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bought in the estate because he was a relative of the ancient and ruined family.

Well, it was the way of the world, and perhaps it must be so; but the thought of it made Alan Vernon sad. If he could have continued that business it might have been otherwise. By this hour his late partners, Sir Robert Aylward and Mr. Champers-Haswell, were doubtless sitting in their granite office in the city, prob-ably in consultation with Lord Specton, who had taken his place upon the board of the great company which was being subscribed that day. With a sigh he turned away to fetch his cap and go out walking-there was a tenant whom he must see, a shifty, newfangled kind of man, who was always clamouring for fresh buildings and reductions in his rent. How was he to pay for more buildings? He must put him off or let him go.

Just then a sharp sound caught his ear, that of an electric bell. It came from the telephone, which since he had been a member of a city firm he had caused to be put into Yarleys at considerable expense in order that he might be able to communicate with the office in London. Were they calling him up from force of habit? he wondered.

"Who is it?" he asked. "I am Yar-

leys. Alan Vernon."

"And I am Barbara," came the answer. "How are you, dear? Did you sleep well?"

No, very badly."

"Nerves - Alan, you have got nerves. Now, although I had a worse day than you did, I went to bed at nine, and, protected by a perfect conscience, I slumbered till nine this morning, exactly twelve hours. Isn't it clever of me to think of this tele phone, which is more than you would ever have done. My uncle has departed to London vowing that no let-ter from you shall enter this house, but he forgot that there is a telephone in every room, and, in fact, at this moment I am speaking round by his office within a yard or two of his head. However, he can't hear, so that doesn't matter. My blessing be on the man who invented telephones, which hitherto I have always thought an awful nuisance. Are you feeling cheerful, Alan?"

"Very much the reverse," he answered, "never was more gloomy in my life, not even when I thought I had to die within six hours of black water fever. Also I have lots that I want to talk about, and I can't do it at the end of this confounded wire that your uncle may be tapping.

"I thought it might be so," answered Barbara, "so I just rang you up to wish you good morning, and to say that I am coming over in the motor to lunch, with my maid Snell as chaperone. All right, don't remonstrate, I am coming over to lunch—I can't hear you—never mind what I can't hear you-never mind what people will say. I am coming over to lunch at one o'clock; mind you are in. Good-bye, I don't want much to eat, but have something for Snell and

the chauffeur. Good-bye."

Then the wire went dead, nor could all Alan's "Hello's" and "Are you there's?" extract another syllable.

Having ordered the best luncheon that his old housekeeper could provide, Alan went off for his walk in much better spirits, which were further improved by his success in persuading the tenant to do without the new building for another year. In a year, he reflected, anything might happen. Then he returned by the wood, where a number of new-felled cold law ready for barking. This was oak lay ready for barking. This was not a cheerful sight; it seemed so cruel to kill the great trees just as they were pushing their buds for another summer of life. But he consoled himself by recalling that they had been too crowded, and that the

timber was really needed on the estate. As he reached the house again, carrying a bunch of white violets, which he had plucked in a sheltered place, for Barbara, he perceived a motor travelling at much more than the legal speed up the walnut avenue, which was the pride of the place, and in it that young lady herself and her maid, Snell, a middle-aged woman, with whom, as it chanced, he was on very good terms, as once, at some trouble to himself, he had been able

to do her a kindness.

The motor pulled up at the front door, and out of it sprang Barbara,

laughing pleasantly and looking fresh and charming as the spring itself.

"There will be a row over this, dear," said Alan, shaking his head doubtfully when at last they were alone together in the hall.

"Of course there'll be a row," she answered. "I mean that there should be a row. I mean to have a row every day, if necessary, until they leave me alone to follow my own road, and if they won't, as I said, to go to the Court of Chancery for protection. Oh! by the way, I have brought you a copy of 'The Judge.' There's a awful article in it about that Sahara flotation, and among other things it announces that you have left the firm, and congratulates you upon having done so.

"They'll think I have put it in, groaned Alan, as he glanced at the head lines, which were almost libellous in their vigour, and the summaries of the financial careers of Sir Robert Aylward and Mr. Champers-Has-well. "I must not stay here, I must go away, the further the better, until are your own mistress.

"Where to, Alan?"
"To West Africa, I think."
"To West Africa?" repeated Bar-

bara, her voice trembling a little. "After that treasure, Alan?"
"Yes, Barbara. But first come and have your lunch, then we will talk." I have got lots to tell and show you.'

So they lunched, speaking of in-different things, for the servant was there waiting on them. Just as they were finishing their meal Jeeki entered the room carrying a box, and a large envelope addressed to his master, which he said had been sent down by special messenger from the office in London.

"What's in the box?" asked Alan, looking somewhat nervously at the envelope, which was addressed in a writing that he knew.

"Don't know for certain, Major," answered Jeeki, "but think Little Bonsa, think I smell her through wood. Little Bonsa always have sweet smell."

"Well, look and see," replied Alan, while he broke the seal of the envelope and drew out its contents. They proved to be sundry documents sent by the firm's lawyers, among which were a notice of the formal dissolution of partnership to be approved by him before it appeared in the "Gazette," a second notice calling in a mortgage for fifteen thousand and odd pounds on Yarleys, which, as a matter of business had been taken over by the firm while he was a partner; a cash account showing a small balance against him, and finally a receipt for him to sign acknowledging the return of the gold image that was his property.
"You see," said Alan with a sigh,

pushing over the papers to Barbara,

pushing over the papers to Barbara, who read them carefully one by one. "I see," she answered presently. "It is war to the knife. Alan, I hate the idea of it, but perhaps you had better go away. While you are here they will harass the life out of you."

Meanwhile, with the aid of a big is the life on the dining room poker.

jack-knife and the dining-room poker Jeeki had pried off the lid of the box. Chancing to look round Barbara saw him on his knees muttering something



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