THE night was advancing. The rain pattered on the canals of mud that trickled off through the hills, on the great squares of rusted pipe piled along the railroad track, on the heaps of frayed cable, on the jam of wagons behind the freight shed.

The lanterns on the edge of the hideous ravine were all dark, except a single one built on piles and opening with a decayed porch directly into the mud road. This was the office of the doctor—a single room, filled with shelves and bottles, a table, a chair or two, and a bed screened off with a calico curtain. Within, on the table, a new tallow candle burned in a tin candlestick. Hot tallow in a white pulp mass was pushed up around the base of the candle, showing that a new one had just replaced one already burned out.

The doctor was walking backward and forward through this room. Sometimes he stopped before the window, dizzy with smoke and dirt; but the night was like in and he could see nothing. He was a young man with what had once been a delicate physique, but he was now bronzed and toughened. Sometimes, as he walked, the man paused as though to listen, but there were no noises save those of the rain.

An hour passed. Then, from the canal of mud running off westward into the hills, there arose a sound as though a lake of water were being thrashed with a gigantic flail. At the sound the doctor's anxiety ceased; he came over to the table, thrust the candle more firmly into the candlestick and sat down. The gigantic thrashing sound increased, and a moment later the door opened and a man entered hurriedly.

The man was covered with soft yellow mud; it trickled in under various rivulets over his big Sandy face. He was no usual person—tall and muscular, with a thin, bony, hawk-bill nose, a head that was perfectly bald, and a wide, straight mouth. And, in spite of the evidence of his bald head, he was in the very prime of life. He looked around at the shelves of little bottles, the stove, the table covered with medical journals, old letters and scraps of paper, the saddle-pockets in the corner, the calico curtain screening the bed, and the nails in the wall that did service for a wardrobe.

"True to life, Charlie," he said.

"Why not?" replied the doctor, raising. "It is life.

Then he went over to a shelf, took down a glass jar half full of some amber-colored liquid and set it on the table. There was a stone pitcher with a broken mouth on an inverted nail keg by the window, and a cloudy glass. He rinsed out the glass and placed it beside the jar. In the meantime, the big man got out of his rubber coat. He threw it with his hat on the floor and wiped the rivulets of mud from his face with a handkerchief; then he noticed the doctor's doing.

"Not for me," he said, "I've cut out the boose, Charlie; but if you have any tobacco in this joint, let me have it."

The doctor put a box of stogies on the table. They were strong, black and bitter from the green tobacco out of which they were rolled, but the big man seized upon them as though they were a sort of treasure, bit off the end of one and lit it from the doctor's candle. Then he sat down and began to draw the smoke into his mouth and slowly release it, as though it were a soothing and delicious incense.

"This is a fine place you roost in, Charlie," he said; "I came from that flag station through a mud river."
"You're not afraid of the dead?" exclaimed the doctor.
"Nor the dead," said Arkm.
"What is it, then, that you're afraid of?" asked Charlie.
"Charlie," said the big man, "I don't know.
"The doctor looked at his companion as though he were a patient with some deadly obscure disease.
"Afraid of something and you don't know what it is!" he replied.
"No," replied the big man; "I don't know what it is.
"Nobody knows what it is.
"Isn't it got a name?" asked the doctor.
"Yes," said the man; "it's got a lot of names—none of them any good. You'd call it chance.
"Chance!" said the doctor laughed.
"Why, Arkm, that's a word men invented to cover up their incompetency.

Gemini 6

"What Can I?" cried the Doctor. "You'll Kill Somebody, You Fool!"

Chance! That's a word that means lack of foresight.
When you say you're afraid of chance, you simply say that you are afraid of yourself.

"There," said Arkm; "I told you the names were no good. Sure they're not worth anything—any of them.
"To give a thing a name, you've got to know what it is; but nobody knows what this thing is; so all the names you give it mean something else. Then when you get to going on one of these names, you're not talking about the thing—

Yemen

you're talking about what the name means. Try them all: There's Providence! You don't believe there's anything that fits that name, now do you?"
"I do not," replied the doctor. "The term implies that an authority, which has got the universe going according to a fixed set of laws, carelessly interrupts these laws at its pleasure."
"Sure," said Arkm; "the name's no good. But the race track name's no better, now is it? When you say 'luck,' you begin to talk about something else right away.

"You begin to talk about something that's rot," said the doctor. "You are assuming that there is an influence external to yourself that impels events to assist you or
to destroy you.

"There you are!" said the big man; "you can't name it, but it's on the job, Charlie. And when it starts to land you, all your precautions are not a woooop.

There will be some little unforeseen accident that will put you to the bad.

The doctor made a gesture of disgust.
"Rot!" he said.

The big man chewed the end of his story.

"All right, Charlie—look where the boys are; look where they all end up; look at Sim; look at them; Julie's full of them; and look at what they say.

"A man will say anything when he's soft," said the doctor.

Was Vronsky soft?" replied the big man. "Was that old cockney Ponsford soft? I was with Vronsky the night he was hanged. He kicked the preacher out of the cell; and he sat there and smoked like a man as I am doing now. Do you know what he said? 'The thing's crooked, Arkm; you can't beat it.' And Ponsford said the same thing—'Tint off!'"

"Nonsense!" said the doctor. "The thing is probably only a per cent of accidents."
"But why is that per cent of accidents always against us?" replied Arkm; "that's what I want to know.
I've thought about it often."

"Any preacher will tell you," replied the doctor; "step into a church."

"I did step into a church," said Arkm, "but it wasn't the way a preacher told me. I was standing in the door one night downtown in New York. It was raining, and a man who was waiting for a car came in and stood beside me. He didn't belong in the crowd; you could tell that by everything about him. He listened a moment and then he said to me:

"That's all folderol. Nature is laboring at some great work; those men who are useful to her purpose, who assist her, who aid her, she6e endeavors to preserve; and those who are useless and harmful, she endeavors to destroy—it's a law. And he went out.

"Wait a minute, Charlie—it's not about the size of it! We're on the wrong side; we're not helping anything along; we're against it; we're not useful to the thing we're in way. And it's a-trying to get rid of us! Now that's what Vronsky meant when he said the thing was crooked; he meant that our side wasn't getting the fair deal—that there was something working against us. He didn't understand what was; but he was a Slav with a head full of brains and he could see the thing at work. I've been watching it, Charlie, and I know it's picking us off! That's what makes me afraid.

And there's another thing Vronsky said—'You can't beat it,' and you can't. Try to think of anything that it didn't finally land. They've all got theirs, sooner or later. Count them on your fingers!

"Say! Charlie; anybody can see results. Even old Ponsford saw results—'Tint off!' Sure it's not safe! I saw just that as well as Vronsky, just as well as Ponsford; but I didn't understand why until that stranger told me.

"Charlie, what the devil have we been trying to do? We've been going up against the Thing that runs the whole universe—and we've been trying to beat it at its own game. See! It's playing all the time—all the time, day and night, morning—always getting the upper hand, and advance, and to keep everybody and everything that helps it, and to get rid of everybody and everything that hinders it. And it knows what it's doing everything, and it understands everything. And us bucking a layout like that! The nerve of it!"

At this moment the latch of the door clicked.

The doctor arose and thrust open the door. An old negro stood there. The doctor was angry.

"Didn't I tell you to clear out?" he said. "What's wrong with you, man? Why are you standing around for?"

The negro was frightened and he stammered.

"Yes, Doc," he said, "I'm going, Doc, yes, sir!" and he shuffled away through the mud.

The doctor closed the door.

"Who was it?" asked Arkm.

A worthless nigger who sweeps out the office," replied the doctor. "He's a nuisance. He's always breaking something and he's always in the way, but somebody has to keep him.

The doctor stopped by Arkm and took hold of his wrist. The man's face was cool and his pulse was deep and placid.

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THE NAMELESS THING

(Continued from Page 6)

The big man smiled. "Did you think I was losing my nerve, eh, Charlie?" he said.
"Judging from the gait you were hitting up that rotten line of talk, I did," replied the
doctor.
"The talk's all right, Charlie, believe me."
The doctor laughed.
"Then your mysterious influence ought to be on my side," he said; "I've been
doing its work for a couple of years."
The big man took the story out of his
mouth.
"Sure, Charlie," he said, "I hadn't thought of that."
The doctor continued to smile. "Well," he said, "we shall see if it is."
"And if it is, you stay on the job?"
The doctor sat down; his face lengthened
into an ironical smile; he put out his legs
and thrust his hands into his pockets.
"I'm willing to back my own intelligence," he said; "I've worked the thing out. I've considered everything and pro-
vided for every contingency—" I'm not
taking any chance. If your mysterious
influence can trip me O. K.; I'll stay on the
job." Then he jerked himself up.
"What drivel!" he said. "An incompet-
et jackass makes a rotten plan, and when
it goes to pieces he says some supernatu-
ral agency threw him down; or some lotus-
ater blows a big shiny bubble, and when it
collides with the sharp edge of a fact he says
that Heaven's against him! Or some old
stuff forgets the part he's playing.
"Look at the men you've been talking
about: Take Vronsky. He planned to kill
Gates. He found out that the old man
worked in his library with the window open.
It was summer, and the library looked into
the garden. Vronsky reasoned that he
could go into that garden on a dark night,
shoot Gates, and that under cover of the
darkness no one would know who it was
that had done it.
"Vronsky was right about several things:
he knew that he could get away. He knew
that no one would suspect him unless he
was seen, because he was believed to be in
Australia; and with his skill with a gun he
knew that he would not miss. Moreover,
he knew that he being in the dark and
Gates in the light, Gates could not see his
assassin even if he were not instantly killed.
"Now that was all sound. Everything
that Vronsky thought about, he figured out
right—but there was one thing that Vronsky
didn't think about. Well, he pulled it off
the way he planned—and what happened?
Gates saw Vronsky's face by the flash of
the pistol and shouted his name as he fell. Now,
what had Heaven to do with that?
"Take Ponsford: What did he do? He'd
Cracked the Empire Bank and the whole
country was looking for him. He was hid-
ing over on the East Side, and he was safe;
but he got lonesome one night, put into his
pocket the small tool with which a burglar
forces a window, and went down on Long
Island to rob a house. The village police
picked him up. When he saw them coming
he threw his tool into the gutter. The
police asked him what it was he threw away
and he said it was a story.
"That was all right. The police believed
him. They took him to the station-house,
looked him over and told him he could go.
Well, what did the old fool do? He sat
round and got chummy with the police, and
finally, when one of them offered him a
cigar, he said that he didn't smoke!
"Was that Providence, or luck, or
chance? Nonsense! The thing is to make
your plan exclude these contingencies."
"Man," said Arkman, "you've got to
take a chance."
"No, you haven't," replied the doctor;
"there's where your brains come in."
"Why, Charlie," said Arkman, "you're
taking a chance right here. Suppose your
watchman doesn't swallow his dope; there
are a dozen things that might keep a man
from taking a dose of medicine."
"There's nothing that will keep that
man from taking it," said the doctor.
"Why?" said Arkman.
"Because he has already taken it," re-
plied the doctor. "Damn it, man, do you
think I'm a fool? I planned his medicine
to run out today, and when he came here
at nine o'clock for some more I gave him
the tablets myself. I had to be sure of him;
he'd shoot you to death before you got the
key in the lock."
Again the big man whistled low and softly. He turned around in his chair; he put his hands together on the table. He looked at the doctor with a quiet smile.

"Charlie," he said, "you're a wonder!"

The doctor took out his watch. "It's about time we were getting the traps together," he said, and he rose. He started to go behind the calico curtains, where a sound reached him and he stopped. It was the sound of horses plunging in that canal of water, and a minute later a voice called.

The doctor went to the door. The night was black as ink and the rain pattered on the soft mud. A man riding a horse and leading another was there in the road.

"Is that you, Doc?" he said.

"Yes," replied the doctor.

"Then get in this saddle quick. A scat-'in' fell at the Jones No. 1 and cut the driller's head open. The blood's spurtin' like a gusher."

"Damn it!" cried the doctor, "was there no one to put his finger on the artery?"

"Yes," said the man; "Hindle's got his thumb on it, but he can't hold it there all night. Hurry, for Heaven's sake!"

The doctor sprang for his saddle-pockets. Arkman got up. "Charlie," he said, "you're not going, are you?"

The doctor did not seem to hear him. He was jamming his arms into the sleeves of his greatcoat; the muscles of his face were stern and rigid.

Arkman went up close to him. "Come, Charlie," he said, "you're sure not going to throw the job off."

The doctor replied with an oath—and he was gone. The door banged behind him and the horses galloped in the flying mud.

The man went over to the little dingy window and looked out into the vat of ink. He stood there for a long time with his hands behind him. Finally he sat down, fingered the box of stogies, at last took one out, carefully cut the end of it and lighted it in the candle. The end of the cigar glowed and he sat motionless. Two hours passed. The man's face seemed to have lengthened and grown old.

Then the door opened and the doctor entered. Arkman looked up. The doctor flung his soaked coat into a corner, wiped the mud from his face with a dirty towel, jerked the calico curtain aside, and began to empty the contents of his saddle-pockets out onto the bed.

"Get up, Arkman," he said, "we've got to hurry."

The big man did not move. "Hurry for what?" he said.

The doctor turned sharply.

"Are you asleep?"

"No, I'm not asleep," he said; "but you're not going to risk the job after that, are you?"

"After what?" said the doctor.

"After that—that—warning."

The doctor looked at the man a moment in astonishment, then he began to curse.

"Warning! Are you that big a fool? Don't things happen all the time; don't men come for the doctor at all hours of the night? Don't be an idiot."

"But, Charlie," replied the man, "you said—"

The doctor interrupted him with an oath.

"Are you still harking on that drivel?"

Then he turned savagely. "If you're going with me, come on."

"And if I don't go!" said the man.

"Then,—cried the doctor, "I'll do it myself!" And he caught hold of the door. When his fingers touched the latch the door swung, and the old negro fell into the room.

The doctor caught him by the collar and jerked him to his feet.

"You back here again!" he cried.

"Don't, Doc," the negro whimpered; "I want to tell you somethin'."

"Then why didn't you tell it when you were here before?" said the doctor.

"I . . . I . . . I was 'fraid to," the negro stammered.

The doctor shook him.

"Out with it; what is it?"

"This mornin', Doc, . . . . when I was sweepin' . . . . I spilled all the stuff out of one of them little bottles into the water bucket, an' I filled it up out of one of them cans."

"What can?" cried the doctor. "You'll kill somebody, you fool!"

"That can," replied the negro.

The doctor seized it. His face changed. "That wouldn't hurt anybody," he said, "that's soda—now what bottle did you knock over?"

And the negro pointed to the bottle of morphine.