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Nothing is more fascinating than a mystery. No mystery could be more mysterious than

"TRACING THE SHADOW"

BY CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "Vicky Van," etc.

BEGINNING NEXT WEEK

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 250 Broadway, New York, and Temple House, Temple Avenue, E. C., London
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Squaring Oblong

by Paul Steele



SOME scientists place the age of the world at twenty million years. Others argue it has existed for three hundred and seventy million years.

This dispute between *savants* proves only how "much" we have learned — during either period.

Anyway, it is clear that the year 1,000,000 B.C. was a comparatively modern one. Man looked like a Bolshevik, even then. However, he was beginning to grow a head. In this he was superior to a Bolshevik.

Originally an arboreal animal, he had been obliged to leave the trees because they began to leave him. He had learned to walk upon his hind legs, to develop the gracility of the Grecian bend.

Dame Nature, busy in her laboratory, had continued to separate wheat from chaff; geological, botanically, zoologically.

She pressed a button; the western half of the North American continent popped above the Pacific waves. She began to "can" the mastodon and the mammoth. She started to eliminate all reptiles over a mile long.

She surveyed the insect, man, under a microscope. For some occult reason she let him stay and started to specialize on him.

Yet he has worried her more than all her other work lumped together!

"Ugh, whee! Gobble, gobble — siss, boom, awww!"

It has been found that the vocabulary of a hen holds twenty sounds. *Pithecantropus*

erectus, as the primordial lady Ugrewamba has since been dubbed by science, could loose many more tones than these.

Her tones were peevish. For this was reason. When Oblongata had won her by braining Oysterhead and sending a dozen other rivals to the hospital, he had made nuptial vows to keep her in thickness and in stealth. The prize, once gained, had lost its value in his eyes. Ugrewamba was a neglected wife.

Only echoes answered her calls for him, voiced on this gorgeous spring afternoon from the doorway of her cave in Greenwich Village, Manhattan.

Except for the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet Ugrewamba was enveloped in brown fur. A coiffure of spiraling orange and black hair surmounted her round head. Beady eyes glittered from under beetling brows. A tiny *retroussé* nose questioned the blue sky. A long upper lip writhed over big, sparkling teeth.

Her face was framed in Galways and chinchillas of various mottled hues. The tips of large apelike ears showed under her hair. Furry arms swung by her sides, her finger-tips hanging below her sturdy knees.

She was slightly bandy-legged. Nor, in this respect, has her lovely sex *wholly* changed since then, as revealed on Broadway by the short skirts of 1919—er—

However:

Such was Ugrewamba, recognized belle and Venus of her day.

Angrily she redoubled her outcries. Her gaze wandered toward the heights of Har-

lem. It turned straight ahead, over ravines and kloofs, past patches of scrub to a stretch that would be christened one day Central Park.

Here were clumps of acacia, stretches of dry steppe grasses. There showed lovely flowers refreshed by a shower that morning. The woman's look swerved to a glint of the Hudson, bordered by giant alders, celtis and willows. There, too, were clumps of laurel, laburnum, lilac, and strawberry trees.

A group of near-by cave-women, sitting gossiping, glanced with concern toward the vociferous Ugrewamba. They knew the reason for her wo; it was one of those neighborhood subjects.

"What's the matter, mama?"

Ugrewamba turned and glanced downward. Her loving hand stroked the flaxen curly head of her little twelve-year old daughter, who had come a running from her play. A wistful, childish face, tanned and fringed with embryonic pinkish whiskers, stared up into hers.

She replied to her daughter's question, her voice grown harsh with resentment.

"We're out of everything, Pawlyanna, and you know your old bum of a father promised to make good to-day—"

"Don't call him an old bum, mama!" There was pain in the child's piping squeal. "Remember, he's my father!"

"All right, chicky. Oh, deary, if it were not for you, I'd—I'd *snuff coke!*"

Her voice broke huskily. Bitter tears rained down her cheeks into her beard as she squatted and drew her child to her bosom.

"Don't cry any more!" implored the little girl. "You're drizzling your whiskers, mama. I know where papa is; ain't it the truth? I'll run and get him!"

Ugrewamba recoiled. "I dassent let you, Pawly! You're my only duckling. What if a *Felis Graenveldtii* should get you?"

Pawlyanna, at mention of the fearsome creature, half-lion and half-tiger, shuddered uncontrollably. Bravely she choked back her fears.

"He won't get me, mama. And if I should see one, I'd stand straight and tall, as I've seen you do, and he would skulk away."

Their need of the husband and father was great. Ugrewamba weakened.

"All right, kiddo, try your luck. But whether you can drag him away or not, hustle back, for the sun is getting low."

With a parting smile Pawly pattered away from the foodless cave.

A creature of light and love and laughter, she raced down-town toward the Battery. She resembled the children of to-day only remotely.

The fur which covered her roly-poly figure was Titian red, contrasting oddly with her flaxen hair. Both would be darker when she was older. Her features suggested her mother's, though Pawly would, if spared, mature in deeper beauty. In her black beads of eyes shone a tender, spiritual glow, endearing her to all who knew her.

She was an interesting child, though she did not know it. She did not know much of anything, of course; so rudimentary was she that she was almost rude. But in her brain that was a spark that was to flare into flame and lead her hectic world to better things.

Traffic was as congested during the saurian period as later, during the auto era. The traffic policemen did their best, but there were not enough of them.

Little Pawly romped her way daintily through the down-town maze. She was heedful of the dangers of main thoroughfares and cross trails, against which her mother had warned her. These woodland ways ran crazily, worn by eccentric progress of beasts and reptiles of sky-scraping proportions. This fact accounts, of course, for the present lack of symmetry in the present down-town streets of the metropolis. The Dutch merely seized upon the layout left by the dinosaur.

Carefully Pawly hopped over a four-faced plover, setting on its eggs. She knew there would be no luck in trying to steal one.

Flapping toward her on filmy wings came an early June bug, the size of a trench helmet. The ruddy glow of the westering sun was in its staring eyes, which saved Pawlyanna. Shuddering, she crouched under a bingobush till the insect had fluttered by.

She shuddered again as she edged by a six-legged sextetopus, whose three heads were grazing upon the leaves of a near-by tree. These heads, flat and horned, were set upon writhing necks. The creature was half snake, half cow. But no Pliocenian ever ventured to milk the cow half.

As the sun touched the rim of the western forest Pawlyanna came in sight of her goal.

Across a clearing she descried the sign of the seven bearded goat, a creature then indigenous to Harlem.

It announced to the roisterers of the island that the first brewing of the *ichlurn-pqbzynyf* root beer was now on tap. This was the "bock" of that day.

The sign stood outside the Cavern Café. This was the lair of old Gamber Inus, the darkest spirit of Manhattan. There were lesser dives—but his was deepest.

Therein many of the city's most promising club-swingers were habitually blighting their careers. Among these was Papa Oblongata. For months he had been failing to provide. It was seldom he slept at home.

Little Pawlyanna approached this den for the first time in her furry young life. Her tan face paled with apprehension. Then she bravely skipped on toward the cavern.

From within the cave came whoofings of wassail, chirps of cheer. She heard a voice she knew. It belonged to Beaubummel. He was accounted the wittiest wag on Broadway, coiner of epigrams, ready always with the whimsical quip, the sparkling *bon mot*.

"She sells sea-shells by the seashore," barked Beaubummel. Thunderous laughter greeted the sally.

"Say it, you guzzlers!" urged Beaubummel maliciously. There were sundry guttural attempts to comply. However, most of the revelers were apparently too maudlin to negotiate the eight aspirants which the phrase contained. Dreamily they joined in the resultant mirth of their fellows.

Next came a voice which Pawlyanna, approaching the cavern's mouth now more slowly and timorously, recognized as that of Aproneye, the bartender. He lived near the Oblongatas. His message was evidently intended for Gamber Inus, the proprietor.

"Here's Musselface here. What ho! without."

"Without what?" deeply growled Gamber Inus.

"Money," laconically supplied the bartender.

Musselface had been rich once. He had owned more mammoths' ears than any man in Mott Street, where then caved the millionaires of the Greater City. Now, a town sot, he occupied a pauper's cranny in Chelsea.

Ensuing somber words of Gamber Inus were addressed to the bouncer. "Ha! Herkew, throw him out!"

Interior commotion revealed that Herkew had bounced to obey. In exit the carcass of Musselface just missed little Pawlyanna. The near-sighted Herkew failed to see her. Bravely she trotted into the cave at his hairy heels.

In this instant her pape, Oblongata, thumped upon the reeking bar another mastodon steak. In justice it should have been brought home to his hungry family. Instead, it went the way of the American "treating habit."

"Set 'em up for the gang," he instructed the midge-faced Aproneye. "'S on me. What 'll you have, boys? Mine's the same."

In a moment he lifted a goblet fashioned from a prehistoric tooth. He sighed satisfiedly as down the inside of his twenty-seven-inch neck trickled a whoosiz high-ball.

A man standing next him plucked his furry elbow. "Look what's here?" he yelped.

Deep silence held the company as they turned. There stood little Pawlyanna.

The original drama of "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" was unreeling.

In this den, eel oil-lamps sputtered all day and half the night. In ghastly radiance showed the splashed bar. Upon the shelves behind it were receptacles holding weird liquors. An adjoining buffet held the free lunch. The titbits for this early day were live chameleons and sea serpents' ribs *au jus*.

Pawlyanna knew most of the men who faced her, swaying upon short, unsteady legs. Their sunken eyes gleamed phos-

phorescent, like those of dogs, in the fitful light. They were brown-furred, squabble-jawed, terrible. Their whiskers and hair displayed hues of the rainbow without its harmony.

Herkew, the bouncer, a squat giant of fiendish strength, glanced uncertainly from Pawlyanna to Gamber Inus. He was asking silently if he should throw out this young interloper. Children meant nothing in his unethical life.

Oblongata, standing six feet, was the tallest man in the group. He was transfixed with amaze. He dropped the bone goblet he had just drained, his mouse-hued face whitened perceptibly as he stared wildly at his only child. For remember, she had never before come to this haunt, nor had any child ventured therein.

Behind the company sat Gamber Inus. His chair was hewn from the rock and rested upon a stone dais, so that his glance might always dominate the cavern.

Like a brooding god of some dark cult he sat. The brown hair of his face and body was streaked with gray, for he had lived for over seventy years. His somber visage was unstirred by emotion.

The twinkling lightnings of his eyes turned upon Pawlyanna. In those eyes grew lurking fear. There stood only a tiny figure of ruddy bronze. Yet his cunning intellect grasped that here was danger for him. Why and how? Not yet did Gamber Inus know.

So for a moment endured the tableau.

The eyes of Pawlyanna were only for one of that company, and in them shone love and pleading.

She stepped toward Oblongata, the author of her downy being. With the action the tension was broken. From the group of men, weaving unsteadily, there burst a concerted sigh of relief. They knew at last she was alive and was not an alcoholic fantasy.

Pawly paused before her staring father and sang to him:

"Father, dear father, come home with me
now,

The sun in the offing says six.

You promised to milk the milchawalah cow;
But lushin' and workin' don't mix.

You ain't caught the lizards ma needed for
lunch;

We've nothin' but snail-soup for tea;

Oh, papa, dear papa, please shake this bum
bunch,

And jog home to mama wiz me!"

There should not have been a dry eye in the cave. However, this was long before the softening influence of civilization. The Bernhardt of that day had counseled the men to "be hard." Hard they remained, and unmoved.

As the final line of pleading died in tom-cat cadence, the upper lip of Gamber Inus lifted over one eye in a canine sneer.

Next to Oblongata, who stood indeterminate, stood Chizzeljaw. He was a boon companion and Broadway rouser, modish of mien and a confirmed optimist.

"What you got there, Oblong?" he inquired, digging his pal's ribs with a playful thumb. "A kiddo or a cabaret singer?"

The roar of drunken mirth which followed was heard in Brooklyn. Brooklyn, then as now, would be the last of the boroughs to hear anything.

Angered at the ridicule, Oblongata leaped forward. Previous experience had made Pawlyanna an excellent judge of distance. She preceded the parental toe out of the cave by an inch and a half.

She galloped through the gloaming back to the home cave to grieve with mama.

In the Cavern Café wassail continued. As midnight approached, nobody among the patrons could have repeated: "She sells sea-shells by the seashore" all the way through.

Gamber Inus continued to sit motionless in his rocky chair, staring in moody silence. Upon the horizon of his affairs had appeared a cloud no larger than a child's fuzzy hand. His absorbed gaze peopled vacancy with the unique face of Pawlyanna.

Over the beginnings of his brain had formed a shadow of foreboding. In vain he conjured the sunlight of political assurance, of police immunity for evil ends that had been his. The shadow persisted—and widened.

Finally, when the orgy was at its depth, Gamber Inus stirred wearily. He glanced at his wrist-watch.

" 'S time to shut up, gents," he ululated. " One o'clock. I stand in with the mayor and police of this town. Can't abuse a privilege, you know. Beat it, burns. See you to-morra."

" Ain't it the truth?" yipped Chizzeljaw, gulping his last high-ball. " C'm on, Oblong, lesh shee fuzzer plashes closed."

He linked arms with the older man, and they tumbled out of the cave with the others. Herkew carried out those who were unable to walk. Nonchalantly he dumped them under the bock-beer sign.

Oblongata and Chizzeljaw pattered along for a while, peering, but all the other places were closed. So they propped themselves against a tree in old Fifth Avenue and exchanged maudlin reminiscences. Soon Chizzeljaw slipped from Oblongata's embrace and fell, snoring. Oblongata tacked toward home. He was roaring the lines of an ancient song:

" We won't go home till morning."

But soon he desisted. He was vaguely troubled. Had come memory of another song that had recently bubbled from the lips of his daughter.

Again he visualized the wistful visage of little *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, Ugrewamba's child and his. He saw the tiny face, tenderly fringed with pinkish whiskers, and the eyes alight with love and pleading. His mind's ear heard the song her trembling lips had sung to him in the barroom:

Oh, papa, dear papa, please shake this bum
bunch,
And jog home to mama wiz me!

How long since he had jogged home to them—sober?

His filmy gaze questioned the vault where the stars should have been. They were no longer there. Clouds had rolled in from the Atlantic and blotted them out. The clouds were heavy, like those vapors which lay over the lives of the two beings for whose comfort and happiness he was responsible.

Oblongata paused in the midst of a bit of pampas. From the withered branch of a near-by tree an owl hooted at him its ancient symbolism of wisdom.

Obbie's head was a turret equipped with a mansard roof for a brow. Inside his bone now thronged images far different from the vinous fantasies which had fluttered therein before he left Chizzeljaw.

He now recalled how he had dispersed his rivals for the hand of Ugrewamba; how he had clubbed her into submission and borne her in love and triumph to his cave. Of what brave tenderness had their dreams partaken at that time! Later had come little Pawlyanna; how dear had seemed the mystic link! And now—

You ain't caught the lizards ma needed for
lunch!

For the first time in his primordial life Oblongata knew the throes of remorse. He tasted the dregs of that bitter potion many a soul fails to survive. At last—he *knew himself!*

He lifted to heaven his empty, lizardless hands. He sobbed aloud. The heavens wept with him.

It began to rain. More than this it poured.

Oblongata sat down upon the grass. His head was bent forward over his wrists, which were crossed over his chest with elbows down and outward. His legs were strongly flexed so that the knees were near the wrists.

In this posture Oblongata always slept upon a nest in his cave, when he was at home. Upon another nest Ugrewamba rested likewise. Upon a smaller one slumbered Pawlyanna.

With head bent low Oblongata sobbed himself to sleep in the driving sheets of rain. He slumbered deeply, undisturbed. For the rain was conducted away by his hair and beard, by his elbows and hip-joints, so as to drip nearly clear of the face and body. For—then as now—the hair on his face and body turned down and outward, so as to form a natural water-shed.

Early spring midges and mosquitoes foraged for him. They soon lost heart, being led astray by labyrinthine masses of hair.

In this incident of Oblongata shedding the rains of heaven while he discouraged venomous insects will be found proof of the kindly processes of nature in season.

Man was then his own mosquito-netting, and his own umbrella.

At dawn Ugrewamba sent Pawlyanna to a neighbor's cave to ask the loan of a light breakfast. There was a stir at the doorway. In staggered Oblongata. His fur had wholly dried. A royal sun was shining down upon the Plioceniens.

Ugrewamba placed her hands upon her hips and eyed him angrily.

"So you're *home*, are you?" she asked ironically. "It's the last place you'd reach, you toper, you—your abysmal brute!"

Tears drowned her eyes. She failed to notice the peculiar antics of her husband. He was wandering about the cave, picking imagined crawling things off the walls.

Ugrewamba's voice rose to catamount register. "Why did I ever marry you? I've a good mind to take Pawly and go back to mama in New Rochelle! I'm the unhappiest woman—in—New York!"

"Listen!" softly interrupted Oblongata. "Do you hear them?"

"Hear—*what*, Obbie?"

In sudden trepidation Ugrewamba retreated as he approached her gropingly. For the first time she noticed the odd glare in his eyes. He was close to her, yet worlds away, in the strange realm of dementia.

"The music of the spears," he answered gently. "Listen:

Tinkle, tinkle, tur-ra-loo;
I know more than you think I do!

Instantly her manner changed to wifely solicitude. She skipped to him and softly smoothed his arm. She was instinctively careful to stroke his fur the right way.

"Oblong!" she hooted anxiously. "Baby boy! What's the matter? Tell mama?"

He recoiled from her. His face was suddenly lugubrious with fear.

"Hi!" he screamed. "Do you see them?"

She shrank away. "See—*what*?"

He began to beat his head against the rocky wall. "Mammoths—with wings!" he roared. "Sea serpents with centipede legs! Millions of 'em; you can't see the half of 'em, deary! Bring 'em on; I'll eat 'em like—like—macaroni!"

He fell, sobbing. He dented the rock with iron fists while he groveled. Comprehension came to Ugrewamba as she stared wildly down at him.

"My Gawd! He's got the jimjams!"

She romped blindly from the cave. Her bead eyes blinked painfully in golden sunshine.

Her fluttering glance met a little red-furred figure racing gaily toward her from the neighbor's cave. One little hand waved greeting. The other held a small basket of tree-toad legs which the neighbor had contributed for breakfast. Another yawl sounded from the cave.

"Pawly!" shrieked Ugrewamba. "Run for the doctor! Papa's got the willies!"

It is not for us to intrude too far into that holy of social holies, which is the family circle.

It is enough to say that for many days thereafter an awed gallery of neighbors stood outside the Oblongatas' cave and listened to the frenzied orchestra within.

Oblongata had gone the pace that swills for a long time. That he had to pay was a foregone conclusion.

And he paid—in horrific visionings theretofore outside of his rather limited philosophy.

He saw more things than are of earth, or of the heavens above, or of the waters under the earth.

Throughout his delirious ordeal, his wife and daughter, angels of whom he was unaware, ministered unto him.

Tenderly they clubbed him into periods of temporary coma. Thus they gave nature's sorely tried resources opportunity to rally for another session with the demon his own evil appetite had summoned. The blows hurt them more than they did him.

With sedatives they soothed him. Often they jabbed him with the hypodermic-needle.

Adroitly they dodged things which he threw at them. Through persistence little by little they gained in the battle for their loved one.

Out from the jaws of death and the throat of hell came Oblongata, drawn therefrom by the hands of his wife and little

daughter. In his extremity they had forgiven him for neglect, wickedness, vice.

He felt six hundred years old instead of thirty. However, he was alive and in his right "mind."

While he lay unconscious he had been learning his lesson. The doctor must be paid some time. But how could he ever repay the devotion of his wife and daughter?

Convalescing in his nest, Oblongata thought as deeply as possible.

He evidenced a new humility. It summoned the love and hope of his helpmate and the kiddo. They dared now to picture a future wherein the sway of rum over him was broken.

In the breast of Oblongata, poor primate with a long way to go up the alps of evolution, stirred odd unrest, strange gropings for higher things.

At last his gaze was upward, like that of a caterpillar about to worm up a ladder. Even thus early it was being proved that a little child shall lead them.

Came a dewy morning in the late spring when Ugrewamba, in the doorway of the cave, gazed out with a lurid smile. Oblongata and Pawlyanna, hand in hand, were sauntering toward a near-by flowering field. It was the poor papa's first day out.

Ugrewamba turned back to her household duties, happy and hopeful.

Take me back to dear old Broadway,
That's where I long to be—

She cackled softly as she began to hard-boil a pair of ostrich eggs.

Meanwhile, Oblongata and Pawlyanna hunted primroses. These were the only prim things that grew in Manhattan at that time. Later—perhaps—

—Soon papa rested upon the ossified ribs of a prehistoric pig. His brindled limbs trembled with weariness born of his long illness. For nearly three weeks he had writhed in his cave-nest.

Pensively he ate a primrose. He gazed up at the blue sky across which white fleece was sheering. Beyond an intervening copse he heard the hyenalike laughter of Pawly, diligently plucking primroses, glad to be alive.

"Lo, Oblong, old toppo!" clacked a familiar voice. "So you're out o' pajamas again? Glad t' see yeh; the bunch was askin' about yer, Oblong!"

A familiar figure, topped with a parrakeet crest, came striding toward him through the tall grasses. Chizzeljaw, *bon vivant, reconteur*, and rounder, prince of the younger set, approached. The older man's pulses thrilled; the call of the clan was sweet!

"You look like last week, Oblong," pursued Chizzeljaw solicitously, pausing by his side. "Let's hop along to the Cavern Café, and let Aproneye mix you one of his pick-me-ups. It 'll make you feel like another man. Then you can give the *other* man a drink. C'm' on, old blear!"

With the suggestion the half-formed ethics in Oblongata's breast were consumed as in fire. Had evolution provided him with a shirt he would have sold it in that moment for a drink.

His eyes, grown filmy, gazed into Chizzeljaw's. His mouth opened, watering. He stepped toward his boon companion.

He had not taken time even to waver. He was lost all at once.

When—behind the two men—there pealed a providential scream. It was from the lips of Pawlyanna.

Once more was fate rescuing Oblongata through his child. However, there had been selected a rather hideous office.

The men rushed through a clump of variegated amaryllids and ranunculus. Pawlyanna writhed in the clutch of a seven-stingered scorpion, the size of a truck. Its yellow eyes, thrust out like binoculars, gazed down upon her hungrily.

The distracted father kicked futilely at the shell of the monster insect. Chizzeljaw showed calm initiative. Leaping forward, he tore out the insect's bulging eyes and crammed them down its throat, strangling it. Wriggling, the scorpion dropped Pawlyanna and began plunging its stingers into its own body.

Chizzeljaw picked up the little girl and tossed her into her father's arms.

His parting words to the grief-stricken Oblongata held delicate sentiment that was rare for that time.

"Tough luck, old queer! Sorry, but

accidents will happen in New York. We'll have that little drink after the funeral. And I'll send the undertaker around."

At the sympathy which throbbed in his friend's tone Oblongata nodded. He could not speak. He carried the unconscious child to his cave while Chizzeljaw waddled on toward the liquored lair of Gamber Inus.

He proceeded in sorrowing mood. Tangled with the mellow sunshine was the lovely whiskered face of a little girl. He had mocked her only recently, when she had come to the Cavern Café in quest of her father. But now?

A lovely little girl she was, who would have grown into a goddess woman and a wife, had she not blundered into the path of the scorpion.

A shuddering sigh broke from the lips of Chizzeljaw. A salty tear stole down his cheek.

Had come the ancient call of life and love and mating—too late, too late!

"Papa, I'm going to croak!"

Oblongata bent over the small nest of grass and twigs. Dry, fevered eyes stared up at him. A ray of mocking sunshine stole into the cave. Mama Ugrewamba had gone to the corner drug-store for more herbs. For two weeks had they battled with the final enemy.

The father's voice answered, heavy with grief. "Pawly, do not croak!"

The child's reply was mystic with symbolism. "It's all right, papa. I'm ready. Everybody croaks. And, somehow, I feel there's something beyond—and that there's no croaking there!"

With them in the cave was an invisible presence. It was not death. It was awe. It held them spellbound. Father and daughter were *en rapport* with the Infinite.

Then earthly loneliness engulfed the soul of Oblongata. Tenderly he clutched his only blossom by her tufted ears.

"No *Pithecanthropus* comes back to tell us. Pawly, stay!"

Pawlyanna came to a squatting position. Her flaming eyes sought her father's that were blurred with tears.

"I want your promise, papa. With that, I can croak in peace!"

He stared about; his evil appetite had swept the cave of garnishings:

"I have nothing to give but a promise," he muttered hoarsely.

"I want you to promise me that you will booze no more. That never again will you beat my mama. That you will organize the 'drys' in this town against the 'wets,' and put Gamber Inus and his ilk out of business!

"He's to blame for all our troubles; he can't pass the buck to his patrons! 'Personal responsibility for the habit' be damned; I tell you, daddy, it's the stuff itself! We'll legislate it out! Oh, promise me!"

The childish treble, curiously strengthened in this hour of weakness, tintinnabulated to its close. The shiny eyes inveigled his own. The old clock upon the wall of the cave ticked overlaid in the stillness.

Came at last the deep-toned answer of Oblongata.

"I promise!"

Then and there was accomplished the début of a grand idea. Through the efforts of a little fur-bearing evangel of light had come the original plan of concerted battle against the bottled powers of darkness.

Odd—but at this moment, in the lair of Gambler Inus at the sign of the seven-bearded goat, was proved that telepathy preceded the telephone by some distance in time.

Behind the noisy roisterers, in his chair hewn from the rock, sat Gamber Inus. Like a brooding image of some dark god he sat. The brown hair of his face and body was streaked with gray. His somber face was unstirred by emotion.

Yet in the supreme moment when Oblongata gave his child the epochal promise in the distant cave came a phenomenon. A flapping shadow of foreboding passed over the brain of the iniquitous Gamber Inus. In his eyes flickered a wavering light.

It was the light of fear.

Came the last "wet" night in the metropolis. The next dawn would usher in a "dry" era.

Half the men in town were drunk. The other half, banded as a law and order

league, were aiding the police to try to keep the roisterers within bounds.

Oblongata was in charge of the league forces. It was an honor richly won. For, as the first secretary of the anti-saloon league, had he not led the fight against the common council? Had he and the others not secured, through stone clubs, needed legislation closing these dens?

He had battled nobly then as now. Why not? Fate had been kind to him.

For, after all, little Pawlyanna had not croaked!

Now, convalescent, she squatted with Mama Ugrewamba in the Greenwich Village cave, happy in the thought that the demon rum would be buried on the morrow. Then she and mama slept.

Police and vigilantes continued busy. The cafés were filled with frenzied primates. Others tottered along the thoroughfares, daring any danger in their alcoholic zeal.

The jam was worst at Columbus Circle. At midnight it was a mess. Late theater crowds further tangled divergent itineraries. Traffic was jammed. Upon all sides toiling teetotalers, serving law and order, tussled with tipplers.

Within a circling human eddy stood Oblongata. A white ribbon was pinned to his hairy chest. In his hand was a stone club. He was looking down upon the mangled remnants of one who had been almost human. He dashed the sweat from his brow and spoke.

"I recognized him just before he reeled under the heels of that mammoth. All the animals are raising hell to-night; the noise disturbs them. Anyway, this poor old fellow was on the wrong side of the street; the mammoth had the right of way."

"Who was he?" asked a bystander, peering down at the Washington Square salad that the feet of the mammoth had left.

"He was Musselface, the Chelsea sot," gravely answered Oblongata.

At this instant came a cry from a near-by traffic cop. "Oblong! Help me hold this fellow! He says if a hen can cross the road, he can, and s' help me, it ain't safe!"

Oblongata recognized the sturdy figure wrestling with the traffic cop, who had sprung down from the back of his two-

headed horse. He sprang forward through the crush, but too late.

A magnificent *Pithecanthropus* broke from the hold of the cop, taking half the policeman's luckless face in his jaws. With a derisive squeal he reeled into the path of an advancing monster that nobody had named yet. However, it resembled a "tank" of the recent world's war.

Uprose from the crowd yells of horror.

Beaumbumel, Broadway's most sparkling wit, was now a pancake. The smoldering embers that had been, Musselface, the mounting flame of genius that had been Beaumbumel, alike were drowned in the final (?) libations of Bacchus.

Oblongata turned away, sick at heart. How glad he was to be sober! It were safer so. The hectic moments of the dizzy night fled on gauzy wings.

Finally, in his goat-signed lair further down-town, old Gamber Inus, who had failed in leadership of the fight to keep the town wet, glanced at his wrist-watch.

"One o'clock, boys," he bleated. "We close up—for good!"

Sinister emphasis underlay the pun. His left eyelid drooped in a sly wink that was sufficiently understood.

Battles are not merely for to-day, tomorrow. They are for eternity.

Came golden September, with walnut-trees, with winery air. In woody depths near Van Cortlandt Park Ugrewamba and Pawlyanna were gathering from giant vines some objects that looked like brunette pumpkins. However, they were grapes that would yield their juice for a pleasant drink after a new formula just discovered by a benevolent old party named Bilbrine.

In a further recess two men talked together. They were Oblongata and his young crony, Chizzeljaw, who had torn Pawly from the scorpion, and in that moment began to love her.

Through grace of budding love, with Pawlyanna fluttered back from death, Chizzeljaw's spirit had undergone metamorphosis. Nobly had he toiled with Oblongata in the campaign of law and order against infamy. He, too, was redeemed.

"I know Pawlyanna is too young to marry yet, Oblong," he chattered. "But

after she's out of boarding-school, where you plan to send her, old pal, may I not follow our sacred ritual of courtship? May I not chase her, knock her down, and drag her to my cave?"

Thus was first syllabled the historic phrase: "May I not?"

Oblongata hesitated. "She is my one ewe lamb. I love her," he quavered.

"I, too, love her," Chizzeljaw gravely reminded him. "And I can support her in the style to which she is unused. I'm cleaning up in rentals from those East Side tenements, you know."

Oblongata's eyes gleamed suddenly. Things had not gone well with him; his years of dissipation had told. He felt old, tired, in need of rest.

"Tell you what, Chizzel," he decided. "As a son-in-law you look good to me. You make me superintendent of your tenements, and you can marry her now."

They gripped hands upon the compact. From the adjoining thicket came Pawly's merry song. After all, what need had she of higher education that papa had dreamed for her before he grew tired? The more one learns, the less happy one is. "Where ignorance is bliss," *et cetera*.

"And isn't it grand, old dear," Chizzel was murmuring to Oblong, "that our old temptation is blinked? That we're living in a 'dry' world?"

However, in a down-town forest fastness at this moment proceeded dark doings that gave the lie to the hope of Chizzeljaw.

Now everybody in Manhattan could say: "She sells sea-shells by the seashore." But how long would *all* of them be able to say it?

For in a labyrinthine lair wicked old Gamber Inus and his evil assistants were rigging up the first illicit still.

It would be bootlegging next!

Morals:

History is a monologue man, drearily repeating himself at one-night stands. Moon-shiners prove there is nothing new under the moon.

Eternally wages the struggle between good and evil while dazed humanity tries to raise itself closer to the stars—by tugging at its boot-straps.

We had yesterday. We have to-day.

To-morrow—

Will be yesterday.