with the story.

A short while ago these two determined to pay a night visit to the baggage room of a well known railway company.

Accordingly Shaves laid his plans and one dark, moonless night he and his companion sallied out. Scarcely a soul was abroad. A sharp walk brought them to the door of the baggage office.

Quickly and silently Shaves tried several keys, until the door yielded to his efforts.

Once inside, with the white light of their lanterns illuminating the room, they found themselves surrounded by all manner of baggage. There were big traveling trunks, small and large valises, and a whole host of baskets and tin boxes.

Here, evidently, was something worth looking into. Shaves drew out a large bunch of keys and in a surprisingly short time threw back the lid.

The usual tray met their eyes, covered with flimsy lace and a host of ruffly things. Lifting this out they discovered a number of new and beautiful dresses.

Then one of the burglars drew out a bulky package. Visions of greenbacks floated before their eyes. Filled with this delightful booty they untied the package and glanced carefully through the contents.

The light of lanterns fell on one of the letters, for thus the package proved to be. Shaves scanned the contents. Then he burst into a roar of laughter.

What was this he saw? Why, good gracious, it was a love letter! Next he left out the jacket his companion seized hold of the next letter. Then he, too, shook with laughter.

Famous Horses of Fiction.

EVEN since the time when horses of fire whirled the prophet away into space, the horse has been a favorite theme with poets and story tellers. Even the Olympian deities were not without their equine messengers—the winged steed Pegasus, and the combination of man and horse in those mythical creatures, the Centaurs, was the embodiment of all wisdom and strength.

Whether that famous invention of Ulysses, the wooden horse, which brought about the fall of Troy, can be described as a creature of fiction is still a disputed point. Not only is the authorship of Homer's "Iliad" in doubt according to some, but he declared that it was not written by Homer, but by another fellow of the same name, but even the great poem itself has been voted an allegorical representation of solar and atmospheric phenomena.

"I've stood upon Achilles' tomb And heard Troy doubted: time will doubt of Rome." Thus the poet sings. Let the reader decide for himself. Perhaps the enchanted steed of the "Arabian Nights" has a pretty close relationship to the wooden monster of Ulysses. This curious invention performed aerial flights at an immense speed, and was regulated by the moving of two pegs. It is a modern locomotive. In the "Suite's Tale" of Chaucer the Steed of Brass seems to have been a repetition of the "Arabian Nights" creation.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the experiences of the starry Shalott's day gave the horse no chance in the drama. The pathetic little interview between the imprisoned King Richard II. and a former groom, who tells him of his horse-fairy, seems about the only instance in which Shakespeare throws any interest around a horse, unless it be that fearful compound of disease and bestiality by Petruccio on his wedding day. Almost contemporary with Shakespeare, Cervantes wrote his great romance, the fame of which in some degree rests on the bony steed Rosinante.

But it is in the present day romances and poetry that the horse really appears in his beauty and intelligence and affection. How far the story of Black Beauty is false and how much reality would be difficult to decide; but that some of the halo of romance rests upon this wonderful creature that bore Dick Turpin on his great ride from London to York is certain, and if Harrison Ainsworth has drawn on his imagination in his romance "Rookwood" in telling of this great feat the human interest is in no way diminished.

REAL FRIENDSHIP.

How a Dog Saved a Cat's Life.

SOME of their friends called them Robin Hood and Little John, others David and Jonathan. In this story, however, it is a dog and a cat. Bruno, a black and white dog, was a Newfoundlander, and Pompey, a mager Persian cat, with pink nose and white front.

When Bruno first met Pompey, Pompey snarled, but Bruno was such a good natured little chap they soon made friends. From then their friendship increased. Pompey, as befitted the dignity of such a cat, took particular care to show Bruno which was master.

So the days went on. Bruno grew into a great big, handsome fellow, and Pompey became quite proud of him. One October day, after a whole week of heavy rain, Bruno and Pompey were rambling about on the lawn. Behind the trees, at the farther end of the garden, the river flowed past in a muddy, swirling torrent. Long rains had changed it into a vast lake, and for miles around the fields lay below the flood.

On the bank, hanging over the river, grew an old willow tree. Up this Pompey loved to climb; and today, after being kept indoors so long by the rain, puss could not resist the temptation.

Away he bounded from the surprised Bruno, scaling the tree in a twinkling. At that moment a sparrow alighted quite close to him.

Pompey could never resist a sparrow, and with one twittering not four feet away on a slender branch—well, Pompey made a pounce.

To give Pompey his due, it was not entirely his own fault that he toppled over. What can any cat do when the twigs to which he is clinging break off? But Pompey did the only possible thing—he fell.

Down he went, and turning many somersaults, dropped with a splash right into the muddy water.

Cold and bedraggled the terrified cat did his best to reach the shore; but he could make no headway against the current that was fast carrying him toward the water mill.

Just then something happened. A great, brown head poked its way through the bushes. Its troubled eyes anxiously scanned the stream; then, with a quick bark and a bound, the shaggy body plunged into the river.

Panting hard, it moved swiftly toward the struggling cat. The great red mouth opened, and gently but firmly Bruno had seized the half-drowned Pompey.

And now commenced a battle royal—the great Newfoundlander dog against the swift current. Slowly Bruno forged toward the shore. Sometimes it seemed that the water must succeed and sweep both friends to death.

At last the dog triumphed, and springing to the shore gently laid his drenched comrade on the bank, little the worse for the adventure.