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The familiar theme of the man-hunter and his quarry, always a fascinating subject for detective fiction, is here given a refreshingly sympathetic treatment. For a story that originally appeared twenty years ago, "The Obscure Move" is an astonishingly up-to-date study, conceived and executed with understanding and humor.

THE OBSCURE MOVE

by WADSWORTH CAMP

HIS FRIENDS have never understood why Morgan, one of the best of private detectives, gave up the excitements of the trail for the stupid dignity of office management. Morgan, naturally, didn't care to talk about it at first. Time is a good carpenter, however, and Morgan feels now that he may safely stand on the record. Here it is:

To begin with, Morgan was an odd one. If you had questioned him about the deductive method he would have laughed good-naturedly. It is equally certain that the mention of psychological analysis would have sent him to the dictionary for a clue. Common-sense and a sense of humour were his own stock in trade. His specialty was the smooth crook who keeps the money of the carelessly avaricious in circulation. Consequently he wore expensive clothing himself. He smoked large, fragrant cigars of Havana. When on the road — which was nine tenths of the time in those days — he frequented only the most luxurious hotels. Furthermore, he was fast acquiring an appearance of rotund prosperity quite out of key with the best-loved traditions of the stealthy profession. Still, as has been said, he was one of the most successful in that business.

Therefore, when the Duncan Investment Company closed its doors it was not surprising that the victims should have carried their resentment from the formal optimism of police headquarters to Morgan's agency.

Duncan, they explained, had fled with large sums which he had persuaded them to invest through a trifling lure of from fifty to a hundred per cent. They were law-abiding citizens none the less, and they felt it their duty to

society to see that Duncan, who had taken so much, should also receive what was judicially owing to him.

Morgan lighted a fresh perfecto.

"Rest easy," he told his clients. "I'll place Mr. Duncan in an iron cage where you can poke your fingers at him all you like."

After the sheep had flocked out, he gazed about his comfortable office, filled his pockets with cigars, locked his cellarette, and set forth on his adventures.

Morgan took the customary precautions in case the confidence man had his heart set on Canada or a trip abroad. But Duncan was too wary to thrust his head in the lion's jaw through any such first-offense methods. Instead he revealed the attributes of an eel, squirming, dodging, and once or twice nearly slipping across the Mexican border. The stout, good-natured detective, however, seemed to possess a special intuition. Time and again he made Duncan turn on his tracks. Then a very natural thing happened. When the chase got too hot, Duncan, who had been born and raised in Florida, sought ground which would be far more familiar to him than to his pursuer. Yet Morgan, entering Florida, was reminiscent of nothing so much as a fat, grinning cat, approaching the holeless corner into which he has driven his mouse.

When the police channels had run dry, the detective called on that peculiar intuition of his and bothered the lumber, turpentine, and phosphate men until he had located the fugitive in a timber camp far in the wilderness. Morgan was justly proud. Few men, if they had studied Duncan's record, would have dreamed of looking for him in the vicinity of manual labour.

Morgan's work had chiefly lain in comfort-furnished cities, but, by rail, by boat, by springless wagon, he bravely followed the trail. One crisp morning he reached his destination — a group of tiny, unpainted cabins clustered about a sawmill and a commissary.

With a look of high achievement lighting his face, Morgan shook the camp superintendent's hand.

"Peary and Amundsen and Doctor Cook have nothing on me," he said. "Just remind me to jot down my latitude and longitude so people'll believe I've really been here."

The superintendent stared.

"And it's inhabited!" Morgan went on with awe in his voice. "I'll write a

book, and maybe get decorated by the Swiss — or the Swedes, is it? Well, I made my dash on your word.”

“How come you to suspect he was here?” the superintendent asked.

Morgan’s voice fell.

“Perhaps a fortune teller saw it in the cards.”

He laughed.

“What you laughing at?” the superintendent asked suspiciously.

“The idea of Beau Duncan’s living here! Which may be his stylish bungalow?”

“His quarters, you mean? The shanty yonder with the busted window light.”

“And some of the best hotels have stopped paying dividends since he left town. The lobster palaces are all in heliotrope for him. Where’s old Beau Brummel Duncan now? At the golf club or leading a black-face cotillion?”

“Naw,” the superintendent said. “I allow he’s doing an honest day’s work on the skidder. That’s about three miles from here.”

“The president of your company told me you were a deputy sheriff.”

The superintendent proudly displayed his badge.

“Maybe it puts us in the same criminal class with Duncan,” Morgan said, “but we’re paid to work. Let’s make a bluff, anyway.”

The superintendent led two raw-boned little horses from the corral. He considered Morgan’s portly person with a thoughtful eye, then brought a soap box from the commissariat. Morgan mounted to the soap box and thence to the saddle. He settled himself gingerly.

“Don’t you worry if you ever run out of razors,” he advised. “You might take a chance on Dobbin’s backbone. I’ve tried every means of locomotion on this case except aviating, and if Dobbin gallops it will be that or coming in two. I think animals are fond of you. Use your influence. Don’t let this one overdo himself on my account.”

Proceeding cautiously, they followed the lumber tramway until they came to an open space where a donkey engine was noisily loading logs on a string of flat cars. At first Morgan thought the workers about the engine were all negroes, but finally he realized that, except for dirt and grime, one of them was white.

“According to the description that ought to be my affinity,” he said.

They dismounted and left the horses loose, as they had shown no exceptional aggressiveness, to crop the wiry grass. Morgan followed the superin-

tendent in a wide and casual circle toward the donkey engine. The superintendent, as though he were showing off the activities of the clearing to an interested stranger, frequently stopped to point with broad gestures in one direction or another.

"Better cut that stuff," Morgan warned. "Remember, Duncan isn't any stage crook. He has real brains."

Duncan, in fact, had already turned from his work. He leaned on his log hook, staring at the detective. Then he carefully placed the hook on a flat car, thrust his hands in his pockets, and loafed in the direction of the horses. Morgan and the superintendent quickened their pace. Evidently that was sufficient proof for Duncan, for, with a yell, he threw pretence aside, vaulted a log, and broke into a run.

Morgan started heavily after him, but Duncan was younger, slenderer, and much better conditioned. By the time Morgan had reached his horse and had clambered to the saddle in apparent defiance of the laws of gravity, Duncan was already well away on a sandy track which entered the woods at a right angle to the tramway.

When duty beckoned no chances were too great for Morgan. He set his teeth as he urged his horse to a gallop. Swaying from side to side or bobbing up and down with surprised little grunts, he clutched impulsively at the animal's mane and went in pursuit.

The track wound into the virgin forest. Almost immediately the landscape seemed to conspire lawlessly for the protection of the fugitive. The trees thickened. A dense underbrush sprang up. A growth of saplings cluttered the soil between the trunks. Morgan's horse was a self-centred brute. In worming his quick way among the saplings, he allowed only for his emaciated body. Consequently, the detective had to look out for his own too-solid person. What with lifting one fat leg or the other to escape bruises and fractures against the eager saplings, and what with ducking beneath overhanging branches to avoid being brushed from the saddle, he must have presented the appearance of a grotesque jumping-jack answering to eccentric strings.

Duncan clearly received this impression, for the last Morgan saw of him the other was going through a black, shallow stream, his hand upraised in a mocking and undignified farewell. And the last Morgan heard of him was laughter — unrestrained, joyous, insulting.

But Morgan plodded ahead, hoping that the hummock would soon give

way to open forest land where he might wear the fugitive down. The underbrush, however, closed more riotously about him. There were many stagnant pools which obscured and finally obliterated Duncan's trail. Morgan brought his horse to a halt. He half fell from his saddle. He looked about him, for once at a loss.

Yellow slash pine, towering with forbidding indifference in all directions, spread their green-plumed tops in a roof so thick that the sun could force its way through only at long intervals. Scrub palmettos, like huge caterpillars, squirmed along the ground and thrust green tentacles upward from their ends. Here and there one reared its body higher than horse and man. Stunted maple and gum fought for life in the perpetual twilight, and in the wettest places thick-boled cypresses raised their ghastly frames, strung with moss that had the appearance of matted hair. The ground was soggy underfoot, and the air was hot, damp, and full of decay.

Morgan whistled.

"This," he mused, "is somewhat more of a place than that panorama of hades I paid ten cents to see in Coney Island last summer. Besides, it's several stations farther from Times Square."

He took off his hat, drew an immaculate linen handkerchief from his pocket, and mopped his heated brow. There was no virtue in stubbornness now. Duncan had undoubtedly given him the slip for the present. His best scheme was to return to the lumber camp, where he could arrange to watch the outlets of the forest.

He mounted with considerable difficulty and some strategy, then turned his horse's head. But the many stagnant pools had confused his own trail as thoroughly as they had Duncan's. When the sun set he made a wry face and acknowledged he was lost.

The prospect of spending the night in the swamp was very annoying to one of Morgan's habits. Since his lungs were perfectly sound he had never interested himself in all this talk about outdoor sleeping, but he was ready to back at odds the fact that it couldn't be done either comfortably or beneficially here. The ground was too wet for one thing, and, for another, it was probably friendly to snakes. He had a wholesome respect for snakes. Yet he was certain his raw-boned horse couldn't support him all night. He had already examined him several times to see if his back was sagging.

He tumbled to the ground again, tied the horse to a sapling, and walked to a fallen log. After he had thoroughly searched the neighbourhood for rep-

tiles, he sat down and munched some of the sweet chocolate he always carried for emergencies. Then he lighted a red-banded Havana. His heart sank at the recollection that his pocket carried only two more of those luxuries. Ah, well, they would last until the next morning, when he would certainly be back at the camp.

While he smoked, the drowsy wood life of the warm day melted into a new note as the melancholy creatures of night awoke. Morgan shivered. He had never cared for the country. The only birds whose music he understood fluttered along Broadway or in and out of the Tombs.

He sprang upright at a rustling in the grass behind the log. Snakes, he was sure! He lamented his lack of experience with country jobs, but he remembered reading somewhere that hunters build fires as a protection against such rural denizens as lions and tigers. It might work with snakes. He gathered a pile of sticks and started a meagre blaze. Afterward he lay down, but rest was not easy in the swamp. An owl declaimed its dismal periods nearby; a whippoorwill called disconsolately; a high-pitched, vibrant outcry brought him erect, every nerve alert, his hand on his revolver; some heavy body crashed past; always he imagined furtive rustlings in the grass about him. A case had once taken him to the opera. He had slept through "Gotterdammerung," but that was a soporific compared with this.

It began to rain. He saw his fire diminish and die. He fancied the rustlings were closer, and he had no idea what hunters did when their fires went out. He lifted his feet. He hugged his knees. In this unprofessional attitude he spent the remainder of the night without sleep.

When the gray dawn came he looked in vain for his horse. The broken bridle dangled eloquently from the sapling.

Chilled to the bone and wet, Morgan set out, determined to make Duncan pay in some way for this night just past. He imagined the confidence man, at the end of a multiplicity of adventures, completely at his mercy — even on his knees, begging for mercy. What he wouldn't say to Duncan then! Or, if Duncan resisted, what he wouldn't do to Duncan! These pleasant thoughts served to pass the time, but they brought him no nearer the edge of the swamp. When night fell his weariness overcame his fear of snakes and he slept.

By rare good luck he shot a wild turkey the next morning and managed to broil it over a smouldering fire. Near the fire he stayed all day, for it still rained and he felt rheumatic.

Another night came, and another day of rain. He lost track of time. The feeling that he had spent most of his life in the swamp depressed him. As a matter of fact, it was the fifth day when the storm finally ceased.

Morgan, sitting in the warm, bland sunlight, took stock of himself. The prosperous, well-dressed detective who had entered the swamp had become a mass of discomforts to which rags clung. He was undecided as to whether the rheumatism or his lack of tobacco hurt the more. He had only two cartridges left, and from past experience he knew they might not bring him a single morsel. It behooved him to get on his feet and escape from this hole, rheumatism or no rheumatism.

With the sun shining he could be reasonably sure he was keeping to a straight line. But the swamp was evidently interminable. His lack of success pricked his anger against Duncan. He swore aloud.

"Let me get my hands on that slick article who let me in for this! Just let me see him! Just let me get within striking distance!"

It was about this time that he turned pale and leaned weakly against a tree. He had heard a man shout.

As he opened his lips he wondered if the rain, the cold, the long disuse had affected his voice. Would it respond to his will at this vital moment? It was more than a shout. It was a roar that left his throat. And from somewhere a voice answered, triumphantly, hysterically.

Almost immediately Morgan saw a man running toward him, splashing through pools, waving his arms, crying out incoherently. Morgan straightened and began running, too, in the direction of this figure so like a scarecrow. It was a human being. It meant companionship, conversation, a touch of the world again. Heaven knew he needed all that!

Then Morgan saw that it was Duncan. At the same moment Duncan saw that it was Morgan.

Duncan sprang behind a tree. He thrust his arms out in frantic gestures. Morgan drew his revolver. He walked steadily forward.

"Duncan, my dear, it's struck twelve. Come on out now and take your medicine."

"Gently! Gently!" Duncan called. "I give you fair warning!"

Morgan walked faster.

"Fire away. I'll take my chances."

"Don't misunderstand me," Duncan said. "I haven't a gun. Do you think I would harm a hair of your head if I had? I have a better weapon than that.

Come any closer and I'll run like the devil."

Morgan stopped. Vengeance was in his heart, but he permitted himself a glimpse at the reverse of the picture.

"Duncan! For God's sake, don't do that!"

"Then you'll listen to reason."

Morgan smiled again.

"It's a bluff, Duncan. Maybe you can run like Bryan, but you haven't the nerve."

"Be reasonable or you'll see," Duncan threatened. "I'm a human being. So are you, I take it."

Morgan's smile broadened.

"Don't be foolish with other people's money and bet on it."

Duncan pulled at the torn fringe of his short sleeves. He shifted his feet.

"Suppose I surrendered?" he asked. "Where would you find a policeman or a patrol wagon? Could you get me out of here?"

"I can't seem to find a taxi for myself," Morgan replied. "But I'll land you in the cooler yet."

"If we live," Duncan said, "and nothing happens, and all goes well, and *deus volens*."

"Don't swear in a foreign tongue," Morgan answered.

"Let's confer on the main problem," Duncan proposed. "If you don't agree I'll run and leave you alone. I don't believe you're very good company for yourself just now."

"As far as that's concerned," Morgan grinned, "if I were you I'd hate myself by this time."

"So I do, and I want a truce," Duncan blurted out.

Morgan sighed.

"All right," he agreed. "I'll mark this place, and when we're through you can go play Indian again."

Duncan stepped out. His hair was heavy and tangled. The thick black growth on his face made his eyes seem very large, white, and hungry.

"If I had had you along," Morgan said, "I needn't have been afraid of the snakes."

Duncan came straight to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

"You don't know how good it is to see you, Morgan. I've been denied even the companionship of my horse. He got bogged."

Morgan's voice was a little husky as he asked:

"Say, you don't happen to have a cigar hidden away on your clothes?"

"No, but I retain the essentials."

He produced a large sack of cheap flake tobacco and a package of cigarette papers.

"I never smoked those puff rolls," Morgan said disappointedly. "I couldn't roll one of them if it would get me out of this swamp."

"Permit me to roll it for you," Duncan offered.

And he did it, deftly and lovingly, and passed it to the detective. Then he rolled one for himself, and they sat on a log, shoulders touching, while they smoked contentedly.

"So you're Bob Morgan!" Duncan said. "The famous Morgan! I must confess your present state isn't up to your reputation. You might at least have brought a few necessities in with you."

Morgan glanced at the soiled, tattered figure.

"Beau," he said, "believe me, you're not up to it. If you come any more of that easy money talk on me I'll scream for help."

They both spoke in soft, silky, wondering voices, as though admiring the unaccustomed sounds; and at Morgan's words they burst into high-pitched laughter that was so terrifying in their ears it ceased immediately.

"Glad to meet you, Duncan," Morgan said gruffly. "But I don't want to tap any wires or buy any green goods. Let that be understood."

Duncan shook his head.

"Morgan," he announced, "there is something radically wrong with us."

"Better patent that discovery."

Duncan shook his head again.

"No," he continued. "We're not living up to tradition."

"I'm scarcely living at all," Morgan said.

"For a detective and a fugitive," Duncan declared, "we show extraordinary good sense. Romantically speaking, we should be at each other's throats."

"Cut it, and prepare me another whiff of joy."

But Duncan good-humouredly refused to manufacture any more cigarettes until Morgan had consented to some working arrangement.

The decision to join forces until they had found a way out of the swamp, if the thing could be done, was a matter of a moment. That the chase should recommence once they were out was also agreed to at once. They divided only on the start the detective should give the criminal. Morgan offered

half an hour, and Duncan demanded half a day. Morgan wanted to smoke. Duncan was hungry. Morgan produced from his pocket a few small bones to which tiny shreds of meat still clung, and these he kept prominently in view while the other carelessly dangled the paper and the tobacco bag in his fingers. They began to compromise.

By the time they had settled on an hour and a half the sun was down. They made camp. Duncan proved himself more adept than Morgan at building fires. When he had a pile of brushwood blazing he went in search of certain edible roots on which he had largely subsisted for the last few days. He brought some of these back and shared them with the detective.

The gobbling of wild turkeys awoke them at dawn, and they crept to a clump of palmettos at the foot of a dead cypress. As the sky lightened behind the gibbet-like branches, a row of birds appeared in silhouette. Morgan rested his arm against a palmetto trunk, aimed, and brought one of the birds down.

Duncan patted him on the back.

"You would have made a fortune conducting a shooting gallery, Morgan."

"Yeh. And if I live to tell about that shot up north, I'll feel like a liar and everybody'll know I'm one."

The turkey solved the food problem for the present, and, as long as the sun shone, they knew their chances for speedy escape were good. But the clouds turned black again in the afternoon, and a dismal downpour commenced.

"Doesn't it do anything but rain in this hole?" Morgan grieved.

"We are below the snow line," Duncan explained. "I suggest camping here before we start walking in circles."

They made a fire and by the last daylight gathered a heap of wood.

Duncan regretted their lack of a pack of cards to pass the time. This gave Morgan a thought.

"You don't happen by any crazy chance to play chess, Duncan?"

"I know something more than the moves."

"Three cheers," Morgan cried.

He felt in his pocket and brought forth a small pocket chess board.

"When I'm traveling alone I often irritate myself working problems on this. I was using it on the train only a thousand years or so ago."

They moved closer to the fire, tossed for sides, arranged the markers, and in a few minutes their minds were far away from the swamp and their plight.

They were well matched. Morgan, who had the white pieces, opened with a brilliant, puzzling attack on the king's side; but Duncan, with confidence and forethought, combined his forces in a flawless defense. As they recognized each other's ability they took more time for their moves. Morgan would lean forward, pursing his lips, studious lines showing on his forehead, while Duncan, eyes intent on the board, would roll a couple of cigarettes, pass one to his opponent, reach out his hand to the fire, and offer a burning brand for a light. It was very exciting. Perhaps they saw in the game a symbol of their relations — detective against criminal, and both most excellent players. It was very late when Morgan unmasked his rooks and trapped Duncan's knight on the king's line.

Duncan leaned back.

"You play a strong game, Morgan."

The detective was pleased by his victory.

"You're pretty good practice for me, Beau," he conceded. "But you ought to have left that pawn of mine alone. It was a gold brick. Oh! Excuse me for talking shop. Hello! It's still raining."

The storm ceased the next day for only a few minutes. They did not travel far, because Morgan complained of what he called his growing pains.

That night they played chess again. Duncan won.

"A game apiece," Morgan said. "To-morrow night'll be the rubber. Waterloo won't be jack stones to what I'll do to you."

But Morgan was in no condition to walk the next day. He lay by the smouldering fire, inclined to complain.

"Another twenty-four hours and you'll be all right," Duncan said cheerily.

"I'll never be all right again," Morgan lamented.

Duncan dried enough sticks and moss at the fire to make a crude bed. He lifted Morgan from the wet ground, then prepared a soup of turkey bones and roots in the detective's drinking cup. Morgan drank it with relish, but his ailments occupied his mind to the exclusion of chess. So Duncan sat at his side, watching the fire and trying to keep up his spirits.

The last clouds sailed away in the morning. The cold, wet weather was routed. But Morgan's vocabulary was not sufficiently large to let him walk far at a time. After several attempts he gave up and lay down, groaning.

"Poor old Morgan," Duncan said, leaning sympathetically over him.

"Go to the corner and send in an ambulance call," Morgan answered

with a grimace. "Then bid me farewell before it begins to pour again. If you hang around for me we'll both die of water on the brain."

Duncan patted his shoulder.

"For Heaven's sake, don't get delirious — Bob."

For some time Morgan frowned at the fire.

"Beau," he said at last, "I mean it. I haven't got the build for a millstone. Besides, I can't be under obligations. I can't let pleasure interfere with business. If you get out do me just two favours. Send a posse in for me and wire the office to get another man after you as quick as lightning."

"My position is very simple," Duncan answered. "I wouldn't leave you if you offered me title to all the real estate in this swamp."

Morgan grinned.

"Since you're talking shop, Beau, you may be a Southern cavalier and me a Yankee born, but I never took fifty per cent, and I see ten suckers in my business any day where you see one."

"No use trying to get me mad, Bobbie. I'm too selfish to leave you and face this cheerless world alone."

"Well, just remember, Beau, I'll get you. As sure as the whole world's gone to grass and water, I'll get you."

"I admire ambition," Duncan said. "I regret that I can not encourage it. But the problem need not trouble us at present. Let me make you comfortable, then I'll roll you another cigarette."

He carried Morgan to a sunny spot, and gave his limbs a thorough, hard massage. Afterward the detective struggled up and began to walk in a crouching position. Duncan cut a stout stick for him. He took his arm and helped him all he could.

"You're sure full of sand, Bob," he said.

Without answering, Morgan walked on. Now and then he would pause, but always, after a few minutes' rest, he would start forward again. By and by his figure crouched less and his steps grew longer.

He was exhausted when they made camp, but the worst of his pains had left him, and it was he who proposed after supper that they play the rubber game.

"I'm an awful object to think about," he explained. "Men have gone nutty over less. I've got to get my mind off myself. Besides, I'd like to know who's the better man. If I hadn't lost sight of one thing last time there wouldn't have been anything to it."

The game was slow. Each was determined to win, so each took as long as he pleased for his moves. Morgan, when he could scarcely keep his eyes open, suggested that they postpone the finish until the next evening.

"I guess I'm trained a little fine," he said. "I don't want to make a slip."

"It looks like a draw to me," Duncan answered.

"It looked as though I'd get out of this swamp the day I came in, but did I? Study the board. I can see more than one way to slip over a knock-out."

Duncan laughed.

"I'm afraid you'll never win this game."

"I've got to and I will," Morgan said. "I'll bet you three pine trees and a case of swamp water — magnums!"

He folded the board, returned it to his pocket, lay down, and was fast asleep in a twinkling.

They were off by the time the sun had slipped its first long shadows through the swamp. Morgan was convalescent. He walked steadily onward, resting one hand on Duncan's shoulder. They talked of the unfinished game which had assumed colossal proportions in their dwarfed minds. But that rubber was destined never to be finished. It was a little after noon when Morgan said in a hushed voice:

"Beau, wait a minute."

"What's the matter?" Duncan whispered as he stopped.

"This darned swamp's thinning."

"It had occurred to me," Duncan agreed. "I was afraid to speak of it."

"Look at those palmetto clumps," Morgan went on excitedly. "They're not as high or as thick. There isn't as much water. Beau, old boy, I believe we're going to get out!"

"There's certainly higher ground ahead," Duncan answered. "Come on, Bobbie."

"Beau! Think of the food and the cigars!"

"Oh, you won't have any taste for decent tobacco," Duncan said carelessly.

Morgan made a wry face and rubbed his knee.

"And this rich food isn't all it's cracked up to be. Rich food for the idle rich!"

They struggled through the last of the underbrush and stepped into the open pine forest. There was hard soil or sand beneath their feet. About them the sun laid warm, caressing fingers of light. Insects droned, and birds sang joyously. Before long they came to trees scarred by turpentiners, and later

to a wood road.

They paused and stood awkwardly for a few minutes without words. The road — narrow, twisting, and overgrown — screamed of civilization, of populous cities, and of marts noisy with commerce.

"We've discovered America," Morgan said.

"Yes," replied Duncan. In a moment he added: "I believe you agreed to give me an hour and a half. Therefore, I will resume my travels."

Morgan looked at him with an air of childish wonder.

"So I did," he answered dreamily — "an hour and a half!"

He pulled his wits together.

"Cross my heart, I'll stay where I am for an hour and a half after I lose sight of you."

"Quite satisfactory," Duncan said.

"Before you go," Morgan began uncomfortably, "I'd like to hand you a few words of thanks on this auspicious occasion."

"There's no question of thanks," Duncan protested politely. "Undoubtedly we were mutually helpful."

Morgan extended his hand.

"Beau, good-bye."

He essayed a little humour.

"That is — so long. It won't be many days before we meet again. I am looking forward to it."

Duncan took the detective's hand.

"This is an eternal farewell. In some ways I regret it. Good-bye, Bob. You're sure you can navigate until you come to a house?"

"Sure. I'll steer into the first drydock I see and have them light a fire under me."

Their hands dropped. Duncan hesitated. Finally he put his fingers in his pocket, pulled out tobacco and paper, and rolled a cigarette. He handed it to Morgan, who mechanically placed it between his lips. Duncan divided the tobacco. He gave a part of it with several papers to Morgan. Then he turned and strode off through the woods.

Morgan sat down. He watched the tall, gaunt figure about which ragged clothing flapped until it was out of sight. Very soon he became restless. He took the paper and tobacco and tried to make a cigarette, but his fingers were clumsy. The flakes spilled, and the thin, slippery paper tore. As his desire to smoke even this distasteful makeshift increased, the picture of Dun-

can's deft manipulation came into his fancy and lingered.

He opened the chess board to study the unfinished game. His line of attack was perfectly clear in his mind now. As move by move its beauties unfolded he chuckled quietly. Duncan was helpless. Suddenly his chuckling ceased. There was one obscure move that Duncan might have offered in reply. It would have spoiled the entire combination. Yet it was the advancing of a pawn on the extreme flank, and its immediate significance appeared of minor importance.

"Duncan wasn't wise to it," he told himself.

And after a moment:

"Could Duncan have been hep?"

He puzzled over the board for a long time. He arose and paced back and forth.

"He might have forced a draw with that move," he mused, "or even a winning attack. I've got to know what he would have done. I'll ask him when I nab him."

He took out his watch. Duncan had been gone two hours.

Morgan didn't follow the route Duncan had taken. The memory of his lonely wanderings kept him in the road which brought him before dark to a turpentine camp. He accepted the foreman's hospitality for the night.

He set out early the next morning with the foreman's horse and buggy which he was to send back from the nearest railroad station, five hours away. The road was long and monotonous, but he sat at his ease, smoking bad cigars which he had bought at the camp, and singing snatches of popular songs in praise of his release from muscular effort.

His thoughts of Duncan centred about the uncompleted game of chess. While he was confident that Duncan's capture was only a matter of time, he refused to bother his head with definite plans until he reached the railroad. These few hours, this long journey, were a vacation from mental and physical labour — an excursion in contentment.

The appearance of the country had not altered when the shriek of a locomotive whistle warned him his ride was nearly ended. He touched the whip to his horse for the first time and was soon on the right of way. He saw the glittering lines of steel, a rough section house, and a water tank; but in front of him the woods were as thick as those he had just left. He pulled up, thoroughly puzzled, for he had expected to find a station at this crossing.

Suddenly his curiosity died. His indolent figure stiffened. His hand went

to his coat pocket where the revolver with its single remaining cartridge lay. A filthy man in rags was trying to conceal himself behind one of the insufficient tank supports.

Morgan stepped from the buggy, levelling his revolver.

"Duncan," he said, "I warned you it was 'so long.'"

"It's Morgan, of all the world," Duncan answered, but his smile was sickly. "If that train had only stopped I'd have missed this pleasant reunion."

"You ought to be grateful. Nice people are waiting to weep on your neck up North. Come on out and let's hurry home."

"Not so fast, Morgan. I can easily get away from you. But I confess to a strong desire to finish that game. Suppose for that purpose we arrange another truce."

"We'll finish it on the train," Morgan answered with a grin. "I've got you beaten so many ways I blush to think of it."

"Have you?" Duncan asked slyly. "How about that pawn? I win!"

Morgan's mouth opened. His revolver arm dropped.

"You never saw that ——"

Duncan sprang from behind his post, and bounded across the right of way for the woods.

Morgan raised his arm again.

"Stop or I'll shoot!"

But Duncan ran the faster. The muzzle of Morgan's revolver was pointed at the fugitive's back. He had brought down wild turkeys. The result was certain.

Then his arm swayed gently to one side. The movement seemed almost involuntary. He pulled the trigger. He sped his last cartridge into the heart of an innocent pine tree.

He thrust the gun in his pocket and started in pursuit. When he reached the edge of the woods Duncan had disappeared. Morgan sank to the ground. He rubbed his knees ruefully. He shook his head. He shrugged his shoulders. Sitting there in a heap he lighted one of his vile cigars.

"That blasted rheumatism!" he moaned. "That blasted rheumatism! It must have jumped to my gun arm. I'll have to report sick. I'm not worth a hill of beans at this business as I am. I wonder if I've got anything besides rheumatism."

As he blew the stinging smoke from his nostrils he smiled reminiscently.