

The Rock-Hewn City of Petra

BY HAROLD J. SHEPSTONE

UNIQUE among the many wonders of the Orient and the remains of hoary civilizations stands Petra, the rock-hewn city, the city so graphically addressed by the prophet as "Thou that dwellest in the depths of the rock, whose habitation is high" (Obad. 3), and referred to in the challenge of the Psalmist (60:9): "Who will bring me into the strong city. Who will lead me into Edom?" It lies on the northwest edge of the great Arabian desert, about midway between the Gulf of Akabah and the Dead Sea. Other ruins, such as Palmyra and Baalbec, show crumbling piles of magnificent architectural monuments, but in Petra, high up among the mountain crags that sentinel it, are temples, theatres, tombs, and other structures, strong and indestructible, standing almost as perfect as when they were chiseled out of the living rock of which they still form a part.

These ruins (if ruins they may be called) challenge admiration by the variety of styles they embody, showing, in the most ancient creations, early native art intermixed with Egyptian, and in the later Roman architecture, and by the exquisite hues of the sandstone from which they were hewn, varying from the prevailing pinkish-tan of the mountains and cliffs to the delicate pink and rose color of some strata, and the white, crimson, yellow and blue-ribboned veins in other places, rivaling the softness of the plumage of birds or the petals of flowers.

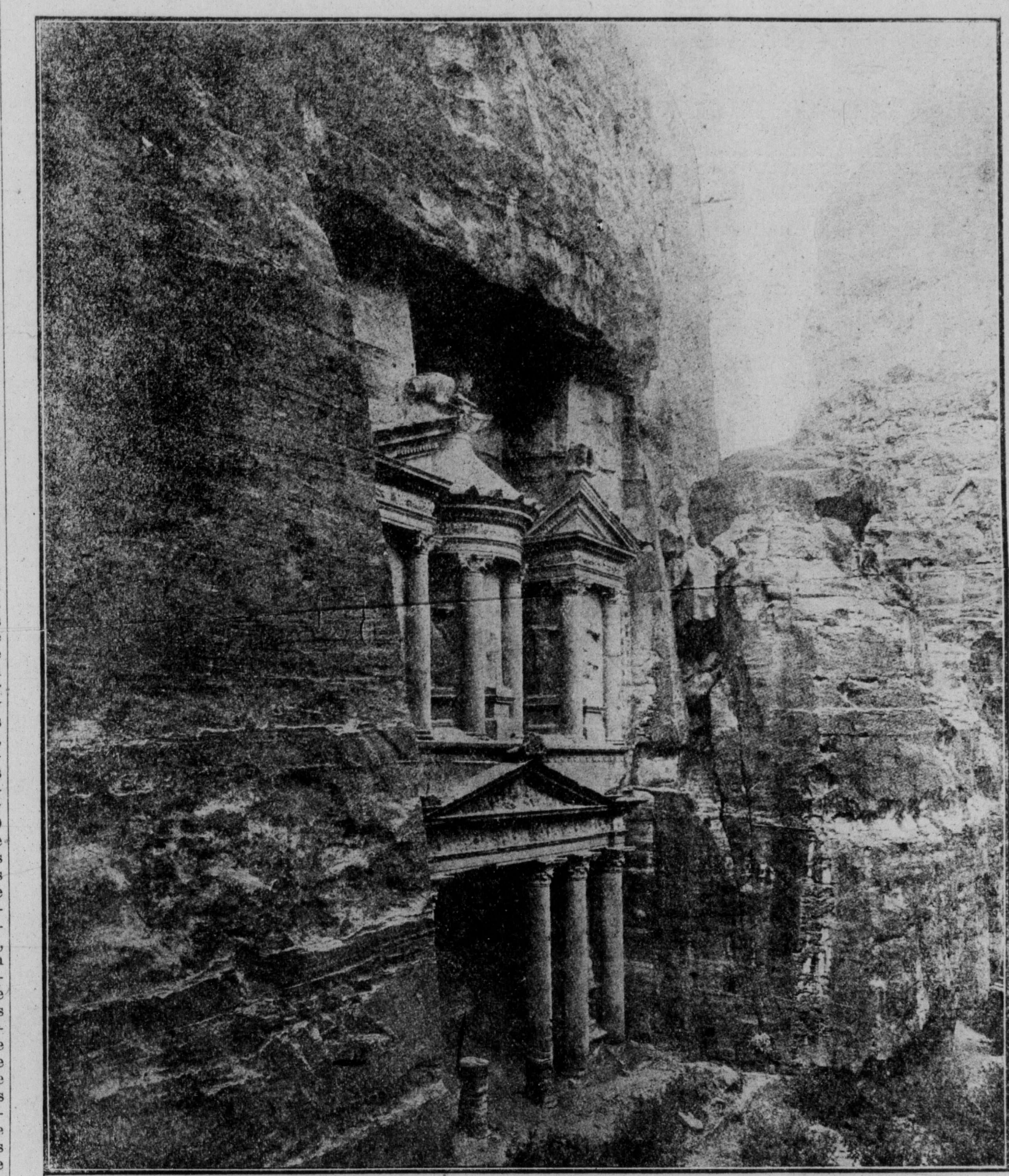
Petra, so long inaccessible because of its remoteness and the danger from roving Bedouins, may now be reached by a six hours' ride westward toward the Arabah from El Maan, a station on the Mecca railroad. Prof. Gustaf Dalman, director of the German Archaeological School of Jerusalem and the author of a monumental work on Petra, has just paid another visit to this scene of his former explorations, in which he was accompanied by photographers of the American colony in Jerusalem, who secured a number of photographs of those majestic ruins, some of the most striking of which were here reproduced for our readers.

Petra, nestling amid its precipices and cliffs almost in the shadow of Mount Hor, called by the natives Jebel Harun (Aaron) from the tradition that it was here on the top of the mountain that Aaron died, is approachable only from the east through a deep and narrow defile which the little stream of the Wady Musa has in past ages cut for itself in the red sandstone. The gorge opens in one place to about two miles in width for a distance of about a mile, and here, protected by mountains and precipices on every side, this remarkable town lay secure from attack from without. It was its impregnable position and its being on the great caravan route to the Red Sea from the north that gave it the importance it had as a trade depot and stopping place. The approach was beneath a grand arched portal at the mouth of the Sik (as the deep ravine is called), some remains of the portal being still visible. It takes half an hour to follow the windings of the narrow path along the dark ravine, which is only from ten to twenty feet wide, threading the course of the olivander, fringed stream bed until one emerges into the small open valley. The variegated sandstone rocks rise precipitously on either side to the height of from 100 to 165 feet, almost shutting out the light of day. One of our views shows the entrance to the Sik. Another is taken about twenty minutes in from the opening, giving a good idea of the narrowness of the defile and the precipitousness of the rock walls, while beyond, where the gorge widens a little, are seen the sculptured columns of the magnificent so-called Khaznet el Farion (the Treasury of Pharaoh), although it is one of the latest of the rock-hewn monuments of Petra, being attributed to the Emperor Hadrian, who visited the place in A. D. 131 and erected here a temple to Isis. Another photograph shows this imposing structure, which is justly regarded as one of the wonders of the East. The rock wall from which it is hewn is here in exquisite rose pink. The imposing facade shows two rows of six majestic columns, one row above the other, with niches in which are rock-hewn equestrian and other statues, the whole terminating above in a miniature temple crowned by a huge urn, the entire height being about 65 feet. Within is a bare lofty room and some chambers. A short distance beyond one emerges into the mountain-girded valley in which the city lay, mounds of debris marking the sites of the fortifications of the Persians, the population in the city's palm days being estimated at from forty to eighty thousand souls. The rock-hewn structures chiseled in the precipitous cliffs on every side, public buildings and tombs rather than dwellings. Just on the left, as the valley is entered, is the vast rock-cut theatre in semi-circular form, capable of holding 3,000 spectators. Here the workmanship is Greek. There are thirty-three tiers of seats. In this locality are some of the oldest tombs, including detached pylons. Many of the oldest tombs were cut away when the theatre was hewn out of the mountain side. Standing in this small open valley one sees the facades of tombs and temples of many styles and dimensions, with many niches for votive offerings. They are at all elevations, many low down on the mountain side, and others high up in the cliffs, with stairways cut in the rock to reach them. While most of them stand out conspicuously, others are hidden in the mountain recesses and lateral valleys. How eloquent are these silent pylons and obelisks of Edom and Egypt, and these columns and capitals of Greece and Rome! What diverse peoples these tombs have looked down upon when living, and given sepulture to when dead. And how many different religions have been represented by ministering priests at these shrines!

On the opposite side of the valley to the west stand the remains of a masonry edifice called by the natives Kasr Farion (the Castle of Pharaoh). It was a Roman heathen temple. Behind the Kasr Farion, a rock-cut staircase leads up the rugged hill of the Acropolis to the Place of Sacrifice, with its altars, pool, and court, all hewn out of the living rock. This was a typical holy place, or "high place," of the

primitive peoples of the land. These "high places" were the subjects of many warnings to the children of Israel. There are other high places in the vicinity of Petra. Still another interesting ruin is of the so-called Ed-Deir (the convent), and is reached by an hour's hard climbing along the ravines and up rock-hewn staircases, to the northwest of Kasr Farion. Passing the striking Tomb of the Lions, we reach at last the high plateau on which stands Ed-Deir. It is nearly 150 feet long and almost as high, being similar to the Khazneh, having its double rows of six columns each, but widened by corner-pilasters on both sides and on both storeys. On this plateau there are several places of sacrifice and a fine view of Mount Hor to the southwest.

The early history of Petra is hidden in the mists of remote antiquity. It was probably the capital of Edom. Its first mention is in sacred history in II Kings, 14:7, which records its conquest by Amman in the ninth century B.C. From Is. 16:1, we learn that it was then, about 700 B.C., held by Moab. It is evidently referred to in several prophetic denunciations whose fulfillment has been most literal. About 300 B.C. it had come into possession of the warlike Nabataeans, descendants of Nebath, the eldest son of Ishmael, who made it for their capital, and it was known to the Greeks as Petra. Strabo,



EL KHAZNEH EL FARION (THE TREASURY OF PHARAOH) PETRA

This is in some respects the most remarkable of the beautiful temples and tombs of Petra, the rock-hewn capital of Edom, and later of the Nabataeans whose king Aretas mentioned in 2 Cor. 11:32, extended his conquests as far as Damascus. This monument of antiquity is thought to be the work of the Romans, being attributed by some to the Emperor Hadrian who visited the place in A.D. 131. The work of the sandstone rock from which this vast monolith was cut is a delicate rose pink. The imposing facade shows two rows each of six majestic columns. It terminates in a miniature temple crowned by a huge urn said to contain treasures of Pharaoh. The angle at which the photograph was taken well shows how the temple was cut from the rock.

The Greek traveler and historian, describes it at the end of the last century B.C., as also did Pliny, the Roman writer, in the first century of our era. In A.D. 60, Aretas IV, King of Petra, had extended his conquests to Damascus and is referred to by St. Paul in II Cor. 11:32. In 105 A.D., in the reign of Trajan, it passed under Roman rule. Ecclesiastical historians in about the fourth century mention it as a Christian metropolis. It continued populous and prosperous as a trade depot until about the beginning of the fourth century, when the caravan routes from the north, which had for so many centuries led past its arched portal to the Red Sea, were diverted to the Persian Gulf. After this it rapidly declined, and it is not heard of again until about A.D. 536. Even its very existence and site were forgotten, until it was visited and identified by Setzen in 1807, and explored and described by Burckhardt in 1812. The latter gaining access to it, as he also did Mecca, in the disguise of a Moslem pilgrim.

A KNAVE OF HEART

(By Bourdon Wilson)

LAST turn, boys! Four for one, if you call it. The tapering fingers of "Gentleman" George came to rest upon the nicked deal-box between his hands as he made this announcement, and his eyes went inquiringly to the faces of the two players seated at one end of the table. "Say, Hank, what's happened to old Alabam, you reckon?" he went on in the next breath. "He hasn't been around for two or three weeks. Must be sick or somethin'; I never knew him to pass up faro that long before."

His tone evinced but little interest in the subject of his inquiry; his manner was that of one who, inspired in a moment of idleness by a bit of idle curiosity, asks an inconsequential question. The scene was one of somnolent restfulness, wherein a mere handful of men sprawled in their chairs, some dozing, some sound asleep. Only the low hum of voices coming from the little group at the faro table, broken at long intervals by a clinking of glasses at the bar, and the lazy intermittent whirr of the roulette wheel, arose in evidence that any remained awake.

"Reckon the old fellow isn't dead, is he?" George concluded.

"I reckon he ain't," responded Hank, in the tone of one who knew. His wife is sick; that's all. Apparently satisfied, George turned back to the game and drew two cards from the box, took a bet of one of the players, who had lost in the turn, and paid one belonging to the other.

"I knew it must be sickness or death," he answered. "He's a shore enough faro-fend, if there ever was one; it's the first time in ten years that he's failed to come in and drop some of his weak pay."

"He ain't the only one," Hank objected, as George fluttered the cards. "You bet he ain't," one of the players agreed. "Gamblin' shore does get a holt that-a-way on lots o' men."

"I shore does," the other player put in, with rueful emphasis. "Specially faro! Me! I'd rather play faro than eat, spite o' me knowin' what little chance a feller has to beat the game; I just go on playin', all the time hopin' I'm goin' to beat it."

"That's what feeds us gamblers," the case-keeper whimsically joined in. "What is it the poet says about hope springin' eternal in the human breast? If it wasn't for that, we'd have to turn

to bet his money, just pikes it off; if he had nerve enough he might make a killin' some time."

"With you dealin' to him?" one of the players gleamed, in good humor. "It's more than I've ever done, and I get my money out to a fare-you-well."

"Alabam is all right, if he does fool his money away," the case-keeper hastened to intervene. "The're heap worse men than him."

"Yes, you bet there are!" Hank heartily agreed. "He's his own worst enemy, every rattle out of the box. If he is a fool that-a-way, he's got a heart in the right place. My wife says it makes her want to cry every time she sees him and his wife together, they think such a lot of one another; she says it's the saddest thing she ever saw."

"Last turn, boys; four for one if you call it," George mechanically reminded the players. "Does he know she's goin' to die?" he asked Hank over his shoulder.

But the latter waited, reserving his answer till George had made the turn and settled with the players. "Yes, he knows it," he said then, as George began shuffling the cards for another deal, "though you wouldn't think so, my wife says, from the cheerful front he puts up. She says she knows his heart is just breakin', the way he looks when his wife can't see his face. But he's bright as a cricket with her, all the time jollyin' her up, and talkin' about the trip they're plannin' to take back to her old home in Alabama when she gets well. That's what I call the real article in the way of nerve; it ain't every man that can put up such a bluff as that. I know I couldn't, if it was my wife, and I can bet a whole month's pay on the turn of the card without battin' an eye, win or lose."

"Gamblin' nerve ain't the only kind

merely a bit of that worthless detsam of the frontier which drifted and eddied about the saloons and gambling tables as moths about the candle. But a close observer would have seen also an air of refinement which marked him as of a different origin from the others in the place.

"Hello, 'Alabam!" Hank cheerily greeted him, as he came to a stand beside his chair. "Your wife any better today?"

He made no answer, seeming not to have heard; his face was filled with a look of dazed incomprehension.

"Your wife any better today?" Hank repeated his question, reaching out and taking him by the arm.

"No," he now absently responded. "She is no better."

Then a spasm of pain shot across his face, as he dropped quivering into his chair by the table. "Why, Hank, have n't you heard? She is dead!" he quavered, his voice breaking piteously, in spite of the effort he made to hold it down. "Oh, my God, what am I to do without her! Hank, she was all the world to me; she was all that I had to live for; I wish I could die, too."

"Oh, you mustn't feel that-a-way, old pardner," Hank responded, his voice coming deep and tremulous with sympathy, as he leaned forward and laid a hand upon his shoulder. "You have lots o' friends to live for; that's somethin'."

A mist of tears swept into Alabam's faded blue eyes, and his mouth quivered with emotion; all his barriers of reserve went down beneath Hank's compassionate air. Alabam, an hour ago, he sobbed, "And Hank, she knew me right to the end, he hastened on, his tone one of mingled grief and joy. "She was talking to me when the end came; poor little wife, she knew she was dyin'!"

"Johnny, dear husband," she said at the last, 'the good Lord has called me to leave you now, and I must go; I have been happy with you, Johnny; you have been a good husband to me, you have done the best you could. There is one thing more that I want you to do for me; I want you to take me back to dear old Alabama; I want to be laid to rest under a tree in the little family burying-ground by my mother, where you and I used to wander in our happy sweetheart days. Will you promise to do it, Johnny?' Oh, Hank, what could I say?"

"You promised her, of course," Hank interrupted. Tears started afresh from Alabam's eyes. "Yes, I did," he sobbed. "Hank, I would have promised her anything in the world! I just had time to say the words when death came, and the smile it brought to her dear face is there yet. But, Hank, I couldn't see how I was going to keep my promise. I knew it would cost a lot of money to take her, and all I had in the world was five dollars. It nearly drove me crazy, Hank, but kneeling there by her side, holding her poor dead hand in mine, I prayed the good Lord to help me—Yes, I did, Hank; the first prayer I've prayed in many a year; I prayed with all the fervor of my being, and the Lord answered me, plainly as I am talking to you now. He told me to come down here and win the money playing faro; and that is why I have come."

George moved uneasily in his chair, and a muttered oath escaped his lips; his feeling was that of the devil upon whom holy water has been sprinkled. The case-keeper and the two players sat staring at Alabam in silent, open-mouthed wonder.

"No, no, old pardner, you mustn't do any gambin' now!" the dealer objected, his voice coming in husky croaks. "You keep the money. You've been buckin' this game for ten years, and you've never quit winner yet; you can't win."

"Oh, yes I can—now!" Alabam exclaimed, his face lighting up with the glow of faith. "I know I never have won; as you say, I've backed this game ever since I came to Arizona, hoping some day to make a winning big enough to take to take her to Europe, where there are doctors who could have cured her, but I never once thought to ask the Lord to help me. I've done that now, though, and He has told me that I shall win. Why, Hank, I couldn't lose now, if I were to try."

George's eyes met Hank's for an instant, and he significantly tapped his forehead. Hastily scrambling down from his seat, Hank placed his arm around the old man's shoulder. "Come, I know me, and go home, Alabam," he said in gentle command. "You don't have to gamble to get the money you need; the Lord didn't mean it that-a-way. He meant that I was goin' to pass the hat around amongst the boys tonight. That's what I am goin' to do; I'll raise all you'll need. Come on, now, and go back home."

"No, no, Hank; I can't take that kind of money!" Alabam hastily refused. "I can't exceed charity; you ought to know me better than that. She wouldn't let me do it, if she were here to say. Poor little wife! She and I have had some mighty hard times since we married, Hank, but I've never been a money maker, but we've never yet taken a cent of charity, and I know she wouldn't let me begin it now."

"Oh, say! That's all d—d foolishness!" Hank growled from deep down in his throat. "Of course you can take it, you can take anything the boys want to give you; you've staked many a one of them in your time; it won't be charity, comin' from them."

But Alabam shook his head. "No," he persisted, "she wouldn't let me take it, Hank, and that settles it. I am not going to do anything now that she wouldn't let me do if she were still with me."

"But you don't know what she'd let you do," Hank objected. "Look a little, old fellow, you ain't yourself to-day; you're all wrought up and shot to pieces by what's happened; you ain't fit to do any gambin', or anything else. Get up, just come on and go back home and stay with your wife; I'll lend you the money out of my own pocket, if that'll make you feel any better about takin' it. You can give me your note for it."

"Now, Hank, you can't fool me that way!" Alabam half angrily rejoined. "My note wouldn't be worth anything, and you know it; I never would be able to pay it. I'm going to win the money; the good Lord is going to let me win; He has told me so. You are trying to bar me from the game, just because I've told you about it; and after I've played here ten years, all the time losin', Hank, is that the kind of a tin-horn gambler

you are? I wouldn't have thought it of you!"

Hank gazed at George in despair; he was at his wit's end. "Why not let him play?" George leaned forward to whisper. "Let him lose his five dollars, and then you'll be able to handle him."

"Better than that," Hank whispered back, his face brightening with a new idea. "You change places with me, and let me deal to him."

"All right, old fellow," he went on, turning a smiling face to Alabam; "reckon we'll have to let you try us a while, you are so set on it. We ain't goin' to bar out an old-timer like you—not much. Get your money out; I'm goin' to deal to you myself."

"You boys are barred, till the old man gets through playin'," he whispered to two players, as he walked around to the dealer's seat.

"What for?" one of them sullenly demanded. "What's the matter with my money? It's as good as his'n, I reckon."

Hank's eyes flashed wickedly, and his hand dropped to the butt of the revolver lying in the open drawer beneath the table. "You heard my talk!" he snapped, fixing the other with an unwavering gaze. "You are barred till I say when. Now shut up, or get out."

An ugly blue barrel darted up beside the dealer's box, at sight of which the other promptly subsided.

Alabam shook and quivered as with palsy, as he drew his lone gold coin from his pocket. "On the high card!" he quavered, tossing it upon the table. "Put it where it will get quick action; I can't lose."

George, now perched in the lookout's seat, suppressed a smile as his watchful eyes detected Hank steal a peep at the cards in the box; a queen was in position to lose; a four to win, which meant disaster to Alabam. Then, swifter than light, Hank's supple fingers moved, and a miracle was performed; instead of the queen, the four was drawn swiftly from the box, leaving the queen to be the winning card.

"What did I tell you?" Alabam crowed. "I knew the Lord was with me! I knew I would win! Let it all go as it lies." His teeth were chattering with the excitement of it.

Again Hank drew cards from the box, and again Alabam won. And again and again, the stake each time doubling, and at last growing into a heap of gold so large as to arrest the attention of the proprietor. In answer to his frown of angry inquiry, Hank beckoned to him.

"It's all right," he whispered in his ear; "I know what I'm doin'. Charge it up to me, all that he wins."

And his employer, bewildered but mollified, passed on.

Alabam's excitement had increased in proportion with his winnings; though his heart was pounding the blood into his ears with a roar that deafened him, his face was ghastly white, and twitching and jerking in spasmodic uncontrol. He had slipped low down in his chair, his chin sunk on his breast; his brain was fast clouding. One glance from a physician, and he would have been pronounced on the verge of collapse.

"Oh, Lord, don't go back on me now," he prayed, his words coming mumbled and scarcely audible. "Give me just one more turn, Lord, and I will have enough. It is not for myself that I want the money; it is for the dear wife who have taken from me. Dear Lord, let me win—just—one—more—turn."

His voice died away in a broken whisper. Through his fast glazing eyes he saw Hank swiftly draw a card from the box, saw him reach into the drawer and again double the heap of gold on the table, then he slid limply from his chair to the floor.

"Heart failure! Too much excitement!" announced the hastily summoned man of medicine. "I can't do anything, boys; he's dead."

Hank was gazing gloomily at George. "I reckon that puts it up to me to take a trip to Alabama," he frowned. "I can't afford to lose the time either."

THE DREAMER

Scorn not the dreamer, ye who strive In busy marts the goal to win; By other ways shall he arrive, And other gates shall enter in.

In touch with nature's mysteries, His is the heart that understands; To paint the picture that he sees His are the artist's skillful hands.

Like that far dreamer of Judea, Who, true of heart and wise of brain, Was made Egyptian Pharaoh's seer And saved the King's domain.

Up from the River crept the lean, Long years across the desert sand; Behold, the Dreamer rose serene—And fed the famished land!

So to the Seer the power is given, And time fulfills the vision dim; The Sun and Moon and Stars eleven Bow down and worship him! —M. E. Buhler, in Outlook Magazine.

THE REPORTER'S ENVOY

When earth's last paper is printed, and the forms and the metal are cold, When the newest scandal is ancient, and the latest extra is sold, We shall loaf—and, Lord, how we need it!—with nothing at all to do.

Till the boss of the perfect paper shall call us to work anew. And then we shall work as we'd like to, each on his own machine; And the truth shall be in our copy and nothing shall intervene;

We shall write real stories about them—beggar and millionaire—For an editor keen and fearless, a paper that's on the square. We shall work in a rush and a hurry, for that is the goodly game; But we shall not dig in the gutter for stories of filth and shame;

And the copy-readers above us shall leave our "features" alone, And the stories that fill the columns we shall recognize as our own!

We shall have no fool assignments, no cruel missions of pain; To torture the broken-hearted or blacken the sinner's stain; We shall scoop and be scooped a-plenty, call us to work anew.

We shall fight with the flurry and noise, We shall fight with the business office and fuss with the copy-boys; But each of us shall be human, and each of us shall be free To write the thing as he sees it for the Paper That Ought to Be.