DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

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E. Wallace
H. Ashton-Wolfe
Chas. Somerville
and others

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SATAN SITS IN

by Edward Parrish Ware

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Violets blue—
Wrigley's Spearmint
Is good for you!
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THE FLAVOR LASTS

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J-5

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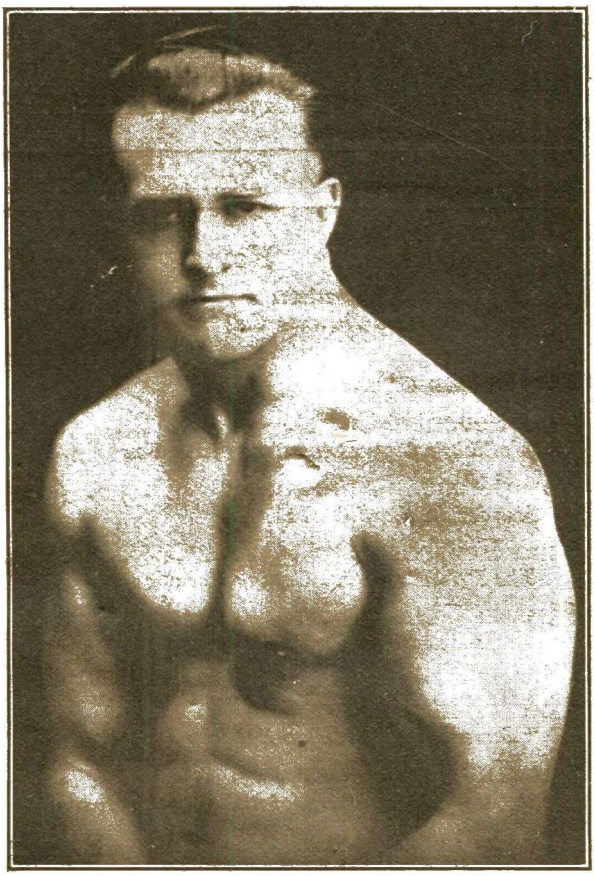

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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XXXIX — *Saturday, February 2, 1929* — NUMBER 1

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4227 Climbing Up Golden Stairs
Lindy Lou

2426 Jeannine I Dream of Lilac Time
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2398 Ramona
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2392 Laugh Clown Laugh
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Don't You Remember

4135 Rovin' Gambler
Little Log Cabin in Lane

2407 Girl of My Dreams
Dear Old Pal of Yesterday

4133 Jesse James
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2386 My Ohio Home
Alice of the Pines

2381 Ford Has Made a Lady Out of Lizzie
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2366 My Blue Heaven
Back of Every Cloud

4141 I Wish I Was Single Again
Want to Find Love

4160 Sweet Hawaiian Kisses
Blue Hawaiian Moon

4118 May I Sleep in Your Barn Tonight
When I Saw Sweet Nellie Home

2369 Among My Souvenirs
We Were Sweethearts

4117 Where River Shannon Flows
A Rose From Ireland

4171 Red Wing
Waters of Minnetonka

Popular Songs

4119 Hand Me Down My Walking Cane
Captain Jinks

2323 Get Away Old Man
Well I Swan

8101 Roll 'Em Girls
Save It for a Rainy Day

4038 Sleep Baby Sleep (Yodel)
Roll On Silvery Moon

4090 In Baggage Coach Ahead
Old Apple Tree

4086 Floyd Collins' Fate
Pickwick Club Tragedy

2338 Lindy Lindy How I'd Like to Be You
No, No Positively No

2344 Me and My Shadow
Sweet Hawaiian Kisses

4122 When I'm Gone You'll Soon Forget
Father, Dear Father Come Home

2272 Rudolph Valentino
Little Rosewood Casket

4173 Boston Burglar
Cowboy's Lament

Hawaiian

4156 La Golondrina
Dreamy Moon

4023 My Old Kentucky Home
O Sole Mio

4084 Aloha Land
Honolulu Bay

4009 Palakiho Blues
One Two Three Four

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4146 Silent Night
Christmas Chimes

4075 Church in Wildwood
Voice of Chimes

4046 Nearer My God to Thee
Lord Is My Shepherd

4069 When Roll Is Called Up Yonder
Throw Out the Life Line

4091 Old Rugged Cross
Beyond the Clouds

Comedy

4002 Flanagan's 2nd Hand Car
Hi and Si and Line Fence

4004 Flanagan in Restaurant
Flanagan's Married Life

4168 Jail Birds
Wedding Bells

4211 Andy Goes A'Hunting
Andy Gets Learnin'

Popular Dances

All with vocal chorus and all fox trots except where otherwise marked.

1541 My Angel (Angela Mia), Waltz
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7028 Varsity Drag
Sure Enough Blues

7029 Mississippi Mud Blues
I'm a One Man Gal

1540 Old Man Sunshine
Sidewalks of New York

1510 Ramona, Waltz
If I Didn't Love You

1463 My Blue Heaven
Best Gal of All

1497 After My Laughter Came Tears
Back to Connemara

1505 My Ohio Home
Like My Daddy's Gal

1508 My Melancholy Baby
Down by the Sea

Instrumental

4193 Whistler and His Dog
Powder Puff

4189 Drowsy Waters
Herd Girl's Dream

4162 Blue Danube Waltz
Skaters Waltz

4190 Sidewalks of New York
O'Leahy's Lullaby

4016 Irish Jigs and Reels, No.1
Irish Jigs and Reels, No.2

4138 By Waters of Minnetonka
Over the Waves

4068 Arkansas Traveler
Turkey in the Straw

4061 Listen to Mocking Bird
Song Bird (Both Whistling)

4161 Dixie Favorites (Banjo Solo)
Medley of Southern Airs

4217 Irish Washerwoman
Mrs. McLeod's Reel

4218 Merry Widow Waltz
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Blues

7023 John Henry Blues
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7025 Yellow Dog Blues
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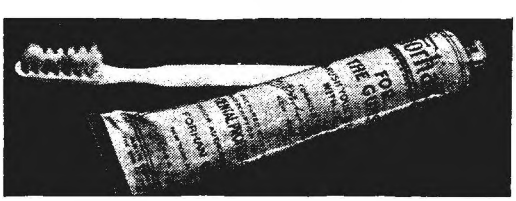
Forhan's *for the gums*



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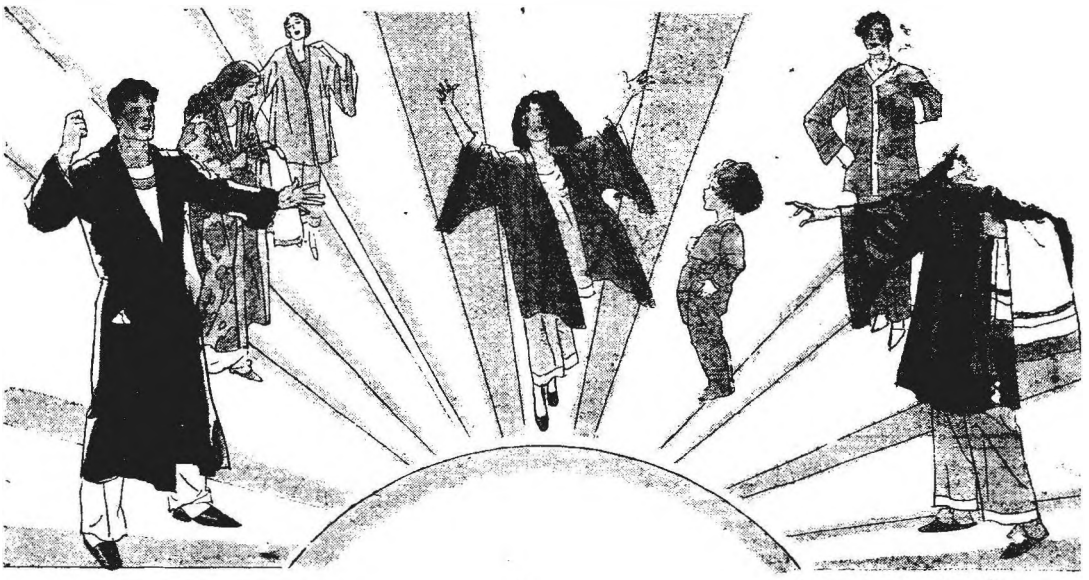

The sunny side of seven

When 7 o'clock seems to you like a dim and drowsy dawn, there's a quick, jolly way to scatter the night mists from heavy eyes—

Plop your sleepy self into the tub while a clear torrent rushes around you. If you are still drowsy after sixty tingling seconds and a gentle caress of Ivory lather—well, really, you should consult a doctor!

Your brush or sponge slips over the creamy smooth cake and works instant magic—light-hearted clouds of quick-cleansing foam. And then, when the shining bubbles have done their refreshing work, how gaily they rinse away!

If, in the course of this revivifying process, you should drop your Ivory, don't even look for it. In a second the gleaming friend of ten million bathers will cheerfully bob to the surface again.

You're clean now as a birch tree in the rain. And if you're brave, you'll run in water that's coolish—or cold—to bring youth glowing to eyes and skin.

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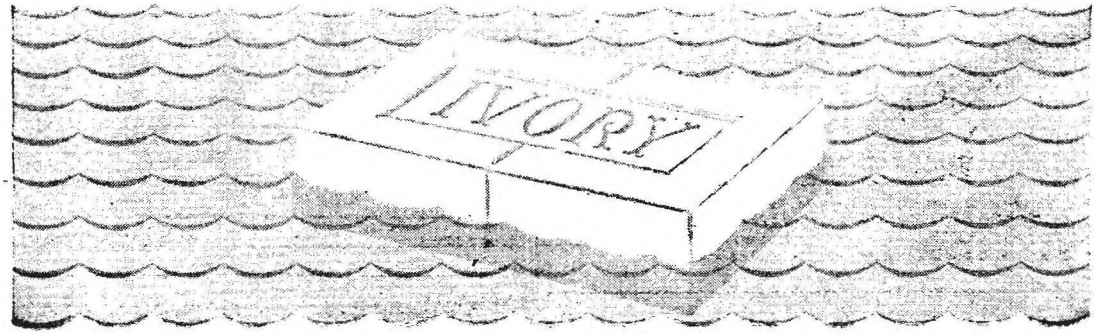


DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

VOLUME XXXIX SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1929 NUMBER 1

Satan Sits In

By Edward Parrish Ware

"Lift 'em high, men," the ranger commanded, stepping into the cleared circle. "Get 'em up!"

A Hound Dog Leads Ranger Calhoun Into a Strange Mystery of the Swamp Country

CHAPTER I

A Grave in the Wilderness

THE mournful howling of a hound, repeated at close intervals, always on the same note, might have passed unnoticed by most men. Not so Jack Calhoun. He heard the eerie sound as he paddled his dugout through the darkness that shrouded Thunder Run, deep in the heart of the Sunken Lands.

"He's got himself hurt, somehow or other," was his thought, as he looked toward the black forest. "Horned by a buck, or maybe accidentally shot by a hunter. Anyhow, he's in considerable agony."

Again came the doleful howl. Cal ceased paddling. For two or three minutes he sat there listening, mind occupied with the dog on shore.

"Doesn't sound exactly like he's hurt, come to think of it," he reflected. "May have been dragging a leash, and got hung up in the brush. No, that isn't exactly the note he's sounding—Mourning! That's it. He's pouring

those doleful howls straight from his heart. Reckon I'll have a look. Nobody lives over there, I'm certain," he told himself, as he nosed his boat ashore. "Can't do any harm to look, at any rate."

Shielding a small lantern under his jacket, concentrating the rays upon the brush ahead, Cal made his way through darkness, a matter of half a quarter. The mourning wail of the hound continued, ever growing nearer. Presently Cal spied the animal, a gaunt black-and-tan, sitting on his haunches beside a tumbled heap of earth, leaves, and broken brush. Up went the lean muzzle, and again came the shivery howl.

"Quiet, boy!" Cal called, advancing. "What's all the fuss about, huh? Reckon I can make a good guess," he muttered to himself, carefully slanting the rays of his lantern in all directions. "Nobody about, it seems—just this old dog, and his dead."

Cal advanced until he stood beside a narrow trench from which the hound had clawed the heap of earth and leaves. A shallow grave, there in the heart of the lonely woodland—a circumstance sufficient in itself to inform the ranger that he had discovered evidence of a crime.

The dog, with Cal's coming, had withdrawn a bit from the trench. Sitting on its gaunt hindquarters, eyes fixed upon him, the animal seemed to have given over his vigil to the ranger. It was as though he had said in words:

"Here's a friend. Now this trouble I'm suffering from will be cured. Whatever it is that's wrong will be made right!"

But it never would be made right in this world.

A dead man lay in the trench, face up to the revealing rays of the lantern. A native, but one with whom the ranger felt sure he had never had contact. Just how long he had been dead, Cal could not determine; perhaps a day. But the cause of death was immediately apparent.

A large-caliber bullet had p through the brain, entering just where the line of bushy hair rose the forehead, and slanting upwa a point slightly below the crown. Dea must have been a matter of one or two brief seconds.

Cal did not examine the corpse further at the moment. Instead, he began circling slowly about the trench, widening the circle constantly. After a bit he paused at a point near where he had first approached the howling dog. Getting to his knees he searched the ground with care.

"Blood on the leaves," he muttered. "Tracks. Two men bore the body between them, coming from toward Thunder Run."

He got up and returned to the grave, where he searched the pockets of the dead. Nothing enlightening was found. The every-day contents of the average native: knife, tobacco, extra cartridges for a rifle which was nowhere to be seen, and such trifles.

There was, however, one pocket which held Cal's interest to the exclusion of all else. The inside breast-pocket of the native's coat had been turned wrongside out, and left so.

"Something was taken hurriedly from that pocket," Cal concluded positively, after considering the matter for five minutes. "Looks like this chap was killed for sake of robbery—though where and how the likes of him would come by enough of value to tempt thieves is something of a puzzle."

He glanced at his watch, noting that he had barely more than an hour in which to reach a certain cabin where he had an appointment, if he wished to be punctual to the minute. So, without further delay, he refilled the trench with earth and leaves, piled some logs over it, then covered the entire spot with a heap of brush.

"That'll keep wolves off until I can return," he said to himself. "Now for a look along that trail toward Thunder, then the cabin."

e hound, evidently comforted by presence of a human being whom instinctively knew he could trust, the brushy mound reluctantly, trotting at Cal's heels. The ranger did not discourage him.

The trail would have baffled any man other than one with the tracking skill of a Pawnee scout, shrouded in darkness as it was, with only the feeble rays of a lantern to disclose it. Calhoun had such skill, plus years of training in woodscraft. He traced the course unerringly to the bank of the stream.

"Native was running the river in his dugout. Men on shore waylaid him. Maybe he put up a fight. Anyhow, he was shot, taken ashore, robbed and buried. Dugout was not set adrift, since somebody would be bound to see it—and a native can invariably identify the craft of another native, provided he has seen it before. They sank it, probably."

Cal took a line of cotton cord from his dugout, fastened his iron skillet to one end, then walked along the shore adjacent to the spot where the blood-trail ended. At intervals he would make a cast with the heavy skillet, dragging it ashore through the water.

At length the improvised plummet dropped into the water and thudded against an obstacle. Cal paddled his boat above the spot, and presently brought the obstacle near enough to the surface to determine its character.

"The dugout," he said briefly. "But I'll have to get help to raise it, granting it should prove advisable to do so."

Time was getting short, and Cal, dropping investigations at that stage, shot his shell up the current, the black-and-tan stretched in the bow.

"You were making a trip with your master, old fellow," he said, speaking aloud to his canine passenger, after the manner of men the world over who love dogs. "And the killers overlooked a bet when they failed to kill you along with him. Dug him up, and called for help, didn't you? And help came. Yeah—and I guess you and I will know more about this thing soon. Just give us time."

The dog, comforted by the soothing tones, whined friendly, and nestled down. Cal paddled on until he judged he had come within a short distance of his destination, then hid his dugout in the brush and went ashore.

To his surprise, the hound leaped out behind him and, without a moment's hesitation, trotted off in the direction Cal judged the cabin lay. The ranger whistled a soft note, and presently the black-and-tan came to his side.

"We'll have a look at things first, old fellow," he said softly, as he leashed the dog with a length of rope. "We might otherwise live to wish we had!"

With the dog docilely beside him, Cal, lantern extinguished, slipped through the timber until a dimly lighted square advised him that a cabin stood just ahead.

Still leading the dog, he stole along the edge of the cleared space in which the cabin stood, thence to an approach at the rear, where he peered through a chinking hole which gave an unobstructed view of the interior.

Leaning against the chimney-board, eyes intent upon the blazing logs on the hearth below, was a girl.

CHAPTER II

The Girl in the Cabin

AND what a girl!

Not more than twenty-two or three, Cal judged her as she stood revealed in the varying tints cast by the blazing logs. As slim and lithe as a willow-shoot, and medium tall, with a crown of silken hair which matched in color the leaves of an oak after the frost has tinted them. Her mouth was rather wide, red-lipped, generous, while a subtle color seemed to flush up under the tan of her smooth skin. Brown corduroy trousers, folded at the knee into the tops of small but businesslike laced boots, flannel shirt, and leather-

faced Mackinaw, gave her something of the appearance of a boy—but nothing could alter, or detract from, the lovely lines and curves of her figure.

The girl was Amy Hollister, who, in short, Calhoun had journeyed many water-miles to meet. He had heard her described by enthusiastic admirers, but had never seen her before. She was, he admitted, worth a long journey to look upon.

But Jack Calhoun had other things to think about besides the personal appearance of the girl in the cabin. His eyes plumbed the shadows in the farthest corners of the room, revealing no other presence. The girl was undoubtedly alone. A moment later he hailed the house, careful to do so not too loudly.

The door opened, and the girl appeared silhouetted against the yellow background.

"Who is it?" she called, her voice striking pleasingly upon Cal's ears.

"The man you sent for, Miss Hollister," the ranger replied, advancing. "Shall I come inside?" he asked, wondering a bit at the manner in which she stared at him. Then, with an inward chuckle, he understood.

Being in a strange section of the Sunken Lands, Inspector Calhoun had elected to masquerade as a native. Instead of the usual uniform of the rangers he wore the jeans trousers, checked shirt, Mackinaw, and slouch hat of the swamper. Moreover, he was unshaved, had carefully disarranged his shock of tawny hair, and a large hunk of home-cured tobacco distended one cheek.

No wonder the girl had hesitated!

"Please don't judge me by my get-up!" he begged, laughing. "Just take my word for it that I'm the man you were awaiting, and invite me in."

The girl relaxed, a smile parted her lips, and she drew aside to allow her caller to enter.

"You look so much like a native, and a rather unprepossessing one at that," she apologized, closing the "that I had my doubts. Please down."

Cal was watching the black-and- the dog having entered with him and been unleashed.

"Perfectly at home," he decided, as the animal, after sniffing at the bunk in a corner, nosing into the shadows a bit, curled up beside the fireplace. "And that tells me a lot."

To the waiting girl he said:

"My time is yours, Miss Hollister. My name is Calhoun, and I'm an inspector of rangers here in the Sunken Lands. Knew your father slightly, and I assure you, both for my chief, Captain Wheeler, and myself, that you shall have our best efforts in whatever task you set us."

"Mr. Calhoun!" the girl exclaimed, wide eyes upon the ranger. "Why, I've heard much of you since coming to the swamp land. It was good of Captain Wheeler to send *you,* I'm sure!"

Cal bowed gravely in acknowledgment of the emphasis she gave that "you," then asked:

"Where is the man who lives here —Sheppard, I believe he is called?"

"Didn't you see him down at headquarters?" Miss Hollister countered. "When he brought my letter?"

Cal looked at her gravely for an instant before replying, then motioned her to a chair before the fire.

"I was not present when your messenger arrived at Oak Donnick," he replied. "Captain Wheeler did not recognize the native who brought it. All we know about the matter, is this:

"A letter, purporting to come from you, reached Oak Donnick by hand early this morning. In it you stated that you were in danger and distress, reminded Captain Wheeler that he had promised, at the time of your father's death, to assist you in any manner possible, and called upon him to keep that promise. You stated that you would meet his man at a certain cabin belong-

[illegible] a native, Hamp Sheppard, at [illegible] o'clock to-night. Should he not [illegible]e to-night, then you would be [illegible]e again at the same hour to-morrow night. You enjoined absolute secrecy, stating that no one hereabouts must know that you had called for a ranger. Further than that you did not go.

"However, we have, of course, some knowledge of your background. Your father, David Hollister, acquired a concession here on Thunder Run, consisting of one hundred and fifty thousand acres of virgin timber, began logging and milling it, and was accidentally killed within six months after he began. You elected to continue the business and have so far done so. That is about the extent of our knowledge. Is it correct?"

"It is," the girl told him, her brow puzzled. "But about the messenger—I do not understand. He was to return here as soon as possible, and when I arrived from Milltown, about dusk, he was absent. Hasn't yet returned."

"And he won't," Cal mentally commented. Aloud: "You had very good reasons for trusting Sheppard, Miss Hollister?"

"Yes. Father befriended him when we first came into the swamp, and he was very grateful—faithful, even. Why are you so curious about Sheppard, Mr. Calhoun?"

"Please let me do the questioning just now, Miss Hollister," Cal requested. "Your answers may, doubtless will, help clear up a matter of vital importance. Do you recognize the dog, yonder?" He pointed to the animals.

"Of course. That's Rowdy, Sheppard's hound. I wondered at seeing him come in with you. Come to think of it," she exclaimed suddenly, finding Cal with eyes which were suddenly shadowed with anxiety, "you had him on leash! Where did you find him, Mr. Calhoun?"

"In the brush along the route to the St. Francis," Cal told her. "Describe Sheppard."

Wonderingly, almost suspiciously, she obeyed—and any doubt Cal might have had was immediately dissipated.

The dead man in the trench was undoubtedly the native messenger, Hamp Sheppard—Amy Hollister's trusted employee.

Cal sat staring into the fire, while gradually he reconstructed a part of what must have happened there beside Big Thunder, resulting in murder and the digging of a shallow grave.

Miss Hollister, sensing his preoccupation, held back certain questions which obviously trembled for expression.

The black-and-tan stirred from a fitful doze, reared his thin muzzle and poured forth a long-drawn, dismal howl.

CHAPTER III

A Bully Intrudes

"QUIET, boy!" Cal admonished, stretching forth a comforting hand. "He's grieving, Miss Hollister—for the loss of some one dear to him. Just as you will no doubt grieve, in lesser degree, over the loss of a trusted employee—one who was, in his humble way, a friend.

"Hamp Sheppard met up with death, in the wilderness between here and the mouth of Thunder Run," he announced gently. "Rowdy's mourning howls guided me to the place where he lies buried. I am convinced that he never reached Oak Donnick. That he died, in short, defending the message with which you had intrusted him. I am sorry to have to hurt you with this news—but it is something you had best know at once."

Sudden tears filled Amy Hollister's eyes, and her lips trembled.

"I—why, Mr. Calhoun, I can hardly believe it!" she cried. "Poor Sheppard—surely not! Is there no chance that you might be mistaken?" she asked, almost pleaded.

Cal shook his head, face gravely

sympathetic. "I am not mistaken," he assured her. "The description is that of Sheppard, and Rowdy was there beside him—mourning. I know what is running in your mind, Miss Hollister. You are blaming yourself for having employed him to bear the message, thereby involving him in danger. An innocent act, and you are in nowise to blame."

Before the girl could comment, the hound suddenly rose, sniffed the air, cocked his ears forward and barked jerkily.

Cal was out of his chair instantly.

"Quick!" he exclaimed, moving swiftly to the double bunk in a corner. "Climb into this upper bunk, Miss Hollister—somebody is coming!"

The girl ran lightly across the floor, set a small boot in Cal's hand, and was raised quickly into the upper bunk. Snatching a blanket from the lower one, the ranger covered her prone figure completely—then turned to meet the person who at that instant opened the door.

The man who paused on the doorsill, alert, eyes shooting questions before the words formed themselves on his lips, was big. More than six feet tall, weighing something near two hundred pounds, he had not an ounce of excess fat on his frame. There was an unmistakable look of good physical condition about him, and ample indications of almost unlimited strength.

His manner of dress gave no indication of his calling. A blue sack-suit, top-boots of fine leather, white shirt, black four-in-hand, and a Stetson hat of medium crown and brim, completed his attire. A black mustache, curled tightly at the ends, revealed a wide, stubborn mouth.

An unusual man. Hard as nails, rough as pig-iron, and sharp along with it. So Cal decided at a glance.

"Where's Sheppard?" the newcomer demanded, rather than asked.

"Don't know," Cal replied. "He ain't nowhar's erbout."

"I can see that much with m[illegible] eyes!" was snapped at him. "[illegible] are you doing here?"

"Reckin that's my bizness," Ca[illegible] torted. "Anythin' else you-all craves to know?"

The big man's eyelids narrowed, and his scowl deepened.

"If there was, you damned idiot, I'd ask—and you'd answer. Remember that, and save yourself trouble. Now, who are you, and what are you doing here in Sheppard's cabin?"

"Well, mister," Cal replied, edging away from his questioner as though a trifle frightened at his demeanor, "seein' you-all air plumb bent on knowin' my bizness, reckin' I'll tell. I'm a stranger in these here parts. Don't know this Sheppard you talks of. I'm a sawhand, lookin' fur a place to work. Name's Al Conners. I happened erlong here a few minnits back, knowed I'd be welcome to stop ontil th' owner come in, so I made myself at home. Now, that satisfy you?"

There was no answer. For, at that juncture, the attention of both was claimed elsewhere.

A shriek of terror, in a woman's voice, filled the cabin. The blanket in the upper bunk was flirted aside, and Amy Hollister, eyes distended in horror, face blanched, fell rather than leaped to the floor.

"A snake!" she cried, a slim hand clutching at her throat. "In the bunk! I felt him crawling—"

Cal leaped to the bunk, and was in time to see the tail of a bull-snake disappear through a hole between two logs—as badly frightened, no doubt, as the girl had been.

"My stars, miss!" the ranger exclaimed, turning to Amy. "You-all done skeered me out of whut little sense I got! Th' snake war a plumb harmless one, which they is called house-snakes by lots of folks, an' they is apt to crawl inside to git warm when chilly weather comes on. Whut I wants to know, please, ma'am, is how

"all come to be hidin' in that bunk. ...now! I'll bet you-all heered me ...in', awhile ago, an' war afeered of ...! That it?"

Miss Hollister properly interpreted the slight wink Cal gave her, and deftly caught the ball he had tossed.

"Yes!" she acknowledged, her body still quivering with fright. "I hid when you came up."

"There, mister!" Cal crowed, turning to the big man, his loutish expression heightened by a pleased grin. "I guessed it, didn't I, now?"

Cal's antics got no attention, the eyes of the other being fixed upon Amy to the exclusion of all else.

"And, Miss Hollister, how came you here—alone?" he queried slowly. "Under the circumstances, perhaps I may be permitted to ask?"

The sudden appearance of the girl from her hiding-place had frozen the big man with astonishment. It required a bit of time for him to find his tongue.

"I fail to agree that my presence here, or anywhere I may choose to be, gives you a right to question me, Mr. Maxted," Amy replied frigidly, her chin lifted. "I am here because I desired to be, with which answer you'll have to content yourself."

Maxted eyed her coolly for a brief instant, while his dark eyes seemed to bore into her.

"I do not admit deserving the calldown," he said, after a bit. "However, that is beside the point. Perhaps you will grant, though, that my arrival proved timely. This halfwit here looks like he'd not be above most any sort of crime. Suppose that snake had scared you before I came, and you had found yourself discovered—alone with him? What then, Miss Wildcat? Instead of putting your back up at me, you should thank me for affording you protection."

The girl gave him a withering glance. "I'm thankful this gentleman, half-wit though he may indeed be, happened to be here when you came," she said icily. "I wonder how long you will think it your privilege to continue to intrude? Are you enjoying being here?"

Maxted's face suddenly reddened with anger, and his eyes, normally blue, looked like twin pools of ink.

"I shall go!" he grated. "But I'll say what I think about this business first! I think Jess Hollister had better be here in the swamp, looking after a sister who has taken to meeting unwashed natives in lonely cabins at night, instead of staying in Marked Tree, playing poker and guzzling whisky! That's what I think!"

Cal took a swift step forward, hard fist knotted, eyes beginning to flame.

"Don't—please!" Amy begged, stamping her foot. "He can't help being uncouth and vulgar! It's natural with him!"

"As you wish," Cal replied, relaxing.

Maxted stood glaring at him, teeth exposed by a nasty snarl, huge fists doubled.

"You poor, ague-ridden rat!" he raged. "I've a mind to break you in two pieces! If you stay in these parts long I will—and you can depend on that! I'll beat you to a pulp—you cur, daring to show your fangs at your betters! Remember, run when you see me again!"

He whirled on his heel and slammed out through the door.

CHAPTER IV

Amy's Problem

CAL indulged in a quiet laugh, then turned to the girl.

"Now there's a fine specimen of a first-chop rascal, or I'm shooting off the target," he commented.

"He is quite a beast, Mr. Calhoun," she agreed. "I'd much rather Curt Maxted had not seen me here, of course, but it can't be helped now."

"Who is he, anyhow?" Cal asked.

"I don't know," was the surprising answer. "That is, I mean I don't know who he really is. You've heard, perhaps, of the Deer Island Club?"

Cal nodded. "Sportsmen from Memphis established it at Lake Leacraft, I recall."

"Yes. Well, Curtis Maxted is a sort of permanent resident at the club," Amy explained. "Not a steward, or caretaker, I believe. His position is not in any sense menial, as I have gathered from observing the attitude of the club members, men and women, toward him. Equal footing, I should say.

"He got into the habit of calling on father," she went on. "Both liked chess, and they played the game together quite often. Then, shortly after the association began, Mr. Maxted began bringing me presents of books and magazines. I went out in his motor launch a time or two—always with other guests aboard.

"Since father died, to make the story short, I have had to forbid him to call—for reasons I need not go into."

"Judging wholly by what I have just seen of him," Cal commented, "you did well to cut him. Has he made trouble for you since?"

"I believe he has, and a great deal of it," she replied. "He is one of the reasons why I sent for help."

She ceased, eyes thoughtfully on the coals.

"I'm listening," Cal told her laconically. "Tell it in your own way."

"You're a mind reader!" Amy exclaimed, looking up. "I was just wondering where to begin, and you make it easy! Would you think me mad, Mr. Calhoun, should I tell you seriously that I am convinced that my father's death was not the accidental one it is supposed to be? That there is an inexorable, unremitting influence working toward the thwarting of our milling project now, just as it betrayed itself during father's lifetime? That, in short, I am being hounded by an unseen, wholly unidentifiable power which is absolutely ruthless, and unbelievably destructive—in the matter of both human rights and human lives. Would you think me insane, if I asserted all that to be true, Mr. Calhoun?"

Cal raised his eyes in a level gaze to hers, nodded understandingly, and said:

"No. I think you are very sane, Miss Hollister. Tell me all about it."

It was characteristic of Calhoun that he did not indulge in spoken speculations concerning Maxted's arrival at the cabin. Neither did he seek to elicit from the girl any information relative to her reason for letting him go unpunished. All those things, he felt certain, would come out in the course of her story, in natural sequence, stripped to actual values.

"You understand, Mr. Calhoun, that getting our big mills established and running at Milltown was no small task, the site being so remote from civilization. Father accomplished it, and set in logging and milling. Then, just when he thought he could breathe easy for awhile, real troubles began.

"Thunder Run is a direct outlet to the Mississippi, rising in Lake Leacraft, several miles east of Milltown. From Lake Leacraft there is passage to the Mississippi by another stream.

"One day a long, snow-white launch steamed down Thunder Run from the lake. It was owned by Cyrus Baldridge, a prominent dealer in finished hardwood products. Aboard the launch were his wife, several other women, his secretary, and two or three of his stockholders.

"The party came ashore, and Baldridge expressed a desire to look over our big tract. He knew timber after it had been refined, but little of it in the natural state. His party had, he stated, established a hunting and fishing club in Leacraft, and then would be a mighty good time to get acquainted with the big trees.

wed a gala week for me. The ladies aboard the Roamer entertained me the entire time, and after the trip of inspection was over, Mr. Baldridge gave us a dinner aboard. After the dinner, he and Mark Ellis, his secretary, and three other men who held stock in Baldridge's enterprises, adjourned to the after-deck, father accompanying them, of course. Then the real reason for the trip of inspection came out.

"Baldridge wanted to buy the tract and mills. Father refused to sell. Then Baldridge offered to organize the business into a corporation, and still father refused. That ended the conference. The Roamer departed next morning.

"A month later, fire destroyed a very valuable maple tract for us—an accident. Hunters' carelessness, no doubt. Two weeks later, our little steam tug, the Amy, struck a snag while towing a long raft of fine walnut logs to the mill. She burned to water-line, and the logs, breaking out of formation, were scattered everywhere. Another accident.

"Next came dissatisfaction among our big working forces. Many quit, others demanded higher wages, still others merely loafed on the work. Then one of our big mills burned. The entire plant, with fifty thousand dollars' worth of machinery, was totally destroyed. The fire spread to the stack-yards, consuming many thousands of dollars worth of drying lumber. A boiler-room accident, this time.

"Three months ago, came the most terrible accident of all," Amy went on, a sob in her voice. "Father was killed by a falling tree, while near a spot where loggers were working. I shall give you the details, though they are few, when you wish. What I seek now is to get the matter roughly before you. I think I have done so. I shall add only this:

"It has lately been strongly in my mind, Mr. Calhoun, that all the misfortune—the accidents—which has relentlessly dogged the Hollister interests here in the Sunken Lands, and still manifests a presence, has been man-made. We have been marked for destruction. Somewhere near, our enemy lurks in hiding, ready to take advantage of every opportunity to thrust deep into our vitals. A beast, Mr. Calhoun, utterly without mercy! So my mind pictures him—a monster of destruction, stopping not even at shedding human blood!"

She shivered slightly, and became silent, eyes staring into the coals, horror in their depths.

Calhoun also studied the coals, eyes veiled. After a bit, he requested:

"Go back to the point in your relation, please, when Maxted first appeared."

The girl looked up quickly. It was patent that she was expecting some such request.

"We first saw him about one month after the visit of the Roamer," she said. "It seems that the Baldridge party established their clubhouse on Deer Island, in Lake Leacraft, and Curtis Maxted came down with a party from Memphis. I do not know whether or not Baldridge was with them. Maxted remained after the others departed, and has been there since."

"And he first came to visit you and your father—when?"

"About a week after he was left alone, except, of course, for the guide and caretaker at the club," was the reply. "He came down Big Thunder in a bateau, stopped for dinner, made himself very agreeable, and father invited him to visit often. Maxted promptly availed himself of the invitation."

"Had the fire in the maple timber occurred before then?"

"Yes. A week before."

"Has Maxted ever said in so many words, or hinted to you, that he has a connection with the Baldridge interests?"

"No. On the contrary, he volunteered the information that he had no business connections whatever. An income sufficiently large to enable him to follow the mood of the moment—that is how he put it."

"Has he ever given any reason for isolating himself here in the swamp?"

"None, except that he had intended returning to civilization after a week or two more in the open, but an unforeseen reason had kept him in the wilds. To put it baldly, I, according to him, furnished the 'unforeseen reason.'"

"I see," Cal commented. "And he may have told the exact truth at that. He may really have stayed on in the hope of winning your regard, Miss Hollister. At least, we shall not saddle him with other designs unless we have more cause than we now have. Is there any one here in the swamp whom you suspect?"

"Unless it is Maxted, I know of nobody," she answered.

"You have a brother, Jesse. Tell me about him."

"Jess, co-heir to the property with myself, is just now of age," she said. "But he cannot touch his share until he is twenty-five. Father saw to that, knowing that Jess was wild and unreliable. He rebelled, took himself off to Marked Tree, and has become something of a sport—also a forger. I have had to make good on several checks, signed with my name, which I never saw until I found them among many canceled papers.

"He is very dear to me, Mr. Calhoun, and I hope to win him back. Meanwhile, he has established a spy on my movements—a checker in the office, Joe Lacewell by name. It amuses me, yet annoys me at the same time. But I permit it, since there is nothing I wish to hide."

"I see. And you propose, alone and unaided, to continue this huge business?"

"Why not?" she asked, surprised. "I know lumber from the stump to the loading dock—and love it. Born in the big woods, cradled in a hollow log, I have never, except while in school, been away from the sound of saws, the roar and scream of the mills. I hope I never shall be.

"Dad used to say that whenever men play a game for high stakes, sooner or later Satan sits in. I know now that his homely saying is full of truth. Satan has taken a seat in the game of logs and lumber here in the swamp—my game, Mr. Calhoun. But I shall play hard against him, and who knows but what, woman though I am, I shall win in the end? Even against Satan!"

At that instant the black-and-tan stirred, listened, leaped up and filled the room with his choppy bark of warning.

CHAPTER V

More Callers

SOMEBODY was approaching the cabin.

Cal silently motioned the girl into the shadows of a corner, stepped to a position just back of where the door would stand when open, and listened.

"Hello!" came a hail in a man's voice. "Hello, Shep!"

A gasp from the girl caused Cal to whirl toward her questioningly.

"I—I know that voice!" she exclaimed. "It's Luke Mallory calling!"

"Somebody with him," Cal told her, his sensitive ears having caught the sounds of two separate and distinct treads outside.

"Maybe it's Dynamite," she returned. "He's usually with Luke."

Cal, without further words, opened the door.

"Shep ain't here," he announced. "But I reckin you-all kin come in!"

Until he knew just who was without, he meant to maintain his rôle of saw-hand in search of a job.

Directly thereafter the doorway framed as fine a specimen of young

as it had ever been the inspector's privilege to behold. Tall, superbly built, clear-eyed, frank of countenance—such a man was Luke Mallory, engineer in charge of logging the tract on Thunder.

Rumor had it that Hollister's girl and the young engineer had fallen in love with each other, and that the untimely death of the father had resulted in a postponement of their contemplated marriage. A rumor which, Cal now felt certain as he looked from one to the other, was well founded.

Accompanying the engineer was a lank, long-haired, black-mustached native. A sleepy-eyed, stoop-shouldered lath of a fellow in blue jeans and tattered Mackinaw, whose face looked as though it had been treated with a generous coating of walnut stain. A slowpoke, as his languid attitude betrayed, with lines of good humor in his face and peering out of his deeply set eyes.

Cal knew a bit about him, too. "Dynamite" Dunn, known to fame in the Sunken Lands as the greatest tracker of them all—and the swamp country boasted many men with trailing senses almost equal to those of the best trained hounds. Except when employed as a pilot, or set upon the trail of lost persons, Dunn was a slow-moving, lazy, laughter-loving person, his dry humor being well-known to all who knew him. The natives had long ago nicknamed him Dynamite, doubtless because there was absolutely nothing explosive in his nature.

"Where is Sheppard?" Mallory asked, blinking his eyes against the light.

"I'll tell you that, Mallory," Cal returned, "in good time. Just come inside, and close the door. Howdy, Dynamite," he greeted the native, as the latter slouched in.

"Ah'd nevah of knowed you-all, Mistah Calhoun," Dynamite drawled, dropping into the nearest chair, "hadn't been you spoke. How does you-all find yourse'f these days?"

Cal's eyes were upon Luke, who stood near the fireplace, gazing at Amy. The girl came slowly to the opposite side of the hearth, and asked:

"How did you happen to come here, Luke?"

"I didn't 'happen,' Amy," the engineer replied. "Came on purpose. What was Maxted doing here?"

"How did you know Maxted was here?" she countered, surprised.

"Because I have had Dynamite watching him lately, every time he came to the mill, in short," was the reply. "I don't trust him, as you know. Dynamite trailed him here, thence back as far as the mill, and reported to me."

"And he reported, also, my presence here?"

Mallory nodded.

"Yessum, Miss Amy, Ah seed you-all through a chink-hole, an' 'lowed Luke oughter know it," Dynamite drawled. "Ah heered you-all bawlin' of Maxted out, 'bout somethin' ernuther, an' 'lowed maybe Luke oughter know he done made you-all mad. No harm in doin' that, Ah hopes?"

"None at all," Amy assured him. "I should have told Luke about the affair to-morrow, anyhow."

"What was he doing here, Amy?" Mallory repeated, voice sharpening a bit.

"Just turn around, Luke, and shake hands with Inspector Jack Calhoun," the girl bade him, smilingly, "and then all shall be made clear. Manners first, you know."

The engineer turned and looked at Cal intently for a moment, then extended a powerful hand which was gripped by one equally as powerful.

"I know a lot about you, inspector," he said. "And, honestly, I'd have a hard time reconciling your appearance with what I have heard, but for the fact that Miss Hollister vouches for you."

"An' me, too, Luke," Dynamite put in. "Ah vouches fur him."

Both men laughed, and, as they sat down by the fire, Amy asked Cal to tell Mallory what had taken place in the cabin.

"Mr. Calhoun came at my request," she said. "I did not consult you about sending to Captain Wheeler, Luke, because you were away in the timber and I felt it inadvisable to wait."

"Mallory will understand a lot more than he now does," Cal ventured, "when I have finished. Time is precious, as you will all agree presently. I'll talk, and you can ask questions later. Here's both the facts and the speculations."

The ranger related all that had passed in the cabin, touching lightly upon his trip up the river until Mallory had been informed concerning Maxted's part in the night's proceedings. Then he cast back.

"Now, here is the construction I put on the killing of Sheppard. Miss Hollister is undoubtedly watched in almost her every movement. It was known that she had given Hamp a letter, despite her efforts at secrecy, and that fact aroused a certain party, or parties —identity yet unknown—to action. That letter, given in supposed secrecy, was of utmost importance.

"Hamp was waylaid, the letter taken, read, then sent on to us at Oak Donnick—for reasons which I now think I understand, but will not go into with you yet. Where did Hamp place the letter, Miss Hollister?"

"In the inside pocket of his coat," was the answer.

Cal nodded. He had suspected as much.

"How comes it that they permitted you to reach here, knowing the contents of the letter?" Mallory asked.

"They were expecting a ranger, not a saw-hand," Cal grinned in return. "Now, the night is getting old, and there is much I hope to do before morning. I think I understand enough now to enable me to go ahead intelligently. Suppose this party breaks up?"

"Luke," broke in the dra of Dynamite, "you-all done fur tell Miss Amy that them frien of her'n, Baldridges, done arriv' on Thunder in that big la'nch of their'n. You-all aimed to tell her that, you said, because Baldridge come ashore an' axed p'intedly fur her. Remember?"

"Baldridge!" Amy exclaimed. "What can he want with me?"

"Suppose we find out?" Cal suggested. "You set out ahead with Miss Hollister, Mallory," he instructed. "Dynamite and I will come along later. Don't give Baldridge an interview until you see me again. Is that clear?"

The girl nodded, and she and Luke arose.

"Good-by, Mr. Calhoun," Amy said, pausing at the threshold. "I hope to see you early to-morrow."

"I'll confess, Calhoun, that I'm mighty glad to see you take hold of things for us," Luke declared, as he followed the girl. "And I'm betting that in the end you'll find Maxted and Baldridge at the bottom of all the trouble."

Cal merely smiled, then closed the door behind them.

CHAPTER VI

On the Trail of Big Game

"NOW, Dynamite," said Cal, turning to the native the moment Luke and Amy were gone, "you and I have some fast work to do. Maxted, I believe, was not fooled by my disguise when he came to the cabin. I am convinced he had a trap set for me farther down Thunder, and I got by because I came as a native. Therefore, somewhere between this place and Milltown there will likely be another trap—the kind they set for Sheppard.

"You know the trails, day or night, and should be able to figure out the most likely place for an ambush. Think it over. If we can find the place, and bag those who lie in wait there, it 'll

trick worth taking—and, in addition, darned good life insurance for me. What say?"

Dynamite Dunn slowly stroked his long mustache, spat reflectively into the fire, and gave the matter weighty consideration. He had no peer when it came to such matters as ambushes, hidden trails, and the like, and his professional character was now at stake. Finally, after perhaps two or three minutes' intent concentration, he again spat into the fire, glanced up at the ranger and expressed himself.

"Thar's one likely place, Mr. Calhoun, which Ah has in mind," he said slowly. "More likely than any othah. Them bushers would nacherly expect you-all to come on to th' mill by boat. Well, thar's jist one place in th' five mile betwixt heah an' theah whafat th' channel runs in clost to th' shore. That's at Tightbrier Donnick. At that p'int th' channel washes th' bank on this side, an' th' donnick has got plenty good covah, right to th' watah's aidge. Grantin' Ah war waylayin' a enemy, an' knowed he'd be comin' erlong thataway, Ah'd shorely choose me that place to git him at."

Calhoun listened carefully to what the native was saying, knowing full well that his would be words of wisdom. He nodded agreement.

"Without doubt," he argued aloud, "a native woodsman, and a expert at that, is one of the party. No one except a man well acquainted with this section of the swamp would be trusted in such a matter. Quite likely he would be of a mind with you, Dynamite, in thinking that Tightbrier is the one best bet for the little party. Now, can you take us to the donnick by the back door, so to speak, and get us right up among 'em before they get wind of us?"

"Ah kin ondoubtedly take sich a man as you-all right thar," Dynamite replied. "But nobody 'cept a plumb wise woodsman could hope to git in half a quarter of th' spot without bein' heered. When you-all air ready, Mr. Calhoun. Ah reckin we'd bettah make a start."

Cal nodded. "The sooner the better," he agreed. "I have an idea they will expect me to pass shortly after Luke and Miss Hollister go by, and might come hunting me should I be over long. I'd a lot rather find them, than have them find me. How are you fixed for guns?"

The native grinned, opened the front of his Mackinaw, and tapped the butts of a pair of forty-fives suggestively.

"Good!" Cal approved. "We may have to do a bit of hot work, once we get going."

After covering the fire with ashes, and feeding the black-and-tan some cold meat which would keep him contented until his release later, they locked the cabin and set off eastward through the timber, Cal following closely at the native's heels.

Dynamite chose a course that gradually angled south of east, avoiding instinctively logs, thick growth, and other obstacles. Cal, moving swiftly along with as little noise as the native, trailed him without trouble.

For a distance of two miles they glided on their course deep into the heart of the swamp, then Dynamite changed to an almost direct line northward. After half a mile thus, he paused and allowed Cal to come abreast.

"Smell anything?" he queried in a whisper.

"Coffee."

"Yeah. One of 'em probably went way back in th' timbah an' made 'em up a pot. All we got to do now is follah ouah noses."

Cautiously, feeling their way a foot or two at a time, they moved forward toward the death-trap which Calhoun hoped to spring on those who had set it.

For the ranger, in common with decent men wherever they are, had for a bushwhacker the same love he entertained for a copperhead—and no more.

"It's always open-season on the man

who shoots from cover," was an unwritten but well understood motto of the rangers.

CHAPTER VII

The Death-Trap at Tightbrier

IN obedience to a light touch of Dynamite's outstretched hand, Calhoun stiffened in his tracks.

"Fifty yards, or sich mattah," the native whispered, face close to the ranger's. "Now whut?"

"The moon will top these trees in less than half an hour," Cal whispered in return. "Wait."

Squatting on their heels, the two stalkers of human game waited as moveless as two stone images. The hour was past two in the morning, and the late moon slowly but inevitably mounted above the tree-tops, sifting its white radiance down ever nearer the suspected spot.

Presently Cal touched his companion lightly with the tip of a finger, directing his gaze forward. Somebody, not more than fifty yards away, had lighted a match, carefully guarded from the river by a cupped hand, doubtless to disclose the face of his watch. The light disappeared, and a gruff rumble sounded in their ears—the rumble of a voice.

"Gettin' tiahd waitin'," Dynamite whispered. "Hope that air moon gits a move on itse'f!"

Abruptly the surrounding brush glowed in a pale light, picking out the trees and stumps and rendering them identifiable. The moon stood just above the spot desired. It was time for action.

Cal drew his six-guns from under his Mackinaw, and motioned Dynamite to do the same. The native complied, and, crouching low, they glided forward like a pair of foxes toward a duck-roost. Cal, leading, straightened slowly, and peered ahead into a small, circular cleared spot which the moonlight bathed.

Two men were there, reclining on the ground. One lay as though asleep, while the other, back against a log, appeared to keep watch.

"Lift 'em high, men!" the ranger commanded, stepping into the cleared circle, guns resting on his hips, muzzles steady. "Get 'em up!"

Dynamite, both weapons drawn, stepped forward and covered the now wide-awake man on the ground.

The watcher against the log had evidently been lying there with gun in hand. No sooner had Cal voiced his command than his right swung up, holding something that glittered in the moonlight. Calhoun dropped to his knees, and the reports of two heavy caliber weapons shattered the woodland silence.

A third report, almost blending with the first two, caused Cal to wheel suddenly and look behind. Dynamite, smoking gun in hand, was staring fixedly at the spot across the clearing from him, while with light tread he moved forward.

The other man had disappeared.

"Ah winged him!" Dynamite called back. "He slid fur covah, jist when you-all shot—an' Ah'm shore Ah nicked him somewhar!"

"Can you trail him?" Cal demanded.

"Come daybreak," the native answered certainly. "Ah'll nose him out, no mattah wharat he goes to covah!"

"All right," Cal returned. "He's your game. Mine's here on the ground—dead, if I'm not mistaken."

He crossed to where the man who had fired too late lay sprawled on the leaves, lighted a match and looked thoughtfully at the face it disclosed. The dead man had been a stranger to him, he concluded.

"See if you recognize him, Dynamite," he called to the native.

Dynamite came beside him and peered down.

"Shore!" he exclaimed. "That air fellah war guide, up to Deer Islan'! Tom Stack, he war called. I knowed

him purty well. Danged effen it don't beat hell that he'd be up to sich a onderhanded business as this here, Ah says!"

"Did you get a glimpse of the other fellow's face?"

"Naw," was the disgusted reply. "Thar he lays on th' ground in front of me, then, all of a suddenty, he war in th' bresh. Nevah seed a man move as quick as he done! Dang it!"

"But you slugged him, quick as he was," Cal said pacifyingly. "And I'm betting you'll be on his trail like a blood-hound, come daybreak," he added.

"Yeah, you-all shore air right, Mr. Calhoun!" Dynamite declared, comforted. "A'll run him down, or my name ain't Dynamite Dunn!"

"Right!" Cal applauded. "Deer Island, now—that's Maxted's hangout. I've seen him in this thing from the start, or thought so at least, and his man being here in ambush lends a lot of color to my suspicion. There'll be a boat somewhere near, Dynamite. Suppose we find it. Maybe it also will give us a line on things."

They had not far to search. Dynamite uncovered a bateau in a clump of river-grass near by.

"That air is a clubhouse boat," the native declared unhesitatingly. "All th' boats up thar is painted green, like this'n. No doubt erbout it."

Cal nodded. "I thought it would be," he said. "Nothing in it but the paddles," he added, after examining the inside. "Just let it stay here. Guess we've got a job to attend to in the brush, and we'd better be at it. Daybreak soon."

And so another narrow trench was dug in the wilderness that night, Cal and Dynamite gouging it out of the loamy soil with their sheath-knives. The body of the guide was placed therein, covered securely against the ravages of wolves, to be reclaimed when it should suit Cal to do so.

In the native, Calhoun had an invaluable aid. He knew the trails of the timber country as familiarly as he did the path to his own cabin, and could call by name nearly every man, woman and child who dwelt therein.

The inspector well knew that Dynamite frequently ran moonshine liquor, made illicitly and aged in the swamps, to certain tramp steamers which sneaked by night, without lights, into Lake Leacraft to receive it. Knew also that the trailer's services could be secured by crooks who sought sanctuary in the deeper hideouts of the hinterland, as well as by officers who sought quarry therein. Dynamite was for hire, and that was that.

But he also knew that the native was absolutely loyal to whoever employed him, and that he had attached himself to Luke Mallory and the Hollister interests. Therefore he trusted him fully.

Daylight sifted into the wilderness, and Cal watched with deep interest as the native cast about in search of the trail of the man who had escaped. Dynamite became transformed. There was nothing of the slouchy slow-poke about him then; on the contrary he reminded the ranger of a highly-trained fox-hound nosing out a scent.

Silently he moved here and there among the bushes in which he had seen the man plunge, questioning, as it seemed, each tangled vine, each twig and leaf. Presently he stopped dead for a moment, then struck off in a course which lay parallel with the bank of the run.

Cal remained where he was. Presently Dynamite reappeared.

"Th' man whut laid that air trail wa'n't no native, nor war he woodswise," he stated in the manner of one who asserts a fact about which there can be no question. "He fell over logs in three places a-fore he'd gone half a quarter, bumped into a tree an' caught his coat on a snag wharat a limb has done been broke off. Left a patch of cloth on it. Gray cloth, it air. I fotched it to you-all."

Cal took a small bit of torn cloth from the native's hand, hardly more than a shred, and examined it carefully. Placing it in his pocket, he said:

"That lets Maxted out. He wore a suit of dark blue."

Dynamite nodded. "Heah's somethin' else as makes me know he wa'n't no native," he offered. "I figgered a-fore I struck th' trail that if it war a native's it would lead off in th' swamp, no matter wharat he war really headed. No reg'lar woods feller would fail to tangle his trail thataway. Then I figgered, fuddermoah, that effen a outsider laid it, th' trail would lead straight fur wharat he's headed, without no thought of coverin' it up. That's jist whut happened — he's p'inted straight up th' run to'ard th' mill, an' somewhar thar I'll find him."

"Luck to you!" Cal called to the native's vanishing back, as he arose and prepared to begin what he surmised would be a very busy day.

CHAPTER VIII

Rowdy Trails a Varmint

CALHOUN returned in a straight line to the edge of the clearing surrounding Sheppard's cabin, where he paused in the brush and observed the place critically. Satisfied that no one lurked near, he went forward, unlocked the door and released the hound.

Rowdy, with every evidence of delight at the meeting, did not linger long near Cal. Instead, he began circling about the cabin, nose to the ground, long, spikelike tail wagging from side to side. Presently he gave tongue in a short, clear note, then struck off slowly on a scent which led into timber on the south.

Cal stood for a moment quietly observing the hound's behavior, then struck off after him at a fast clip.

Like most of the swamp hounds, Rowdy had bloodhound in his ancestry—the huge, "man-tracker" type of slavery days. The scent of a man lies on the ground as well for dogs of Rowdy's strain as does the spoor of a varmint.

"The question in my mind," Cal soliloquized, as he dropped into a walk behind the dog, "is whether Rowdy is trailing a four-legged varmint, or one of the two-legged kind. From his actions I'd judge him to be on the scent of a human, otherwise he'd be giving tongue at intervals. In the case of a human, he'd be mute until he sighted his quarry—then open up for fair. Well, it's worth the time it will take to find out."

Half a mile onward, beside a shallow slough which cut off progress to the south, Rowdy suddenly broke into full cry.

Cal dashed forward, gun on hip—to find himself eye to eye with Curtis Maxted!

Maxted stood with back against a giant oak, right hand thrust inside his vest where, Cal knew, it gripped the butt of a gun. He did not change his position when Cal broke cover, but remained in careless pose against the bole of the oak.

"Well, Mr. Ranger," he greeted, a sneering smile on his lips, "have you figured things out yet?"

"Somewhat," Cal replied. "Enough to know that your game is lost, in both quarters, Maxted. The girl is going to keep the timber, and Luke is going to get the girl—and you're due to get hell, and a lot of it."

Maxted laughed, but his face flushed darkly nevertheless. Cal's steady gaze never shifted from the hand inside the vest.

"You'd naturally figure me in the dirty work," the clubman told him. "Probably as the deeply dyed villain in the piece; the one who gets the papers from the poor old gent, and tries to force the innocent young gal to wed with him—but is foiled by the hero in the end. Well, what of it? Now you've figured the play out to suit your-

self, how are you going to prove it true?"

"You're a dirty scoundrel, Maxted," Cal said quietly. "Really you are. First you join hands with Baldridge in an attempt to skin Hollister out of a huge amount of money. But Hollister, in spite of all the damaging tricks you and your hired help were able to do him, was game. He stuck. All right. Maybe the girl would be easier to bluff. With that thought in mind, you ordered the death of Hollister—and your order was obeyed.

"But the girl was cast in the same mold as her father. She held on to her timber. She's a mighty attractive young woman, and you decided she'd make a fine wife for you. So you set in and caused a breach between brother and sister, encouraging Jess Hollister along the path he's been treading for some time back. You meant, in the end, to get him into such trouble as would prove a lever in your hands—a lever by which you thought to force Miss Hollister to consent to all you proposed.

"Guess work? Well, not altogether. Your man, Stack, got caught in the trap you laid for me—and is where he, a few hours before, helped lay Hamp Sheppard. He's buried in a shallow trench. The second man of that ambush is, by now, known. Probably in custody. They came in one of your boats, I'll add—and I have the boat.

"Ah, I see plainly that I have hit you in a sore spot, Maxted! You really should have learned, before setting in to play in such a big game, to control your face."

"If you'll just look behind you," Maxted exclaimed, pointing over Cal's shoulder, "maybe your face will get out of control!"

Cal twisted suddenly—then dropped to one knee, his gun spitting flame. But it was not at some one behind that he fired.

Maxted, the moment the ranger twisted as though to look to the rear, had slid a gun from inside his vest—and the gun had promptly been shot from his hand. He stood with mouth agape, wringing his numbed fingers, stunned at the turn of events.

Cal arose, laughing ironically, while tiny flames began to flicker far back in his eyes.

"My ears are keen, Maxted," he observed. "No one could have approached dangerously near me from behind without warning me. Besides, that's an old dodge nobody but a novice or a fool would fall for. But thank you for trying it just the same. That attempt at murder on your part confirms your guilt, in my mind, when I had only strong suspicion before. Any more guns on you, Max—to get you in more trouble?"

Holding the clubman under the muzzle of his six-shooter, Cal went to him and searched him thoroughly. There were no other weapons.

"You'll never get out of these swamps alive, Mr. Ranger!" Maxted grated. "You're up against something you don't know beans about! Money and influence—that's what wins always, and it will win in this game, too! Now, damn you, in the absence of evidence sufficient to arrest me—what are you going to do?"

"I sometimes make arrests without a particle of direct evidence, Maxted," Cal told him. "But I'm not going to do that in your case. When I tap you on the shoulder and tell you to come with me, I'll have you dead to rights, and you'll come—or be carried, just as you choose. Now make tracks before I change my mind!"

Maxted stood for an instant as though deciding just what action to take, then swung about abruptly and strode off into the timber.

"No trick at all to figure out what brought him to the cabin so early, Rowdy," Cal commented, patting the black-and-tan's head. "No report from his men that I'd been put under, and he was afraid to go hunting them

in their ambush. So he comes here, on the chance that I might be holed up, hoping to get a shot at me through a chink hole in the cabin. That's about what he had it all laid out to do. But there wasn't anybody at home but you, oldtimer—and you brought him to bay. For that good job I'll see that you get all the tender steak you can eat, and we'll set about getting in touch with said steak right now!"

A few minutes later, with Rowdy curled in the bow of his dugout, Calhoun headed up Thunder Run toward Hollister's Mill.

He had, he felt certain, a good many of the threads in his hands. Maxted, having set a spy on Amy, knew she had sent out a letter, and when he possessed himself of it and learned that a ranger had been sent for, he decided that the message might as well go through.

In the first place, Amy, having set her mind on communicating with Wheeler, would undoubtedly send other messages, should the first one fail. In the second place, the coming of the ranger might be made to fit in with their plans.

In a nutshell, Cal believed, Maxted had meant to have him killed, then, with his uniform available, send a man of his own choosing on to meet Amy. That would serve two purposes. It would quiet the girl and prevent any more messages being sent down to Oak Donnick, and it would put them in possession of all she might impart to the supposed ranger.

"That argues," Cal reflected, "that the game is about to be brought to a close. They couldn't hope to keep Wheeler in ignorance that something had gone wrong with me, seeing that nobody but a ranger could convincingly report to the chief. Yes, the game is about to close—but, if all goes well, the result may prove somewhat astonishing to the partners, Baldridge and Maxted.

"Just what big card they have yet to play—that's a question. They've failed to bluff or buy. But they haven't given up. Such men must think they have a strong hand, else they would not keep on playing. Well, whatever it is, we'll soon know it!"

With a speed more like a motorboat than a primitive, native dugout, Calhoun headed up Thunder toward Hollister's Mill.

CHAPTER IX

Baldridge Plays His Cards

A NEW steam tug, the Amy, replacing the boat which had burned, was busily towing small rafts of logs from place to place along the dock frontage before the mills, sorting them in readiness for the big bands, when Cal arrived.

The inspector noted with approval the fine lines of the tug, denoting both sturdiness and speed. The pointed, steel-shod and reënforced bow, designed to enable the tug to plow her way through the obstructing drifts of the smaller streams, particularly earned the approbation of the ranger, who, in such matters, was an expert.

The hour was early, but Cal noted a number of city-dressed men lounging about the cabin deck of a big, white launch anchored in Thunder. The launch was, he noted, the Roamer.

Presenting himself as unobtrusively as possible at the back door of the Hollister cottage, Cal was admitted by a heavy-lidded, white-faced Amy—as different in appearance, he thought, from the girl he had last seen in Sheppard's cabin as sunlight is from shadow.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Calhoun, that something has occurred which even you cannot remedy," she said dully, ushering the ranger into the sitting room where Luke Mallory stood, back to the blazing logs in a fireplace, his face grave.

"What?" Cal demanded crisply.

"Baldridge, with Maxted's assist-

ance, has taken a trick that puts at least part of the game in his hands for keeps, Calhoun!" Luke declared, rage keening his voice. "Something entirely unforeseen—"

"Get at it!" Cal snapped. "Time's precious. What has happened?"

"This: Jess Hollister was, as you know, barred by his father's will from the possession of any part of his share of the estate until he reaches the age of twenty-five, except a stated income to be paid by his sister," Luke explained. "But the law permits an heir so restricted to part with his 'expectations of inheritance,' it appears, when he reaches the age of twenty-one. Jess came of age a week ago, and, for the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, has conveyed his expectations of inheritance to Baldridge—damn him!"

"To think, Mr. Calhoun, that it should be my own brother who has enabled our enemy, his and mine, to triumph!"

Amy dropped into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

"He came ashore with Baldridge and his group," she moaned, "when Luke and I got here last night. They were awaiting us. I should have followed your instructions about not seeing Baldridge, but Jess was of the party and that was different. I admitted them.

"Jess was thoroughly intoxicated—acted very queerly," she went on hopelessly. "But he readily admitted executing the agreement and receiving the hundred thousand in cash. It is too terrible even to think of!"

"Rather bad, yes," Cal agreed, leaning against a corner of the mantel, face serious. "What use does Baldridge expect to make of his hold?"

"Here comes the gentleman now," Luke put in, pointing to where a tall, gray-haired, ruddy-faced man approached from the landing. He was accompanied by three others.

Beside him, speaking earnestly and gesturing vehemently, was Maxted.

"Then we shall hear from him what his next step will be," Cal commented. "I confess I shall be deeply interested."

A moment later, Baldridge, his secretary, Maxted and one other entered the room. The fourth member of the party caught and held Cal's attention exclusively.

A dissipated youth, white of face and shaking in body, was young Hollister that morning. His shifty eyes looked everywhere but into those of the sad-faced girl, who, though suffering intensely because of his treachery, greeted him with a tenderness and sorrow touching in the extreme.

"Now," Baldridge began, taking a seat in the manner of one who was but exercising a well defined right, "let's get down to business this morning—"

"Wait, Baldridge!"

The interruption came from Maxted. He had paused just inside the room, brought up standing by the sight of Calhoun, still in native attire, leaning against the mantel. The clubman's face had lost a trifle of its assurance, the moment he perceived the ranger.

"Well, what is it?" Baldridge demanded, a trifle irritably.

"Before you go ahead with the business in hand," Maxted replied, "I must warn you that the lout over by the fireplace is anything but what he appears. He's an inspector of rangers, Calhoun by name—and I'd suggest that we conduct our business without his presence."

"What are you doing here?" Baldridge demanded, bristling sharp eyes upon Cal.

The ranger grinned provokingly. "I'm a sort of umpire, Baldridge," he replied. "Go right ahead with your rat-killing. I won't interfere—unless the game gets crooked."

"If you wish to speak to me about business, Mr. Baldridge," Amy said firmly, "you will do so in the presence of Inspector Calhoun. Otherwise I must ask you to leave. That is final!"

"Oh, very well!" Baldridge agreed

airily. "Ranger or not, this business is of no concern to him. It's just an open and shut matter, plain as day, and no chance for the 'game to get crooked,' as he so crudely puts it.

"Here's what I have to say," he went on sternly. "In David Hollister's will there is a provision which gives his son, Jesse, the option of employing a representative who shall superintend and safeguard his interests in the estate until such time as the legatee shall find himself free from the legal disabilities under which the will places him.

"Furthermore, the will provides, as is well known to you, Miss Hollister, that you shall hold yourself accountable to such representative to the extent of rendering an account of all business deals, all sales and receipts, and, in short, other matters of importance to the welfare of the estate. Also—and mark this well—the representative is, by the terms of the will, empowered to demand a consultation with you and your managers upon all business deals contemplated, before they are carried out, if he so wishes. If, in his opinion, such deals will result detrimentally to his principal, then a court order shall be necessary before you may legally proceed.

"It is to that last provision I wish especially to call your attention," Baldridge said, triumph edging his tones. "It, in effect, gives any one whom your brother might select to represent him equal right with yourself in determining the business policy of the mills. No question about it.

"Now, Miss Hollister," he finished, pounding the arm of his chair softly with doubled fist, "I have purchased Jesse Hollister's inheritance. Those qualifying clauses in the will apply to me in his stead. From now on Curtis Maxted will represent me here at Hollister's—and I shall expect you to act in accordance with the stipulations of the will, and the legal phases of the matter. Is that clear?"

Calhoun, while listening intently, had also been using his eyes. Jesse Hollister had interested him from the start, and the interest had grown. The young man appeared to be in desperate straits—suffering, probably, from the after effects of his debauchery and, it might be, a few twinges of conscience.

"Is that quite clear?"

Having received no answer to his question, Baldridge, his manner bristling, repeated it.

"That would practically give you equal control with me, Mr. Baldridge," Amy pointed out. "Which is not at all what father desired."

"But it's what he allowed!" Baldridge declared, laughing with keen relish. "I take it you don't like having such relationship with me?"

"Frankly, I do not!"

"There is a remedy. I'll buy you outright—and more generously than in the case of Jess. Five hundred thousand, is my offer. Come, what do you say?"

"Is the mill doctor available at once, Miss Hollister?"

Calhoun's voice cut into the silence following Baldridge's preposterous offer—five hundred thousand for an interest potentially worth at least two million!

The interruption was startling, and acted on those present in various ways.

Amy shot Cal a questioning glance, while Luke looked plainly mystified.

"What's the idea?" Maxted demanded truculently. "Trying something funny, Ranger?"

"Keep out of this affair, Calhoun—or whatever your name is!" Baldridge threatened. "Otherwise I'll have a talk with your chief, and if I do it's your job!"

"Have a talk with him if you wish!" Cal snapped. "In the meantime, get that doctor, Luke—and at once!"

Luke, without reply, hastened from the room.

"Now," said Calhoun quietly, but with a sharp threat in his voice, as he

crossed to the door and placed his back against it, "this party remains as it is, until a certain matter not in the cards as you, Baldridge, and your fellow rascal, Maxted, meant to play them, is attended to. If you, any of you, want to take personal issue with me—just have at it!"

Baldridge, with a contemptuous wave of his hand, disclaimed any intention of raising a personal issue. Maxted, who had already raised one that morning and regretted it, merely glared.

"This thing is in my hands!" The thought was repeating itself in Cal's mind, even though his face was calm and controlled. "If only Dynamite doesn't fail me!"

For Dynamite Dunn alone could produce the weapon with which, Calhoun was certain, he could smash the Baldridge scheme, and the Baldridge group, to atoms.

Would that weapon be in his hands in time?

CHAPTER X

"We Hold the Better Hand!"

FOOTSTEPS sounded in the corridor, coming hurriedly, and Calhoun opened the door to admit Luke and a thin, professional-looking man.

"This is Dr. Mays, inspector," Luke said, introducing the physician.

"What can I do to serve you, inspector?" Mays queried, eyes ranging from face to face of those in the room, coming to rest upon the weak, twitching features of Jess Hollister.

"I wish you to examine young Hollister, doctor," Cal requested. "Then give us your opinion as to his present condition."

"What the devil is the meaning of this damned foolery?" Baldridge demanded, rising in protest.

Mallory fairly hurled himself across the room, confronting the lumberman, chin outthrust, big hands clubbed into mighty fists.

"One more word like that out of you, Baldridge!" he gritted, his eyes flaming torches, "and I'll break every bone in your body! Sit down—and keep your mouth shut until you're called on for words!"

"Luke!" Amy protested.

"Hush!" Luke ordered her sternly. "From now on, this is a game between men! If you remain, you must sit out of it! Sit down, Baldridge!"

Baldridge dropped into his chair, muttering words too low to register.

Dr. Mays crossed to where Hollister sat, the latter shrinking from him, voicing weak protests. Mays hesitated, glancing toward Calhoun.

"In the interests of law and justice, doctor," Cal said quietly, "I must ask you to proceed, whether with or without Hollister's consent. For your own good, Hollister," he added, addressing the suffering young man, "do not protest further."

As though too weak, both of will and body, to resist, Jess Hollister relaxed, permitting the examination to go forward.

Three minutes, and the doctor turned a grave face to his intent audience.

"This young man is a drug-addict," he announced. "Morphia. Judging from conditions I find, he has been using the drug for perhaps six or eight months."

A smothered scream burst from Amy's lips, and Luke laid a comforting hand on hers.

"How long have you been using the drug, Jess?" Cal queried, sympathy in his voice.

"Ask that damned scoundrel there!" Hollister electrified all by shouting, as he leaped to his feet and aimed a shaking forefinger at Maxted. "He got me drunk the first time I ever overindulged! Kept on pouring wine and whisky into me, at the club on Deer Island, every time I visited there—and he saw to it that those visits were frequent! Then—I don't know just when it came about—I found that

drink no longer meant much to me. I craved something stronger. Maxted, damn him, had slipped dope into my whisky! Morphine!

"I became addicted to its use—and he saw to it that I was supplied. Later, when I forged a check with his name attached, he took it up, winked good-humoredly—and thereafter supplied me with funds. All the time he urged me to make a deal with Baldridge, holding out dazzling prospects for me, should I accept. When I rebelled, there was always the forged check—and a shortage of money and dope!

"But why say more? When I came of age the other day, instead of being the decent, clean man I should have been, I was what you see me now! A trembling wreck, craving above everything else on earth the poison which is, as I well know, consigning me to my grave! It was Maxted—damn him! I'm glad I've been found out! Glad it's over with!"

Exhausted, Hollister dropped into his chair.

Maxted, eyes blazing, burst into vehement denials—to be silenced by Calhoun.

"Shut up, you!" the ranger ordered sternly, shoving the clubman back into the chair from which he had risen. "Else I'll strain matters a bit, and put handcuffs on you right now!"

Maxted, eyes shooting flames, nevertheless subsided.

"You were under the influence of drugs, Jess, when the agreement was signed with Baldridge?" Cal queried.

"Yes."

"You had been an addict for some time before that?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Nearly six months."

"He would, then, be accounted a drug-addict, I take it, doctor?" Cal asked the physician. "One the law would regard as such?"

"Without any doubt whatever!" was the positive assurance.

Cal wheeled upon Baldridge.

"You might as well tear that agreement up, Baldridge," he said quietly, but with a ring of triumph in his voice. "We hold the better hand!"

"How do you mean?" the lumberman thundered.

"That same law which allows an heir to sell—*for adequate consideration,* I'll add—his 'inheritance expectations,' also declares the oath of a drug addict of no legal value, and holds him incompetent to act for himself in matters involving legal procedure—such as signing away his inheritance expectations for a mere pittance, as in this case. The laws of conveyancing are strict ones, Baldridge, and, because they are, that agreement Jesse Hollister signed isn't worth the ink that's in his scrawl!"

Baldridge, his face the hue of an over-ripe pawpaw, stared at Calhoun with murder in his eyes. Just when the game seemed in his hands, this homely man of humble calling had checkmated him—and in the only way it could have been done. He had counted on having only a woman to deal with, and, safe in the belief that young Hollister was too far gone in mental as well as physical demoralization ever to speak up, had foreseen no obstacles in his way to the control of the coveted tract. The chance that the law, little known statute that it was, relative to the incompetency of drug addicts, would rise and defeat him had been so remote as never to enter his calculation of possibilities.

"Oh, Mr. Calhoun!" Amy cried, hope lighting her eyes. "Is it true? Will the courts cancel that agreement?"

Cal nodded affirmatively. "The courts will," he said positively. "The fact that Jess is so far gone in dope that it was almost immediately apparent to me, a layman in medicine, is sufficient evidence that he was an addict at the time he entered into the engagement with Baldridge. Medical science, as Dr. Mays will no doubt support me

in declaring, will verify that. Baldridge and Maxted have lost. Look at them. They know it."

"Thank Heaven!" Amy breathed.

"It appears that Satan, in this instance, sat in the game—and stacked the cards against himself," was the ironical, and pointed, comment of Luke Mallory.

"Well," Maxted queried surlily, "what of it? You can't do anything about it, can you? We're within the law—and that's all there is to it!"

"And you haven't won yet!" Baldridge, recovering speech, shouted. "Wait until my lawyers get hold of this! They'll make monkeys of all of you! I'll spend every dime I possess to break you to my will, Amy Hollister—and it's my will to own that tract of timber on Thunder Run! Come, Maxted, we'll leave these smart folks to enjoy their temporary triumph—to come back later and witness their grief and chagrin!"

"But—Mr. Calhoun!" Amy protested. "Are you not going to arrest them? Are they not to be punished?"

Cal shook his head negatively. "I'm sorry," he said sincerely, "but there is not, right now, anything upon which I can hold them. They are free to go—but the end is not yet. There are more cards to be played, Miss Hollister, you may be sure of that."

"Yes!" Baldridge snarled, pausing with hand on doorknob, "and we'll play 'em, too!"

Cal watched them depart, keen regret in his eyes. But what else could he do?

Dynamite Dunn, the trailer, had not arrived. The weapon with which the inspector had expected to clinch the defeat of Baldridge and Maxted, even to landing them behind bars, had not come to hand. He could only let them go.

He walked onto the veranda and, leaning across the rail, watched the Roamer, with her pair of ruthless crooks aboard, until her after-guard disappeared around a bend toward Lake Leacraft—a picture of Maxted, standing on the pilot-deck, an ironical grin on his face, vivid in his mind.

"Damn it!" he gritted. "I'd have him in cuffs, except for Dynamite—"

He glanced up quickly in response to a hail, and saw two figures emerge from the timber on the west. Two men, one prodding the other ahead of him ungently with the muzzle of a gun.

"Ah got him, Mr. Calhoun!" yelled Dynamite Dunn, the man with the gun. "He laid me a long, tangled trail, atter all—but Ah done nosed him out! Heah we comes!"

Stumbling ahead of the trailer, exhaustion all but claiming him, came a tall, sandy-haired man of thirty-odd. His clothing was torn, muddy, bedraggled, face drained of blood.

"Why—why, that's Joe Lacewell, Mr. Calhoun! I wondered why he had not appeared to-day!"

The voice was Amy's. She had come out to the veranda, unperceived by Cal.

"Yes," the ranger told her. "Lacewell—an active instrument in the Baldridge-Maxted game. Now, Miss Hollister," he added grimly, "we'll find a way to play the rest of our cards!"

CHAPTER XI

What Lacewell Told

LACEWELL stumbled to the steps of the veranda and collapsed upon the lower one.

"He war makin' fur th' clubhouse on Deer Islan'," Dynamite explained, standing watchfully above Lacewell. "Thar war a boat tied in th' bresh, an' he aimed to use it, but, him packin' mah lead in his side like he is, he stopped to rest afore tacklin' th' crossin' to th' islan'. Then Ah got him!"

"And a fine job you did of it, Dunn!" Cal applauded. "Without him, I'm afraid two bigger crooks even than he would escape punishment."

"What's it all about?" Amy asked,

greatly puzzled. "Lacewell has done wrong in acting as a spy for Jess, I know, but surely—"

"He was spying for Maxted, not Jess," Calhoun interrupted. "More than that, he was lying in ambush with the intention of killing me this morning—and did ambush and kill Hamp Sheppard last night."

"No!" Lacewell gasped. "I did not kill Sheppard! Before God, it was Stack! He fired the shot!"

Mallory, who had joined the group, turned questioning eyes to Cal.

"What about Baldridge and Maxted now?" he asked.

"Bring up the Amy," Cal directed. "Are you sure of the crew?"

"Absolutely. I chose them myself."

"Get her here as quickly as possible," Calhoun ordered.

Mallory hastened off toward the wharf.

"I'm forced to arrest you for murder, Lacewell," the ranger told the abject wreck on the steps, taking a pair of handcuffs from his pocket. "Hold out your wrists."

Lacewell tottered to his feet, sheer terror shaking and twisting his unnerved body.

"Don't—for God's sake!" he pleaded. "Give me a chance! I'll tell everything—and there's little I do not know! Let me have a chance, inspector!"

"Talk quick!" Cal snapped. "And if you lie in even the smallest particular, I promise to see you hanged with your confederates. Spit it out!"

"I will! I came here from Baldridge's office in Memphis," Lacewell confessed. "That was before he first visited here. He'd learned of the valuable veneer timber on Hollister's concession, and wanted it. The fire in the maple section was set by me, and, later, I destroyed one unit of the mill in like manner. It was done to discourage Hollister, and make him willing to sell. You see," he pleaded, "I'm not sparing myself!"

Cal merely nodded.

"The destruction of the original Amy, and the loss of the logs," the crook went on, "was an accident, so far as I know. Must have been, because I didn't arrange it. Then came the plotting of Mr. Hollister's murder—in which, I swear, I had no part.

"Maxted and Stack killed him. You remember, no doubt, that the broken body of Mr. Hollister was discovered beside the bole of a big oak—but he was not seen in the neighborhood of the cutting alive. This is how they worked it:

"Knowing that Mr. Hollister meant to cruise about in the timber that day, Stack and Maxted followed him. In a lonely place, far from possible help, they attacked and killed him—with clubs. After the sawyers knocked off work for the day they carried the body to the spot and placed it there among the limbs of the oak, with a huge broken limb across him. It was the most natural conclusion that he had been struck down by the tree when it was thrown, since there were only bruises to be found on his body. The underbrush was thick, and it could easily have happened, and the sawyers none the wiser. It did happen just that way, the verdict was.

"I notified Maxted that Miss Hollister was sending a messenger to Oak Donnick—or, at least, I suspected as much. He sent Stack along with instructions to waylay the messenger when he started off and take the letter from him. I did not know Stack meant to kill Sheppard, but he did.

"After that Maxted came to us where we were waiting for the ranger to show up, and told us that he suspected he had already arrived. Was, in short, in Sheppard's cabin at that moment. We were then instructed to lay for him between the cabin and the mill. We did so—and Stack was killed, as you know. I got away, and tried to escape to Deer Island. Dynamite prevented that.

"I don't know why I entered into the scheme," Lacewell moaned at the finish, dropping again onto the step and covering his face with his hands, "except that Baldridge had caught me embezzling funds of the company, while I acted as an assistant cashier in the Memphis office, and thereafter held the act as a threat over me. Of course I've been well paid—and money, big money, always has been my curse. That's all. I think I have covered everything."

Cal turned to Amy, who stood, white to the lips, listening. Beside her was Dr. Mays who, having put young Hollister to bed and quieted him with the drug he craved, had come out in time to hear the confession.

"You've both heard what Lacewell related," he said. "Should he later on try to change his story, you will bear witness that he voluntarily confessed—and you will also bear witness to what he confessed."

"I shall not change it in the least!" Lacewell declared. "I know the game is up, and I'm trying to get off with my life! You'll help me, inspector, won't you? I'll aid you all I can! I swear it!"

"You're about the most despicable thing in human form in the world, Lacewell," Cal told him. "You're the weak material from which really daring crooks make tools—often to their undoing. You're very brave and very vicious when the cards are running your way, but a cowardly squealer when they are all against you. Nevertheless, if you stick by your confession, I'll do my best to get you off with a prison term instead of the noose. Look after his wound, please, doctor," he requested, turning to Mays, "and guard him well."

At that moment the little tug, the Amy, steamed importantly up to the dock, and Luke came ashore.

"Get your rifle, Mallory," Cal told him, "and come aboard. Let's go, Dynamite. You deserve to be in at the finish."

"What are you going to do?" Amy demanded as Cal turned to depart.

"We're going to take Baldridge and Maxted off the Roamer," was Cal's reply, "or sink 'em along with her."

Five minutes later, with Calhoun, Mallory, and Dynamite on the bow, the little tug shot away up Thunder under a full head of steam—a ferret on the trail of a wolf.

CHAPTER XII

The Game Closes

"THEY'VE got a thirty-minute lead on us, inspector," Skipper Tim McHose reminded Cal as he stood by, ready for orders.

"They've got a wider, bigger boat—which is against them and in our favor," Cal pointed out. "We draw a foot less water, and need not feel our way so carefully as they. Furthermore, your pilot knows every inch of Thunder—and the Roamer's man does not.

"Now, your orders," he continued. "If we sight the Roamer before reaching Lake Leacraft, you will drop back out of rifle range, holding that position until told to close up. Such an order will come when both boats are in the lake, and not until. Then will come, in all probability, an order which will test the courage and obedience of two of your crew at least—pilot and engineer. It must, however, be obeyed and without the slightest delay—else we shall lose. Is that clear?"

"It is," the skipper replied. "And you can count on me men doin' what they're ordered to do, inspector!" he declared loyally. "They'd ram her nose into hell if so be I told 'em to!"

"That's just about what they're going to be told to do," Cal declared in his turn. "And, for ramming, I'll say that the Amy is remarkably well equipped."

He pointed to the sharp, steel shod and steel reënforced bow—and Skipper Tim McHose nodded understandingly.

"Ye've got nerve, Calhoun—an' so have we!" he exclaimed, his eyes beginning to glow with excitement. "I'll be havin' a word with me pilot an' engineer!"

He departed hastily, and Luke and Dynamite questioned the ranger with silent glances.

Cal nodded. "It may come to that," he said quietly. "But they'll have a chance to come aboard us as prisoners first."

"They'll never accept it!" Mallory declared.

"Then we'll see some mighty fast action, and a bit of hot work, directly we come up with them," Cal stated calmly. "And I'm laying it all on the Amy's nose. Luckily they have no women aboard."

Dynamite grinned widely.

"Ah seed a wil'-cat whup hell outen a wolf once," he remarked. "Reckin whut's ahead of us, more'n likely, will be somethin' like that. Huh?"

Cal nodded. "And the safest place aboard for you two," he suggested, "is the pilot deck, aft the pilot house."

At that moment the watch above called out that he had sighted the Roamer.

"In a bend, a quarter ahead!" the watch called down.

McHose signaled the engine room, and the speed of the Amy promptly fell off.

"Five miles more to th' lake," he informed Cal.

"As we are," he was instructed.

Presently, however, it became apparent that the Roamer had discovered the Amy on her tail, and had speeded up. She had taken a lead of over half a mile, according to the lookout.

"Chase her," Cal instructed the skipper. "If we get right on her heels, drop back."

The Amy leaped forward like an unleashed greyhound, and the distance between the two boats rapidly decreased. Well out of rifle range, the little tug hung grimly on the launch's stern and, try though she did, the larger craft thereafter gained not an inch.

"Lake ahead—half a quarter!" bawled the lookout.

"Careful!" Cal warned the skipper. "She may round on us the minute she gets steering way under her keel!"

McHose, knowing the danger, signaled the engineer to proceed at half speed. The Roamer, in consequence, gained again.

Abruptly the forest walls dropped away, the channel widened, and the Amy slid out upon the broad bosom of Lake Leacraft. A mile distant could be seen Deer Island, occupying a position in the center of the lake.

Between the Amy and Deer Island, her short funnels spouting thick smoke shot with bits of blazing wood, paddle-wheels churning desperately at her sides, sped the Roamer. She had decided to run for it.

"Close up!" Cal snapped the order.

McHose yanked his signal bell. The tug leaped ahead, cleaving a course straight for the larger boat. Presently she was on her heels.

"Run along her port side!" Cal ordered.

In obedience to a signal from the skipper, the pilot brought his wheel over and, under crowding steam from her sturdy but straining boilers, the Amy clawed up and lay alongside the Roamer, with only a hundred yards of blue water between.

"Aboard the Roamer!"

Calhoun, standing forward on the cabin deck, hailed the fleeing boat through the skipper's trumpet.

"Aboard the Amy!"

It was Bannerman, skipper of the Roamer, who replied.

"You've got two fugitives from justice aboard, skipper!" Cal called. "Lay-to, while we board you and take them off. Inspector Calhoun, of the United States Rangers, speaking!"

"Go to hell!"

It was the defiant voice of Baldridge answering.

"That's your final decision, is it?" Cal called.

"It is! Just try to board us, damn you!"

Maxted, Baldridge and the skipper stood in plain sight upon the cabin deck. Cal then addressed the skipper.

"You've got about three minutes in which to get your men off the boat, skipper!" he warned. "Get busy, else you'll have to take the consequences!"

"Damn the consequences!" Bannerman yelled.

At that instant two puffs of white smoke spurted from the Roamer's lower deck, followed instantly by the whiplike reports of rifles, and lead splintered the woodwork of the Amy's texas..

"Get to cover!" Cal ordered. "You, McHose, prepare to ram! Take her just aft the boilers—and under a full head! That's all!"

Cal raced for the pilot deck, on the heels of Mallory and Dunn. By the time he had reached it, half a dozen rifles aboard the Roamer were plugging away at the Amy. Evidently the crew of the pursued boat were of a kind with her owner.

In the pilot house, Alf Small was manipulating the wheel disastrously, bringing the Amy about, drawing her off perhaps two hundred yards farther than her first position, and heading her around—powerful, steel-shod bow pointed dead ahead.

A terrific rattle of gunfire broke from the deck of the Roamer, and lead sleeted against the pilot house. Small, expecting an attack the instant his maneuvers became plain, had dropped below the windows, one steady hand holding the wheel, the other grasping his bell-pull, ready to transmit an order to the engine room which would send the little tug straight at her quarry's port side, like an arrow from a monster bow.

"Full speed ahead!"

Cal's voice sang out the order the moment he saw the Amy pointed as he wished her to be.

The pilot's hand yanked the cord, there was an answering roar from below as the engineer gave his cylinders all he had—and the Amy, like a startled deer from cover, shot with torpedolike speed and directness straight for the Roamer's side!

The Roamer's pilot, in a desperate and daring effort to elude the crash, swung his craft out of her course to starboard—but his attempt came too late.

With a terrific, splintering crash, the Amy's ram caught the Roamer just forward of the engine room, tearing its way through the guard rail as if it had been so much twine. On through the side of the hull it clove, while splintered wood and broken window glass fell like hail upon the decks and superstructure behind.

Yells and oaths of terror and rage filled the air, while many of the crew leaped into the water and struck off for the island which loomed as a safe port not more than half a quarter away.

The big launch listed sharply under the impact, her starboard boiler deck was immediately awash. Fearful of a boiler explosion, Cal had given orders calculated to take them out of danger should it occur.

The engineer of the Amy, at the moment of contact, had carefully and expertly thrown his levers into reverse. The little craft quivered and protested under the restraint, then tore her nose out of her enemy's side and slid away.

There was not a whole window pane in her structure, one of her stacks was down on the hurricane deck, every movable piece aboard her had gone hurtling out of place, while the front of the texas was a splintered ruin.

But, with all her damage, she had won!

Calhoun and every man aboard had either thrown themselves prone before the impact, or had been hurled down by it.

No explosion came, only a thunder-

ing roar as the waters of the lake swept in and covered the Roamer's fires.

Cal and his men promptly manned the two boats which remained aboard the Amy after the crash, and set out for the wreck. Most of the crew had, as it developed, reached the island in safety. Just before they reached the sinking launch Dynamite reached out suddenly and grasped a swimming man by the hair. It proved to be Baldridge —badly demoralized and all but drowned. He was taken aboard.

"Look!" yelled Luke, pointing toward the top of the pilot house, which was gradually settling toward the surface of the lake.

Cal cast a glance that way—just as Maxted, his face black with fear and hatred, dropped on his knees and brought a rifle to bear upon him.

With the speed of lightning Calhoun swung the muzzle of a forty-five across his hip and fired.

The menacing rifle dropped to the pilot house roof, exploding as it fell. Maxted, clutching at a spot above his heart, managed to struggle to his feet, then plunged headlong into the water.

Five minutes later, while Cal and the crew watched from a safe distance, all that remained of the Roamer plunged beneath the surface of the lake, leaving a monster whirlpool in its wake.

"And that," said Luke Mallory, in an awed voice, "is the end of the game!"

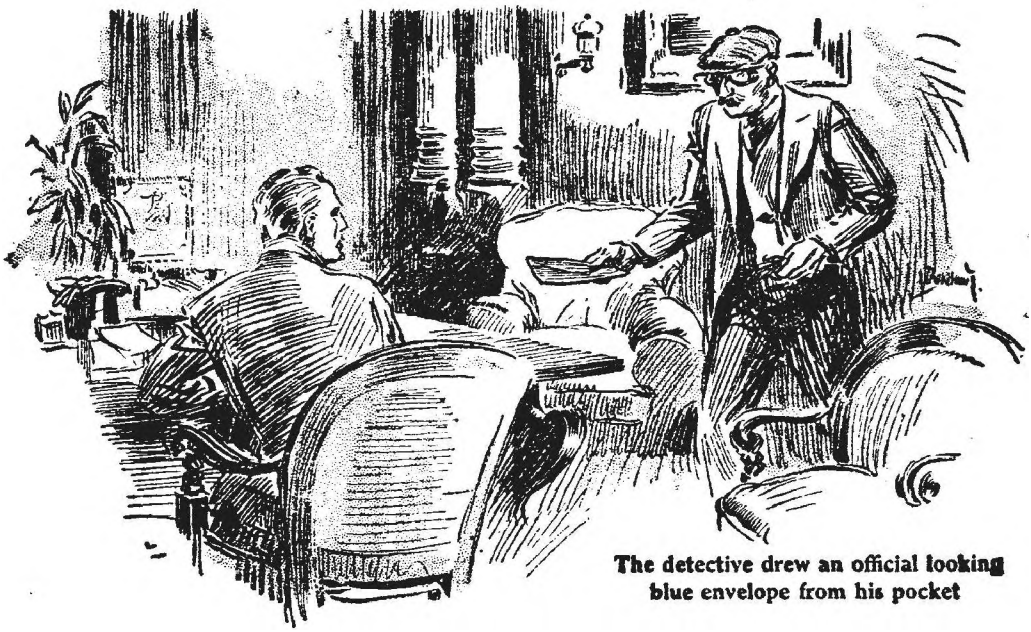
The restoration of young Hollister to his natural manhood, the marriage of Luke and Amy, and the subsequent logging of the big tract on Thunder, all form a part of another story. With the failure of Baldridge, the particular Satan in this game, to win the coveted stakes, this one ends.

Calhoun, true to his promise, succeeded in getting Joe Lacewell off with a ten-year prison term—after the tool's evidence had sent Baldridge to prison for life.

"Which," the ranger observed to himself, "is just about the measure of punishment each deserved. A big dose for the big crook, and a little dose for the little one—which doesn't always happen, but, I'd say, balances things up pretty well!"

THE END

Don't miss the "fightin' Irish" yarn next week, "Cassidy's War," by W. Wirt.



The detective drew an official looking blue envelope from his pocket

Four Men of Murder

Sir Philip Gets the Four's Last Warning—a Grim Message: "To-morrow You Will Die!"

By Edgar Wallace

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

ALL England was startled one morning by a sinister announcement in the newspapers. Sir Philip Ramon, the Foreign Secretary, had been threatened with death. People inclined to treat the matter as a jest or the work of "cranks," soon appreciated the seriousness of the affair when they discovered the source of the threat. It was signed: "The Four Just Men."

Who were they? Through the news columns England learned that they were four who considered law courts inadequate, and dispensed their own kind of justice: a bloody justice—capital punishment for every offense they considered reprehensible. Ramon had been threatened because he intended to force the passage in Parliament of a certain bill which would send back to his native country—and execution—a political refugee in London.

The four were: Gonsalez, Poiccart, Manfred, and Thery, the first three scholars, the last a criminal and an unwilling addition to the ranks. Thery wanted to reform.

Through the columns of the *Daily Megaphone,* any one of the four who would come forward and betray his comrades was promised reward and immunity. Thery went to the *Mega-*

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for January 26

phone with his secret, and was about to betray his comrades, when a masked man stepped into the editor's office and leveled a pistol at the traitor.

CHAPTER VI

Ramon Scoffs

"HOW did you get here — what do you want?" demanded the editor, and stretched his hand to an open drawer in his desk.

"Take your hand away"—and the thin barrel of the revolver rose with a jerk. "How I came here your doorkeeper will explain when he recovers consciousness. Why I am here is because I wish to save my life—not an unreasonable wish. If Thery speaks I may be a dead man—I am about to prevent him speaking. I have no quarrel with either of you gentlemen, but if you hinder me I shall kill you," he said simply. He spoke all the while in English, and Thery, unable to understand, with wide-stretched eyes and distended nostrils, shrank back against the wall, breathing quickly.

"You," said the masked man, turning to the terror-stricken informer and speaking in Spanish, "would have betrayed your comrades—you would have thwarted a great purpose, therefore it is just that you should die."

He raised the revolver to the level of Thery's breast, and Thery fell on his knees, mouthing the prayer he could not articulate.

"By God—no!" cried the editor, and sprang forward.

The revolver turned on him.

"Sir," said the unknown—and his voice sank almost to a whisper—"for God's sake do not force me to kill you!"

"You shall not commit a cold-blooded murder!" cried the editor in a white heat of anger, and moved forward, but Welby held him back.

"What is the use?" said Welby in an undertone; "he means it—we can do nothing."

"You can do something," said the stranger, and his revolver dropped to his side.

Before the editor could answer there was a knock at the door.

"Say you are busy." And the revolver covered Thery, who was a whimpering, huddled heap by the wall.

"Go away," shouted the editor, "I am busy."

"The printers are waiting," said the voice of the messenger.

"Now," asked the chief, as the footsteps died away; "what can we do?"

"You can save this man's life."

"How?"

"Give me your word of honor that you will allow us both to depart, and will neither raise an alarm nor leave this room for a quarter of an hour."

The editor hesitated.

"How do I know that the murder you contemplate will not be committed as soon as you get clear?"

The other laughed under his mask.

"How do I know that as soon as I have left the room you will not raise an alarm?"

"I should have given my word, sir," said the editor stiffly.

"And I mine," was the quiet response; "and my word has never been broken."

In the editor's mind a struggle was going on; here in his hand was the greatest story of the century; another minute and he would have extracted from Thery the secret of the Four.

Even now a bold dash might save everything—and the printers were waiting—but the hand that held the revolver was the hand of a resolute man, and the chief yielded.

"I agree, but under protest," he said. "I warn you that your arrest and punishment is inevitable."

"I regret," said the masked man with a slight bow, "that I cannot agree with you—nothing is inevitable save death. Come, Thery," he said, speaking in Spanish. "On my word as a Cabelerro, I will not harm you."

Thery hesitated, then slunk forward with his head bowed and his eyes fixed on the floor.

The masked man opened the door an inch, listened, and in the moment came the inspiration of the editor's life.

"Look here," he said quickly, the man giving place to the journalist, "when you get home will you write us an article about yourselves? You needn't give us any embarrassing particulars? You know—something about your intentions, your ideas—"

"Sir," said the masked man — and there was a note of admiration in his voice—"I recognize in you an artist. The article will be delivered to-morrow." He opened the door, and the two men stepped into the darkened corridor.

Blood-red placards, hoarse newsboys, overwhelming headlines, and column after column of leaded type told the world next day how near the Four had been to capture. Men in the train leaned forward, their newspapers on their knees, and explained what they would have done had they been in the editor of the *Megaphone's* position. People stopped talking about wars and famines and drafts and street accidents and parliaments and ordinary everyday murders in order to concentrate their minds upon the topic of the hour. Would the Four Just Men carry out their promise and slay the Secretary for Foreign Affairs on the morrow?

Nothing else was spoken about. Here was a murder threatened a month ago, and, unless something unforeseen happened, to be committed to-morrow.

No wonder that the London Press devoted the greater part of its space to discuss the coming of Thery and his recapture.

"It is not so easy to understand," said the *Telegram,* "why, having the miscreants in their hands, certain journalists connected with a sensational contemporary allowed them to go free to work their evil designs upon a great statesman. We say 'if,' for, unfortunately, in these days of cheap journalism every story coming from sensation-loving sheets is not to be accepted on its pretensions; so *if,* as it is stated, these desperadoes really *did* visit the office of a contemporary last night—"

At noon day Scotland Yard circulated broadcast a hastily printed sheet:

£1,000 REWARD

Wanted, on suspicion of being connected with a criminal organization known as the Four Just Men, Miguel Thery, alias Saimont, alias Le Chico, late of Jerez, Spain, a Spaniard speaking no English. Height five feet eight inches. Eyes brown, hair black, slight black mustache, face broad. Scars: white scar on cheek, old knife wound on body. Figure, thick-set.

The above reward will be paid to any person or persons who shall give such information as shall lead to the identification of the said Thery with the band known as the Four Just Men, and his capture.

From which may be gathered that, acting on the information furnished by the editor and his assistant at two o'clock in the morning, the Direct Spanish Cable had been kept busy; important personages had been roused from their beds in Madrid, and the history of Thery as recorded in the bureau had been reconstructed from pigeonhole records for the enlightenment of an energetic commissioner of police.

Sir Philip Ramon, sitting writing in his study at Portland Place, found a difficulty in keeping his mind upon the letter that lay before him.

It was a letter addressed to his agent at Branfell, the huge estate over which he, in the years he was out of office, played squire.

Neither wife nor chick nor child had Sir Philip. "If by any chance these men succeed in carrying out their purpose I have made ample provision not only for yourself, but for all who have rendered me faithful service," he wrote

—from which may be gathered the tenor of his letter.

During these past few weeks Sir Philip's feelings toward the possible outcome of his action had undergone a change.

The irritation of a constant espionage, friendly on the one hand, menacing on the other, had engendered so bitter a feeling of resentment that in this newer emotion all personal fear had been swallowed up. His mind was filled with one unswerving determination, to carry through the measure he had in hand, to thwart the Four Just Men, and to vindicate the integrity of a Minister of the Crown.

"It would be absurd," he wrote in the course of an article entitled "Individuality in its Relation to the Public Service," and which was published some months later in the *Quarterly Review*—"it would be monstrous to suppose that incidental criticism should affect or in any way influence a member of the government in his duty to the millions of people entrusted to his care. He is the instrument, duly appointed, to put into tangible form the wishes and desires of those who naturally look to him to furnish, not only means and methods for the betterment of their conditions, but to find them protection from risks. A Minister of the Crown with due appreciation of his responsibilities ceases to exist as a man and is merely an unhuman automaton."

Sir Philip Ramon was a man with very few friends. He had none of the qualities that go to the making of a popular man. He was an honest, conscientious and strong man. He was the cold-blooded, cynical creature that a life devoid of love had left him.

He had no enthusiasm—and inspired none. Satisfied that a certain procedure was less wrong than any other, he adopted it. Satisfied that a measure was for the immediate or ultimate good of his fellows, he carried that measure through to the bitter end. It may be said of him that he had no ambitions—only aims. He was the dangerous man in the Cabinet, which he dominated in his masterful way, for he knew not the meaning of the blessed word "compromise."

If he held views on any subject under the sun, those views were to be the views of his colleagues.

Four times in the short history of the administration had "Rumored Resignation of a Cabinet Minister" filled the placards of the newspapers, and each time the Minister whose resignation was ultimately recorded was the man whose views had clashed with the Foreign Secretary. In small things, as in great, he had his way.

His official residence he absolutely refused to occupy, and No. 44 Downing Street was converted into half office, half palace. Portland Place was his home, and from thither he drove every morning, passing the Horse Guards' clock as it finished the last stroke of ten.

A private telephone wire connected his study in Portland Place with the official residence, and but for this Sir Philip had cut himself adrift from the house in Downing Street, to occupy which had been the ambition of the great men of his party.

Now, however, with the approach of the day on which their every effort would be taxed, the police insisted upon his taking up his quarters in Downing Street.

Here, they said, the task of protecting the minister would be simplified. No. 44 Downing Street they knew. The approaches could be better guarded, and, moreover, the drive—that dangerous drive!—between Portland Place and the Foreign Office would be eliminated.

It took a considerable amount of pressure and pleading to induce Sir Philip to take even this step, and it was only when it was pointed out that the surveillance to which he was being subjected would not be so apparent to himself that he yielded.

"You don't like to find my men outside your door with your shaving water," said Superintendent Falmouth bluntly. "You objected to one of my men being in your bathroom when you went in the other morning, and you complained about a plainclothes officer driving on your box. Well, Sir Philip, in Downing Street I promise that you shan't even see them."

This clinched the argument.

It was just before leaving Portland Place to take up his new quarters that he sat writing to his agent while the detective waited outside the door.

The telephone at Sir Philip's elbow buzzed—he hated bells—and the voice of his private secretary asked, with some anxiety, how long he would be.

"We have got sixty men on duty at 44," said the secretary, zealous and young, "and to-day and to-morrow we shall—" And Sir Philip listened with growing impatience to the recital.

"I wonder you have not got an iron safe to lock me in," he said petulantly, and closed the conversation.

There was a knock at the door and Falmouth put his head inside.

"I don't want to hurry you, sir," he said, "but—"

So the Foreign Secretary drove off to Downing Street in something remarkably like a temper.

For he was not used to being hurried, or taken charge of, or ordered hither and thither. It irritated him further to see the now familiar cyclists on either side of the carriage, to recognize at every few yards an obvious policeman in mufti admiring the view from the sidewalk, and when he came to Downing Street and found it barred to all carriages but his own, and an enormous crowd of morbid sightseers gathered to cheer, he felt as he had never felt before in his life—humiliated.

He found his secretary waiting in his private office with the rough draft of the speech that was to introduce the second reading of the Extradition Bill.

"We are pretty sure to meet with a great deal of opposition," informed the secretary, "but Mainland expects to get a majority of thirty-six—at the very least."

Ramon read over the notes and found them refreshing. They brought back the old feeling of security and importance. After all, he was a great Minister of State. Of course the threats were too absurd—the police were to blame for making so much fuss; and of course the press, yes, that was it—a newspaper sensation.

There was something buoyant, something almost genial in his air, when he turned with a half smile to his secretary.

"Well, what about my unknown friends—what do the blackguards call themselves—the Four Just Men?"

Even as he spoke he was acting a part; he had not forgotten their title, it was with him day and night.

The secretary hesitated; between his chief and himself the Four Just Men had been a tabooed subject.

"They—oh, we've heard nothing more than you have read," he said. "We know now who Thery is, but we can't place his three companions."

The minister pursed his lips.

"They give me till to-morrow night to withdraw," he said.

"Heard from them again?"

"The briefest of notes," said Sir Philip lightly.

"And otherwise?"

Sir Philip frowned. "They will keep their promise," he said shortly, for the "otherwise" of his secretary had sent a coldness into his heart that he could not quite understand.

CHAPTER VII

Thery's Trade

IN the top room in the workshop at Carnsby Street, Thery, subdued, sullen, fearful, sat facing the three.

"I want you to understand," said Manfred, "that we bear you no ill-will

for what you have done. I think, and Señor Poiccart thinks, that Señor Gonsalez did right to spare you your life and bring you back to us."

Thery dropped his eyes before the half-quizzical smile of the speaker.

"To-morrow night you will do as you agreed to do—if the necessity still exists. Then you will go—" he paused.

"Where?" demanded Thery in sudden rage. "Where, in the name of Heaven? I have told them my name, they will know who I am—they will find that by writing to the police. Where am I to go?"

He sprang to his feet, glowering on the three men, his hands trembling with rage, his great frame shaking with the intensity of his anger.

"You betrayed yourself," said Manfred quietly; "that is your punishment. But we will find a place for you, a new Spain under other skies—and the girl at Jerez shall be there waiting for you."

Thery looked from one to the other suspiciously. Were they laughing at him?

There was no smile on their faces; Gonsalez alone looked at him with keen, inquisitive eyes, as though he saw some hidden meaning in the speech.

"Will you swear that?" asked Thery. "Will you swear that by the—"

"I promise that—if you wish it I will swear it," said Manfred. "And now," he went on, his voice changing, "you know what is expected of you to-morrow night—what you have to do?"

Thery nodded.

"There must be no hitch—no bungling; you and I and Poiccart and Gonsalez will kill this unjust man in a way that the world will never guess—such an execution as shall appall mankind. A swift death, a sure death, a death that will creep through cracks, that will pass by the guards unnoticed. Why, there never has been such a thing done—such—" He stopped dead with flushed cheeks and kindling eyes, and met the gaze of his two companions. Poiccart impassive, sphinxlike, Leon interested and analytic. Manfred's face went a duller red.

"I am sorry," he said almost humbly. "For the moment I had forgotten the cause, and the end, in the strangeness of the means."

"It is understandable," said Poiccart gravely, and Leon pressed Manfred's arm.

The three stood in embarrassed silence for a moment, then Manfred laughed.

"To work!" he said, and led the way to the improvised laboratory.

Inside Thery took off his coat. Here was his province, and from being the cowed dependent he took charge of the party, directing them, instructing, commanding, until he had the men of whom, a few minutes before, he had stood in terror running from study to laboratory, from floor to floor.

There was much to be done, much testing, much calculating, many little sums to be worked out on paper, for in the killing of Sir Philip Ramon all the resources of modern science were to be pressed into the service of the Four.

"I am going to survey the land," said Manfred suddenly, and, disappearing into the studio, returned with a pair of stepladders. These he straddled in the dark passage, and, mounting quickly, pushed up a trapdoor that led to the flat roof of the building.

He pulled himself up carefully, crawled along the leaden surface, and, raising himself, cautiously looked over the low parapet.

He was in the center of a half-mile circle of uneven roofs. Beyond the circumference of his horizon London loomed murkily through smoke and mist. Below was the busy street. He crawled slowly back to the trapdoor, raised it, and let himself down very gingerly till his feet touched the top of the ladder. Then he descended rapidly, closing the door after him.

"Well?" asked Thery, with something of triumph in his voice.

"I see you have labeled it," said Manfred.

"It is better so—since we shall work in the dark," said Thery.

"Did you see then—" began Poiccart.

Manfred nodded.

"Very indistinctly—one could just see the Houses of Parliament dimly, and Downing Street is a jumble of roofs."

Thery had turned to the work that was engaging his attention. Whatever was his trade, he was a deft workman. Somehow he felt that he must do his best for these men. He had been made forcibly aware of their superiority in the last days; he had now an ambition to assert his own skill, his own individuality, and to earn commendation from these men who had made him feel his littleness.

Manfred and the others stood aside and watched him in silence. Leon, with a perplexed frown, kept his eyes fixed on the workman's face. Leon Gonsalez, a scientist and a student of crime, was endeavoring to reconcile the criminal with the artisan.

After awhile Thery finished.

"All is now ready," he said, with a grin of satisfaction. "Let me find your minister of state, give me a minute's speech with him, and the next minute he dies."

His face, repulsive in repose, was now demoniacal. He was like some great bull from his own country made more terrible with the snuffle of blood in his nostrils.

In strange contrast were the faces of his employers. Not a muscle of their faces stirred. There was neither exultation nor remorse in their expressions—only a curious something that creeps into the set face of the judge as he pronounces the dread sentence of the law. Thery saw that something, and it froze him to his very marrow.

He threw out his hands as if to ward them off.

"Stop! Stop!" he shouted. "Don't look like that, in the name of God—don't, don't!" He covered his face with shaking hands.

"Like what, Thery?" asked Leon softly.

Thery shook his head.

"I cannot say— Like the judge at Granada when he says—when he says 'Let the thing be done!'"

"If we look so," said Manfred harshly, "it is because we are judges; and not alone judges, but executioners of our judgment."

"I thought you would be pleased," whimpered Thery.

"You have done well," said Manfred gravely.

"*Bueno, bueno!*" echoed the others.

"Pray God that we are successful," added Manfred solemnly; and Thery stared at him in blank amazement.

Superintendent Falmouth reported to the commissioner that afternoon that all arrangements were now complete for the protection of the threatened minister.

"I've filled up 44 Downing Street," he said. "There's practically a man in every room. I've got four of our best men on the roof, men in the basement, men in the kitchens."

"What about the servants?" asked the commissioner.

"Sir Philip has brought up his own people from the country, and now there isn't a person in the house from the private secretary to the doorkeeper whose name and history I do not know from A to Z."

The commissioner breathed an anxious sigh.

"I shall be very glad when to-morrow is over," he said. "What are the final arrangements?"

"There has been no change, sir, since we fixed things up the morning Sir Philip came over. He remains at 44 all day to-morrow until half past eight, goes over to the House at nine to move the reading of the bill, returns at eleven."

"I have given orders for the traffic to be diverted along the Embankment between a quarter to nine and a quarter after, and the same at eleven," said the commissioner. "Four closed carriages will drive from Downing Street to the House; Sir Philip will drive down in a motor car immediately afterward."

There was a rap at the door—the conversation took place in the commissioner's office—and a police officer entered. He bore a card in his hand, which he laid upon the table.

"Señor Jose di Silva," read the commissioner, "the Spanish chief of police," he explained to the superintendent. "Show him in, please."

Señor di Silva, a lithe little man with a pronounced nose and beard, greeted the Englishman with the exaggerated politeness that is peculiar to Spanish official circles.

"I am sorry to bring you over," said Mr. Commissioner after he had shaken hands with the visitor and had introduced him to Falmouth. "We thought you might be able to help us in our search for Thery."

"Luckily I was in Paris," said the Spaniard. "Yes, I know Thery, and I am astounded to find him in such distinguished company. Do I know the Four?" His shoulders went up to his ears. "Who does? I know of them—there was a case at Malaga, you know. Thery is not a good criminal. I was astonished to learn that he had joined the band."

"By the way," said the chief, picking up a copy of the police notice that lay on his desk and running his eye over it, "your people omitted to say—although it really isn't of very great importance—what is Thery's trade."

The Spanish policeman knitted his brow.

"Thery's trade! Let me remember." He thought for a moment. "Thery's trade? I don't think I know; yet I have an idea that it is something to do with rubber. His first crime was stealing rubber. If you want to know—"

The commissioner laughed.

"It really isn't at all important," he said lightly.

CHAPTER VIII

The Messenger of the Four

THERE was yet another missive to be handed to the doomed minister. In the last he had received there had occurred the sentence: "One more warning you shall receive, and so that we may be assured it shall not go astray our next and last message shall be delivered into your hands by one of us in person."

This passage afforded the police more comfort than had any episode since the beginning of the scare. They placed a curious faith in the honesty of the Four Men; they recognized that these were not ordinary criminals, and that their pledge was inviolable. Indeed, had they thought otherwise the elaborate precautions that they were taking to insure the safety of Sir Philip would not have been made. The honesty of the Four was their most terrible characteristic.

In this instance it served to raise a faint hope that the men who were setting at defiance the establishment of the law would overreach themselves. The letter conveying this message was the one to which Sir Philip had referred so airily in his conversation with his secretary. It had come by post, bearing the date mark, "Balham, 12.15."

"The question is, shall we keep you absolutely surrounded, so that these men cannot by any possible chance carry out their threat?" asked Superintendent Falmouth in some perplexity. "Or shall we apparently relax our vigilance in order to lure one of the Four to his destruction?"

The question was directed to Sir Philip Ramon as he sat huddled up in the capacious depths of his office chair.

"You want to use me as a bait?" he asked sharply.

The detective expostulated. "Not exactly that, sir; we want to give these men a chance—"

"I understand perfectly," said the minister, with some show of irritation.

The detective resumed:

"We know now how the infernal machine was smuggled into the House. On the day on which the outrage was committed an old member, Mr. Bascoe, the member from North Torrington, was seen to enter the House."

"Well?" asked Sir Philip in surprise.

"Mr. Bascoe was never within a hundred miles of the House of Commons on that date," said the detective quietly. "We might never have found it out, for his name did not appear in the division list. We've been working quietly on that House of Commons affair ever since, and it was only a couple of days ago that we made the discovery."

Sir Philip sprang from his chair and nervously paced the floor of his room.

"Then they are evidently well acquainted with the conditions of life in England," he asserted rather than asked.

"Evidently; they've got the lay of the land, and that is one of the dangers of the situation."

"But," frowned the other, "you have told me there were no dangers, no real dangers."

"There is this danger, sir," replied the detective, eying the minister steadily and dropping his voice as he spoke. "Men who are capable of making such disguise are really outside the ordinary run of criminals. I don't know what their game is, but whatever it is, they are playing it thoroughly. One of them is evidently an artist at that sort of thing, and he's the man I'm afraid of —to-day."

Sir Philip's head tossed impatiently.

"I am tired of all this—tired of it." He thrashed the edge of his desk with an open palm. "Detectives and disguises and masked murderers until the atmosphere is, for all the world, like that of a melodrama."

"You must have patience for a day or two," said the plain-spoken officer. The Four Just Men were on the nerves of more people than the foreign minister. "And we have not decided what is to be our plan for this evening," he added.

"Do as you like," said Sir Philip shortly, and then: "Am I to be allowed to go to the House to-night?"

"No; that is not part of the program," replied the detective.

Sir Philip stood for a moment in thought.

"These arrangements; they are kept secret, I suppose?"

"Absolutely."

"Who knows of them?"

"Yourself, the commissioner, your secretary, and myself."

"And no one else?"

"No one; there is no danger likely to arise from that source. If upon the secrecy of your movements your safety depended, it would be plain sailing."

"Have these arrangements been committed to writing?" asked Sir Philip.

"No, sir. Nothing has been written; our plans have been settled upon and communicated verbally; even the prime minister does not know."

Sir Philip breathed a sigh of relief.

"That is all to the good," he said as the detective arose to go.

"I must see the commissioner. I shall be away for less than half an hour; in the meantime; I suggest that you do not leave your room," he said.

Sir Philip followed him to the anteroom, in which sat Hamilton, the secretary.

"I have had an uncomfortable feeling," said Falmouth, as one of his men approached with a long coat, which he proceeded to help the detective into, "a sort of instinctive feeling this last

day or two, that I have been watched and followed, so that I am using a motor car to convey me from place to place; they can't follow that, without attracting some notice."

He dipped his hand into the pocket and brought out a pair of motor goggles. He laughed somewhat shamefacedly as he adjusted them. "This is the only disguise I ever adopt, and I might say, Sir Philip," he added with some regret, "that this is the first time during my twenty-five years of service that I have ever played the fool like a stage detective."

After Falmouth's departure the foreign minister returned to his desk.

He hated being alone; it frightened him. That there were two score detectives within call did not dispel the feeling of loneliness. The terror of the Four was ever with him, and this had so worked upon his nerves that the slightest noise irritated him. He played with the penholder that lay on the desk. He scribbled on the blotting-pad before him, and was annoyed to find that the scribbling had taken the form of numbers of figure 4.

Was the bill worth it? Was the sacrifice called for? Was the measure of such importance as to justify the risk? These things he asked himself again and again, and then immediately: What sacrifice? What risk?

"I am taking the consequence too much for granted," he muttered, throwing aside the pen, and half turning from the writing-table. "There is no certainty that they will keep their words; bah! It is impossible that they should—"

There was a knock at the door.

"Hullo! Superintendent," said the foreign minister as the knocker entered. "Back again already!"

The detective, vigorously brushing the dust from his mustache with a handkerchief, drew an official-looking blue envelope from his pocket.

"I thought I had better leave this in your care," he said, dropping his voice. "It occurred to me just after I had left; accidents happen, you know."

The minister took the document.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It is something which would mean absolute disaster for me if by chance it was found in my possession," said the detective, turning to go.

"What am I to do with it?"

"You would greatly oblige me by putting it in your desk until I return," and the detective stepped into the anteroom, closed the door behind him and, acknowledging the salute of the plain-clothes officer who guarded the outer door, passed to the motor car that awaited him.

Sir Philip looked at the envelope with a puzzled frown.

It bore the superscription "Confidential," and the address, "Department A., C. I. D., Scotland Yard."

"Some confidential report," thought Sir Philip, and an angry doubt as to the possibility of it containing particulars of the police arrangements for his safety filled his mind. He had hit by accident upon the truth had he but known. The envelope contained those particulars.

He placed the letter in a drawer of his desk and drew some papers toward him.

They were copies of the bill for the passage of which he was daring so much.

It was not a long document. The clauses were few in number, the objects, briefly described in the preamble, were tersely defined. There was no fear of this bill failing to pass on the morrow. The government's majority was assured. Men had been brought back to town, stragglers had been whipped in, prayers and threats alike had assisted in concentrating the rapidly dwindling strength of the administration on this one effort of legislation; and what the frantic entreaties of the whips had failed to secure, curiosity had accomplished, for members

of both parties were hurrying to town to be present at a scene which might perhaps be history, and, as many feared, tragedy.

As Sir Philip conned the paper he mechanically formed in his mind the line of attack—for, tragedy or none, the bill struck at too many interests in the house to allow of its passage without a stormy debate. He was a master of dialectics, a coiner of phrases that stuck and stung. There was nothing for him to fear in the debate.

If only—it hurt him to think of the Four Just Men. Not so much because they threatened his life—he had gone past that—but the mere thought that there had come a new factor into his calculations, a new and a terrifying force, that could not be argued down or brushed aside with an acid jest, nor intrigued against, nor adjusted by any parliamentary method. He did not think of compromise. The possibility of making terms with his enemy never once entered his head.

"I'll go through with it!" he cried, not once, but a score of times; "I'll go through with it!" and now, as the moment grew nearer to hand, his determination to try conclusions with this new world-force grew stronger than ever.

The telephone at his elbow purred—he was sitting at his desk with his head on his hands—and he took the receiver. The voice of his house steward reminded him that he had arranged to give instructions for the closing of the house in Portland Place.

For two or three days, or until this terror had subsided, he intended his house should be empty. He would not risk the lives of his servants. If the Four intended to carry out their plan, they would run no risks of failure, and if the method they employed was a bomb, then, to make assurance doubly sure, an explosion at Downing Street might well accompany an outrage at Portland Place.

He had finished his talk, and was replacing the receiver when a knock at the door heralded the entry of the detective.

He looked anxiously at the minister.

"Nobody been here, sir?" he asked.

Sir Philip smiled.

"If by that you mean have the Four delivered their ultimatum in person, I can comfort your mind—they have not."

The detective's face was evidence of his relief.

"Thank Heaven!" he said fervently. "I had an awful dread that while I was away something would happen. But I have news for you, sir."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, the commissioner has received a long cable from America. Since the two murders in that country one of Pinkerton's men has been engaged in collecting data. For years he has been piecing together the scrappy evidence he has been able to secure, and this is his cablegram." The detective drew a paper from his pocket and spreading it on the desk, read:

"Pinkerton, Chicago, to Commissioner of Police, Scotland Yard, London.

"Warn Ramon that the Four do not go outside of their promise. If they have threatened to kill in a certain manner at a certain time they will be punctual. We have proof of this characteristic. After Anderson's death small memorandum book was discovered outside window of room evidently dropped. Book was empty save for three pages, which were filled with neatly written memoranda headed 'Six methods of execution.' It was initialed 'C' (third letter in alphabet). Warn Ramon against following: drinking coffee in any form, opening letters or parcels, using soap that has not been manufactured under eye of trustworthy agent, sitting in any room other than that occupied day and night by police officer. Examine his bedroom; see if there is any method by which heavy gases can be introduced. We are sending two men by Lucania to watch."

The detective finished reading. "Watch" was not the last word in the original message, as he knew. There

had been an ominous postscript: "Afraid they will arrive too late."

"Then you think—" asked the statesman.

"That your danger lies in doing one of the things that Pinkerton warns us against," replied the detective. "There is no fear that the American police are talking idly. They have based their warning on some sure knowledge, and that is why I regard their cable as important."

There was a sharp rap on the panel of the door, and without waiting for invitation, the private secretary walked into the room, excitedly waving a newspaper.

"Look at this!" he cried. "Read this! The Four have admitted their failure."

"What!" asked the detective, reaching for the journal.

"What does this mean?" asked Sir Philip sharply.

"Only this, sir: these beggars, it appears, have actually written an article on their 'mission.'"

"In what newspaper?"

"The *Megaphone*. It seems when they recaptured Thery the editor asked the masked man to write him an article about himself, and they've done it; and it's here, and they've admitted defeat, and—and—"

The detective had seized the paper and broke in upon the incoherent secretary's speech.

"'The Creed of the Four Just Men,'" he read. "Where is their confession of failure?"

"Halfway down the column—I have marked the passage—here"; and the young man pointed with a trembling finger to a paragraph.

"'We leave nothing to chance,'" read the detective, "'if the slightest hitch occurs, if the least detail of our plan miscarries, we acknowledge defeat. So assured are we that our presence on earth is necessary for the carrying out of a great plan, so certain are we that we are the indispensable instruments of a divine providence, that we dare not, for the sake of our very cause, accept unnecessary risks.

"'It is essential therefore that the various preliminaries to every execution should be carried out to the full. As an example, it will be necessary for us to deliver our final warning to Sir Philip Ramon; and to add point to this warning, it is, by our code, essential that that should be handed to the minister by one of us in person. All arrangements have been made to carry this portion of our program into effect. But such are the extraordinary exigencies of our system that unless this warning can be handed to Sir Philip in accordance with our promise, and before eight o'clock this evening, our arrangements fall to the ground, and the execution we have planned must be foregone.'"

The detective stopped reading, with disappointment visible on every line of his face.

"I thought, sir, by the way you were carrying on, that you had discovered something new. I've read all this; a copy of the article was sent to the Yard as soon as it was received."

The secretary thumped the desk impatiently.

"But don't you see!" he cried. "Don't you understand, that there is no longer any need to guard Sir Philip, that there is no reason to use him as a bait, or, in fact, to do anything if we are to believe these men—look at the time—"

The detective's hand flew to his pocket; he drew out his watch, looked at the dial and whistled.

"Half-past eight! Good God!" he muttered in astonishment, and the three stood in surprised silence.

Sir Philip broke the silence.

"Is it a ruse to take us off our guard?" he said hoarsely.

"I don't think so," replied the detective slowly. "I feel sure that it is not; nor shall I relax my watch—but I am a believer in the honesty of these

men—I don't know why I should say this, for I have been dealing with criminals for the past twenty-five years, and never once have I put an ounce of faith in the word of the best of 'em, but somehow I can't disbelieve these men. If they have failed to deliver their message, they will not trouble us again."

Ramon paced his room with quick, nervous steps.

"I wish I could believe that," he muttered; "I wish I had your faith."

A tap on the door panel.

"An urgent telegram for Sir Philip," said the gray-haired attendant.

The minister stretched out his hand, but the detective was before him.

"Remember Pinkerton's wire, sir," he said, and ripped open the brown envelope.

> Just received a telegram handed in at Charing Cross 7.52 begins: We have delivered our last message to the foreign secretary, signed Four. Ends. Is this true?
>
> EDITOR, *Megaphone.*

"What does this mean?" asked Falmouth in bewilderment when he had finished reading.

"It means, my dear Mr. Falmouth," replied Sir Philip testily, "that your noble Four are liars and braggarts as well as murderers; and it means at the same time, I hope, an end to your ridiculous faith in their honesty!"

The detective made no answer, but his face was clouded and he bit his lips in perplexity.

"Nobody came after I left?" he asked.

"Nobody."

"You have seen no person besides your secretary and myself?"

"Absolutely nobody has spoken to me, or approached within a dozen yards of me," Ramon answered shortly.

Falmouth shook his head despairingly.

"Well—I—where are we?" he asked, speaking more to himself than to anybody in the room, and moved toward the door.

Then it was that Sir Philip remembered the package left in his charge.

"You had better take your precious documents," he said, opening his drawer and throwing the package left in his charge on to the table.

The detective looked puzzled.

"What is this?" he asked, picking up the envelope.

"I'm afraid the shock of finding yourself deceived in your estimate of my persecutors has dazed you," said Sir Philip, and added pointedly, "I must ask the commissioner to send an officer who has a better appreciation of the criminal mind, and a less childlike faith in the honor of murderers."

"As to that, sir," said Falmouth, unmoved by the outburst, "you must do as you think best. I have discharged my duty to my own satisfaction; and I have no more critical taskmaster than myself. But what I am more anxious to hear is exactly what you mean by saying that I handed any papers into your care."

The Foreign Secretary glared across the table at the imperturbable police officer.

"I am referring, sir," he said harshly, "to the packet which you returned to leave in my charge."

The detective stared.

"I—did—not—return," he said in a strained voice. "I have left no papers in your hands." He picked up the package from the table, tore it open and disclosed yet another envelope. As he caught sight of the gray-green cover he gave a sharp cry.

"This is the message of the Four," said Falmouth.

The Foreign Secretary staggered back a pace, white to the lips.

"And the man who delivered it?" he gasped.

"Was one of the Four Just Men," said the detective grimly. "They have kept their promise."

He took a quick step to the door, passed through into the anteroom and beckoned the plainclothes officer who stood on guard at the outer door.

"Do you remember my going out?" he asked.

"Yes, sir—both times."

"Both times, eh?" said Falmouth bitterly. "And how did I look the second time?"

His subordinate was bewildered at the form the question took.

"As usual, sir," he stammered.

"How was I dressed?"

The constable considered.

"In your long dust-coat."

"I wore my goggles, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so," muttered Falmouth savagely, and raced down the broad marble stairs that led to the entrance-hall. There were four men on duty, who saluted him as he approached.

"Do you remember my going out?" he asked of the sergeant in charge.

"Yes, sir—both times," the officer replied.

"Damn your 'both times,'" snapped Falmouth. "How long had I been gone the first time before I returned?"

"Five minutes, sir," was the astonished officer's reply.

"They just gave themselves time to do it," muttered Falmouth, and then aloud: "Did I return in my car?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah!" Hope sprang into the detective's breast. "Did you notice the number?" he asked, almost fearful to hear the reply.

"Yes!"

The detective could have hugged the stolid officer.

"Good—what was it?"

"A-17164."

The detective made a rapid note of the number. "Jackson," he called, and one of the men in mufti stepped forward and saluted.

"Go to the Yard; find out the registered owner of this car. When you have found this go to the owner; ask him to explain his movements; if necessary, take him into custody."

Falmouth retraced his steps to Sir Philip's study. He found the statesman still agitatedly walking up and down the room, the secretary nervously drumming his fingers on the table and the letter still unopened.

"As I thought," explained Falmouth, "the man you saw was one of the Four impersonating me. He chose his time admirably; my own men were deceived. They managed to get a car exactly similar in build and color to mine, and, watching their opportunity, they drove to Downing Street a few minutes after I had left. There is one last chance of our catching him—luckily the sergeant on duty noticed the number of the car, and we might be able to trace him through that—hello!" An attendant stood at the door.

Would the Superintendent see Detective Jackson? Falmouth found him waiting in the hall below.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Jackson, saluting, "but is there not some mistake in this number?"

"Why?" asked the detective sharply.

"Because," said the man, "A-17164 is the number of your own car."

CHAPTER IX

The Pocketbook

THE final warning sent to Sir Philip Ramon was brief and to the point:

> We allow you until to-morrow evening to reconsider your position in the matter of the Aliens Extradition Bill. If by six o'clock no announcement is made in the afternoon newspapers of your withdrawing this measure we shall have no other course to pursue but to fulfill our promise. You will die at eight in the evening. We append for your enlightenment a concise table of the secret police arrangements made for your safety to-morrow. Farewell.
>
> (Signed)—FOUR JUST MEN.

Sir Philip read this over without a tremor. He read, too, the slip of pa-

per on which was written, in the strange foreign hand, the details that the police had not dared to put into writing.

"There is a leakage somewhere," he said, and the two anxious watchers saw that the face of their charge was gray and drawn.

"These details were known only to four," said the detective quietly, "and I'll stake my life that it was neither the Commissioner nor myself."

"Nor I!" said the private secretary emphatically.

Sir Philip shrugged his shoulders with a weary laugh.

"What does it matter? — they know!" he exclaimed. "By what uncanny method they have learned the secret I neither know nor care. The question is, can I be adequately protected to-morrow night at eight o'clock?"

Falmouth shut his teeth.

"Either you'll come out of it alive or, by the Lord, they'll kill two," he said, and there was a gleam in his eye that spoke for his determination.

The news that yet another letter had reached the great statesman was on the streets at ten o'clock that night. It circulated through the clubs and theaters, and between the acts grave-faced men stood in the vestibules discussing Ramon's danger. The House of Commons was seething with excitement. In the hope that the Minister would come down, a strong House had gathered, but the members were disappointed, for it was evident soon after the dinner recess that Sir Philip had no intention of showing himself that night.

"Might I ask the right honorable the Prime Minister whether it is the intention of his Majesty's Government to proceed with the Aliens Extradition —Political Offense—Bill?" asked the Radical Member for West Deptford. "And whether he has not considered, in view of the extraordinary conditions that the Bill has called into life, the advisability of postponing the introduction of this measure?"

The question was greeted with a chorus of "hears," and the Prime Minister rose slowly and turned an amused glance in the direction of the questioner.

"I know of no circumstance that is likely to prevent my right honorable friend, who is unfortunately not in his place to-night, from moving the second reading of the Bill to-morrow," he said, and sat down.

"What the devil was he grinning at?" grumbled West Deptford to a neighbor.

"He's deuced uncomfortable, is J. K.," said the other wisely, "deuced uncomfortable; a man in the Cabinet was telling me to-day that old J. K. has been feeling deuced uncomfortable. 'You mark my words,' he said, 'this Four Just Men business is making the Premier deuced uncomfortable,'" and the honorable member subsided to allow West Deptford to digest his neighbor's profundities.

"I've done my best to persuade Ramon to drop the Bill," the Premier was saying, "but he is firm, and the pitiable thing is that he believes in his heart of hearts that these fellows intend keeping faith."

"It is monstrous," said the Colonial Secretary hotly; "it is inconceivable that such a state of affairs can last. Why, it strikes at the root of everything, it unbalances every adjustment of civilization."

"It is a political idea," said the stolid Premier, "and the standpoint of the Four is quite a logical one. Think of the enormous power for good or evil often vested in one man; a capitalist controlling the markets of the world, a speculator cornering cotton or wheat while mills stand idle and people starve, tyrants and despots with the destinies of nations between their thumb and finger—and then think of the four men, known to none; vague, condemning and executing the capitalist, the corner

maker, the tyrant—evil forces all, and all beyond reach of the law. We have said of these people, such of us as are touched with mysticism, that God would judge them. Here are men taking to themselves the divine right of superior judgment. If we catch them they will end their lives unpicturesquely, in a matter-of-fact, commonplace manner in a little shed in Pentonville jail, and the world will never realize how great the artists who perish."

"But Ramon?"

The Premier smiled.

"Here, I think, these men have just overreached themselves. Had they been content to slay first and explain their mission afterward I have little doubt that Ramon would have died. But they have warned and warned and exposed their hand a dozen times over. I know nothing of the arrangements that are being made by the police, but I should imagine that by to-morrow night it will be as difficult to get within a dozen yards of Ramon as it would be for a prisoner to dine with the King."

"Is there no possibility of Ramon withdrawing the Bill?" asked the Colonies.

The Premier shook his head.

"Absolutely none," he said.

The rising of a member of the Opposition front bench at that moment to move an amendment to a clause under discussion cut short the conversation.

The House rapidly emptied when it became generally known that Ramon did not intend appearing, and the members gathered in the smoking room and lobby to speculate upon the matter which was uppermost in their minds.

In the vicinity of Palace Yard a great crowd had gathered, as in London crowds will gather, on the off-chance of catching a glimpse of the man whose name was in every mouth. Street venders sold his portrait, frowzy men selling the "real life and adventures" of the Four Just Men did a roaring trade, and street singers, introducing extemporized verses into their repertoire, declaimed the courage of that statesman bold, who dared for to resist the threats of coward alien and deadly anarchist.

There was praise in these poor lyrics for Sir Philip, who was trying to prevent the foreigner from taking the bread out of the mouths of honest working men.

The humor of which appealed greatly to Manfred, who, with Poiccart, had driven to the Westminster end of the Embankment. Having dismissed their cab, they were walking to Whitehall.

"I think the verse about the 'deadly foreign anarchist' taking the bread out of the mouth of the home-made variety is distinctly good," chuckled Manfred.

Both men were in evening dress, and Poiccart wore in his buttonhole the silken button of a Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur.

Manfred continued:

"I doubt whether London has had such a sensation since—when?"

Poiccart's grim smile caught the other's eye, and he smiled in sympathy.

"Well?"

"I asked the same question of the maître d'hôtel," he said slowly, like a man loath to share a joke. "He compared the agitation to the atrocious East End murders."

Manfred stopped dead and looked with horror on his companion.

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed in distress, "it never occurred to me that we should be compared with—him!"

They resumed their walk.

"It is part of the eternal bathos," said Poiccart serenely. "Even de Quincy taught the English nothing. The God of Justice has but one interpreter here, and he lives in a public-house in Lancashire, and is an expert and dexterous disciple of the lamented Marwood, whose system he has improved upon."

They were traversing that portion of

Whitehall from which Scotland Yard runs.

A man, slouching along with bent head and his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his tattered coat, gave them a swift sidelong glance, stopped when they had passed, and looked after them. Then he turned and, quickening his shuffle, followed on their trail. A press of people and a seeming ceaseless string of traffic at the corner of Cockspur Street brought Manfred and Poiccart to a standstill, waiting for an opportunity to cross the road. They were subjected to a little jostling as the knot of waiting people thickened, but eventually they crossed and walked toward St. Martin's Lane.

The comparison which Poiccart had quoted still rankled with Manfred.

"There will be people at His Majesty's to-night," he said, "applauding Brutus as he asks 'What villain touched his body and not for justice?' You will not find a serious student of history, or any commonplace man of intelligence, for the matter of that, who, if you asked, Would it not have been God's blessing for the world if Bonaparte had been assassinated on his return from Egypt? would not answer, without hesitation, Yes. But we—we are murderers!"

"They would not have erected a statue to Napoleon's assassin," said Poiccart easily, "any more than they have enshrined Felton, who slew a profligate minister of Charles I. Posterity may do us justice," he spoke mockingly; "for myself, I am satisfied with the approval of my conscience."

He threw away the cigar he was smoking, and put his hand to the inside pocket of his coat to find another. He withdrew his hand without the cigar and whistled a passing cab.

Manfred looked at him in surprise.

"What is the matter? I thought you said you would walk?"

Nevertheless he entered the taxi and Poiccart followed, giving his direction to the driver—"Baker Street Station."

The cab was rattling along through Shaftesbury Avenue before Poiccart gave any explanation.

"I have been robbed," he said, sinking his voice. "My watch has gone, but that does not matter. The pocket-book with the notes I made for the guidance of Thery has gone—and that matters a great deal."

"It may have been a common thief," said Manfred. "He took the watch."

Poiccart was feeling his pockets rapidly.

"Nothing else has gone," he said. "It may have been, as you say, a pickpocket, who will be content with the watch and will drop the notebook down the nearest drain; but it may be a police agent."

"Was there anything in it to identify you?" asked Manfred, in a troubled tone.

"Nothing," was the prompt reply. "But unless the police are blind they would understand the calculations and the plans. It may not come to their hands at all, but if it does, and the thief can recognize us, we are in a fix."

The cab drew up at the down station at Baker Street, and the two men alighted.

"I shall go east," said Poiccart; "we will meet in the morning. By that time I shall have learned whether the book has reached Scotland Yard. Good night."

And with no other farewell than this the two men parted.

If Billy Marks had not had a drop of drink he would have been perfectly satisfied with his night's work. Filled, however, with that liquid confidence that leads so many good men astray, Bill thought it would be a sin to neglect the opportunities that the gods had shown him. The excitement engendered by the threats of the Four Just Men had brought all suburban London to Westminster, and on the Surrey side of the bridge Billy found hundreds of

patient suburbanites waiting for conveyance to Streatham, Camberwell, Clapham, and Greenwich.

So, the night being comparatively young, Bill decided to work the trams.

He touched a purse from a stout old lady in black, a Waterbury watch from a gentleman in a top hat, a small hand mirror from a dainty bag, and decided to conclude his operations with the exploration of a superior young lady's pocket.

Billy's search was successful. A purse and a lace handkerchief rewarded him, and he made arrangements for a modest retirement. Then it was that a gentle voice breathed into his ear: "Hullo, Billy!"

He knew the voice, and felt momentarily unwell.

"Hullo, Mr. Howard," he exclaimed with feigned joy. "'Ow are you, sir? Fancy meetin' you!"

"Where are you going, Billy?" asked the welcome Mr. Howard, taking Billy's arm affectionately.

"'Ome," said the virtuous Billy.

"Home it is," said Mr. Howard, leading the unwilling Billy from the crowd. "Home, sweet home, it is, Billy." He called another young man, with whom he seemed to be acquainted: "Go on that car, Porter, and see who has lost anything. If you can find any one bring them along." The other young man obeyed.

"And now," said Mr. Howard, still holding Billy's arm affectionately, "tell me how the world has been using you."

"Look 'ere, Mr. Howard," said Billy earnestly. "What's the game? Where are you takin' me?"

"The game is the old game," said Mr. Howard sadly. "The same old game, Bill, and I'm taking you to the same old sweet spot."

"You've made a mistake this time, guv'nor," cried Billy fiercely, and there was a slight clink.

"Permit me, Billy," said Mr. Howard, stooping quickly and picking up the purse Billy had dropped.

At the police station the sergeant behind the charge desk pretended to be greatly overjoyed at Billy's arrival, and the jailer, who put Billy into a steel-barred dock, and passed his hands through cunning pockets, greeted him as a friend.

"Gold watch, half a chain, gold, three purses, two handkerchiefs, and a red moroccer pocketbook," reported the jailer.

The sergeant nodded approvingly.

"Quite a good day's work, William," he said.

"What shall I get this time?" inquired the prisoner, and Mr. Howard, a plainclothes officer engaged in filling in particulars of the charge, opined nine moons.

"Go on!" exclaimed Mr. Billy Marks in consternation.

"Fact," said the sergeant. "You're a rogue and a vagabond, Billy; you're a petty larcenist, and you're for the sessions this time—Number Eight."

This latter was addressed to the jailer, who bore Billy off to the cells protesting vigorously against a police force that could only tumble to poor blokes, and couldn't get a touch on sanguinary murderers like the Four Just Men.

"What do we pay rates and taxes for?" indignantly demanded Billy, through the grating of his cell.

"Fat lot you'll ever pay, Billy," said the jailer, putting the double lock on the door.

In the charge office Mr. Howard and the sergeant were examining the stolen property, and three owners, discovered by Police Constable Porter, were laying claim to their own.

"That disposes of all the articles except the gold watch and the pocketbook," said the sergeant after the claimants had gone, "gold watch, Elgin half hunter No. 5029020; pocketbook containing no papers, no card, no address, and only three pages of writing. What this means I don't know."

The sergeant handed the book to

Howard. The page that puzzled the policeman contained simply a list of streets. Against each street was scrawled a cabalistic character.

"Looks like the diary of a paper-chase," said Mr. Howard. "What is on the other pages?"

They turned the leaf. This was filled with figures.

"H'm," said the disappointed sergeant, and again turned over a leaf. The contents of this page was understandable and readable, although evidently written in a hurry as though it had been taken down at dictation.

"The chap who wrote this must have had a train to catch," said the facetious Mr. Howard, pointing to the abbreviations:

> Will not leave D.S., except to Hs. Will drive to Hs in M.C. (4 dummy brghms first), 8.30. At 2 600 p arve traf divtd Embank, 80 spls inside D.S. One each rm, three each cor, six basemt, six rf. All drs wide opn allow each off see another, all spls will carry revr. Nobody except F and H to approach R. In Hse strange gal filled with spl, all press vouched for. 200 spl in cor. If nec battalion guards at disposal.

The policeman read this over slowly.

"Now what the devil does that mean?" asked the sergeant helplessly.

It was at that precise moment that Constable Howard earned his promotion.

"Let me have that book for ten minutes," he said excitedly. The sergeant handed the book over with wondering stare.

"I think I can find an owner for this," said Howard, his hand trembling as he took the book, and ramming his hat on his head he ran out into the street.

He did not stop running until he reached the main road, and finding a cab he sprang in with a hurried order to the driver.

"Whitehall, and drive like blazes," he called, and in a few minutes he was explaining his errand to the inspector in charge of the cordon that guarded the entrance of Downing Street.

"Constable Howard, 946 L. reserve," he introduced himself. "I've a very important message for Superintendent Falmouth."

That officer, looking tired and beaten, listened to the policeman's story.

"It looks to me," went on Howard breathlessly, "as though this had something to do with your case, sir. D.S. is Downing Street, and—" He produced the book and Falmouth snatched at it.

He read a few words and then gave a triumphant cry.

"Our secret instructions," he cried, and catching the constable by the arm he drew him to the entrance hall.

"Is my car outside?" he asked, and in response to a whistle a car drew up. "Jump in, Howard," said the detective, and the car slipped into Whitehall.

"Who is the thief?" asked the senior.

"Billy Marks, sir," replied Howard; "you may not know him, but down at Lambeth he is a well-known character."

"Oh, yes," Falmouth hastened to correct. "I know Billy very well indeed—we'll see what he has to say."

The car drew up at the police station and the two men jumped out.

The sergeant rose to his feet as he recognized the famous Falmouth, and saluted.

"I want to see the prisoner Marks," said Falmouth shortly, and Billy, roused from his sleep, came blinking into the charge office.

"Now, Billy," said the detective, "I've got a few words to say to you."

"Why, it's Mr. Falmouth," said the astonished Billy, and something like fear shaded his face. "I wasn't in that 'Oxton affair, s' 'elp me."

"Make your mind easy, Billy; I don't want you for anything, and if you'll answer my questions truthfully,

you may get off the present charge and get a reward into the bargain."

Billy was suspicious.

"I'm not going to give anybody away if that's what you mean," he said sullenly.

"Nor that either," said the detective impatiently. "I want to know where you found this pocketbook," and he held it up.

Billy grinned.

"Found it lyin' on the pavement," he lied.

"I want the truth," thundered Falmouth.

"Well," said Billy sulkily, "I pinched it."

"From whom?"

"I didn't stop to ask him his name," was the impudent reply.

The detective breathed deeply.

"Now, look here," he said, lowering his voice, "you've heard about the Four Just Men?"

Billy nodded, opening his eyes in amazement at the question.

"Well," exclaimed Falmouth impressively, "the man to whom this pocketbook belongs is one of them."

"What!" cried Billy.

"For his capture there is a reward of a thousand pounds offered. If your description leads to his arrest that thousand is yours."

Marks stood paralyzed at the thought.

"A thousand—a thousand!" he muttered in a dazed fashion, "and I might just as easily have caught him."

"Come, come!" cried the detective sharply. "You may catch him yet—tell us what he looked like."

Billy knitted his brows in thought.

"He looked like a gentleman," he said, trying to recall from the chaos of his mind a picture of his victim; "he had a white weskit, a white shirt, nice patent shoes—"

"But his face—his face!" demanded the detective.

"His face?" cried Billy indignantly. "How do I know what it looked like? I don't look a chap in the face when I'm pinching his watch, do I?"

TO BE CONCLUDED

"The Hick Dick," by Martin J. Porter, the funniest true story of the year, will appear in next week's DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Take-a-Chance

By Richard Milne

"Faster! They're gaining on us!"

Roas' Bif Molloy, With a Gun at His Head, Takes a Wild Ride With a Burglar

A SWELL life. Be a taxi driver. Sit down all the time, life one grand joy ride. Never strain the muscles of your back. Be a gent. Take things easy, roll along like a prince. There's the way to live!

"Bif" Molloy could swear in three languages: United States, Frog, and very low German—the first having been, so to speak, born into him; the other two natural results of Argonne adventures. For the past half hour, at intervals, he had exercised his talents. Oh, no cussing to brag about—just a fair, journeyman job. The sort of thing that helps a bit in a cold spring drizzle, at midnight or thereabouts, when you're standing outside the Grand Central with a moth-eaten, [illegible]-eyed and consumptive concrete mixer, waiting for something to happen (or not to happen—who cares?), and when there don't seem to be any sense to anything except bed. Or a game.

Half an hour more. Half an hour more and he could knock off—take this creeping coffee-grinder off the street and give honest traffic a chance. Then bed. Or maybe Butch Ingram's. He sort of thought he'd go around to Butch's for an hour.

Conscience tormented him now. He oughtn't to go to Butch's. "If you'd only stop gambling, before it *gets* you!" Tess had said to him.

Funny: she was like that. It worried her. Bif laughed. Queer about some women, he thought. Everything in life—everything worth while, anyhow—was take a chance, and yet they threw fits if a man wanted to try and throw sevens; got all worked up because he took a chance with a few measly bucks.

For instance, the way she'd riled up when Butch had breezed into the Elite Garage — her old man's place — and bawled: "Hi, there, Take-a-Chance! How's th' kid?"

"What did he call you, Bif?"

"Aw, that was just a wise crack."

The flame in Tess's eyes had died down slowly; the eyes had grown sorrowful with understanding. It was pretty bad when a man with a perfectly good nickname, like Bif—short for *rosbif*, Molloy's favorite overseas diet, when obtainable — got Take-a-Chance tacked onto him.

"I don't like it," Tess had said. "Bif, you can't fool me! When Butch Ingram calls you that—and he one of the worst gamblers in the city! Oh, Bif, I'm frightened! Please stop it. You must stop it!"

"A ring on your finger might stop it, Tess."

That was a neat way to put it. Put it squarely up to her, after all these months of coyness, of hemming and hawing. Let her answer that one. Tess did, cruelly.

"Could you buy me a ring to-day, Bif?"

Molloy went sickly white. Shame—shame of two distinct kinds, honest and otherwise—boiled up in him. He couldn't, that was the truth of it; but for Tess to jab his poverty into him—

"You know I'm no millionaire!" he said savagely.

"You earn enough," Tess reminded him. "If I've said something I shouldn't, it's your own fault. And even if you could buy me the best ring in town I wouldn't wear it: I'd know how you got the money. Bif Molloy, if you don't stay away from Butch Ingram's and get some sense into your thick head—well, you can start right now calling me Miss Ryan!"

Bif knew when the referee had counted ten. In a manner of speaking he could have got to his feet on nine, but he stayed down. Maybe that was yellow; at times he'd thought it was; but he was sore.

"All right, Miss Ryan," he'd said, trying to be free and easy, and all that. "See you again when the air ain't so chilly."

Gents, be a taxi driver! See the world from the front seat! Drive through romance every day in the week. Wear a big raccoon coat, and all the girls 'll fall in love with you. Be a taxi driver—it's the life!

Bif puckered his lips, and from them came that world-famous song hit—the beautiful razzberry.

"A nice way to greet a customer!" snapped a voice at his elbow.

Bif turned. The weak light that filtered through the steaming air showed him a runtish bird. It had all the earmarks of the man species, but with undeniable rodent characteristics. In short, he would have made a good movie stool pigeon. And yet, of course, a fare was a fare. You didn't have to win the Coney Island beauty contest to ride in a taxi—or, for that matter, in a Rolls-Royce limousine.

"Well, well," Bif mused. "A customer, you say?"

"What do I look like?" the runt growled.

Bif smiled, as if to say: "Oh, I'm too polite to tell you;" but the runt didn't notice. The light was pretty bad at that.

"Well, how about it?" the runt growled again. "Snap out of it, buddy! Get in that—"

He looked at the taxi as if at loss for proper words.

"Taxicab," Bif suggested. It was, he admitted, a terrible boat, but no stranger should be permitted to say so.

"All right. Call it that. Let's go."

"Where to?" said Bif, looking back as the runt crept into the fare's ramshackle quarters.

A boney, twisted hand held a card out to him.

"Massage your eyes with that," the runt ordered.

Bif read the address on the card, intuition telling him that he was reaping the fruit of his sins, that he was in for it. Pelham—tch! tch! Pelham, on a night like this. And a ten-cent tip. He could see that coming. No largesse from this bird.

"Listen!" said the runt's voice. "The sooner we get started, the sooner we get there. I like to sleep in bed. Let's smell your exhaust!"

Bif tried to oblige him by sending a cloud of carbon out. Ten per cent of it, he figured, would seep through the cracks into the cab. Oh, well, the fare was right, the sooner he got started, the sooner he got back.

It was a silent, dreary ride. Sometimes, on the late-long ones, the fare got chummy, and talked about the scenery, rumor that Abie's Irish Rose was going to have children and the holes in the road; but this was no camarade. He minded his own business, for which Bif was duly grateful. He wasn't the sort of bird any one 'd want to talk to.

Like most bad things, the journey came to an end in due course. Bif pulled up beside an attractive house; the fare climbed out.

"Five dollars," said Bif; and it was reasonable at that.

"Be yourself," the runt snarled.

"Five dollars," Bif repeated, with cheerfulness one degree removed from fury. "[illegible] and I couldn't make it a dime less for my own mother."

The runt leaned forward. Bif discovered that he disliked his face more and more. "Listen, buddy—I *never* pay for taxis. Get me?"

In the runt's right hand an automatic gleamed. Cagy guy; he held it just far enough off so that Bif hadn't a chance in the world of grabbing it, even if he'd been a coffin fancier. No luck, thought Bif—no luck at all.

"Say you, step on the gas," the runt advised.

"Yes, sir," said Bif.

He wasn't at all cowed as he drove away. Automatics were nothing new to him; he'd take a dozen Lugers from Heinie looies if he'd taken one. His first thought had been to drive a short distance and then go back — get his man somehow. But he wasn't packing a gun, and he had an idea that the runt knew his cartridges. The best dope was to see if there were any cops still awake and make sure of the five dollars.

A quarter of a mile off he found a police station and made his report. The sergeant on the desk was extremely interested.

"Philip Grant's place," he said. Two minutes later, or maybe a trifle less, Bif was carrying three more free fares to the scene of his discomfiture.

A sleepy-eyed butler came to the door when the cops rang. Protesting, he let them in. They searched the house, Bif on their heels, eager; but there was absolutely no sign of a burglar.

"Say," one of the policemen had an inspiration; "you're sure you saw the guy go in?"

"I saw him go in the driveway," Bif reddened.

"My Gawd, what an apple you are!" the cop blared. "A fare gyps you five bucks and then goes in a driveway, and you— Say, d'ye think any crook in his right mind would advertise the place he was going to rob? If that bird's doing business he's a mile from here!"

Bif left the house first, smarting. Climbing into the car he scampered away. Nice fellows. If they wanted to act like that, let 'em *walk* back to the station house.

On the way back to town his anger died somewhat to sour melancholy. Five bucks gone; insults ringing in his ears. Hang it, he'd go to Butch's! He had a right to some pleasure after a night like this!

II

BIF MOLLOY went into Butch Ingram's place at three in the morning with forty dollars in his kick and a temper like an unbroken stallion. He came out at a quarter to four, singing "Mademoiselle from Armentieres," with bills totalling eight hundred in his pocket and clear ownership

of a two-thousand-dollar car, almost brand new. It happened like this:

Lady Luck was in a good mood. Maybe, Bif said to himself, she was trying to square herself after the raw deal she'd handed him with the runt. Even with careless fading, forty went to a hundred in five minutes, and after that he just walked in and took the city.

"Um," said Butch, who didn't care who won, since he never played himself, and therefore never lost, "luck's runnin', Take-a-Chance. Play it, kid, play it!"

"Do I look young or something?" Bif retorted, good-naturedly.

From time to time, though, he had qualms. And it wasn't the pale-faced, lantern-jawed man at his right who caused them, either, though the paleface's money went into Bif's pocket by tens. It was Tess. Bif had forgotten he was sore on Tess; he remembered that life would never be complete unless he had Tess to pour the morning coffee. After all, you had to expect some sharp words, now and again, from a girl important enough to become your wife. Tess had a right to lambaste him. Deserve it? Of course he deserved it! How could he expect any girl in her right mind to take a chance on a guy who might throw the week's pork and beans out the window an hour after the ghost toddled?

"No more," he said to himself. "To-night's the last shot. Here and now I do reform—s' help me."

And when he found himself, to his amazement, the sole owner of eight hundred dollars, however acquired, he decided he'd had enough. Go home; get some sleep; buy Tess her ring in the morning; tell her she'd bought something in the shape of a decent, law-abiding man.

At this point, however, the paleface on the right remarked: "I'm cleaned."

"Sorry," said Bif, gently, with a smile. "Lend you any amount?"

The paleface shook his head. "Never borrow, son. That's my only virtue. Pay all my debts; never cheat; never borrow. But I'm cleaned, and I don't want to go home. How much you got, son?"

"About eight hundred," said Bif, surprised.

With bent forehead gleaming in the brilliant cone of light, the paleface considered.

"I've got a car standing outside. Worth two thousand anywhere. Shoot your eight hundred against half my

[illegible] he should refuse: he'd be stealing Tess's ring. But he was a bit sorry for the paleface. Ought to give him a break.

"You're on."

A flip of the wrist later Bif learned that he owned half of a two-thousand-dollar automobile.

"How about one last shot?" the paleface smiled. "Half a car's odd. My half against your half?"

There was sense in this suggestion. If had breathed his sigh of relief Bif [illegible] Tess's ring [illegible]; now his seeing [illegible] into safety, [illegible]obile! blood coursed hotly. An automobile! A little luck, and—

The paleface, when the dice stopped, saw snake eyes and shrugged. "Oh, well, it's the way it goes. You own an automobile, son. It's a good one."

Bif began protestation of regret, sincere enough, for it was always tough to clean a good sport, but the paleface's hand stopped him short. "Don't waste your time. I'm a long way from starvation. Plenty more cars where that one came from. Oh, don't worry—it wasn't stolen: I run an agency. You won it fairly. Hope you enjoy it. But if you don't mind preaching, son—"

"Well?" said Bif, as the paleface hesitated.

"Lay off the gambling. There's nothing in it. I know: I've done it all my life. All you get's bad air, bad thrills, bad drama—everything bad.

Be healthy—*earn* your living. So long."

With a signed bill of sale from the paleface in his pocket, and a key, Bif left Butch Ingram's place and went out into the night. He found the car against the curb, and loved it dearly. A sedan, and a beautiful bus. He sat at the wheel for several minutes before driving off, wondering. Would he run it as a taxi, or sell it—or just keep it? A sedan had weaknesses, as a taxi. It let the driver breathe the same air as his passengers, and the world was full of snobs. But he hated to sell it. Keep it, just for pleasure? No point in that, unless— Well, who'd want a car unless he had a girl to ride with him?

After long consideration he decided that he wouldn't park it at the Elite Garage. He had a bee in his bonnet. No harm, he thought, in a little dramatics—the Grand was just a few doors from his boarding house, so he left it there for the night—what was left of the night—and turned in.

III

PROMPTLY at 1 P.M. the Elite Garage and its entire staff was treated to the sight of Bif Molloy in all his glory. He breezed in like a Vanderbilt and stopped the sedan's bumpers an eighth of an inch from his gawdy chariot of everyday shame.

"Easy, easy!" yelled old man Ryan, careering up.

"How d'ye like it?" Bif grinned.

"Your driving? Rotten!"

"The boat, I mean."

Ryan looked at it indifferently. One car in a million, and he'd parked the whole blamed million.

"Why should anybody like it?" he snapped. "Whose is it?"

Bif had climbed out. "It's a fair question," he admitted. "And the answer is—mine."

"You can't get those by porch-climbing," Ryan remarked pleasantly.

Bif shrugged. "Oh, there are ways. Anyhow, I got it on a second story. Ain't that funny?" He turned to face Tess, who'd come out of the office, and Ryan strode away, with more important business to attend to. "Ah, there, Tess—here I am! I've got good news for you. I've decided to give you another chance!"

Oh, the lad had a way with him! Tess Ryan was all set to give him the look that mother gave dad on the wedding anniversary, but he wiped it right off her face.

"Thank you," she said, primly, but after the faintest of smiles—which showed the wind had southerly possibilities; "I haven't asked for another chance."

"Well," Bif grinned, "I just thought I might tell you, in case you were thinking of it. And now that's settled, let's go for a ride."

Tess put arms akimbo, and her marvelous eyes gave the sedan serious inspection. "Is it really yours, Bif?"

"Just like my good right arm—mine by rights, but yours whenever you want it."

But Tess, who could blush very easily and smile when she'd a mind to, neither blushed nor smiled, and that, to a bright young man, showed that the business might be difficult.

"You didn't buy it, Bif?"

"Well," he laughed uncertainly, "a bus like this costs money. I—"

She pinned him down, mercilessly. That was the worst of Tess, he'd often thought: she was merciless when she had the goods on you. She couldn't be sidetracked; she wouldn't become sentimental and forget the fundamentals.

"Where'd you get it, Bif? At Butch Ingram's?"

Cornered—because he couldn't lie to her—he nodded, and without another word Tess started away. Bif clutched and caught her arm. "But, Tess! Look here, I've got a car. I've got some money. I'm my own boss, if I want to be. See it right, Tess!—I'm all set. Why should you kick at that?"

"I wasn't kicking at that, and you needn't stick your jaw out that way," Tess said quietly. "But I don't like the way you got the car—or the money. That's what counts. Anybody who gambles will win at times; but it's the gambling that's wrong, win or lose. Bif Molloy, I wouldn't trust a man like you around the corner!"

He still held her. He drew her closer to him, and she didn't resist. They stood there, and he looked down into her eyes, and found them steadfast, sure. His, he knew, were excited with pleading.

"You don't mean that, Tess."

"I do mean it, Bif. You're irresponsible." Still and all, the accusing note in her voice was a little weaker.

"I'm a bum, then," he added, bitterly. "I'm a bum. A good-for-nothing—something that ought to be out on the ash-pile."

But a brilliant flash of teeth and a chortling laugh was the only sympathy he got. "I didn't say that. I said I wouldn't trust you around the corner. You're all right as far as you go, Bif Molloy—but you'll never go very far; you haven't got it in you."

That was a nice challenge, Bif reflected; and, his common sense coming to the surface to save him, he decided that he'd take it as a challenge, not a taunt. He loved Tess; he mustn't let anything she said put up barriers between them.

"All right. Let it go at that. Now get in and we'll take a ride."

"Not to-day, thanks," Tess said sweetly.

Something in Bif's eye, however, made her lower hers. Bif laughed forlornly. Then he sprang audacity.

"Come on—take a chance! We'll toss for it. Heads you go, tails you don't. Tess, give me a break!" He flipped a quarter. "Heads: you go. How about it?"

"Heads on both sides?" Tess asked, too thoughtlessly.

That beat her. She shouldn't have said it. Bif's sad, hurt stare made her redden. Silently he offered the quarter for her inspection, but Tess turned her eyes away, for she couldn't bear to look at it. And then, suddenly, she fled from his side, and the next moment she was sitting on the seat beside the driver's, in the sedan.

But as they were driving out of the garage she said to him: "I don't want you to think things that aren't so, Bif—I still wouldn't trust you around the corner."

"Well," Bif laughed, half happily, "we're apt to turn a hundred corners to-day, trust or no trust."

As they turned the first he said: "You know, Miss Ryan, I've reformed."

Tess received this with a faint smile. "Maybe I'll believe that some day," she admitted; "but not to-day. You spend the night at Butch Ingram's, and then come 'round and tell me you've reformed. Yes—till to-night."

Bif looked at her out of the tail of his eye. She was right, at that; he'd been reforming ever since he'd met her. Well, it was going to take this time. How could she know that, though?

"Tess," he asked, after a nervous cough, "am I a bad egg? See here, I'm serious. Am I so low-down you've got no hopes for me at all? I mean—is it all off?"

His mind on his wobbling romance, and not on his driving, Bif didn't see the furniture van swinging in from Eighty-Seventh Street. As Tess screamed he hauled at the wheel, jammed on the brakes and pulled the emergency, and missed the van by a fraction of an inch—the smallest fraction you've got the heart to think of.

"Bif Molloy, look where you're going!"

But Bif cried: "Answer my question!" He wasn't going to be sidetracked by a near accident. An eighth of an inch was as good as sixteen miles. If he threw a fit every time he almost

wrapped himself around telegraph poles he'd be a whirling dervish.

"I—I don't know," Tess faltered.

"Then it's time you found out," declared Bif. It was time, he felt, to be heavy.

"Mr. Molloy! Are you trying to cave-man me?"

"I'll say I am!"

Tess Ryan laughed heartily, and it was the first important laugh he'd heard from her in days—and, of course, it had to come in the wrong place.

"K-keep it up!" she stuttered. "It's as good as a sh-show!"

Dud. The act had not gone over. Bif went red to the ears. "All right," he growled. "Laugh your head off. I don't blame you. I'm the biggest fool born."

"Well," Tess said brightly, "if you've found that out there's hope for you."

Bif cried, "Tess!" but she squelched him by saying: "Mr. Molloy, I still wouldn't trust you around the corner."

Nevertheless, Bif felt much better. He was not entirely doomed; there was hope, if he could keep away from Butch Ingram's. Silently he swore he'd never go within a mile of the place; and that meant he'd have to move, because his boarding house was only a dozen blocks away.

Turning back, they were soon in the heart of the city again. With his mind made up, for he'd been thinking the matter over during the ride, Bif stopped in front of a jeweler's.

"Come in with me," he said to Tess. "I'm going to buy you a ring."

"I won't wear it."

"Well, come in anyhow. Even if you won't wear it, you can't stop me from buying it."

Realizing that this was one of the constitutional rights of an American citizen, and that there was no law to stop a free man from spending his money legitimately, Tess got out and went in with him.

In an undertone Bif told the clerk that he wanted to buy an eight-hundred-dollar diamond. A trayful of rings was laid before him, and within thirty seconds he had selected the one he liked best.

"How about it?" he asked, holding it out to Tess. "Like it?"

"It's beautiful," she admitted.

"Tess, let me put it on you."

"No."

Bif handed the clerk his ready roll of bills. The tray holding the other rings had been put away, and the sale was complete.

"Come on, Tess," he exhorted. "Be a sport. Take a chance! I'll match you to see whether you wear it or not!"

Bif had hoped for a laugh; he had been afraid of blazing wrath; but he was not prepared for Tess's attitude. She seemed to droop, and the lids fell over her eyes.

"You'd even gamble for *me*," she said brokenly. "I—I guess that's the end, Bif."

She walked slowly out of the store. For a moment Bif stood stunned, and then he followed swiftly. Hand on her elbow he pleaded with her, but she didn't seem to hear him. Not another word did she say until they had reached the Elite Garage.

As she got out of the car he said, hoarsely: "Tess, I swear on my honor that I'll never gamble again! I swear I—"

She just glanced at him queerly and walked away.

When he reached his boarding house room Bif took the ring out of his pocket and stared at it. Then he flung it on the floor, where it lay beneath the dresser for a full ten minutes before he picked it up again. After a bit of puzzling he found a length of string and hung the ring from his neck like a pendant.

That night, when he went back to the Elite to take the old cab out, he left a note for Tess, saying that he hoped the wearing of the ring would help him to keep his promise. It rained

again that night, but Bif hardly noticed it.

IV

GETTING married was a serious proposition; that was the point. You didn't pick a wife by flipping a coin. Bif mused morosely; it'd take Tess a long while to get over the wallop he'd handed her. Jackass! Pulling a line like that!

He dreamed of it. Crawling into bed at two in the morning he had one of the wildest nights of his life. Half the time he was arguing with Tess over something; the rest of the time he was chasing the runt. Funny how that guy's face haunted him. He sat in the galloping steam-roller and chased the runt down back alleys, and over fences, and when the runt did the human fly stunt up the Times Building the old calliope swooped up after him. Amazing, the things an auto could do in dreams!

After ham and eggs he went over to the Elite, filled the sedan's tank, and rolled her out. Then he poked his nose into the office, where Tess sat.

"Ride, Miss Ryan? Have a heart—I've reformed."

"Too busy," she replied; she didn't smile.

Well, she didn't seem angry. That was something. Bif sauntered out of the garage and got into the car. Now that he was all set he wasn't sure he was going anywhere. No fun driving alone.

Now the Elite Garage is always a busy place, what with taxis running in and out all day long. Feet run in the Elite, so running feet attract no attention at all. That's how it happened.

The only warning came from Tess.

"Bif! Bif! Look out!"

But Tess was too late. Bif felt the chilly muzzle of the gun at his medulla oblongata, just above the neck. He'd've been crazy to argue when the holder of the gun said: "Move fast!"

Bif did, and the sedan went. Nowhere in particular. As Bif understood it, the gunman didn't care particularly where they went, so long as they kept going. The idea was to get away, as far away as possible.

Little by little he reasoned the whole business out. Tess had seen the gunman. Therefore he'd run through the garage—

Zing! A hole in the windshield. Another through the mirror, ruining it!

Yes, sir, he'd been running. With cops after him. And he'd popped into the sedan while Bif had been dreaming. And now it was a chase!

Bif looked at the hole in the windshield. "Gee, that was close!"

"Never mind, never mind! Step on it. I can shoot a lot closer than that!"

The man was right. Bif realized that if the trigger finger behind him got nervous, what would be left of the skull of Bif Molloy would be entirely negligible. And a man couldn't get along without a skull—not a real civilized man.

"Faster!" his tormentor breathed in his ear. "They're gainin' on us!"

"Doing forty-five now," Bif complained. "Can't do more than that in this traffic. We'll be pinched for speeding anyhow."

"Pinched hell! Breeze her up!"

Imagine it, thought Bif to himself. Fifty-five an hour on Seventh Avenue, in broad daylight. Taking a chance? This wasn't taking a chance! This was traveling to the hospital—you couldn't miss it.

Beads of sweat stood out on his brow. Bif was scared; he didn't deny it. Weaving in and out of traffic—thick traffic—at fifty-five miles! He'd done plenty of snappy driving, but nothing like this. Eighteen times a minute he scraped mudguards. He heard the yells of other drivers—wild curses.

"Boys," Bif muttered as he almost took off the left rear wheel of a drowsing taxi, "you ain't seen nothing yet!"

Let 'em stick around. Let 'em follow along and see the fireworks. This was going to be a good show, too blamed good for a small audience. Ought to stage it in the Yankee Stadium—Big Time stuff; change a two-thousand-dollar sedan into assorted tea strainers in a split second!

Now and then he got a clear stretch of a hundred yards or so; then he had time to think, to mourn. There were three holes through the windshield now, and he heard the lead smacking on the nice finish.

"If they're trying for the tires," he mused, disconsolately, "why the devil don't they hit 'em and get it over with. Nice thing, to scratch a guy's car up for no reason at all. Why the blazes don't cops learn to shoot?"

A moving van stood at the curb, blocking most of the road. A street car was ahead of them. Pocketed—

"Squeeze by!" the malignant voice snarled.

It was either squeeze or turn into tin; there wasn't a chance in the world to stop. So Bif squeezed. The street car sideswiped them; one of the sedan's windows splintered and the sedan itself took a couple of hops. Bif fought the wheel and they kept on going.

"What y' doing?" the voice demanded.

"Fifty-eight."

"Lift her. 'Tain't enough."

Bif wondered what kind of a taxi could be following 'em, to do fifty-eight. He couldn't, offhand, think of any striped boat at the Elite that could do it without exploding. Other things being equal he'd have been willing enough to let her out. It was always interesting to know how fast you could cover ground. Fifty-eight now—well, even making allowance for a lying speedometer, that ought to be about fifty-five by standard time or daylight either. But the old boiler was working. He gave her more, and little by little the arrow crept up. Sixty-two, according to the record, with a bit more in reserve, maybe.

"Say," he growled, over his shoulder, "d'ye mind telling me what kind of a taxi is following us, at this speed?"

"Don't be silly," said the voice. "It's a Hutz. It's got a yellow driver or we wouldn't be showin' the way."

They were well out into the country now, and the speedometer swayed at sixty-two. The whole country seemed to know a road race was on. Cars were drawn up at the side of the road as they flashed by, and excited eyes peered out at them. A cop at a crossroads jumped out and waved his arm—and jumped back to safety, yelling. Bif heard five quick shots. He was amazed that the tires hadn't gone. What brains! What brains! Still and all, he was thankful. A blowout at sixty-two wouldn't be any too pleasant.

"Listen," he said, respectfully, fidgeting his shoulders, "I wish you'd take that rod away from my neck. You've no idea how it tickles."

"Never mind the gat," the voice mumbled; "it feels right at home."

"Oh, very well," Bif sighed. "Of course, if you feel like that about it—and after all we've been to each other!"

The muzzle did tickle, though; and it suggested such unpleasant things. To be sure, the anticipation of being shot could not be as completely bad as realization, but it did get you all worked up. During the war the anticipation had only been spasmodic. Every now and then you forgot all about being shot. He sort of wished he could know for certain whether he was going to be shot or not; then he could lay plans accordingly.

Suddenly he yelled. A hundred and fifty yards ahead was a railroad crossing; and about a hundred and fifty yards along the line smoke belched and the scream of the engine rang out.

Automatically Bif's foot jammed the brake and his hand reached for the emergency.

"Gwan!" the gunman yelled. "Make it! Make it! Take a chance!"

And the gun poked even farther into Bif's *medulla oblongata.*

Take a chance! Bif laughed almost hysterically and let her out the limit. Sticking his own words in his ear, was he? Wasn't that a joke? Wasn't that a nice, lovely joke? *Take a chance!* Well, get killed one way or t'other! Where's the chance?

It was a sporting proposition, though—to try to beat a train. Much nicer to get socked by a Mogul than to get pushed out by a measly .38.

They were approaching the tracks—Bif struggled to keep his eyes open. Wanted to shut 'em. Wanted to hide out the sight of death. But he kept 'em open. They ached as he made them keep the road and peek fearfully at the same time.

Time seemed to stand still. The sedan body flung squarely across the tracks—the Mogul's squat, glaring nose a foot and a half off—

He heard a shrill squeal; not human. The wheel writhed in his fists that gripped grimly, and the sedan swerved.

A gasp behind him; then: "All right, bud. You're alive. But don't waste time."

Bif pondered. The squeal, then, must have been—um—bumper, probably. Must have scraped the side of the engine. If it had caught on the engine—Bif's shoulders shook.

Cool customer behind him, he admitted. Back seat would be a good place to pull off a faint, too. Bif's respect for the gunman had been pretty good all along; it doubled now.

"Still following?" he asked, a minute later.

"Hell, can't y' see for yourself?"

"Not with that gun there."

"Look in your mirror."

"Be yourself," Bif begged. "I started on seven years' hard luck ten seconds after you hopped in. And it looks like I was going to get 'em all in one day."

The gunman grunted. Bif no longer felt the gat against his neck, and he peered around. Far back the pursuing car was just a short distance across the tracks. They had a good lead.

"Well, so far so bad," Bif remarked.

Then his eyes took in the gunman. *The runt! It was the runt! The ——, ——, —— runt!*

"Say!" Bif yelled, eyes bulging and face red as a flapper's mouth before a heavy date.

The gunman grinned, but the gun didn't. "Jackass," said the runt, "look where you're goin'!"

It was time. They were nearly off the road.

Bif did a lot of thinking. The muzzle of the gun caressed his *medulla oblongata* again, an old friend back, but he ignored it completely. He was getting used to it. Besides, he had more important matters to occupy his attention.

"I guess I owe you something," the runt chuckled. "Well, I'm payin' the bill, ain't I?"

Nice fellow; nice guy. And he was helping him out of a hole. If he'd only known who it was before!

Well, what would he have done? What could anybody do with a gun against his neck? Even when you were sore you had to show some sense. But he'd get hunk. He'd get hunk!

"Gaining on us?" Bif asked.

"Nope," the runt replied contentedly. "Losing. Engine trouble, I guess."

Bif's brain went bolshevik. *He was getting the runt away!* The thought was unbearable.

"Having a good night's work?" he inquired, stifling his rage. An idea was dawning: get the runt off his guard, and—

"Eh? Oh, not bad. Cleaned up about a thousand, I guess."

"Nice guy," Bif whined, "to gyp a poor taxi driver.' "

The runt laughed. "Aw, don't be sore. I'll square it."

No, thought Bif, *I'll* square it! And right then he saw the way. Ahead loomed a bridge, a bridge across a narrow river. Just this side of the bridge was a steep embankment, a sixty-degree drop to the water's edge.

He did it swiftly. It had to be sudden or it was all night. Take a chance, anyhow—no matter how you looked at it. He had a fleeting thought of Tess. Gambling—this was gambling, and how, and why, and where, and what! Longest odds ever taken anywhere! And he'd reformed. Oh, well, it wasn't measly, anyhow—a man-size gamble!

Shutting his eyes—he couldn't keep 'em open now, the thought of the gun at his neck in mind—he wrenched the wheel.

He heard the gun go off. But as the car toppled he still felt somehow alive. Swerve of the car must have knocked the gun aside. Thanks for small favors.

The last words he heard were: "You—fool!" A high, mad scream.

And the sedan rolled and banged, tip over teakettle. But it was all very vague to Biff Molloy; the lights went out everywhere.

V

THE next minute, Bif thought, he came to in a room that stank of ether. It was three days later, but naturally he couldn't be expected to know that.

He didn't like the smell of ether. He'd always hated it.

He saw a doctor—a nice doctor, just like the ads—talking to a nurse. Bif spoke up. "Who won?"

The doctor ran his hand over his chin thoughtfully. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Molloy," he said, "it was pretty near a draw. You bent four ribs, the other man cracked five; you both suffered concussion of the brain, but nothing to worry about; you both broke your right arm, while his left was fractured. On the whole, however, I figure you won, for your legs both came through safely, while his right leg was twisted about considerably."

"All in all," Bif concluded, "a very satisfactory party."

The doctor smiled. "You ought to be in the psychopathic for observation."

Bif blushed. Admiration was evident in the doctor's raillery. So the cops had guessed that he'd ditched the car on purpose.

"They're sure spreading you," the doc went on. "We have to keep a double guard on the door so's the reporters won't storm the place."

"*Me?*" said Bif weakly.

"'Take-a-Chance Molloy,'" the doctor nodded. "Great newspaper stuff. By the way, we've been letting a Miss Ryan see you. All right?"

Bif gasped with the ecstatic surprise of it. "Is she around now?"

The doctor took out his watch.

"Well, she's due back pretty soon. Just went out to have a bite to eat."

It was only a minute or two later that Tess came in. When she saw Bif awake she clasped her hands.

"Couldn't kill me, Tess!" Bif grinned.

The doctor went out and Tess sat down. Her right hand stroked Bif's plastered forehead. He wasn't feverish, but the stroking felt good just the same.

So Bif felt at his neck. Now, he thought, would be a very good time to bring up the matter of the ring again.

He felt, then explored excitedly, his eyes widening with alarm. "Tess! The ring's gone! I've lost it!"

She didn't seem to be upset. She was smiling—and blushing. Slowly he saw her left hand come into view, and there was the diamond glistening on the proper finger.

"I— You said it was for me, Bif," she apologized. "So I—just took it."

Bif was more than a little dazed. "You mean you'll take a chance?"

Tess Ryan laughed a trifle shakily. "I won't be taking a chance, Bif."

The "King of Forgers"

A True Story

The Most Interesting Crook "Camera-Eye" Bill Ever Met Was Eely Lon Whiteman Who Left a Trail of Bogus Checks and Baffled Dicks

By Charles Somerville

OF all the criminal faces which passed his Identification Desk at New York Police Headquarters in the near quarter of a century that he occupied it—the thousands of criminal faces, some ugly with viciousness, others bland and smooth and as expressionless of evil as a baby's, all faces he never forgot—the one "Camera-Eye" Sheridan recalls with perhaps the most vivid interest is that of Alonzo J. Whiteman.

Lon Whiteman, as he was known to the folks of Dansville, New York, where he began life as a gay boy and son of wealth, became, as years went by, to the underworld and police, "Lord Lon, King of Forgers." This accolade of crime was given him because no forgery that he ever committed, no name he ever falsified, nor handwriting he ever imitated ever caused a bank cashier to lift a brow in doubt, or squint an eye in suspicion. It was only after the spurious checks had been unquestioningly cashed, gone through the processes of the clearing houses, and returned to the man whose name had been misused that the crime became apparent. There have been expert forgers since his day, as there were before, but none that has ever equalled Lon's record of infallible skill.

So also there is no criminal life to compare with his. There are circumstances the like of which have existed in no other crook's career. Son of a millionaire paper manufacturer, graduate of college and university, lawyer, lumber dealer on a big scale, Alderman, Assemblyman, the youngest State Senator in his day in the entire country, candidate for Congress when only thirty years old, high speculator in grain, forger, hotel beat, swindler, preacher! Then forger and hotel beat

He swung out and dropped to the ground rolling for twenty feet or more

again, gambler for huge stakes, race track crook, the eeliest, oiliest man the law ever laid its hands upon.

He was sentenced, in all, to fifty-one years' imprisonment, yet by his own consummate talent for legal trickery and the defenses thrown around him again and again by the folks of his home town of Dansville, who never got over their affection for the gay, smiling kid of wealth as they had once known him, served, in all, only eight years out of the fifty-one!

In his life are romantic chapters of thrilling escapes and a tragic episode of a Spartan mother's attempt to save him once from capture. Other criminals served him abjectly. They did the cashing of the checks he infallibly forged so well, and they took the punishment with sealed lips as to the forger.

Only once did an accomplice turn State's evidence on Lord Lon, the King of Forgers. This was a very aged man suddenly seized with a great horror of dying within prison walls. He "peached" on Lord Lon to escape such a dismal and disgraceful end. And this was the first time in which the law was able to fasten securely and irrevocably upon Lon Whiteman and make him do his full "stretch"—a matter of about five and a half years in Auburn Prison, New York.

He was slight of figure, debonair of manner, always well dressed—really well dressed in the manner of a man born to silk stockings and the offices of good tailors, as, indeed, he was—and, Camera-Eye Sheridan will tell you, had a countenance to impress man, woman or child. He had lively, twinkling gray eyes and, back of a mustache worn with the twirly ends affected in the 'nineties, a large but well-shaped mouth ever ready with smiles and prone to flash flawless white teeth in hearty laughter. He was witty in speech, had a humorous eye on every-

thing, and was such a delightful companion that many good sporting men whom, in later years, he fleeced, freely forgave him and took him back into their society. His colleagues of the underworld stood in awe of his erudition, his unaffectedly polished speech, and his great skill with a criminal pen.

A Crook's Hands

Curiously enough, his downfall—and it was from a great height—cannot be attributed to any of the vices which usually bring men low. He wasn't a dipsomaniac, nor was he a fool about women. Never in prison or out could he be induced to use drugs. He drank but very moderately. It is true that he was married and divorced three times, yet his history shows that women occupied only a minor place in his life and thoughts. But he loved to scheme and to cheat, loved the game as much or more than the profits his machinations brought. He took to crookedness like some men do to opium or morphine. And once he had tasted the excitement and adventure of it, though the chances given him to reform were many, he could never break away. The straight path looked dull. The crooked path, with its queer twists and turns and surprises, risks and adventure fascinated this at one and the same time brilliant and imbecilic man.

Camera-Eye Sheridan remembers best the remarkable hands of this forger, who caused bank cashiers to pass through their windows more than a million dollars on the spurious signatures which he made. They were small hands and very slender, the fingers slim and small-boned, and he had his nefarious skill in both of them. Certain signatures he manipulated best with his left hand on account of the slant or trend of the writing. Mostly he used the right. He took the greatest care of these hands of his, his big asset in crime. The nails were always kept most carefully trimmed, filed and polished. He rubbed daily his hands in olive oil, and afterward used cold cream and other lotions on them. No society belle ever gave her hands more attention than did the King of Forgers. Nor did he spoil such fine, delicate hands at any time with flashy jewelry. Only a plain seal ring on the third finger of his deft left hand, a ring descended from a Colonial ancestor—that was all the jewelry he wore in a time when men were much given to big sparkling diamonds and emeralds.

This amazing criminal stands as a sympathetic figure at the beginning of his career. He was a rich boy who was no snob. He fraternized democratically with lads in poor circumstances, and shared his liberal spending money with them freely. Some of these boys who acquired substantial fortunes later in life were to stick to him with affecting loyalty when he became a criminal and hunted creature. They supplied him bail, and some even went so far as to put themselves in peril of the law by hiding him when detectives pursued.

His father was a wealthy paper manufacturer. Young Lon was given every educational advantage. He first went to Hamilton College, where he graduated with honors, and then to Columbia University, where he made a brilliant scholastic record. He was given a degree of Bachelor of Laws there before he was twenty-one.

Elected Alderman

His father at this time had large timber holdings in Minnesota which he knew to be in need of development. Such was his confidence in his son's judgment that he handed the young man fifty thousand dollars and told him to go out and look over the timberlands, and, if things shaped right, to make further investments. Young Whiteman invested the fifty thousand dollars, and it brought his father a one hundred thousand dollars return within a year. His father turned this capital back to his son, who continued success-

ful investments. And the while won the respect of the lumbermen and business men generally in that part of the country for his acumen.

He decided that he would settle permanently in Duluth and carve a career on his own account. He opened a law office and soon had a good practice. He went into politics and the smiling personality and witty tongue which had won him success with juries, won him the consideration of the bosses and popularity with the voters.

He was elected Alderman of Duluth, and at twenty-four he was sent to the Assembly of the State. At twenty-six he was elected Senator. He was the "boy legislator" of the country.

Lon Plays the Market

Everything went swimmingly fine for him till he was thirty years old. He had trebled the value of his father's property and was well on the way toward making an independent fortune for himself. He appeared to be one of those on whom the beams of a lucky star would ever shine.

But at thirty came his first set back. He ran for Congress, challenging a strong opposition candidate, and was beaten. He was embittered, but would probably have got over it and passed once more to the beams of his lucky star had he stuck to the environment where he had first succeeded.

Just about this time, however, his father died. There was an estate of a million. The paper mill man's widow, who came of a family famous in the neighborhood of Dansville, New York, as being among the pioneer settlers of the locality, was left the family mansion and a substantial income for life, but the bulk of the million was divided equally between Lon Whiteman and his sister, who had been recently married.

With luxury assured for the remainder of his life Whiteman's gambling instinct, always somewhat in evidence from boyhood, arose in him to become a passion—a ruinous passion.

He attempted gigantic deals, especially in the grain markets of Duluth and Chicago, at one time running his holdings up to three million bushels of wheat. But he was outwitted and outsharped in the West. He dropped huge chunks of his fortune. That should have warned him to keep away from Wall Street. On the contrary he invaded the New York market. He figured in one after another of great enterprises. That is to say they were great on paper, but it was as if some one invariably touched a match to the paper. The promising schemes went up in smoke. Whiteman's half million was wiped out in three years.

He turned to his sister. She, with knowledge of his early successes in the development of their father's properties in the West had, at first, unbounded confidence in him. And away went two hundred thousand dollars of her fortune!

And when she found that some of these thousands had gone across the green baize in the notorious gambling houses of the day in New York and Chicago, she became frozen toward all other appeals for capital.

The Silk-Stocking Gang

And now Lon Whiteman came to face actual poverty. The one-time highroller who had spent hundreds, thousands of dollars across the Fifth Avenue Hotel bar, who was one of the first to register at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel when it opened as the most magnificent inn in New York, and the world for that matter, was put to it to find his next five-dollar bill.

For a long time he lived on borrowings. Many of his old associates in New York and the West thought his shortage could only be temporary and loaned freely. But when the debts went bad his following appeals met with clamped purses. Pride kept him from appealing to his boyhood friends in Dansville.

There was a coterie of silk-stocking

swindlers infesting the barrooms of the big hotels of New York at the time, and they were the first to scent Whiteman's complete downfall. He had been hail fellow well met with them in a superficial fashion, but now they went after him to make him one of their number. His list of acquaintances of wealth was long. This they well knew. So they proposed schemes to him by which his old-time friends could be drawn into the purchase of worthless stocks. He fell in with them. For a time the harvest was rich. But that vein petered out and, in fact, things were getting so warm around New York for Whiteman and the mob of gentlemen crooks he was training with that they scattered.

His First Forgery

Whiteman went to San Francisco. There he committed his first of what was to mount into hundreds of forgeries. It was scarcely a forgery at that—more of a swindle—for he drew up a check for five hundred dollars on a form of the Importers and Traders Bank of New York City in his own favor and signed by "Frank Dixon," who didn't exist. This piece of worthless paper he passed on J. D. Maxwell, of the Pacific metropolis. When the check came back from the Importers and Traders with the declaration that no man of the name of Frank Dixon had an account with the institution, Whiteman was arrested, tried and convicted for forgery.

Facing a long sentence at his first attempt to exploit spurious financial paper, the man who was to become the King of Forgers, bamboozled a learned San Francisco judge with this flowing line of polished speech:

"If I have committed a forgery, I deserve no sympathy or clemency, for I have enjoyed all the advantages that wealth and education give. I graduated with honors at an Eastern college and afterward at Columbia Law School. I served four years in the Senate of my State, and was a member of the Judiciary Committee. At the expiration of that time I received the unanimous nomination of my party for Congress, was elected chairman of the State Committee and a delegate to the National Convention. I have been a director in three National banks and a vice-president of one, and if a man of my antecedents and experience has been guilty of the heinous crime of forgery there is nothing can be said in extenuation or in mitigation, but if through overconfidence in the justice of my cause, in the consciousness of my innocence of this charge, I allowed the case to go to a speedy trial and was unprepared for the introduction of extraneous evidence, I humbly submit that I should have the opportunity to prove my innocence beyond a reasonable doubt.

"During the six weeks that have elapsed since that trial by continuances which your honor kindly granted me, I have had this check photographed and obtained the affidavit of Dixon—after finding out where he was—and other reputable men of Chicago who knew him. Your reputation as an impartial, upright judge is not bound by the confines of this State, and I therefore ask for a new trial, confident that you would not put falsely the brand of forger upon a man who has never been convicted for a crime."

Handwriting Practise

The goodly judge granted him stay after stay, but when finally no Dixon was produced to back the fake affidavit, Whiteman had presented, laid the law on with a heavy hand. He sentenced Whiteman to ten years' imprisonment. But Whiteman served only seven months of it. From his cell he directed an appeal based on the assertion that since there was no Frank Dixon there was no forgery. A swindle may have been committed, but not a forgery. And the higher courts sustained his legal contention and set him free. And since

he might not be tried twice for the same offense under any other tag by which it might be called, he left California with a grin.

While he was in the California prison he appears to have fully decided on a future career as a forger. Other inmates afterward told how he practiced in every available hour the imitation of men signatures. He got dozens of prisoners to sign their names and then made the closest of studies of the signatures and began practicing them. He would work at a signature until he could reproduce it with the same flowing run of the hand with which a man usually writes his name. He was never to use any of the technical devices of professional forgers. They usually trace a signature over a desk of illuminated glass or by painful traceries on tissue paper. But Whiteman was a free-hand forger. It was what made his forgeries of signatures so successful. There was nothing of hesitancy in the lines by which an ordinary forgery is so frequently detected, especially under a magnifying glass which shows up the breaks in the strokes.

The Law Closes In

Whiteman had an unerring picture eye for a signature as well as the deftness of hand to reproduce writing at any angle and with any peculiar quirk or flourish it presented. He practiced a signature until he could unhesitatingly dash it off. And as stated in the beginning, never registered a failure. His forgeries fooled every bank cashier to whom they were ever offered.

On the way back from Frisco he stopped off in Denver, got hold of the signature of a wealthy man there, and struck off a forged check which caused a bank to pay him three thousand dollars, which he requested to be paid in gold. But the paper traveled through the clearing house faster than he expected and he was "knocked" off at the railway station from which a train East was due to depart in about ten minutes. He was carrying two hand bags and one of the two detectives who nabbed him said:

"Got you and the goods with you, I guess."

With each of his arms in the grip of a detective, he was marched out of the station. They had progressed about a block when Whiteman suddenly threw both grips into an open hallway. The detectives released him simultaneously to rush for the grips. When they had recovered them their man was gone.

An Account Transfer

As a matter of fact, he raced back to the station in time to swing aboard the train for the East as it pulled out. When the detective opened the grips, expecting to find them filled with gold, collars, shirts and a few toilet articles were their only reward. Whiteman was carrying the gold in a money belt beneath his clothing. Furthermore, he jockeyed his railroad journey so skillfully that, although a national alarm went out for him, he was not caught.

Next, in New York City, the authorities thought they had him hard and fast. He was positively identified as a man who had come to the Columbia Bank in Fifth Avenue representing himself to be Dr. J. H. Williams, a Brooklyn practitioner who was moving to offices in Manhattan. The well-dressed and well-spoken little man was readily accepted by one of the vice-presidents and the cashier for what he said he was. He had an engraved card in the name of Williams to further sustain his assertions. He said he desired to transfer an account he had with a Brooklyn bank to the Columbia, and the vice-president said he would be glad to receive the account.

The little "doctor" then drew forth a deposit book bearing the name of the Brooklyn bank he mentioned, and a check book on the same institution. He carefully consulted the deposit book

and then wrote a check for three thousand seven hundred and sixteen dollars and twenty-one cents—an irregular figure whose precision down to a penny was convincing of its genuineness.

This check was accepted by the Columbia Bank, and a book and check book of that institution handed the doctor. That was all that happened that day. But the next, which was a Friday, he reappeared and asked if he might draw against his deposit. The check deposited had not yet traveled the regular route to confirm its value, but the cashier figured that a professional man might not understand the rules exactly and had no wish to offend the new depositor. He was allowed to draw two hundred dollars. He had adroitly chosen to make the deposit late in the week because his own knowledge of banking affairs told him it would carry over Saturday with Sunday intervening and the bogus check for three thousand seven hundred and sixteen dollars and twenty-one cents would probably not be reported back for a fake until the close of banking hours Monday, or the opening of the banks on Tuesday.

Arrested in Lakewood

On Saturday he reappeared and was allowed to draw three hundred and eighty dollars more. He said, reasonably enough, that he was purchasing all new furniture for his New York office and needed the cash for that purpose.

When the check on the Brooklyn bank was returned to the Columbia Bank the following Tuesday marked "No good," the aid of the police was called. Circulars were out for Whiteman from Denver, on which was printed a photograph obtained from San Francisco. Both bank officials positively identified Whiteman as "Dr. Williams."

The New York detective bureau located Whiteman as the guest of a fine hotel at Lakewood, New Jersey. Despite the fact that he had, presumably, a pocketful of money obtained by fraud, he was deeply in debt to the hotel as well as having borrowed two or three hundred dollars from some of the guests.

He declared himself penniless when arrested and for a fact only a few dollars were found in his pockets. They had not arrested him in New Jersey because that would have called forth a fight on extraditing him to New York, but had kept Whiteman under espionage until he came to the city himself from Lakewood, and then "knocked him off."

Strong Testimony

But Whiteman appeared far from a penniless man when he came to face trial for this swindle. At his counsel table sat Norman J. Marsh, a partner of Noah Davis. Marsh had been a freshman at Hamilton when Whiteman was a brilliant senior, and had promptly responded to Whiteman's call for legal aid. Also appeared E. M. Grout, equally eminent at the bar. The three were fraternity brothers.

And, behold, out of Whiteman's home town of Dansville marched ten men, a clergyman and a justice of the peace among them, who took the stand and swore that on the day Whiteman was accused of offering the bad check to the Columbia Bank, they had seen Whiteman in Dansville, many, many miles away from New York. His counsel ripped and tore at the identifications made by the bank officials who, they contended, had by their own admissions seen and talked with Dr. Williams only once, and that for a little while. And the testimony of the hotel proprietor and clerk of the Lakewood, New Jersey, hotel to the effect that Whiteman had been there and not in Dansville that day and had left the hotel saying he was going to make a trip to New York, and had returned to the Lakewood hotel that night, also went by the board in the face of the

testimony of the phalanx from his home town and the eloquence of his fraternity brothers from Hamilton College. After his acquittal, Joseph Adams, a forger, who resembled Whiteman, confessed he had signed the Williams check. Adams later repudiated his confession. The rare old New York *Sun* headed the story of Whiteman's acquittal in this wise:

A GREEK LETTER RESCUE

Within the next three years, Lon Whiteman came to his full development as a forger and adroitly kept himself in the background. He committed the actual forgeries, but sent out passers, and although he was arrested again and again and now and then convicted and sentenced, he always managed to dig up legal technicalities on which he won his release.

Dansville's Robin Hood

On his second arrest in San Francisco when he was sentenced again to ten years' imprisonment, the home paper of Dansville had this to say about it:

> Lon Whiteman is reported by the Associated Press to be under sentence of ten years in California. This seems to be reliable authority, but we will bet dollars to doughnuts that Lon will be walking the streets of Dansville before the snow flies.

And Lon didn't disappoint them. After his conviction he had built up such a network of legal technicalities in his appeal that when a second trial was granted him the prosecutor found his hands so bound he despaired of successfully bringing the forger to trial again. And so Lon went back home before the snow flew.

No matter what he did, he was always certain of a friendly reception at Dansville. Whenever detectives from other parts of the country would come to Dansville looking for him, some friend would then make a dummy criminal charge against Whiteman, and when the outside sleuths tried to serve their warrants, Lon would be in a cell on a local charge and they would be told they might not serve their warrants and ask his extradition until the home charge had been disposed of by trial. And the trial would be put off and put off until the "foreign" sleuths would pack themselves off in disgust. By then Whiteman's friends would have reached the outside complainants and made restitution in his name. And the charges would usually be dropped.

It was curious, indeed, the hero the home town always made of him. They were proud of the brilliant beginning of his career when it was honorable and, in time, they appeared to become proud and sentimental regarding his exploits in roguery. They made a sort of Robin Hood of him. In some respects he was like Robin Hood in that whenever he had a dollar in his pocket no beggar asked in vain and when he would come home to Dansville flush with crooked money he had certain old men and women he always looked up to toss some of his pelf into their laps.

A New Stall

Proud old woman that his mother was, with her, Lon could do no wrong. When his sister denounced him for a wastrel, his mother clung to him the firmer. He was always certain of a refuge on her hearth.

And this fact leads up to the most thrilling of all the tales concerning him.

It began with a fraud on the Fidelity Trust Company of Buffalo. This concern received a letter on the business notepaper of a firm in East Aurora, New York, signed F. H. Hubbard, whose name also appeared as one of the firm. The letter stated that Mr. Hubbard was an invalid who could not very well present himself in person to open an account, but asked that the company accept as deposit an inclosed draft for nine thousand dollars. This was made out to the order of F. H.

Hubbard and bore the purported signature of the cashier of the National Hudson River Bank of Hudson, New York. The draft was drawn on the Leather Manufacturers Bank of New York City.

The forgery, as usual, was perfect, and the draft went through the usual channels without question. A check book was sent the sick man. The invalid, Hubbard, then began to draw from the principal in small sums and had taken out something over three thousand dollars before the draft was discovered to be a fake.

Arrested in St. Louis

By this time Whiteman had fled West. But also by this time every move the celebrated forger made was being watched by the Pinkerton Detective Agency which then had the contract for protecting the national banks. Two sleuths were especially assigned to keep tabs on him at all times. Thus it was that the alarm had not long been out when Whiteman was arrested as he was about to board a St. Louis street car with a very pretty young woman.

He made no fuss when he was taken and agreed to return to New York without extradition. He was even apologetic to Detective Al Solomon of the Buffalo detective force and polite to Fields of the Pinkertons. Whiteman always had a way with him, a gentlemanly, courteous demeanor when placed under arrest, that made his captors hesitate to submit him to the harshness of handcuffs. In fact, he enlivened the long homeward journey for them with a recital of some of his queer experiences since he had joined the underworld. The while he assured the detectives he was eager to return to Buffalo to face the charges because, he said: "They really haven't anything on me. I can beat the case." He seemed so confident in this regard that they thought him sincere.

The extended and tedious journey was within fifty miles of being over when the train paused at Dunkirk.

"I'd love a chance to stretch my legs a bit," said Whiteman as they sat in the drawing-room of a Pullman—the drawing-room being paid for by the King of the Forgers that he might not be subjected to the stares of those who would possibly surmise that he was a prisoner.

"I could do with a stretch of the legs myself," assented Detective Solomon.

"Me, too," agreed Fields of the Pinks.

"Come on," said Solomon. "You walk between us, Whiteman."

"Certainly," said Whiteman, "I understand."

The three stepped down and on the station and walked briskly up and down, breathing deeply and telling each other what a refreshment and a relief the little promenade was. And then came the conductor's cry of "All aboard."

To show he meant to make no trouble, Whiteman was the first to board the train. The other two men were at his heels. The train began to move just as they approached the drawing-room.

A Desperate Leap

Suddenly Whiteman leaped forward and into the room, and with one swift, backward motion of his hand slammed the heavy door of the private compartment in the faces of his captors. And as swiftly turned the lock! They hammered on the door, kicked on it. But it wasn't opened.

Inside Whiteman stood by the open window. It was a nervy thing he must do, but he had the nerve to do it. He waited till the train picked up considerable speed. Then he swung out of the window and dropped to the ground, rolling for twenty feet or more.

It appears that neither detective had presence of mind to pull the bellrope and stop the train. Or, perhaps, the

conductor got in the way of it for it was an express and the train may have been behind time. Also, the detectives afterward said they did not think he would jump from the train. It had picked up high speed too quickly. What they really believed was that Lon Whiteman, in despair, had shot himself or taken poison. But when the door of the drawing-room was opened, they saw readily enough that it was completely empty.

An Armed Posse

There was nothing for them to do but twiddle their thumbs and grunt in chagrin till the train arrived at Buffalo. They took the next train back to Dunkirk and tried to pick up the trail of Whiteman from where he had jumped off. They drove about the surrounding country for many miles failing to pick up a clew, and then returned, weary and sleepy, to the Erie Hotel at Dunkirk, where they put up for the night.

On the same floor, much earlier to bed, was Whiteman!

When he jumped from the train, he went to a barber shop, had a shave and a haircut, and his clothes well-brushed and, without even sacrificing his mustache, walked into the Erie Hotel and registered under an alias, had dinner, stepped into the pool room to watch the play awhile, and then went to bed.

Solomon and Fields never figured he would dare stay around Dunkirk. Thus while they slept next morning, Whiteman, unconscious of the fact they were also at the hotel, ate a leisurely breakfast and made railroad connections for his home in Dansville.

Where he went in hiding there, he would never tell. But three weeks later he departed South and found his way to Mexico City. In Mexico City, he joined a one-time Washington lawyer of the name of Knox in putting over a scheme whereby a Mexico City jeweler was swindled out of twenty thousand dollars worth of diamonds. Knox was caught with most of the booty and did a five-years' stretch for it, but eely Lon Whiteman managed to wriggle across the border with about three thousand dollars' worth of the stones and threw up such a legal barrier of protection that the Mexican Government was never able to get him back under its jurisdiction.

Again he returned to Dansville to "recuperate." But the Fidelity Trust Company of Buffalo hadn't forgotten. Nor had the Pinkertons forgotten the man who had given them more trouble than any other dozen bank plunderers. Positive information was gained that Lon Whiteman was back in Dansville and in his mother's home.

His pursuers took no chances. They did not go for him by day. They knew that news of their move would be sent through secret channels to Whiteman so that when they got there he would again have flown. The importance with which his arrest was regarded may be estimated from the fact that the Buffalo police sent ten detectives to Dansville to get him, and this ten was supplemented by ten Pinkertons. Some were armed with revolvers, others with shotguns, others rifles. They entered Dansville in the dead of night.

Shielded by His Mother

Their information was positive that Whiteman was hiding in his mother's home. Eighteen of the men surrounded the house, while Whiteman's old friends, Detective Al Solomon and Fields of the Pinks clanged the old-fashioned door gong.

There is no doubt the visitation was a complete surprise. It was aged Mrs. Whiteman who came in person to the door with a seal fur coat thrown over her nightclothes, for it was midwinter and roads and trees and housetops were under coverings of hard, solidly frozen snow.

When her white hair appeared in the doorway, Solomon said in his most polite way:

"We are sorry to disturb you in this way, Mrs. Whiteman, but we have a warrant for your son, and we know he is here in this house."

Her immediate answer was to slam the door in his face.

But he worked the old door gong savagely, and presently the voice of Mrs. Whiteman from within demanded:

"Will you kindly stop that infernal racket, sir? What right have you to disturb me in my home this way? You may have a warrant for my son, but I warn you this is my home, and not my son's house. A warrant for my son does not give you the right to invade my home."

A Thorough Search

"I am sorry, Mrs. Whiteman," said Solomon, for commiseration for this aged and tried mother was in his heart all the time, "but the warrant I hold gives me the right of search, and I have the right to break into your house if you will not let me in peaceably."

There was a long silence after that, but finally the voice of the old woman came again to the detectives through the doorway.

"Very well; I suppose I must submit to this indignity," she said. "But there are only myself and my women servants in the house. And I must insist that we have our rights of decency. I will let you in, but not until we are all properly dressed."

"I'll agree to that, Mrs. Whiteman," said the Buffalo detective. "But if your son is in the house he can save us all a lot of trouble by surrendering immediately. No trick to escape from the house can be pulled off. The house is surrounded; there are twenty of us on hand, Mrs. Whiteman."

"As to that," said she, "I don't know and I don't care. Although you would think my son was some sort of a bloodthirsty outlaw. Twenty men to arrest one! Are you as afraid of him as all that?"

"Please hurry and get dressed, Mrs. Whiteman."

"Very well."

But it was nearly twenty minutes afterward, when the detectives were all shaking with chill, before she swung open the door and permitted men to cross her threshold.

"Now you may go over the whole house; and afterward you will apologize to me for this outrageous intrusion. You are forever hounding my son, but you have come up a wrong trail. He isn't here."

She appeared to have spoken the truth. Into every room, from cellar to attic, Solomon and Fields went looking under beds and into closets, looking into empty barrels and hogsheads in the cellar, shoveling away the coal pile, breaking down the wood pile —and no sign of Lon Whiteman. The barn and two smaller outhouses were as thoroughly searched. No Whiteman.

Yet so positive had been their information that he was hiding in his mother's house, so positive also were they that no warning could have reached him of the intended raid, Solomon and Fields returned to the house.

The Secret Passage

When they had left it they had made humble apologies to the white-haired woman for the invasion of her home. But this was by way of a ruse. They figured if Whiteman were hiding in some recess they had been unable to discover, he would come out of it after they had left apparently convinced that he was not in concealment there.

They made their return suddenly, rushing through the still open portal. But again no trace of him could be found. Beginning once more in the cellar, they worked their way to the attic of the house. And this time the lamp that Fields of the Pinks carried up from the rooms of one of the maidservants on the floor below disclosed that which had missed the eyes of the

searchers on their first trip to the attic.

It was a narrow door set in the wall. The walls of the attic were papered, and this door was papered over in the same design. It was scarcely discernible. It had the innocent appearance of a small closet—till Solomon opened it. Then was disclosed the existence of a chute that extended below and above. Above, it passed to the roof and into what was a false chimney; for this chute was no legitimate smoke flue. Later investigation proved it extended to the cellar.

Unless it was an especially designed hiding place, its only explanation would be that it was designed to keep the cellar ventilated from the false chimney opening in the roof.

Eely Lon

At any rate, in this instance it proved to be Whiteman's place of refuge. When Solomon held up the lamp and looked upward it was to see Whiteman in the chute, clinging by hand and foot to short cross sections of wood resembling ladder steps. He was nearly to the top of the chimney.

The instant Whiteman saw they had found him he climbed the remainder of the way up and swung out over the false chimney to the roof. There was a short ladder in the attic with a trapdoor opening upon the roof in the regular fashion.

Solomon went that way; Fields went up the chute, so that Whiteman might not return through it.

They came out upon Whiteman balancing himself on the peak of the shingled roof. The roof was slippery with ice. But Fields had the advantage of the false chimney to cling to, while Solomon balanced himself on the top step of the roof ladder while his body emerged. Both detectives drew revolvers and called on Whiteman to surrender.

He hesitated a moment, teetering on the slippery footing. And apparently in that minute his tricky mind suggested a last chance.

"All right I surrender!" he cried.

As he did so he threw up his hands. And as he threw up his hands he fell face forward on the slippery, slanting roof and slid like a shot down to the eaves. These he caught with his hands as his body went over. Only his widespread, clinging fingers offered a mark for the pistol of the detectives; and this only for a split second, for without hesitation Whiteman took the twenty-five foot drop to the ground. He was saved from injury by dropping into a huge snowdrift, into which he disappeared completely. But waiting for him beside the drift were two of the surrounding force. There was a wild flurry of snow, and the King of Forgers was dragged forth.

To Buffalo he was taken in triumph. And this time he received an eight-years' sentence out of which he found it impossible to squirm although after a time he successfully feigned insanity, and spent most of his sentence in the gentler confinement of an asylum.

Boothman Squeals

He was convicted only because his aged accomplice, Henry Boothman, turned State's evidence. And Boothman said he did this because Whiteman had spoken unfeelingly to him when they were in jail.

Boothman had said: "God, I don't want to die behind prison bars. I hate the idea!"

Whiteman had laughed and said: "Well, you are going to, old boy, whether you like it or not; so don't turn cry-baby about it."

"He said this," old Boothman later explained, "expecting the usual to happen. They could prove that it was me cashed those Hubbard checks drawn on the fake nine-thousand-dollar account, but if I kept my mouth shut about who had given me those checks, they couldn't have proved anything against him, and he'd have gone

scot-free like he usually did. I was going to stick to him like all of us always did. But when he made that nasty crack about me going to die in prison whether I liked it or not, I just made up my mind that if I could get off myself by sending him to prison, I'd do it. And I have. The mob can call me a rat, and he can call me a rat, but I don't give a damn. A man that hasn't got any more decent feeling or heart than he showed ought to get his medicine. And I'm not going to die in prison."

Lon's Lucky Star

Much more in exposure of Whiteman came during this Buffalo trial, for old Boothman told how he had obtained a genuine draft for fifty-one dollars which Whiteman had deftly raised to fifty-one hundred dollars. Again, how Whiteman appealed to his sister for financial aid, and when all she sent him was a draft for eight dollars—sufficient to pay his car fare to his Dansville home—promptly raised it to eight thousand dollars and went on a big gambling spree.

Again, much of the Robin Hood legend concerning him was shattered in the story told by John Flynn, a well-known horse trainer, at the forgery trial in rebuttal of Whiteman's testimony from the stand to the effect that the Pinkerton's had hounded him for years and tried to frame him for every forgery mystery they couldn't solve. This was one of those cases, he averred, and old Boothman's testimony was only purchased perjury.

Flynn testified that he had known Whiteman in his heyday, and had liked him. He had later met Whiteman when he was down and out, and staked him liberally. They had not met for years until about six months before, when they came together in the rotunda of the Lafayette Hotel in Buffalo. Flynn said he was glad to see Whiteman again, had always liked him. Whiteman appeared equally delighted to meet him. And over a bottle of champagne Whiteman had said:

"I begin to believe in my lucky star again! This is a fortunate meeting, John. For it so happens that there is on here from Duluth a very wealthy old fellow. He has retired with millions. And he is horse struck. He wants to organize a stable and run a string. He came here to ask my advice about getting a trainer. I was just going to take him to New York and look the ground over. I had you in mind—honestly. You were the first one I thought of.

"Well, the old boy is here, staying in this hotel right now. Just sit there and I'll see if he's in his room."

He soon reappeared with the white-haired, well-dressed old crook, Boothman. And after the introduction, Whiteman gave Boothman a glowing account of John Flynn's great abilities as a horse trainer. They arranged a meeting for the next day when Boothman handed Flynn a draft on a Duluth bank for fifteen thousand dollars.

A Queer Prison

"Just credit me with that," he said. "I may want to draw some of it back during the next few days until I can arrange matters in Duluth for some real capital, and we will go into the game good and strong. I have every confidence in my friend, Lon Whiteman's, judgment."

Flynn began planning a big stable, and the while deposited the fifteen-thousand-dollar draft to his own credit. He was more than willing to give his check from time to time to his new owner for various amounts as requested. He had thus surrendered about twenty-five hundred dollars of his good money when the report came in that the draft on Duluth was bogus, whereupon he went looking for Whiteman and his "owner" in vain.

But sometimes Whiteman pulled tricks to cause a grin. One of them was an adventure in a Western hotel.

He had run up a large bill and found himself facing a proprietor who looked askance at anything in the way of a check or a draft that Whiteman sought to offer.

"But I know," said mine host, "that you've got friends who'll come through with the cash for you if they find it is the only way out for you. And just to show you it is the only way out, you little shrimp, I'm going to strip every stitch of clothing off you. I'll feed you till they come to save you. But stark naked you stay in this room till they do!"

He was as good as his word about stripping Whiteman to the skin.

The king of forgers, whose art could not then serve him, went to the telephone in his room about fifteen minutes later and called for the proprietor.

Out Again

"Say," he said, "how the hell can I notify my friends of the trouble I'm in if I haven't got pen, ink and paper to write them? Send a bell hop up with some."

"That's talking sense," said the gratified proprietor.

When the bell hop entered the room, Whiteman, who had arisen from his bed suddenly, got between the lad and the door. Then he seized the boy by the throat to stifle the outcry, and swore he'd murder him if he dared resist. The frightened lad submitted to being gagged.

Whereupon Whiteman served the boy as the hotel proprietor had served Whiteman. He stripped the lad to his skin and donned the bell hop's clothing. Being small of stature and slim himself, the ruse was practical. Then for once he sacrificed his mustache at the edge of his razor and in bell hop uniform, pill box hat and all, walked out of the hotel. It was an hour after he was gone that the proprietor bethought himself as to whether his prisoner had written and mailed the letters to his friends. He called for the particular bell hop who had been sent to the room with the stationery, and when the boy couldn't be found he went to his unwelcome guest's room only to find, of course, in Whiteman's place, a naked and indignant lad chewing on a gag.

It was a deft trick he played on the Boston authorities. He had been arrested for the fourth or fifth time in New York on a swindling charge and convicted. Under a sentence of two years and a half he yet managed to get out on bail pending an appeal for a new trial. As soon as he was released, the Boston authorities made a dash for him. They declared they were certain of convicting him, and that fully ten years' imprisonment awaited him in Massachusetts. Whereupon Whiteman instantly canceled his bail bond and returned to the Tombs.

Governor Odell refused to extradite him until his New York sentence was served. When Boston abandoned the attempt to lay hands on him, Whiteman made his appeal for a new trial effectively, and when that came about, was acquitted. Boston, certain that the New York conviction would be repeated at his second trial, was caught napping. When the news of his acquittal reached the authorities there, they shot detectives to New York, but when they got to New York, Whiteman was elsewhere—just where, even the Pinkertons did not know.

A Race Track Swindle

One day Whiteman appeared at the Sheepshead race track and flashed on a leading bookmaker a telegram purporting to have been sent from Boston by a well-known millionaire race track follower. The despatch said that Whiteman was to act for the day as the sender's commissioner, and the bookmaker would oblige him by allowing Whiteman to lay wagers in his name up to ten thousand dollars. Whiteman's selections in the main proved successful, and on the credit given per the telegram he cleaned up

about five thousand dollars. Meanwhile the bookmaker had wired to the man in Boston for confirmation of the telegram, and received a reply, at the end of the racing day, repudiating the dispatch which had been presented by Whiteman. The raging bookie sought Whiteman, demanding his five thousand dollars back, but Whiteman, in effect, told him to "try and get it."

On the return train one of the Pinks sought out Whiteman on behalf of the bookmaker, and said:

"You'd better give that money back. Race track or no race track, that telegram was bogus, and constitutes a swindle. You'll be pinched as soon as we get to New York."

"I guess not," smiled Whiteman.

"That's where you are a fool. That telegram is all the evidence he needs to convict you of a swindle."

"But he must show the telegram—he has to have that, hasn't he?" asked Whiteman.

"Sure—and he's got it."

"Oh, no he hasn't," replied Whiteman blandly, "because I picked his pocket for it when he was paying me off on the last race and touched a match to it."

Whiteman for a period of two years took his talents to Europe. The data regarding his activities there are meager, but it is known that he swindled a London bank out of twenty-five hundred dollars, and becoming the boon companion of a prominent member of Parliament, picked the gentleman's pocket for his check book and two letters which would serve as further identification, took boat to France, and had a high old time, leaving behind a stream of bogus checks, which all, however, bore perfect forgeries of his erstwhile boon companion's name.

Whiteman's stay in prison was brief. He obtained a transfer to Dannemora on an insanity plea, and was shortly released from the latter institution. He went back into the old game, but the old keenness was somewhat dulled. He was arrested and spent terms in Atlanta and Sing Sing. In all, he was arrested forty-seven times.

The end of this astonishing man's career is an ironic one. One day, Lon Whiteman, haggard and weary, down on his luck, came to the supervisor of the Livingston County Poor House, and asked to be admitted. Lon Whiteman, the original "Jim the Penman," the most adroit forger in the history of crime, went back to the State which he had cost thousands, made a pitiable appeal for charity, and was admitted.

"Lord Larceny," by Charles Somerville, the story of two clever swindlers, is the next "Camera-Eye" Sheridan story. Look for it next week

Ransome, a ghoulish grin on his face, was bending over his wife, mumbling to himself

The Seventh Card

Detective Mullikin Discovers That When a Client Wants Himself Watched, Anything May Happen!

By Martin J. Porter

IT'S one of them laws of nature, maybe gravity, that puts it into the conks of goofy people to stampede morgues, newspaper offices and offices of private dicks like myself. Maybe I'm wrong, but I've come to believe that the Mullikin Protective Agency gets more than its share.

When John Ransome happened along, it looked like he was just another nut.

Only, he was different. He was clean-looking and important-like. That's why he got by Sadie. Sadie's my legal handicap and stenog. Usually, she tumbles to the bugs and shoos 'em off. She knows money when she sees it, too, and so when she saw Ransome, she let him in. He sure had a front.

I was so used to seeing agitated people I looked up expecting to see a pair of wild eyes. But this Ransome only looked worried and haggard like a man who hadn't hit the hay for a week.

The kind of people that are willing to pay private detectives have a lot of odd notions, and odder things they want done. But until Ransome came along, I never saw one who wanted himself watched.

That's what Ransome wanted. It kind of bowled me over when he put it plain, just like that, but pretty soon I could see he had a pretty good reason.

"It's this way, Mr. Mullikin," he says sadly. "I'm afraid of myself. I'm developing a complex."

"Yeah," I sympathized, "them things is tough."

"The trouble is," he went on, ignoring my remark, "that I am obsessed, God help me, with the conviction that I am going to kill my wife."

I sat up straight at that. It occurred to me to pull a nifty about this being kind of stylish, but I saw a queer look creeping into his eyes and I put on the brakes.

"You see," he sighed, as a weary smile softened his troubled face, "it's been growing on me for a long time. I can't seem to fight it down, though Heaven knows I've tried with every ounce of my will power. Somehow, it is taking tangible form; it is no longer just a phantom idea, but a cursed reality. When I awoke this morning, it seemed settled in my mind that I *must* kill Felice."

"And why must you?" I asked pleasantly. "Has she—"

Ransome gave me a withering look. His face was dyed by a dark flush. But it passed off.

"I suppose you'll think me mad," he went on. "Possibly this *is* the beginning of madness. But I am not fool enough to let this go on. My wife is blameless. She is a loyal, faithful, and —a—er—a beautiful woman. I love her more than my life. But I can't get away from this dreadful fancy. I dream of killing her and it makes my flesh creep. The idea is planted in my mind like a poisonous weed."

Ransome glanced nervously at his watch. Then he leaned forward and held it up.

"There's her picture," he said.

Felice was no strain on the eyes. She was just about the most fragile-looking and beautiful dame I've ever seen, if that photographer wasn't a liar. It was a full length shot, and I could see that she was young, and had, what I mean, lines and what these artists call delicate contour. She was just like a pretty little kid.

"Does she know anything about this little secret desire of yours?" I inquired politely.

"Naturally not," he comes back. "Heavens, man, it would terrorize her. That is why I want you to help me."

I considered this a moment.

Then a hopeful suggestion occurred to me.

"I guess, Mr. Ransome, you need a doctor more than a detective."

"Man," he comes back impatiently, "don't you think I've been to doctors —the best? All they can do is to think up scientific names to pin on me. One had the temerity to call me a love drunkard; one labeled me a repressionist. I've been to Sheldon, Maurice Sheldon, the university psychiatrist. He is a friend. He informs me that I am nursing a terrible subconscious jealousy. They all suggest that I leave my wife—temporarily. They are absurd. And yet—lately, I have thought of doing that very thing, because it seemed the only way to safeguard her. Then I thought of coming to you."

Ransome seemed battling with his own thoughts for a moment, and then, having come to a sudden decision, he fished out a pink card from his pocket. It was about the size of an ordinary envelope. He laid it on the desk.

I leaned over to look. In a bold, masculine hand were four words:

YOU WILL KILL FELICE

"I found it on my dressing table this morning," Ransome explained. "It's the sixth in six weeks. All are identical."

I studied it for a few seconds.

"Have you no idea where they come from?"

Ransome flushed and hesitated.

"I—I—hadn't until to-day, when, accidentally, I happened to see a letter. It suddenly struck me there was a faint resemblance, and I compared it with this card. There *is* some slight resem-

blance, but I—really, I wouldn't like to say that I suspect the writer of the letter."

"And the writer?"

"Dr. Sheldon."

This was unexpected. I had heard of the doc. There isn't a better known brain specialist and psychologist in town.

"Didn't you say he was a friend of yours?" I reminded him.

"Yes, yes. Indeed, I have known him since boyhood. It was he who introduced me to Felice when I came to the city. That was four years ago. He—er—sort of thought a great deal of her, and he was quite put out, poor chap, when we married.

"But our friendship has continued. It was only natural that he should be rather cut up, but he was sporting, and now we consider him, virtually, a member of the family."

The weak smile reappeared for a moment, and then I noticed a sudden glint in the tired eyes.

"Sheldon visits us once a week," Ransome said with an effort, "and—*these cards have appeared in my room on the day following each visit.*"

That was a hot one, too, but when I asked him how Sheldon could have put the cards in Ransome's room, he couldn't say. His servants, possibly, but he trusted his man, Tipton. As for the others, no one but the housemaid ever entered his bedroom, and she was never on duty when Sheldon called.

Well, it wasn't any duty of mine to solve that mystery. He hadn't asked me to do any sleuthing. What he wanted was a bodyguard.

"I don't know how long it will be before this thing passes off," he said, "but I will feel safer with you or one of your men at hand. The thought occurred to me, Mullikin, that you might pretend to visit me as a guest—a buyer—from New York."

O'Brien went out behind Ransome to check him up.

He was no nut—certainly, O'Brien assured me by telephone. He was John Ransome sure enough. So I called in Sadie.

"Kid," I asked her, "did you ever hear of a dual personality?"

"Yeah," she snaps back cheerily. "One of those Don Johns who fight with swords."

I let that pass and sent her down to get a job at Ransome's store. I wasn't quite sure there wasn't a catch in this after all, and it wouldn't hurt to see what Mr. Ransome did during working hours. I got to figuring that maybe there was an extra dame in this.

Just out of curiosity, I put Dr. Sheldon on my calling list. I spent most of the afternoon crashing his office and getting a slant at John Ransome's mental chart.

The doc knew all about it. He was kind of uppish at first, but when I told him, confidentially, of Ransome's proposition, he looked serious. I guess he would have made a good dick himself, because he sure had third-degreed Ransome. Also, he had known him a long time. These psycho-analysts have a quaint way of digging out secrets.

It seems that Ransome, back in his young days, started out with the idea of being an artist. He had the urge all right, but his fist didn't fit a paint brush and he must have turned out pretty punk. He was lucky, but he didn't know it. Here, he had a big department store. If he'd got to be an artist, he probably would have starved. But anyhow, the doc says, it disappointed Ransome and it hurt his pride. He had a real eye for beauty, though, which I could understand after seeing Felice's picture. And the doc said he had a yearning that was unconquerable, to create beauty on canvas, or maybe in marble or something. But he just couldn't. His hands wouldn't follow his mind.

"It's not at all an unusual case," the doc said, solemnly jerking at his spade goatee. The doctor was a handsome

devil. "After he gave up hope of a career, he began to nurse a repressed jealousy of others who did succeed; also there was a desire to destroy anything beautiful that reminded him of his disappointment. Whenever he saw anything beautiful in any form, he had an impulse to blot it out. He couldn't create, so he must destroy. Of course, he held all this in check. It's what we medical men call a psychic trauma—a mental scar."

"And," I chirped in, "it healed, huh? And then busted open again?"

"That's about the size of it. Also, he seems much in love with his wife—a—er—ah—a most attractive woman—and charming. To him, although he doesn't know it, she symbolizes his early ambitions, his worship of beauty, yet, to his subconscious mind she conjures up buried memories of his failure. He has a subjective fear of losing her as he lost out in his career. While consciously, he is devoted to her, there exists a buried impulse to destroy—kill her. It is quite pitiful. And there is nothing to be done, except to leave her."

I didn't ask the doctor about the pink cards.

He was worked up on his subject now and inclined to talk. He went on to analyze the emotions of love and hate. I sort of got the drift of what the other docs had told Ransome. It seems that in the medical world they look on love as a spree—a psychic intoxication, with reactions like a souse. And though I'd heard of it before, it was impressed then on me that there is a very thin line between love and hate.

I had a headache from trying to digest it all, but I must say it sharpened my interest in Ransome. He might be a nut, after all, but he was a high-class nut, and so I thanked Dr. Sheldon and got back on the job.

When I got back to the office Sadie was there. She hadn't got the job, but she had buzzed a lot of girls in the store. There was only one woman that ever went into Ransome's office, and that was his secretary—a cute little blonde, Lydia Newcomb, who was smart and officious, and that was all.

As per schedule, I showed up in soup and fish that night at the Ransome home. I'd never seen a sweller joint. Back in Colonial times it had stood by itself, but now the city was built up around it. It was set back like an antique jewel in a mass of shrubbery and gardens that I knew must have detoured a lot of sugar into the pockets of some landscape artist. I remembered the place.

There were stories about it, when I was pounding pavements, about slave dungeons and s e c r e t passages. It looked that type. Ransome had bought it soon after he made his first million, and had it fancied up, leaving just enough of the old-fashioned touch to make it attractive.

A chocolate-colored maid let me in. Ransome greeted me like a visiting Elk.

When he introduced me to Felice I realized that the photographer was no liar. He wasn't even misleading. She was like a Dresden doll, and the eyes—they were large and blue, and I somehow got the impression that fear lurked in them. Her figure reminded you of an animate cameo, or a miniature that breathed. The lovely face was delicately tinted and framed by a bunch of unruly, coppery hair.

When the phony introduction was over we sat there in the large living room. Ransome seemed ill at ease. Mrs. Ransome noticed it and apologized prettily for him.

"John's pouting, you know, Mr. Mullikin. He's a big boy. He worries over trifles. Don't you think it silly for a grown man to take dreams seriously?"

"Why, has he been dreaming?"

"Oh, no," she laughed. "I don't think *he* ever dreams. But I do, occasionally. I've just told him about a

dream I had—that"—she blushed furiously—"that he choked me. Wasn't it silly?"

"You should always take dreams by opposites," I suggested.

"That's just what I told him. Come, John"—and she kissed him, without much fervor, I thought—"I hear Marie calling. Dinner is ready, and after that I'll leave you men to talk."

After dinner, Ransome pleaded business, and we went to his study. He was sure in the dumps. We talked idly for awhile, neither wishing to stir unpleasant thoughts.

Suddenly he said: "Mullikin, I think I have pretty well found my trouble. Do you believe in hypnotism?"

"Not the stage sort," I replied. "But I think hypnotism is possible in the medical field."

"Umph! Well, so do I. Mullikin, I may be foolish, but in back of all this I feel the impelling will power of another, stronger mind."

I could see he was in for a bit of self-pity. I do not encourage those things. I suggested a drink, and, as quickly as I could do so politely, I asked to be shown to my room. I went to bed.

But I could not sleep. I did not intend to. I found myself going over the events of the day. "What this guy needs," I said to myself, "is a long rest. He is sticking around for a nervous break."

I tried to read a book, but in spite of my promise to myself I must have dozed off. Ransome had seen to it that my room adjoined his, with that of his wife on the other side of him. I guess it was somewhere around midnight when I snapped out of it and sat bolt upright in bed.

The shrill scream of a woman was still echoing throughout the halls, as I leaped into my clothes and ran out into the corridor. I switched on the light and bolted for Mrs. Ransome's room.

As I threw open the door Ransome came rushing out from his own room. Together we entered his wife's boudoir.

Felice lay across the bed, unconscious. The coverings had been hurled to the floor. Her head was thrown back over the edge of the bed, her hair trailing to the floor.

She was not dead.

Ransome, speechless, rang for the maid. In a few moments Mrs. Ransome was revived.

"What happened, Mrs. Ransome?" I demanded.

She seemed bewildered and did not answer at once.

"It's nothing," she breathed finally. "I'm afraid I've alarmed you needlessly. It was another of those dreams."

"What did you dream?" Ransome asked, frightened.

"Oh, John, it's so silly of me! But it was the same as last night; but it was much more real. I dreamed you came in stealthily and suddenly seized me by the throat. Before I knew it I had screamed, and then I must have fainted."

"It's silly to take these things seriously," I observed, seeking to quiet them. "Have Marie here remain with you, Mrs. Ransome, and we'll go back to bed."

She seemed glad to have it over so quickly.

Ransome was groaning to himself, but I shook him vigorously. "Snap out of it, man. Go back to bed and to sleep. There is nothing to worry about."

He took my advice reluctantly, and I went back to the hay myself.

Although I remained awake all night, nothing more happened to disturb the household.

At the end of the week the tenseness seemed relieved. O'Brien secretly relieved me twice, while I returned to the office to keep things going. Ransome, however, still brooded. The

impulse to kill his wife kept growing on him.

At my suggestion we took long walks after dinner at night. But Ransome would not snap out. I realized the man was growing worse instead of better.

Dr. Sheldon came to visit on Sunday. He eyed me suspiciously, and I tipped him the wink. He got me, and when Mrs. Ransome introduced me as a buyer he bowed politely.

Sheldon was the perfect guest, and proved a charming fellow who disliked talking shop. He was determined, it seemed, not to encourage Ransome in his obsession. Once or twice I caught a glance of understanding pass between him and Felice. And I wondered.

Was there some good tangible reason for Ransome's condition? Did the man have reason to suspect Sheldon? The doctor was an eminent scientist, versed and steeped in all the mysteries of the human mind. He had penetrated many secrets hidden there. Some said that he could glimpse sometimes into the human soul. What if he had found some means of exerting his powerful will over others?

It was not unlikely that, if he still loved Felice, he might plan some revenge on Ransome. On the other hand, if he loved her it was improbable that he would want to see her killed—not unless he was vindictive and held it against her that she had given him up for Ransome.

The man's eyes were large and magnetic. There was a commanding glint in them. His whole manner was one of superiority, of dignity, and of leadership.

Were the pink cards the tangible contact? Did they serve as a constant reminder to Ransome that his brain was being barraged with subtle suggestion?

It was uncanny and savored of black magic and witchcraft. I found it hard to believe.

But there *was something!*

I was roused from these thoughts for dinner. After the meal Sheldon, pleading a professional conference, took his leave. I thought he held Felice's hand a bit too long when she personally handed him his stick.

Both Ransome and Felice seemed depressed, and I was glad when we turned in.

I tried to read, but I could not get Sheldon off my mind. The more I thought of the man, the more I pictured him as a mystic—a scientific Svengali who might at this moment be exercising some fantastic power over the two occupants of this house.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

I started at the faint scraping sounds. They were measured and rhythmic, the sounds of slipper feet filtering in from the corridor.

I listened tensely.

Some one was moving about out there, and whoever it was, was walking with an automatic and uncommonly slow tread.

I looked at the illuminated dial of my watch. It was twenty-five minutes past midnight.

It took me only a few seconds to throw on a dressing gown. I peeped into the corridor. A faint light was diffused by a shaded lamp at one end. A shadow flitted past. I stuck my head cautiously through the doorway, not wishing to alarm the apparition—and gasped!

The figure of a man in pink pyjamas was walking, slowly and dazedly, like one of those slow-motion pictures. He didn't seem real, but more like a soulless wraith.

It was Ransome!

I gum-shoed behind him, but he did not turn, even though I made some slight noise. He kept on like a machine toward a door near the end of the hall, on his right. He slipped inside like a phantom and closed the door softly.

The next instant I heard a faint

click, and a thin streak of light showed at the bottom of the door. Creeping softly up to it, I knelt down and peered through the keyhole.

Ransome was seated at a small desk, his head bent low.

He was writing.

After a few moments he rose slowly and almost solemnly held up a piece of pink cardboard. It was oblong and about the size of an ordinary envelope.

Then, resuming his automaton-like pace, he moved out of my vision.

Suddenly there was another click, and the room was plunged into darkness. I retreated quickly to the door of my room and took a position inside, leaving the door slightly ajar.

Ransome reappeared in the hallway in a few seconds. Slowly and almost noiselessly he returned to his bedroom. As he passed me I was startled by the fixed grin on his countenance. It was devilish, malevolent.

After a moment of indecision I strode boldly to his door and walked in. I found the light switch and flooded the room with brilliance.

I stared.

John Ransome was in bed—to all appearances calmly, peacefully sleeping.

On his dresser lay the seventh card.

I picked it up and read:

Remember. You must kill Felice.

My first impulse was to drag the man out of bed; but I checked it. I was beginning to get the drift. Approaching the sleeping man cautiously, I listened. He was relaxed, but his heart was pounding abnormally. I know enough about physiology to realize that this was phenomenal. With such a pulse the man should have shown some outward sign of his recent exertion.

I decided not to awaken him. Taking the seventh card, I returned to my room. Ransome had given me a sample of Sheldon's writing, and I took it now and compared it with that on the card. Beyond any doubt there was a resemblance. The "R" in "Remember" was singularly like the "R" in "Ransome" on the envelope of Ransome's letter—merely a formal note accepting a dinner invitation. The "e's," too, were similar. The general contour of the letters was the same.

I knew Sheldon to be an intelligent man. Would he risk his handwriting on such a message? The man would be a fool. Still, I have seen clever criminals do things equally foolish. I mulled over the thing until I became sleepy and drifted off.

When I greeted Ransome at breakfast next morning, he met my eyes fairly. There was no shiftiness in his look. I kept my little adventure of the night strictly to myself. I also had a fine working theory, but of this I said nothing.

Everything was quite all right with Felice. She was quite cheerful and set about the day's routine with a song on her lips. How soon those pretty lips would be sealed by tragic death, she little knew.

I spent the day with Sadie, keeping things going at the office and managed to get a little sleep in the afternoon.

At the Ransome home that evening, I proposed the theater, thinking to cheer up Ransome, but he vetoed the idea and we played cards. At ten o'clock we quit and started to turn in. But Ransome proposed a nightcap, and Mrs. Ransome bade us good night. It was an hour before we got settled.

I had just got in between the sheets when from downstairs came the insistent shrill of the telephone. Slow footsteps echoed on the stairs and I heard Tipton, Ransome's man tap at his door.

The men spoke in low tones and then, as far as I could judge, both went down the steps.

I listened with the door partly open, but I could not make out what Ransome was saying. It was brief, and

I slipped back into bed before he had reached the landing. He went into his room and I heard the door close.

Some subconscious urge prompted me to look at my watch some time later.

I suddenly felt kind of jumpy and the watch did not reassure me. Its hands indicated twelve twenty-five—the same hour that I had heard Felice scream on the occasion of my first uncanny experience in the house.

It was ten minutes later that I heard the scraping of slipper feet again. It was slow and measured as before. I took my time getting ready, and I heard the walker pass my door before I opened it.

I glanced out.

Ransome was again promenading the corridor. The man had just about had time to fall asleep, I thought. I could see him as a sort of silhouette, but when he moved under the light, I got the shock of my life.

Ransome was dressed for the street.

But he was making this time for his wife's bedroom. As he paused for a second to reach for the doorknob, he shifted something from his right hand to the left.

It gleamed in the dull light. I caught a glimpse of it before he got the door open.

It was a large hunting knife!

One of those large, murderous things you see in the movies—with a wicked two-edged blade, tapering to a fine point.

I rushed out into the corridor, but Ransome, though moving slowly, was methodical in his action. He slipped into the room like a shadow, and closed the door. I heard the key click.

In five seconds I was at it. I twisted the knob and pushed with all my strength, but the house was built solidly and the door was of heavy oak. It did not give.

I drew back to throw my weight against it and paused.

I shouted at the top of my voice, thinking at the same time to summon help and to warn Felice.

I heard Tipton answer, and I could hear other noises throughout the house, just as I plunged forward. Again the door resisted my onslaught.

"Bring an ax," I shouted to Tipton. "Quick, for God's sake."

As I paused to regain my breath, a choking scream, muffled by the thick panels, issued from within the room.

I did not wait for Tipton. Rushing into Ransome's room, I quickly climbed through the window, worked my way around the coping, and leaped headlong into the window of Felice's room.

As I picked myself up from the floor, I was greeted by a horrible sight.

I realized with a sickening sensation that I had been too late.

A boudoir lamp threw a greenish, subdued light from one of the room's cozy nooks. In its ghastly glow I could see Felice. The rich coverlet was thrown partly off her and one delicate arm was raised over her head on the pillow.

It's queer how in a moment of great stress, strange thoughts flit through your mind. I fancied that her attitude was one of defense—a gesture prompted even before the fatal thrust of the knife had come, by some inner consciousness that doesn't sleep; something that had sensed her deadly peril.

The great hunting knife had been thrust into her white throat, and now, framed by a crimson ring that was widening with each minute, the ugly hilt protruded.

Ransome, a ghoulish grin on his face, a gloating grin, cruel and fiendish, was bending over his wife, mumbling to himself. His fingers closed and opened, opened and closed, convulsively.

I realized that Felice was either dead or doomed, and acting on a sudden impulse, I drove my fist squarely between Ransome's eyes. He fell to the floor like a log.

Tipton was shouting to me from the

hall, and in a moment I had the door open. Followed by Marie, he entered the room.

I turned my attention to Felice. Quickly I saw that she was beyond aid. The vicious knife had severed the jugular. John Ransome's obsession, it seemed, had been no idle fancy.

I had him back to consciousness by the time the police arrived. He was mumbling and muttering and I could get very little sense out of him. He seemed not to realize what had happened. He stared at me dumbly when I told him what he had done.

Inspector Murphy was a bit less gentle with him. When I had told the police all about the reason for my presence there, Murphy turned to Ransome who was lying across the bad.

"Man," he bawled, "come to life. Don't you realize that you have killed your wife?"

Gradually, it dawned on him. Murphy plied him with a thousand questions, and he didn't spare me either.

The coroner had been there only a couple of minutes when O'Brien showed up. He signaled me to a corner of the room.

"Chief," he said, "I tapped the phone line like you told me at six o'clock. Did you hear Ransome when he phoned?"

I nodded. "But I couldn't tell what he was saying," I said.

"Well, it was from Lydia. He said he would get it done to-night. Then they said good night and rang off."

When I returned to Murphy's side, Ransome was talking.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I cannot account for this thing. If you say that I killed my wife, I cannot deny it. But I swear that I know nothing of it."

Then he told Murphy of his strange impulse.

"Mullikin will tell you," he went on, "that I was afraid of this very thing. I employed him to guard my wife. Mr. Mullikin will tell you of the inexplicable messages—the pink cards. There were—"

"Seven of them, inspector," I cut in. "And he found them every once in awhile in this room."

And then I told my little story.

"Ransome," I said, "you wrote those messages yourself. More than that, you walked about this house at night, and I wouldn't be surprised that those terrifying dreams your wife had were not dreams at all, but real visions of you entering her room with murder in your heart."

Ransome groaned.

"I must have walked in my sleep—somnambulist," he sighed. "If you say I wrote those notes—"

"You did, you scheming devil," I said. "And you clumsily copied Dr. Sheldon's handwriting. You and your strange impulses. You wanted to kill your wife all right, but you wanted a witness who would say you did it while you were walking in your sleep. A fine defense it would make. You see, Ransome, I read of that case in England, too, where a prisoner was freed on the plea that he had killed his wife while walking in his sleep. You schemed to improve on that idea. You wanted official witnesses to haul into court to swear that you were mentally affected; that you were the victim of a complex, possibly of autosuggestion. If opportunity presented itself, you would even cast suspicion on Dr. Sheldon, by hinting that he was exerting some spell upon you. You hated him because you knew your wife respected him more than she did you—and that she perhaps still loved him.

"That was your idea in imitating his writing. Pretty good, you thought. It would be a dramatic touch. If he was your Svengali, if he was hypnotizing you, what more impressive than his own writing? You slipped up, Ransome. You didn't know that a sleepwalker acts automatically, that he can write only in his own, natural way. Ask any psychologist.

"You thought me a hick. I would be called to testify that you acted as if you were going mad. You would call in the doctors—even Sheldon—to testify that you had consulted them—that you feared the very thing that happened.

"You walked past my door at night to attract me, knowing I would follow you and think you were really a somnambulist. You betrayed yourself when you locked the door. Another moment and I would have saved your wife's life."

There was a glowing hate in the look he gave me.

"You're crazy, Mullikin. You've got nothing on me. I was asleep. I don't remember anything after retiring. How do I know that *you* didn't kill my wife?"

I chuckled at that.

"I suppose," I venture, "that you were asleep when Lydia Newcomb called you to-night—and when you answered her, telling her it would all be over to-night. I'll bet you were asleep when you both went to her apartment the other afternoon—and O'Brien followed you and overheard your plans for turning your assets into cash after your wife was murdered, and going away to France to forget your grief—with Lydia Newcomb.

"Sorry, Ransome, but the game's up."

Murphy put the cuffs on him.

It didn't take Murphy long to get Lydia into the law's meshes, and Lydia who was easily frightened broke down and told it all. Together they had planned the bizarre defense; through various channels they had collected legal opinions on the subject, and both were convinced that though Ransome, as he planned, would be seen in the actual commission of his wife's murder, would get away with it.

I guess, after all, he was just a nut. No sane man would have tried a stunt so bold and cold-blooded.

It's a good thing I took a fat retainer from Ransome before I started on the case. But I'd cheerfully give every cent of it if I could live that last night over and save those few seconds that I lost while Felice Ransome was meeting her end.

The Foxy Flapper

OUT in Indianapolis the flappers carry more than their bobbed hair under their bonnets.

A girl boldly drew up alongside an Indianapolis traffic sign reading definitely: "Parking Fifteen Minutes Only."

"You can only park fifteen minutes here," her companion pointed out.

"Don't believe it," replied the bright lass.

She took out a once-used summons sticker, put it on the car, and left, confident the officer on the beat wouldn't put another sticker on a car already spotted.

The Three Crows

By John Hunter

"You bet," said Tony grimly, "the very end for you two devils!"

Into the Pit Under the Gatterman Building Creeps Matthew Crow to Wrest With Torture the Secret of a Fortune

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

THREE brothers, Montague, Matthew and Mornington Crow, plotted to obtain the fortune left by their dead cousin, Frederick Verrall. They stood to inherit only if Verrall's daughter, who disappeared before his death, and a wastrel nephew, last heard of from Africa, should both fail to reappear and claim it.

The Crows sought to locate the daughter and the nephew so they could murder them and obtain the fortune. To that end, they tried to wring a secret of the Verrall heiress from Michael Calcott. Calcott died with only the words:

"Go and pull down the Gatterman Building, and then you'll know the truth!"

Calcott's house had once stood on a site now occupied by an immense office and residence building owned by Maurice Gatterman. The Crows made Gatterman a ridiculous offer for the building, but he scoffed at them. So they decided to institute a reign of terror and drive tenants out of the place, believing Gatterman would then be glad to sell.

In the meantime, Virginia Telford, Gatterman's secretary, was seeing a great deal of Tony Stevens, professed free-lance writer, actually a solicitor trying to trace the Verrall heiress.

Virginia noticed a picture in the paper of Michael Calcott, found dead on a moorland. She recognized it as the man she knew as her father, whom she had not seen for years. She told Tony about it. Tony wondered.

And then Sam Trench, from the African coast, came north looking for

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his old friend Calcott. He called on Maurice Gatterman.

That night the reign of terror started in the Gatterman Building. Virginia, having worked late, was going down a dark hall when she stumbled on the body of a murdered man.

It was a harmless old man who lived in the Gatterman apartments. Police investigated, but found no murderer. Then, a few nights later, the second victim was found dead in the Gatterman Building, and no clews to guide Scotland Yard.

Gatterman, conducting his own search, got hold of Sam Trench and, plying him with drinks, learned the story of the disappearance of the Verrall heiress. Virginia Telford Verrall was the daughter of Lucy Crow, a cousin and ward of the Crow brothers. They had made her marry Verrall, who, with heart trouble was close to death, so that they could obtain his fortune when he died. But she loved Michael Calcott, and later ran off with him. She took her daughter. Later she died. Calcott sent the girl to a distant relative of his.

Gatterman, convinced that his secretary was Virginia Verrall, the missing heiress, decided to propose marriage. That night he took her to his restaurant. She refused him. And that night, a few tables away, was found the third man murdered in the Gatterman Building.

It marked the end of the Gatterman Building. Residents moved out, the restaurant and the theater were closed. Gatterman, maddened by this mysterious terror that was ruining him, armed with his revolver, prowled through his building, on the verge of insanity. He was obsessed with a single idea—to wreak his vengeance.

Matthew Crow captured Sam Trench and led him to a shop adjoining the Gatterman Building, which the Three Crows had leased. From there they were boring through the ground into the Gatterman Building, determined to discover the secret which Michael Calcott had said was buried under the huge edifice. They put Sam Trench to work, digging and hacking.

And then Matthew, convinced that Virginia Telford was the missing Verrall heiress, read her doom with the words:

"I have decided that it is best that she should be removed beyond reach of inquiries."

And, true to his word, Matthew struck. Virginia was kidnaped by the Three Crows and carried to the shop they had rented adjoining the Gatterman Building. There she was left, in the cellar, a prisoner with Sam Trench.

The Three Crows confronted her there with a demand to tell the whereabouts of Charlotte Smithson, Virginia's former guardian, who possessed valuable secrets about the Verrall fortune. Virginia refused. They gave her two hours, until midnight, to decide.

CHAPTER XXX

Mad Gatterman

SAM TRENCH crept away from the grating and touched Virginia timidly on the arm.

"Don't you go and get too upset, miss," he said hoarsely. "Perhaps something will turn up." He shuddered. "Lor'! How I'd have liked a gun when them three devils was climbing the ladder out of this rotten cellar. I'd kill 'em all and ask the Government for a medal, quick."

Virginia looked up at him. "Mr. Trench," she said softly, "they'll torture me, won't they? Don't tell me lies, will you, because it won't help me a bit. They've tortured you, haven't they?"

"Well, not exactly tortured, as you might say," replied Sam Trench. "Different, I mean, from what you read about in histories, where they have them images called iron maidens, or whatever they are, and racks and

things. But I will say that Mornington bloke has been a bit free with the whip."

Virginia shuddered. "What shall I do? What shall I do? I'm an awful coward, Mr. Trench. I can't bear the thought of the fiendish things Matthew Crow may devise. I don't think he can be human. The very thought of him makes me tremble and feel faint."

Sam Trench dropped to his knees beside her and put his arm across her shoulders. The action was automatic, utterly without offense, and had some quality of tenderness in it.

"There. You don't want to take on about it. Jumping tombstones! I know what I'll do. When they come in to get hold of you I'll have a blessed go at the lot of 'em, and chance it. And perhaps you can get up that blinking ladder while I'm scrapping. If you do, and you're in the shop, chuck anything you can find through the window. that 'll bring the coppers here."

He paused. "Funny, ain't it? I've always looked on cops as my natural enemies; but I'd give five years of my life to see an extra pair of policemen's feet come down through that trap."

Virginia smiled. "I shouldn't think of letting you interfere, Mr. Trench. It's absolutely heroic of you to suggest what you have suggested; but you're not to think any more about it." She hesitated. "I wonder what Tony's doing?" she added softly.

"Is that the young fellow that buys you the scent from Paris?"

"Yes"—with a little sad smile.

"Well, if he's got anything in him he's raking London endwise to find you. I should be, if I was him."

Virginia relapsed into silence. Sam Trench cuddled her close to him, and, somehow, she wished him to do so. She wanted to be sure that there was a friend at hand, for there was a mounting horror in her brain as she contemplated Matthew Crow's last words to her.

They terrified her far more than the whip Mornington had held out. The whip was a concrete thing, eloquent in its evil but bounded by the limitations of its use. She knew what to expect from the whip.

But what might she not expect from the brain of Matthew Crow?

Her imagination painted grotesque pictures before which her tired and beaten brain reeled. The pictures had little definite shape—they were mere etchings of things unspeakable.

"What shall I do when they come?" she breathed. "Oh, what shall I do?"

Sam Trench's arm tightened about her. He could say nothing. In this frightful emergency he was dumb, for there was nothing to say. He knew the Three Crows. He knew that Virginia's sex and beauty were nothing in the sight of Matthew. He dreaded the advent of the questioner as much as did Virginia herself. In a strange but undoubtedly heroic way, he had a dim kind of idea that he would have much preferred to stand in Virginia's place.

And then after two hours which passed like lightning, Montague Crow came.

He descended the ladder, coughed a little throat-clearing cough, and adjusted his jacket and his cuffs and tie after the climb.

"Hm. I am to receive your answer," he said, looking at Virginia. "It is now about two minutes to midnight, and in order that our bargain may be punctiliously observed, I am quite prepared to wait for one hundred and twenty seconds more. But no longer. Miss Telford, as a man of business, as one who has long since recognized the futility of kicking against the pricks, let me tell you that there are moments when discretion is the better part of valor—an old saw but a true one. This is one of such moments. Tell what you know, and be thankful for the chance."

He touched his nostrils with a fine white handkerchief and beamed on her.

"To all of us, in life, come trials," he added. "Only in the hereafter can we hope to escape the troubles and tribulations of this distressing world. After all a difficulty is purely a matter for philosophic contemplation. A century hence what will it matter? The difficulties of the ancient Egyptians are lost in the mists of antiquity. Er—not too good an illustration, I'm afraid, not too well phrased; but—er—you understand me. *What was that?*"

He spun round, his bland smile gone, his pale face hard and rocklike, with the upper lip lifted slightly so that Virginia saw a dog's face set with glittering eyes.

He stared toward the grating. Sam Trench stared, too, and Virginia.

They saw Maurice Gatterman.

He was standing on the other side of the grating, and through one of the open squares formed by the crisscross of timber protruded his hand and the gun he worshiped.

He laughed. "Hello, Crow. Talk about the hereafter, eh? See this gun? That talks about the hereafter, too, and it talks a damned sight more forcibly than you. Stand still!" He added a foul and horrid word. "Crow! I've waited for one of you to come into that cellar. One at a time. See? One at a time. Think of the Verrall money, Crow, because thinking's all you'll ever see of it."

Montague Crow's tongue touched his lips. "Gatterman, my dear chap," he began. His voice was husky. Of a sudden he was no longer imposing in his swallow-tailed coat, his striped trousers and his immaculate spats. His fine white handkerchief slipped from his trembling fingers to the door of the cellar.

"Dear! Expensive you mean, Crow. Expensive to meet, I am, Crow. More than expensive to you. It's going to cost you a whole lot to have met up with me to-night." Gatterman laughed wildly and madly. "It's going to cost you your life!"

For long, quivering moments Montague Crow was silent. Visibly he drooped. Once he brushed his right eye where the perspiration from his forehead burned it. His cheeks were as white as the spotless collar about his throat. He seemed to have shrunk in size.

"Gatterman!" All his bland pomposity was gone. The unction in his voice had given place to quavering hoarseness. "This is not my doing. It's Matthew. I have protested—nay, argued—that this thing should not be. I have used all the powers of persuasion at my command."

Gatterman's devilish laughter broke rudely across his speech.

"Crow, you're so good that you ought to be wearing a halo. I'm going to help you to get one. I understand they're not fashionable on earth. Used your powers of persuasion, have you? Well, you look at this gun and start persuading it not to go off."

"Mr. Gatterman! For Heaven's sake, don't—shoot—"

Gatterman's wild and roving eyes dwelt momentarily on Virginia.

"Ah! My Miss Telford, eh? And why do you think I've come here if not to shoot this cur? D'you think I'm walking round for the air? You put your fingers into your ears and you won't hear anything. And old Sam Trench, too?"

His cackle filled the cellar and rolled to chattering echoes under the great base of the Gatterman Building. He jerked his head backward in the direction whence the echoes came.

"There's all my little devils laughing with me. Hear 'em. Follow me about, they do, upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber. I call out sometimes in the corridors upstairs—hellooooo—and they always call back—just the same as I call. Hear 'em now?"

Nobody answered him. Virginia realized that argument with the madman was useless.

Montague Crow stirred. The perspiration was literally dripping from his cheeks. He looked round and saw the ladder. He lurched toward it, and as he did so the gun boomed in the inclosed space of the cellar and he dropped in his tracks.

Virginia heard Gatterman's laugh high above the rolling echoes of the shot—growing fainter as Gatterman ran back to the garage and the pit.

She saw Montague Crow turn over slowly and look at her, and she saw something in his eyes which she knew she could never forget—a tremendous horror, as though a door had been opened through which he could see, a door through which he must pass to face the inevitable that lay beyond it.

He ceased to move as she realized this.

Sam Trench was at the barrier, jerking at it madly, shouting at the top of his voice: "Gatterman! Come back! For God's sake come back, Gatterman! Gatterman—Gatterman—"

But the madman did not heed him. What mattered it to Gatterman who was imprisoned in the cellar? Gatterman had killed one of the Three Crows. Death had leaped out of the Gatterman Building into the black heart of one of the devils who had ruined it. That was all Gatterman thought about. He kept patting the discolored muzzle of the gun, kept holding the wicked little thing to his breast. He was mad—mad—

Overhead, Virginia heard stumbling feet. She was aware of a white and frightened face staring down through the trapdoor, even while Sam Trench continued his insane shouts for Gatterman to return.

She recognized Mrs. Soames, and saw her joined by Jones.

Jones dropped through the trapdoor clean to the floor and examined Montague.

"Dead, by God!" he breathed. He glanced toward the grating. He heard Sam Trench's cries.

"Gatterman!" he added.

He took a jump and clutched at the edge of the trap, hauled himself through, and dropped the trapdoor into place. Then, snatching up his cap, he hurried out into the street and bolted for the gloomy square and the gloomy house where the Three Crows lived. The police watchers, to whose ears had come no sound of the gun's explosion, watched him and wondered why he should hurry.

Down in the cellar Virginia sat like stone and looked at the body of Montague Crow.

Sam Trench ceased to pull at the grating. He was exhausted, pale, shaken.

"He won't listen!" he wailed. "He won't listen! If only he'd come back he could get us out. But he's mad! And the other two'll come! Them above will fetch 'em. And then—what 'll happen, eh? What 'll happen to you and to me?"

CHAPTER XXXI

Gatterman Stops Laughing

THEY waited for the Crows to come. Trench kept rocking himself backward and forward and moaning. Every now and again he would run to the grating and frantically shake it, and yell aloud for Gatterman, who, far above him in his flower-ringed aerie, had pushed his way through the hedge and was standing against the parapet shaking his fist across dark London and laughing like the maniac he was.

People heard him in the streets, chance wayfarers, solitary policemen, belated travelers and taxi drivers. Folk crossed the road and walked on the other side, so that they were not near the Gatterman Building.

Virginia had sunk into cold and motionless despair, a despair which quickened to leaping terror each time she heard a sound overhead.

The Crows would come—no longer

the Three Crows, but two of them. What would happen when they came?

She tried not to look at Montague, dead in his sins and his fine clothes, with that unspeakable fear stamped on his face; and yet her eyes kept seeking him. Montague, she thought, had suffered for his wickedness in those moments of his death. He had seen beyond the veil what waited for him in the dark corridors of all eternity, and his black soul had shriveled at the sight. The horror in his staring eyes at last made Virginia shift so that she could not see them.

Sam Trench spoke. "Miss, it's awful. They'll flay us. That's what they'll do. One of 'em dead! D'you understand? They've always had a funny idea of sticking together, kind of family honor business. That's one of the reasons why they hated Mike Calcott so. They was the only ones who could dirty the family honor and get away with it. Nobody else could touch it. Now—Gatterman's killed one of 'em. Gawd—" His trembling fingers pulled at his lower lip, and his jutting eyes roved restlessly round the cellar.

Virginia did not answer him. She was touching the depths. The foul and horrid cellar, she thought, would live forever in her memory.

At last the Crows came. They heard booted feet on the floor above them, the trap was thrown back and a voice said: "There he is!"

Matthew Crow and Mornington dropped through, with Jones after them. They stood for a moment and looked at Montague. Their hats were in their hands.

"May his soul rest in peace," said Matthew with hideous solemnity.

He looked up. He was paler than usual, and his eyes were brilliant. He lifted his finger.

"Come here!"

Sam Trench crept toward him.

"You saw this happen?"

"Yes."

"Tell us."

Mornington took snuff with trembling fingers, spilled it about him shockingly, and checked a giggle just in time. The air of the cellar seemed poised above Virginia's head. She could hardly breathe.

Sam Trench haltingly told what had happened.

Matthew asked him a few questions, received his answers, and then addressed himself to Mornington and Jones.

"This must be attended to at once." He spoke deliberately and coldly. "To-night there shall be an end of all this. Jones, my brother and I are going through that grating. We shall block it after us, and there is no need for you to stay here. Go upstairs, and hunt out those tea cases. Prepare them for nailing down."

He looked about him. "Yes. We shall finish here to-night," he added. "Mornington, come with me."

They passed to the other side of the grating, and fastened it after them. Jones swung aloft and dropped the trap into place. Sam Trench and Virginia could see two long shafts of white light arcing about the abysmal darkness under the Gatterman Building, stabbing here and there like long lances.

At last: "Here it is. The bottom of the car pit. See! He's sawed the wood through."

The voices ceased. The long shafts of light vanished.

Sam Trench muttered: "They'll finish here to-night—"

So it came to pass that Maurice Gatterman ceased to laugh above London.

CHAPTER XXXII

Tony Arrives

TONY calmed somewhat. He forced himself to it, and, once he had more or less established his mental balance, he began to think; and he thought largely of the Gatterman Building, and his own theories.

The Crows had purchased a little shop in a little street behind the Gatterman. He remembered how he had previously considered this, and he permitted himself to theorize on it still further.

He laughed grimly as he reflected that he had taken a flat in the Gatterman Building just because the Three Crows had bought that tiny shop—and had never yet slept in the flat. However, he had its key, and he had a key to the great outer bronze gates, supplied to him by Gatterman because there was now no permanent staff to keep the monstrous building open day and night.

He thought of these things in his flat at Rutland Gate, sitting late over the fire, and came to a swift decision. He had wasted time. He had allowed his agony at Virginia's disappearance, at the failure of the searches carried out by Richardson, to check his activities. Now that the paralysis was gone, he was eager to be up and doing.

He got up from his chair and hurried out to the street. He had to walk from Rutland Gate, for he failed to find a stray taxicab, and he reached the Gatterman Building at about one o'clock in the morning.

It was quiet, wraithlike in the starlight, and its bronze gates creaked and wailed on neglected hinges as he pushed them open. An electric torch helped him to the elevator shafts, and, with the power not yet cut off, he was whirled aloft.

He would, he decided, see Gatterman and enlist his aid in an expedition of discovery in the very bowels of the building. Gatterman, he felt sure, would help him, would, in fact, be only too eager to take part in such a search; and Gatterman, with his immense bulk and strength, his undoubted courage, would be a valuable companion. Besides, Gatterman had a gun, and that was a thing Tony had never yet owned.

He climbed the last short flight of steps, and found himself in a little lobby inside Gatterman's bungalow.

He banged on the door of the lobby and yelled: "Gatterman! Wake up! This is Stevens!"

There was no reply. His voice rang emptily through the place. He sought Gatterman's bedroom. Whether the bed had been slept in that night he could not tell, for Gatterman's home had been in shocking and increasing disorder from the time the building emptied, and all the servants left.

He went from room to room, calling on Gatterman, but failed to find him, and as his search proved fruitless he began to get frantically anxious, to become filled with a vague and heavy foreboding of disaster.

At last he let himself into the garden, and so, standing amid the scent of the roses, with the night wind softly rustling the tall hedgerow and bending down the closed and sleeping blossoms at his feet, he found Maurice Gatterman.

He was lying athwart the crazy-paved path, twisted hideously. His head was immersed in the pool, and all about his upturned, pale face the startled and awakened goldfish darted and leaped. Rose petals were drifting past his feet.

Tony dropped to his knees beside him. Gatterman had been shot through the heart, and must have died at the moment of the bullet's impact.

"Fetch the police!" urged a crying voice within Tony, and another crying voice yelled: "Have you time? Who killed him? What's happening far below in this great tomb of hopes and ambitions? Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!"

Tony stayed still on his knees beside Gatterman for an appreciable space; then he ran his hands through Gatterman's pockets. He found the gun Gatterman always carried, with its one cartridge fired, the gun which had killed Montague Crow.

He held the gun tightly in his right hand, first of all examining it and

making himself acquainted with its mechanism. Then he sprinted to the little lobby, almost fell down the steps, and reached the quiet and dark interior of the Gatterman Building.

An elevator dropped him like a stone sheer to the garage, and his torch struck this way and that as he swept it over the great stretch of empty concrete, over Gatterman's sleek Rolls-Royce, standing dust-laden and forlorn, abandoned and neglected.

"Is there a way down?" he kept asking himself. "There must be! There must be! Where did he break the concrete?"

And then: "I ought to have phoned the police. I ought to have got Richardson. I'm a fool. I'm running wild. I'm mad. I'll go back and ring the Yard!"

He heard a scream and stood still.

For the voice was the voice of Virginia.

Tony found his lips opening to shout. He wanted to cry out to Virginia that he was near at hand; but fortunately, with that speed which only the human intelligence can achieve in moments of crisis, his brain cried a warning to him, and the shout did not materialize.

Virginia was in danger, and she was near at hand, somewhere beneath the floor of the great garage, right down at the feet of the Gatterman Building. He was alone. He must calculate that the Three Crows might be with Virginia. To shout would not serve so much to reassure her as to warn them.

He was thankful, then, that he had not waited to telephone Richardson, thankful that wild impulse had sent him on this frantic search for her. Almost sobbing with desperation he raked the floor in all directions for a sign of a break in it, telling himself repeatedly that the Three Crows had killed Maurice Gatterman, and that they had made their entry to the building through the garage floor—the only way in for them!

But where was the floor broken? His light showed only the smooth stretch of concrete, baffling in its bland expressionless expanse. He hated it. He wanted to fetch a pick and smash it. He strained his ears for a repetition of that cry; but none came.

There was only the silence, the stabbing, leaping lance of light from his torch, and the unbroken, solid concrete —silence and fear—and a fretting anxiety which was like the beating of drums within him.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Crows Come Back

WHILE Matthew and Morning-ton were away, Virginia observed a change in Sam Trench. The man ceased his moaning and his swaying, ceased to talk to her. He sat, leaning forward slightly as though he listened, strained, intent, alert—waiting.

He looked haggard, wasted by his sufferings—and yet stronger in some fashion. His mouth no longer quivered, and his eyes were half closed without the former terror showing in them. Somehow, he frightened Virginia, and after watching him for a space, she said: "Mr. Trench. What are you thinking about?"

Sam Trench seemed to awaken from a tremendous concentration.

"Eh? Me? Them," he said, jerking his thumb toward the grating.

Virginia looked hard at him. "What about them, Mr. Trench?"

He leaned forward and spoke in a husky whisper. "It's time they got theirs," he hissed. "D'you see? They've bossed it long enough. They've played with terror till it's their servant. I ain't any good at saying things, but that's how I see it. I was mad with joy when I see that devil dying there. I'd like to see 'em all die—slow—I'd like to see the fear they've put into others creep into their eyes and make them shiver. I'd like to see the thing

they've made their slave be their master at the last. That's what I'd like to see. It's against all Providence that men can go on as they've gone. Lord knows I ain't ever been a churchgoer, but I believe there's a God in heaven, and He'll look to them one day and say it's enough. Don't you think so, miss?"

Virginia nodded. She had been breathing silent prayers, and she must believe that those prayers would be answered, else she felt she would go mad with strain.

"I'm going to try," added Sam Trench between clenched teeth. "I'm going to have a shot at it. That dog Mornington's beat me day and night—day and night—whip—whip—whip—biting into me, flaying me, driving me like a beast. I'm going to have a shot at him. I ain't going to be afraid any more. It's not right to be afraid. They can only kill you; though Heaven knows that Matthew Crow can kill in ways other men wouldn't ever dream about."

"What are you going to do?" asked Virginia, with quick alarm.

Sam Trench looked straight at her. "I'm going to try and be a man for the first time since they copped me," he said slowly. "And if they get me—well, I've tried. You sit tight, miss, and if you see a chance, bolt into the basement of the Gatterman. It's big enough and dark enough, and maybe you'll be able to hide there."

"Mr. Trench, don't do anything silly. They'll kill you! You know them. You know what they are. Please! For my sake—"

Sam Trench shook his head slowly. He measured the distance to the oil lamp, and he stood back against the wall. Virginia huddled far into the corner, crouched down like a terrified child.

They heard footsteps and saw two flickering pencils of white light shooting and darting through the utter darkness beneath the Gatterman Building.

The Crows had come back.

"Gatterman's dead," thought Virginia to herself. "They've killed him. He's dead—" It kept resounding in her head like the tolling of a bell. "He's dead. He's dead."

The electric torches went out. Matthew Crow unlocked and swung back the grating and stepped into the cellar. Mornington followed him.

And as Mornington did so, Sam Trench hurled a great chunk of concrete broken from the cellar wall clean at the oil lamp and knocked it over.

Virginia heard a yell, a rush, the hissing intake of a man's breath, and a thud.

On the heels of this came sounds of fierce conflict, feet kicking and scraping, a curious rattling, choking noise, boots flaying wildly at wall and floor, and Matthew Crow calling aloud in the darkness:

"Mornington! Mornington!"

There was a click. Matthew had his electric torch from his pocket once more and turned it on. Its white pitiless light showed the men who fought by the open grating, Sam Trench atop of Mornington, his hands clutched at Mornington's throat. Mornington's legs were kicking wildly, heels drumming on the floor—and drumming more slowly, with less strength.

Sam Trench began to laugh. "Choke! Choke, you devil! Where's your whip? Fetch your whip! I'll strangle you with its lash!"

Matthew, moving with cold precision, stooped and picked the whip up. It had fallen from beneath Mornington's coat, as he fell, and Sam Trench, in his wild rage, had not noticed it.

Back went Matthew's arm, his eyes measuring the distance to Trench's head, and Virginia found herself doing an utterly amazing thing.

She screamed aloud, and, jumping up, seized Matthew's arm and clung, so that the blow was not delivered, and the arm fell downward.

Matthew Crow turned on her with a snarl. His face was like an animal's.

She clung desperately to his arm. He tried to beat her off, and dropped his torch. Darkness came down on the scene once more.

With this, her brain miraculously clear in the sudden and tremendous activity of the moment, Virginia realized that she could not hope to beat him in physical combat, but that, aided by the darkness, she might escape to the under section of the Gatterman.

She drew away, loosing her grip of Crow's arm, just in time to avoid the savage blow he smashed round in the direction of her head. With his bony fist within half an inch of her face, she ducked in the direction of the grating, and would undoubtedly have made it, but that she had momentarily overlooked the presence of Sam Trench and Mornington Crow.

She tripped over one of Mornington's feet and dropped headlong. In the madness and hurry of it all, below the oaths which, hideously enough, were coming from the lips of Matthew Crow, she could hear a dull thudding—Sam Trench beating Mornington's head against the cellar floor.

She was sick with horror. She tried to crawl. She tried to get up, fell; tried again to crawl.

Then Matthew Crow found his torch. He flicked it the switch down, no light came, and flung the thing aside with a curse.

He roared: "Jones! Jones!"

Virginia reached the edge of the hole in the cellar wall. She put out her hands and clutched the rough edges of it. Beyond was the abysmal blackness which lay beneath the Gatterman Building.

Jones was overhead. The trapdoor was back and a square of light from the room above shot down to the cellar through the trap.

"Bring a lamp!" yelled Matthew Crow. His voice was almost unrecognizable. He was hoarse with rage, and nearly choking.

Virginia hauled herself through the opening. Jones had disappeared—gone to fetch a lamp.

She was nearly through when she felt her left ankle seized convulsively, in a grip she could not free—the hand of Mornington Crow clutching at anything in his strangled agony.

Then Jones dropped through the trap, the cellar was flooded with a tide of soft yellow light, and Virginia, half fainting, her ankle still gripped by Mornington Crow, knew that the great attempt to escape had failed, and that there now remained nothing but the settling of its cost.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Ancient Rack

MATTHEW CROW, in those few seconds after Jones arrived with the lamp, was swift and terrible. His face blazed with a strange and dreadful pallor, and his brilliant eyes were like glass in the lamplight.

"Pull him off!" he snarled to Jones, and flung a trembling finger toward Sam Trench.

Sam Trench was dragged away from Mornington Crow and thrown back against the wall, where he stood sullenly defiant, breathing in great gasps, and watching first Matthew and then Mornington.

"You come here!" said Matthew Crow.

Virginia, her ankle now released, left the hole in the wall and stepped to the middle of the cellar.

Matthew looked hard at her. "You laid hands on me," he said slowly. "You prevented me from carrying out a perfectly justifiable attempt to rescue my brother from the hands of that man over there. For that, you shall pay."

The action and the excitement of their effort to escape, had stirred Virginia tremendously. The faintness which had threatened her when the attempt failed persisted for a moment or two, so that she looked at Matthew

Crow sightlessly, swaying like a tall flower brushed by a passing breeze. Then she recovered a little.

She was afraid of Crow. The knowledge drummed within her. She was dreadfully afraid of him—more afraid than ever she had been of anything or anybody. She saw him not so much as an evil man, an unscrupulous scoundrel, but as the very incarnation of all that is wicked and devilish. The cold, white rage in his eyes was a terrifying thing in her sight. His very grief for the death of the bland and iniquitous Montague was something almost obscene, for no good man could have regretted the passing of so villainous a creature.

She said quietly: "I think you will find it difficult to make me pay any more. One can only forfeit so much in suffering." The faintness was going. She felt stronger, clearer in her head. She laughed at him without any mirth in the laughter. "It's so easy to talk of making other people pay. Have you ever thought that somebody might one day demand an accounting of you?"

He sneered. His cold, passionless poise was still eluding him.

"Melodramatic tosh," he said. "Don't be such a little fool." He leaned forward, thrusting his gray face closer to hers. "I'll spoil your beauty, my girl, before I've finished with you. I'll make you scream till your throat bursts."

He seized her arm and flung her sidewise, so that she struck the wall and slid to a heap at its foot.

Matthew stooped over Mornington. Mornington was horrible to look on. His greasy face was sweat-drenched, and even then the purple was only just draining from his cheeks. His tongue lolled slightly, and on his fat, flabby throat were the vivid marks made by Sam Trench's fingers and thumbs.

Matthew looked round at Trench. "You have nearly committed murder to-night," he said.

He was his old self. His voice had lost its harshness. His glasslike eyes were steady and the throbbing wild thing no longer moved in them.

Sam Trench nodded. His fat chin thrust grotesquely forward.

"Only nearly?" he asked. "Hard luck!"

Matthew Crow smiled, and Virginia, picking herself up, found in that smile more terror than all his threats.

She and Trench and Jones watched Matthew minister to Mornington, dope him carefully with little sips of brandy poured from a silver hip flask, and work at him until he stirred and sat up.

He began to blubber. He was like some great and frightful child sprawled on the floor slavering and wailing.

"My throat! My throat's giving me hell! Matthew, I can hardly breathe. He nearly killed me, Matthew. I thought I was going to die. Matthew—"

"All right," said Matthew gently. "It's all over now, Mornington. There's nothing to worry about. And we can see what shall be done with him. There—you're better already. Come along, Mornington."

He helped the fat mass to its feet, and Mornington stood running a finger round the inside of his torn shirt, his collar standing out on its stud at the back of his neck.

"Give me some more brandy," he gasped.

"Gently," said Matthew. "It may choke you. Gently, Mornington."

Mornington snatched the flask and took a swig. He coughed violently, recovered, and his tiny eyes began to gleam.

He felt for his snuffbox and automatically took a pinch. Automatically, also, he giggled.

"Monty's dead," he said. "Halves, Matthew."

Matthew shrugged his shoulders. "This is no time to discuss the readjustment of our affairs, Mornington. You yourself have just stepped back

from the valley of the shadow, and our dear brother has fallen under the hands of an assassin."

There was a short silence. Virginia was wondering, bewildered, repelled by Matthew's hypocrisy, by Mornington's cold and instant callousness now that he himself was out of danger. She realized how formidable and inexorable the trio had been during the years they had operated in criminal circles. The Three Crows. No wonder Michael Calcott had flew from them.

"And now," said Matthew, "we must discuss what has to be done. Do you feel fit for such a discussion, Mornington?"

Mornington looked round. His eyes fell on Sam Trench.

"If it's to do with him I'll discuss till doomsday," he said savagely.

"All right. All right. In good time."

Virginia crept along the wall until she stood next to Sam Trench. Her hand sought his. She could feel that he was trembling violently. Jones made no effort to stop her. He was watching the Crows, and Virginia conceived that he feared them as much as did she herself.

"First of all," said Matthew calmly, "I think we made a mistake in regard to Gatterman. We should not have left him where he is. It would be better if he disappeared completely. After all, he has shut himself away from the world, and sees nobody. The world will probably not trouble about him for several days, at least, and in those days we can finish all that we need down here. What do you say to that, Mornington?"

Mornington nodded. He had been looking at Sam Trench and Virginia, and he seemed to recall himself to the conversation with an effort.

"You mean," he said, "bring him down here and lay him to rest at the feet of the Gatterman? Poetic idea, Matthew. I'm a lover of poetry."

He giggled. He was himself again. He took snuff. Montague lay dead on the floor and nobody looked at him.

Virginia was trying not to think at all. The strangeness of her surroundings threatened to break her reason. The cellar was like a little stage hideously set for a devilish drama. She had a mad and awful idea that a gray wolf should have slavered at Matthew's thigh, or a black dog, red-eyed and wide-jawed, have padded round the cellar.

"That done," said Matthew, as though Mornington had not spoken, "I suggest that we immediately set this man Trench, and this girl here, to dig across the old ground plan of Calcott's house. The work must be done swiftly. Trench must use a pickax and the girl a shovel. If she finds her strength inadequate to the task the whip may prove a good tonic."

"Why the haste, Matthew?" asked Mornington, his eyes roving toward Virginia. "She's a very pretty girl, and it would be a pity to whip her. I'm not naturally inclined toward violence where love and friendship can effect the same purpose. I'm sure a little love would go a long way with her. Eh—sweetness?"

He giggled toward Virginia and splashed snuff about.

Matthew gestured sharply. "This is no time for fooling, Mornington. We know those lawyers are on the track of Charlotte Smithson. We have to find her, and we have—" He paused. "I think," he said slowly, "that Charlotte Smithson is even more important than digging at the moment."

"Sure thing," agreed Mornington. "Very true, Matthew. What are we going to do about it?"

Matthew turned and lifted his finger. "Come here," he said to Virginia; and, as she hesitated: "Did you hear?"

She came slowly toward him, and Sam Trench, retaining his grip of her hand, came with her.

"I don't want you," said Matthew.

Sam Trench swallowed. "I don't care. You've got me. I'm sticking to this gal, Crow, till I can't stand."

Mornington laughed. He picked up the whip and he drove its haft into Sam Trench's face, so that Trench went backward and fell.

"You no longer stand," giggled Mornington. "Joke!"

Sam Trench would have hurled himself at the man, but that Virginia stopped him with a gesture. As it was, he got up and stood just behind her at her shoulder, fingering his bruised jaw and glaring at Mornington.

"Now," said Matthew, "you were asked a certain question earlier tonight, and my brother, in coming for your answer, lost his life. In effect, had you not been so stubborn, my brother would still have been alive. I want you to bear that in mind. His blood is on your head."

"Please let us have no more hypocrisy," Virginia spoke wearily. "Acknowledge to yourself that you are the foul thing that I see in you, and talk plainly."

She had hurt him, and she realized it as she saw his eyes change.

"All right. So be it. You are, I believe, well acquainted with the lifts of this admirably planned building. You know that they are worked by an electric current, and that their control is so delicate and infinitely variable that they can be moved slowly or quickly, through the space of an eighth of an inch or to the height of seven stories."

Virginia said nothing. Mornington was listening intently, and it was evident from his expression that he was confident Matthew's ingenuity had devised something splendidly entertaining.

Matthew continued in his sonorous voice:

"In olden days there were many and varied methods of extracting from people information they were disinclined to impart. I mention this to indicate that what I propose to do is not at all fantastic, but that I merely follow an established precedent. What measures a man may take in connection with anything affecting himself are merely dependable upon the urgency of the problem confronting him and his own immediate necessities. A starving man would be justified in killing his favorite horse if the slaying of the horse meant that he himself would continue to live until salvation was assured."

"Good stuff, Matthew," giggled Mornington. "Law of supply and demand. Circumstances supply the motive and demand the action. 'Nother joke."

"One of the persuasive instruments which proved remarkably effective in the days to which I have just referred was the rack," added Matthew.

He fixed his eyes on Virginia. "Young woman, I would put a question to you. The lower ends of the lift shafts drop down to the garage just above us. The lifts are very powerful, and can hoist a great weight right away to the top of this big building. Suppose your feet were fastened, we will say, to something in the bottom of one of the shafts. Suppose your hands were tied to the underside of the lift in that shaft. Do you think you could prevent the lift from ascending? By this I do not mean to say that the lift would be set at full speed upward. Bear that in mind. But a gradual and intermittent hoisting—the switching on and off of the power. In effect, all the old operative qualities of the rack of our ancestors, without their cumbersome ropes and quaint machinery."

Mornington laughed aloud. "Clever, Matthew!" he chuckled. "Clever! Real bit of brain work. How'd you like that, Miss Telford? What about snuff in my eyes, now?"

Virginia cried wildly: "I don't know where Charlotte Smithson is. I've told you once. I've told you." Better to be killed at once by Matthew Crow

than suffer the thing he had devised for her.

Sam Trench shouldered past her. His voice was thick and unrecognizable.

"You fiend, Crow," he snarled; and added a word he never normally would have spoken before Virginia. "You can't do it! Even you can't do a thing like that."

"Trench," said Matthew Crow steadily, "your time is to come. Abuse will serve neither you nor this woman —nor will it save you. Now, my cousin. The truth or the lift. Which is it to be?"

"Oh, I can't tell you! How can I tell you anything I don't know?"

"Bring her along, and bring that man with her," said Matthew curtly.

Jones and Mornington bore down Sam Trench, kicking and struggling. Matthew himself laid hold of Virginia, she shrieked aloud as his hand closed on her arm.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Lift

THEY went out through the gap into the intense darkness of the Gatterman foundations. Outside, in the streets, people and traffic were passing by, and many of those who passed looked up at the great building and shuddered, wondering whether it would ever reveal its secret, not knowing that yet another secret was being made deep down inside it.

Mornington had a gun, and this he had held in the middle of Sam Trench's back, so that after his first wild struggle Trench was forced to obey orders without resistance; thus Jones was free to carry the lamp.

He came behind them, so that the lamplight threw grotesque and monstrous shadows toward the deeper gloom where the lamplight did not penetrate. The pillars and the shadows seemed to lurch in a hideous unearthly fandango, as the lamp moved in Jones's hand. Save for the tread of their feet on the concrete and the litter of shavings left by the carpenters who had worked on the building, the whole place was eerily silent.

They reached the floor of the pit, and Sam Trench, acting under orders, lifted the sawed boards out of place.

"Jones," said Matthew, "you will climb through. Trench will follow you and Mornington will be at his heels. I shall then hand up the lamp, and you will pull this girl through. I will come last."

The movement was carried out without a hitch. Trench had no time to struggle with Jones before Mornington and the gun were in the garage. The lamp was handed up and Jones hauled Virginia aloft. Matthew followed.

The lamp cast a limited circle of radiance over the garage floor. It showed Gatterman's Rolls Royce indistinctly, magnified it into a monstrous chariot which threw a tremendous shadow right away into the infinity of blackness beyond.

"What was that?" asked Mornington sharply.

"What do you mean?"

Mornington looked round—quick little head movements, his eyes bright as lamps.

"I thought I heard a noise."

They all stood still, listening. Virginia was hardly conscious of her surroundings, her faculties drowned in a roaring flood of unchecked terror.

"Nothing," said Matthew at last.

Mornington shook his head. "I'm absolutely sure of it. I heard a creak, a rustle."

Matthew shrugged his shoulders. "Jones and you will hold Trench. The girl will come with me. Give me the gun and the lamp."

He took the weapon, and while Jones and Mornington held Trench securely he forced Virginia to go with him on a comprehensive search of the great garage. The search was easily carried out. The garage was nothing but a

mighty platform of concrete broken here and there by supporting pillars.

Matthew Crow, once committed to the task, carried it out thoroughly and methodically. He went all round the walls, into the steel-latticed compartment which had once been the machine room, and he crisscrossed the floor in long lines of search, so that it was utterly impossible for anybody to be in the garage without his having discovered them. He finished by looking into the Rolls Royce car.

"Your nerves are jumpy, Mornington," he observed. "There hasn't been an atom of need for this delay. Come along." He spoke jerkily. It was evident that the silence and the close-gathered forces of the darkness lurking just outside the circle of light were affecting even his nerves.

They all moved forward, leaving the big stand behind them until the darkness swallowed it; and so they reached the lift shafts. The lamplight showed two lifts standing in the wells of two of the six shafts.

Mornington spoke excitedly: "What did I tell you, Matthew? When we came out to—er—to see Gatterman, there was only one lift, and we used it and left it standing at the foot of its shaft. That's the one." He pointed to the right hand lift; and then added quietly and slowly: "Now there are two lifts down here. Who came down in the second?"

Once more they all stood still, silent, strained. Jones's uneasiness was very apparent, even in the uncertain light of the lamp.

"We ought to get out," he muttered in a hoarse voice. "There's something wrong. Besides, I don't like this place. It's ghostly. It's full of shadows. I vote we make a bolt for it." He looked round swiftly, as though expecting to see a threatening shape at his shoulder.

"Be quiet!" hissed Matthew Crow. "You fool! Are you afraid of the dark?"

Jones muttered: "No, but I'm not pretending to be unafraid of what the dark might hold."

Mornington giggled noisily and took snuff. "Trite observation, Jones. Exceedingly trite. Matthew, I don't like those two lifts."

Matthew looked at him and spoke slowly: "I suppose Gatterman was—" he broke off on a note of inquiry.

"As a door nail," said Mornington emphatically. "Old Gatterman was as dead as a doornail. There was no doubt whatever about that. Dickens, my dear Jones—he! He! That's a good joke if you spot it—is very sound reading, and bristles with applicable quotations."

Matthew moved impatiently. He knew that Mornington's cackle was the product of nervousness, and while he resented the nervousness he also resented its cause. He himself was disturbed by the presence of the second lift. With its baffling latticed gates, its open interior seemed to stare sullenly at him, mockingly inscrutable, challengingly mysterious.

"There is nobody in the garage," he said emphatically. "We have searched the place, and we are sure. Your memory is playing you tricks, Mornington."

"Is yours?" asked Mornington coolly. "Do you remember this second lift?"

"No," replied Matthew reluctantly. He suddenly blazed with passion. His bony hands lifted high. "Curse this building, and Gatterman who built it and Calcott on whose ground it was built. I've destroyed Calcott and I've destroyed Gatterman, and in my good time I shall destroy the third of those partners who tried to keep me from money which is rightly mine—this place of steel and stone. They've made mysteries for me, but I've solved them." He shook his fist vaguely toward the Gatterman Building, high above the garage roof. "You are the last mystery, but I shall solve your

secret and bring you in ruins to the ground! Damn you! Damn you, I say!"

He recovered swiftly, and was silent, breathing deeply. Virginia watched him. She could understand that the great Gatterman Building seemed a living entity to him, a mute giant who, motionless, passively resisting, clutched a secret to his colossal breast and defied all the world to wrest it from him; for the Gatterman, lately, had impressed her as being endowed with a soul, a dark, mysterious soul which leered through shadowed eyes on the shuddering passer-by.

Trench was shivering violently, and so was Jones. To them, there was something almost supernatural in their surroundings. Matthew's wild outburst against the Gatterman Building had conjured up all manner of wild and foolish thoughts in their brains. Trench looked up apprehensively, as though he expected to see the Gatterman come down in thunder and crush them.

"We will proceed," said Matthew calmly, at last.

Jones, breathing heavily, stepped forward. "I'm through," he said.

"What do you mean?" Matthew's face was wicked in the lamplight, gray and hard.

"I mean that I can't stick it any longer. I don't get nothing out of it so far as I can see, and, anyhow, this ain't the sort of game I'm used to."

"You'll stay where you are," snarled Matthew.

Jones looked doggedly obstinate. "I know I won't. I tell you I'm through. This business ain't right. It ain't what you might call clean crook stuff. It's too weird for me. I don't mind cracking a box, or a bit of black-jacking if it comes to that, but this gets me stiff. I'm out, Crow. I'm out for good."

Mornington, his head on one side, was surveying Jones curiously. Sam Trench, past all strength, could only stand trembling and staring.

Virginia found a mounting terror within her. She knew, as surely as she could see, the evil face of Matthew Crow in the wavering lamplight that she stood on the edge of grim tragedy.

"You will stay where you are," repeated Matthew Crow slowly. "If you don't, you'll regret your decision, Jones."

"Who are you threatening?" demanded Jones fiercely. His vulgar face flamed. "Two can play at that game, Crow, and don't you forget it. Who killed Gatterman, eh?"

"Ah! That is a question the police may be asking shortly," said Crow, very softly.

"And if you start any of your threats I'm the man to tell 'em," declared Jones. "You've held over me long enough, Crow, the little things I've done here and there. Now I guess we're quits, and I'm going."

Mornington giggled loudly. "Observe, Matthew, dear brother? Jones says we're quits and he's a quitter. One could carry on that joke indefinitely, including words like acquit—which has an unpleasant savor of the police court about it, and acquittance—which means something entirely different — Matthew—"

Their eyes met. Mornington's were bright, like beads, Matthew's glassy, like a snake's eyes.

Matthew lifted his gun and shot Jones down. He fired twice, and Virginia saw the lurching body as it went backward, twitch under the shock of the second bullet. Jones fell in a twisted heap and did not move again.

"Gawd!" The echoes had rolled away, and the only sound which broke the stillness was Sam Trench's muttered oath. Trench sobbed. He could hardly stand. "You've killed two men to-night," he choked. "Two! And all because of this building and because of Mike Calcott."

He began to sob unashamedly. His eyes were fixed on Matthew Crow and were charged with horror unspeakable.

Crow drove him and Virginia forward. Mornington carried the lamp. Virginia walked mechanically. The thing was now past all human limits of endurance. The great bare garage was like the anteroom of hell, where devil shapes moved and did their work.

They were under the lift. Mornington had placed the lamp on the garage floor, and had elevated the lift sufficiently for them to step beneath it.

"Trench," said Crow, "you will carry out my instructions as I give them, or you will follow Jones. You, young woman, have one last chance."

He stepped back from under the lift to the garage floor, so that he faced toward Trench and Virginia in the lift well. Above them, in the lift itself, was Mornington, his hand on the control.

"Will you tell me where Charlotte Smithson is?" asked Crow.

"I don't know," Virginia's voice held no intonation whatsoever. "I've told you I don't know. It's the truth."

"You lie! Why are you so foolish?" Crow laughed shortly and a little wildly. "Why dare you defy me? I've pitted myself against Calcott and Gatterman and Gatterman's building, and I've won! Do you think I'll allow a slip of a girl to stand in my way now? Do you think you can safely deny my wishes? You fool! You don't know what you're doing! I give you one last chance before you are tied to that lift. After that perhaps some suffering will open your lips. But rest assured, whatever may pass, resistance is futile. Now! Your answer."

Virginia shook her head. Her eyes were dulled. Her body drooped.

Matthew Crow shrugged his shoulders. "So be it. You have brought this thing on yourself."

A voice came out of the darkness behind him. It was a steady, even voice, cool, and there was a sharp metallic ring of command in it:

"Drop that gun, Crow!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

Calcott's Vengeance

VIRGINIA heard the voice, and it was as though a bugle rang in silent hill country and awakened her from the sleep of despair.

She saw the pistol slip from Matthew Crow's hand. She heard the clang of it as it struck the concrete. She heard Mornington cry aloud.

And she heard her own voice, as though it were the voice of somebody else. "Tony! Oh, Tony!"

Now she could see him. He had stepped into the little circle of light, behind Matthew Crow. He was hatless, and his clothes were dusty. In his hand was the gun which he had taken from Maurice Gatterman.

"Mornington," he said, "jump down to the floor. Take your hand off that power switch or I'll kill you. I mean that. Down you get!"

Mornington flopped to the floor, dropped to his hands and knees and recovered himself.

"Virginia, and you, Trench, come out here. Matthew, you and Mornington are going into that lift well. Move!" He barked the last word, and Mornington jumped grotesquely.

Matthew turned round. "Suppose I refuse?" His eyes fixed and held Tony's.

"I shall shoot you, and I shan't shoot to kill, Crow. But I'll put you out of action. I promise you that. Mornington! Are you in that well yet?"

Mornington hurriedly dropped into the lift well, and Sam Trench helped Virginia out.

Tony drove Matthew before him, and when both the brothers were in the well he pulled the lattice work gates across.

"You'll stand at the back of the well," he instructed. "If either of you

come forward to touch these gates you'll be shot as you move. Virginia, bring that lamp and set it down just here, by the gates, so that I can see them closely. Trench, I want you to do something."

"Yes, sir." Sam Trench spoke with some briskness. Years seemed to have dropped from him during the past few seconds. "Anything you like, sir."

"Go down through the pit to the cellar, and climb into the shop. You can get out of the shop to the street. There are some plainclothes men watching the place, but if you don't recognize them as such, or they don't accost you, go to the nearest telephone booth and ring Detective Inspector Richardson of Scotland Yard and tell him who you are and where I am and what I'm doing. Leave the rest to him."

"Yes, sir." Sam Trench went off.

Mornington suddenly yelled: "Trench! Trench! Come back! I'll give you fifty thousand pounds to help us to get away. A hundred thousand pounds! I'll give—"

"Shut up," said Tony. "You haven't got it, and, anyhow, you wouldn't give, and you're not worth it. Crow"—to Matthew—"you're a bad searcher. I've been in the garage all the time."

He put out his hand, and, holding Virginia's fingers, drew her close to his side.

"I heard Miss Telford shout, and was just going to climb through the pit when you started to break away the boards. I hid underneath the Rolls Royce, hooking my legs above the back axle and clinging to the underparts of the chassis. You didn't think of going on your hands and knees when you swept your light under the car, did you?"

"I knew there was somebody in the place!" bleated Mornington. "Oh, my God! My God! This is the end."

"You bet," said Tony grimly. "The very end—for you two devils." His fingers tightened over Virginia's shoulder. "Are you all right, old girl?"

"Now you're here," she whispered. "Tony, it's wonderful. I want to laugh and to cry."

"Just laugh," said Tony.

All this time Matthew Crow had stood back against the further wall of the lift well, his shifting eyes restlessly roving over Tony and Virginia, the steel of the gates, the solidity of the walls. The Gatterman Building had got him at last, secure right down under its very feet. Perhaps Crow understood this, although nobody ever really knew all that Matthew Crow thought.

He spoke quietly: "You are an ingenious young man, Stevens, and I realize an error of omission when I see you standing alive before me at this minute. I suppose no consideration whatsoever would influence you in regard to awaiting the arrival of police?"

Tony answered him just as quietly: "I'd give every penny I've got, and every penny I hope to earn to see you on the gallows, Crow. That's your proper place. There were days—just passed—when I wanted vengeance on you for what you have done to this girl here; but those desires are gone. A bigger thing than myself, or any man, must deal with you. You want justice—no more, and no less. You don't want to stand up before an individual with a gun, who shoots you down and wipes you out. You want to come face to face with the inexorable law of reaping and sowing, and learn—Crow—just learn—"

Matthew Crow's face twisted slightly. Something passed across his eyes, and was gone. The rage which had possessed him when he spoke of the Gatterman Building once again flamed within him.

"All right, Stevens—with your justice and your law. Have a go at the Gatterman Building. Wrench from it the secret Michael Calcott intrusted to it. Do that—and get your hussy her riches, if you can."

So violent was his wrath that Virginia shrank closer to Tony.

Tony smiled. "That's a point which needs some explanation, Crow. In fact, I consider it due to Michael Calcott's memory to enlighten you on the point." He paused a moment. "It's not my job to taunt a man who's licked; but, clever as you are, you underrated Michael Calcott grievously."

Mornington's fears were momentarily forgotten. With Matthew, he was listening intently.

"What's that?" asked Matthew, in a strangled voice. "Calcott, cleverer than I thought! You're mad, Stevens!"

"Not I!" said Tony cheerfully; and then became grave. "Calcott perpetrated a hideous jest. He perpetrated it at your expense primarily, and it has cost men their lives. Dying, he snapped a finger and thumb in your face, Crow, and he set your feet on a path which has led you to your damnation. If any one man were more responsible than another for the fact that you stand where you now stand, awaiting arrest for willful murder, that man is Michael Calcott, your victim, the man you slew months ago, the man who, if my imagination isn't too vivid, must even now be watching you from somewhere in these shadows and passing on the jest."

Mornington groaned, but from the tight bloodless lips of Matthew Crow came no sound whatsoever. He stood very still, watching Tony.

"Crow, your brothers hunted down Calcott. They lay in wait for him when he was released from prison, and under God's sunshine they drove him like a wild thing till they caught him. They tortured him to make him tell them where they could find Virginia Telford Verrall and all the papers relative to her birth. Calcott, suffering hell, knowing that at the last, he could hope for nothing more than death, helpless, without an ally, must—I think—have sought for such.

"Perhaps I am too fanciful, and yet in what he did I see a fancifulness, a jeer. I imagine that he remembered all he had heard in prison of the great Gatterman Building. Perhaps he saw it as a friend, a silent giant who would stand on his side after he was gone. I don't know. Perhaps his imagination did not run to that, although when men are suffering and dying their brains take strange and wonderful fancies.

"Anyhow, he gave those devils of brothers of yours a hint that they might find what they wanted under the feet of the Gatterman Building. He told them enough to be sure that when they left his battered body on the moor they would be embarking on a campaign against the monstrous ally he had left behind him."

Tony leaned forward. "And it was all a lie, Crow—all untrue. The documents in question have never been near the Gatterman Building since the first bolt was driven through the first girder."

Matthew Crow exclaimed aloud. Before Virginia's eyes he seemed to shrink, to become very, very old in a few seconds. He leaned against the wall, slipped down slightly. His lips were trembling. His eyes were blank and clouded.

"They were," went on Tony remorselessly, "exactly where one might expect to find them, in the keeping of the woman who had had charge of Virginia Telford Verrall ever since she was a child. I theorized along that line and strove to find the woman. Her name is Charlotte Smithson. I have found her and I have seen her. I may say that when Miss Telford—or Miss Verrall, if you like—told you just now she didn't know where Charlotte Smithson was, she told nothing but the truth. Charlotte Smithson disappeared on the day the murder of Michael Calcott was announced in the newspapers."

"Why, Tony?" It was Virginia who asked the question.

"She knew the whole history from

start to finish. She knew Calcott's fear of the Three Crows. She knew they had murdered Calcott, and she feared for herself." Tony laughed. "A most discreet business woman, Charlotte Smithson. I saw her about the papers, and she intimated, most guardedly, that she had been to a great deal of trouble and expense in connection with the whole affair and would like to understand that she would be amply recompensed before she told anything. It cost a bit, but it was worth it. What's that?"

There was a noise from the direction of the pit. Tony, alert and tense, swung around, and then sighed with relief. The immensity of Detective Inspector Richardson was clambering to the floor of the garage and after him came several men in plain clothes.

Mornington Crow screamed when they dragged him away, and fought ludicrously and ineffectively; but Matthew Crow went with the officers without a word or a struggle, bent and old, his eyes no longer brilliant, but dazed and staring.

Virginia stood on the battlements some old Roman general had raised, and looked across the age-old Downs. Behind her, tree-crowned and immense, was Chanctonbury. Westward was the mill of Salvington and Highdown in the distance. Below, was the pleasant stretch of the Down-guarded southland, stretching toward the sea.

"So," she said, "I kept my promise, and I had steak and onions and a bottle of stout. Sam Trench told me that young women always drank stout, and that it was very good for you. So I drank it. I tried to thank Sam for standing by me so heroically in that awful cellar, but I left my thanks until rather late in the evening, and Sam had drunk what seemed to me a terrific amount of ale. He waved the thanks aside and said in his best manner: 'Don't mention it as between friends. All my family's the same. My brother married a twice-times widow with seven kids.'"

"What was that about a pub?" asked Tony.

"Oh!. It was rather difficult to mention it, but I said that I was sure he would wish to start in business, or something, and that I was quite willing to loan him some money. He hesitated a great deal at first, and then confessed that he had his eyes on what he called 'a nice little 'ouse down Westerham way, in Kent.' So he's going into it, and he solemnly assured me that if you and I are ever motoring down that way, out of hours, we can always be certain of getting one—whatever that may all mean."

Tony laughed, and Virginia laughed with him. There was tremendous happiness in her laugh, and she stretched herself to full height and drank in the soft wind.

"Of course," said Tony, "you'll be doing a good bit of motoring now you've got all that cash."

"Will I?" asked Virginia. "I've decided not to buy a car, after all."

"But why?"

She smiled at him, her eyes kind and soft. "Haven't you got one?"

And, while he stared, she added a little unsteadily: "You made love to me once, and you used to joke about marrying me, and I used to laugh at you. I hope I shall always laugh at you, Tony, because you're such a dear, but I know I shouldn't ever laugh again about your marrying me." She swayed toward him. "You see—"

He kissed her and held her close, exultantly, lovingly, eagerly. He held her at arms' length and looked at her.

"Blessed," he said, "is the man who keepeth only one chariot at his gate, for he shall save many taxes. That's another ancient Persian proverb that isn't Persian at all. Come and be kissed again."

Virginia obeyed.

THE END

Standing unsteadily in the middle of the room, Henry Slater stared at her in befuddled fashion

Tanglefoot

The Fact That the Solution Seemed Simple Only Served to Make the Case More Puzzling

By Maxwell Smith

THE maid, descending that morning, paused at the door of the dining room, troubled with the realization that something out of the ordinary had met her eye. Puzzled and vaguely alarmed, she looked through the door of the music room, which lay between dining room and living room.

Then she got it. A floor lamp was burning in the music room.

Tiptoeing nervously into the dining room she sought a fuller view of the adjoining apartments.

She gasped, stood, stared, as the legs of a man came into sight on the music room floor; a man apparently stretched face downward. His face lay in a puddle of blood, one eye visible, staring starkly. The back of his head, his neck, was a gory mess.

Chief of Police Rowan rose reluctantly in his bed and reached a sleepy arm for the burring telephone. The voice of his night constable came over the wire:

"John Marshall's dead. He's been murdered," the constable imparted all

in one breath. "His head is chopped off. He's been murdered."

The chief checked a yawn. "Murdered?" he said vacantly. "You're sure of that?"

"I'm sure," said the constable. "His maid is here. She seen him."

"Murdered," said the chief. "Uh-huh! Where's he murdered?"

"In his house."

"In his house, eh?" said the chief. "Who done it?"

"I don't know."

"Lemme talk to the maid."

He frowned upon learning from the maid that there was no information other than the bald fact.

"His wife, you say, is out of town?"

"Yes; on a visit to Philadelphia."

"How long since?"

"She went away two days ago," said the maid. "They had—they had an argument before she went."

"An argument?" said the chief. "What about?"

The maid hesitated.

"I don't know. I mean maybe I better not talk over the phone. You'll come out, won't you?"

"Right away. And, say—don't let anybody in the house till I get there. Don't let anybody run around, stepping on things. I'm coming right away."

He took time, however, to phone the county prosecutor.

"There's a murder here, Ned," he said. "You better give us a hand. John Marshall's got himself killed in his house and that's all anybody seems to know. Will you be over yourself or send somebody?"

"I've got to be in court this morning," said the prosecutor. "I'll send Cranston."

Chief Rowan arrived shortly at the Marshall home. The maid found him at the door explaining to a growing group of sketchily clad neighbors why they could not be allowed in to enjoy the morbid thrill of tragedy. She opened the door, then froze to immobility.

From the direction of the music room came a rustling sound—the sound of some one moving.

The maid stared through the living room.

Standing unsteadily in the middle of the room, Henry Slater stared back at her in befuddled fashion.

Chief Rowan frowned as he stepped inside and saw the man.

"I told you, didn't I," he rebuked the maid, "not to leave anybody in? What's he doing here?"

"I didn't," she said quickly, still staring at Slater. "He was here. I just this moment saw him."

Slater grinned affably; spread his feet for better balance. His eyes were heavy, his hair tousled. His clothes were rumpled from sleeping in them.

"'Lo, chief," he said thickly. "Come to join the party, huh? Perfly welcome, chief, perfly welcome. Siddown anave a drink."

The chief eyed him dubiously; looked an inquiry at the girl.

Slater made an expansive gesture.

"'Lo, everybody," he said. "Come on in anave a drink. Perfly welcome, everybody, perfly welcome."

He glanced perplexedly from the girl to Slater and back again, he scratched his head and wished to Heaven that County Detective Cranston would hurry up.

"Slater," he said to the maid as one stating a great discovery, "is drunk."

"Perfly welcome," said Slater, teetering, "perfly welcome."

The maid said nothing but watched him.

"Where," asked Rowan, "has he been all night?"

"Here, I suppose," she answered. "I don't know, but I suppose he has."

"You didn't tell me about him over the phone," objected Rowan.

"I didn't know he was here," she explained. "I didn't know anybody was here until just now. Why don't you ask him where he's been? Why don't you ask him what happened?"

Slater was edging toward a chair with careful sidewise steps. He sat down heavily—on a chair, the maid noted, which kept his back turned to the music room.

"He's drunk," said Rowan indecisively.

Slater became petulant.

"Where's John Marshall? Where's he gone? I want John t'ave a drink."

"Mr. Slater," said the girl clearly, "where is Mr. Marshall?"

"Eh?" He puckered his eyes to look at her. "What's that?"

"He's drunk," said the chief.

The maid smiled faintly; a hard little smile, wise. "Pretty drunk," she said softly; "it looks that way, doesn't it?"

Slater's head drooped sleepily. He settled farther into the chair.

"We'll let him rest a spell," said the chief, "till Cranston gets here, anyhow. There was something you were going to tell me about an argument Marshall and his wife had. What was that?"

"The argument," the maid said, "was about Slater. Marshall told his wife he was onto them and was going to get a divorce. Now go ask Slater what he's got to say about that."

Chief Rowan fed himself a bite of tobacco and pursed his lips over it, his manner doubtful. The Marshalls and Slater were old friends, had grown up together. He had heard no hint of gossip linking their names, no suggestion of scandal.

"You're sure of that?"

"I'm sure," said the maid positively. "I heard the argument."

The chief nodded seriously and got his tobacco working. He began to see things—including himself making a quick clean-up of the murder without the aid of county detective or district attorney.

"This was before she went away a couple of days ago?"

"Right before he drove her to the station."

"How much did you hear?"

"I wouldn't talk so loud," said the maid, glancing toward the living room. "There's no use telling him all you know, is there?"

"He's drunk."

She smiled, that hard little smile, wise: "Maybe."

"Well," he said, more softly, "what did you hear?"

"Not much," she admitted, "but it was plain enough. Just what I told you. Mr. Marshall said he knew she had been out with Slater—in New York, I guess—and he wasn't going to stand for it. He said he was going to get a divorce."

"And what did she say?"

"She told him to go to hell. Then they heard me—I'd come back from an errand he sent me on—and went out to the car and drove away."

"She's in Philadelphia, did you say?"

"Visiting her cousin. That's what Mr. Marshall told somebody on the phone, anyhow. He said she'd be gone a week or longer."

The chief ruminated, nodded in self-communion. Perhaps, now, he could show that he was pretty good with murders himself.

"You hear any trouble last night?"

"No."

"Um!" He cocked his head and chewed.

"He's not so drunk," opined the maid.

"Huh?" Rowan regarded her more heedfully. "How do you make that out?"

"His eyes," said the girl. "He was watching us all he could without seeming to—and listening. His eyes aren't drunk; they're only tired. You don't believe he slept, do you, with the man he killed lying in the next room?"

Chief Rowan scratched his head grinned.

"You've got him hanged already, haven't you? He'd be kind of a fool, wouldn't he, to sit around and wait if he killed Marshall?"

The maid shrugged. The chief turned toward the music room. "I want to look at him," he said.

II

THERE was no disorder, no evidence of even the briefest fight for life. Nothing—save that the left lapel of Marshall's coat was pulled back over the shoulder as if the murderer had gripped him there to hold him steady for the blow.

Bending over to look at the murder weapon, a blood-crusted butcher's cleaver lying on a chair, Rowan clucked with satisfaction.

The cleaver was new. On the clean, white wood of the handle were marks —reddish marks—finger-prints.

Chief Rowan smiled. There wasn't so much to a murder case, after all. Just the business of being wide awake enough to pick up clews. He had it all sewed up. The affair between Mrs. Marshall and Slater. Finger-prints of the murderer.

The maid read his smile as he returned to her side.

"You've found something?"

"I've got him hooked," said the chief confidently. "Hey, Slater, wake up. I want to talk with you."

Slater looked up at him drowsily.

"Perfly welcome," said Slater, "perfly welcome—" and dropped his head again.

"Here!"

Taking him by the wrists the chief pulled them out to examine his hands.

He grunted disappointment upon upon finding them clean.

Slater mumbled protest.

The maid recalled something she had noticed in the kitchen, something which had not at the time fully registered.

"Somebody," she said, "washed his hands in the kitchen—bloody hands. There's a towel out there with blood on it."

"Fetch it."

She ran and got it, a dish towel which had been left on the sink.

At one end of it were ruddy stains as if the user had started to wipe his hands without washing. The rest of the towel showed that he had dried them after cleansing them of blood.

"Wassamatter?" asked Slater, looking around. "Where's John Marshall?"

"You know," said the chief grimly. "Let's see your arms."

He pulled them out to examine the sleeves.

Slater resisted feebly.

"Wassamatter?" he protested. "What you hauling me round for? Leggo."

Finding no stains on the sleeves, the chief straightened him up to inspect the rest of his clothing.

"Perfly welcome," began Slater—then he frowned and shook his head.

Following the chief's example, he looked himself over curiously. The performance seemed to amuse him. He smiled vacuously up into the policeman's face.

"Wha's the idea?" he asked more coherently. "Wha's the game? Lemme in on it, huh?"

The chief pointed a stern finger at him.

"The game is murder, Slater. Come on now, snap into it."

Slater blinked, his brows gathering with apparent effort to collect his thoughts.

"You hear me, Slater?"

"Murder?" he said, shaking his head. "What d'you mean, murder? Who's murdered?"

"You killed Marshall," said the chief vigorously. "You chopped his head in. Come on, Slater, you might as well tell us all about it now. We've got you dead to rights. What did you do it for?"

The accusation seemed to soak into Slater's mind. He opened his eyes wide, opened his mouth, aghast. Repeated still more emphatically, it had a sobering effect. He gripped the arms of his chair and held himself erect.

"I what?"

"You killed Marshall."

"I killed him!" Slater wet his lips, his eyes rolling. "Good God, no! You don't mean that!"

"His body's in the next room. Want to see it?"

"God, no!"

He sank back, hands over his face, breathing hard.

The chief chewed contentedly. He nodded significantly at the maid, silently inviting her to observe that Slater made no attempt at denial.

He applied another touch of what seemed to be an effective third degree.

"Don't remember much about it, eh, Slater? That's what you're going to claim, is it? Well, I'll help your memory. You caved his head in with a meat cleaver. Remember now, don't you?"

"God!" shuddered Slater. "A meat cleaver!"

"That's what," said the chief. "Want a look at it—all over with Marshall's blood?"

"Don't," Slater pleaded, "don't! For God's sake, don't."

He got to his feet and stood shaking, hands working, eyes bulging, face grotesque with horror.

"Don't start anything," warned Rowan, making ready to grab him.

Slater shook his head, looked fearfully at his hands.

"You washed 'em," said Rowan, "but that don't matter. You left your finger-prints plain enough on the cleaver and"—he stretched his imagination—"on the towel you used when you washed up. What did you do it for, Slater? Over the woman, wasn't it?"

Slater didn't answer; nor did he deny. "Let me think," he said hoarsely. "I want to remember—something. Let me think."

The chief pressed for a direct admission.

"You done it, didn't you? You killed him?"

Slater gave him a long, hopeless stare.

"I suppose so. I remember we had—Yes, I suppose so."

The chief pounced on the unfinished sentence.

"You had what? A row, wasn't it, over his wife? That's what you were going to say."

Slater paid no heed.

"Let me think," he said dazedly.

The chief was an easy-going soul far from hard-boiled. He was naturally disposed to be considerate. He even felt sorry for Slater, laying the actual crime to liquor. Anger and rum made a bad combination.

"Take your time," he said. "You must have been crazy drunk to do a thing like this."

Slater nodded, holding his head.

"If I could only remember— Yes, I must have been crazy drunk."

The maid sniffed skeptically.

"Not so drunk," she said, "and maybe not so crazy."

He glanced at her with a wan smile—and she did not miss the wicked glitter in his eye.

III

CHIEF ROWAN gave him five minutes to think things over and then went on with the examination. He wanted to get the whole story and have the case complete before the coming of the county detective or the coroner. He wanted to show that he could handle things in his own town, even murder, without outside assistance.

"How did you happen to visit Marshall last night?" he began.

Slater leaned back, facing him resignedly.

"He asked me to come. He phoned me about nine o'clock."

Slater's glance roved over the drawn window shades, the lights burning in the room, then to the sunshine in the hall.

"What time is it?"

"Seven thirty."

"Seven thirty," said Slater tonelessly. "I must have been here all night. The last I remember—" He shook his head.

"We'll come to that," said the chief. "What did you think he wanted you for when he asked you over?"

"Why, nothing. I often visited here."

"You didn't think he wanted to talk about his wife, did you?"

Slater's flat expression didn't change.

"Why should he have wanted to talk about her?"

"You knew they had a row before she went—a row over you?"

"No," said Slater, "I didn't."

"You knew he was going to get a divorce with you as corespondent."

"I didn't; no."

"Didn't she tell you?"

"No. I haven't seen Mrs. Marshall for several days."

"All right. You came over last night at what time?"

The maid chipped in: "It was nine thirty. I opened the door for him."

"And," said the chief, "you had a row with Marshall. How did that come about?"

"Not right away," said Slater. "We had a drink like we always did—a number of drinks. I don't remember much."

"Let's have what you do remember," said the chief. "You had some drinks—and then?"

"We talked."

"About what?"

"We talked about his business—selling bonds to the farmers, you know. And we drank quite a bit. John," he said, "seemed to want to drink."

"I never heard of him as a drinking man," said the chief. "Didn't you think it queer he was drinking so much? Didn't it strike you he might be priming himself to go after you about his wife?"

Slater gave his first sign of resentment; a quick frown.

"There wasn't anything between his wife and me. We've been friends since childhood the same as he and I have been."

"He thought there was something."

"He brought up the subject," said Slater evenly, "but I convinced him that he was wrong, foolish. Last I remember, that was all over and done with. He admitted that his suspicion was foolish and apologized. We had another drink on it."

The maid spoke: "I saw you kiss Mrs. Marshall one night when you were leaving."

Slater smiled at her—with that wicked gleam in his eye.

"Possibly," he conceded. "I've done that a number of times in fun—kissed her good night."

"The one I saw," said the maid, "wasn't just fun."

The chief grunted.

"If there wasn't anything to it what did you go and kill Marshall for?"

"God knows," said Slater fervently. "I wish I did." He brushed a hand over his eyes. "If I could only remember—"

"It 'll come to you," said Rowan, "if it amounts to anything. What did Marshall say to you about his wife?"

"Some one had been telling him tales," said Slater, glancing at the maid. "He wanted to know if Inez—Mrs. Marshall met me in New York last week. He wanted to know if she was out riding with me last Tuesday."

"Well," queried the chief, "had she been?"

"Of course not."

"All right. What else did Marshall say?"

"That was all. We talked it over, naturally, and—that was all. He apologized and we had a few more drinks. Too many," he said dismally, "for I apparently got drunk. But the last I remember we were sitting across the room there, in that corner, as good friends as ever. That, I'd judge, was about midnight."

"You mean you passed out then?"

"Apparently."

"Don't you remember going after the cleaver? You must've got that out of the kitchen."

"Not a thing," groaned Slater, "not a thing."

"I guess," said the chief, "it won't hurt you any if you stick to that story. See who that is at the door, girl."

IV

COUNTY DETECTIVE CRANSTON nodded generous approval while listening to Chief Rowan's solution of the murder. The chief was noticeably pleased with himself.

But Cranston wasn't satisfied. Even before he exchanged a word with Slater he had a feeling that everything was not yet on the record; not by a long shot.

Out of his long experience, the case struck him as much too superficially simple; suspiciously simple.

It was possible, of course, that Slater had been so intoxicated when he killed Marshal that he had not the wit to go away from there and try to cover himself. Possible—but somehow it did not seem plausible.

And, to Cranston's way of thinking, Slater was too ready with confession, too complete in his surrender.

If, as Slater claimed, there had been no real falling out between him and Marshal, why didn't he at least make some show of fighting the charge that he had murdered his lifelong friend?

Granting that he committed the murder while mentally incapable and therefore had no recollection of it, the natural attitude for him to take was to protest it as unbelievable until the evidence conclusively proved otherwise. Yet here he was, admitting the murder of which he claimed he had no memory when there remained the possibility that a third person had done it.

True, the chief had told him that his finger-prints were on the murder weapon. But he, a man of intelligence, should have noticed that his own finger-prints had not been taken. How, then, could it be known that the finger-prints on the cleaver were his when no comparison had been made?

It looked queer to Cranston, phony somewhere, and he went about his investigation in this frame of mind.

Without talking at all with Slater, he started nosing around while the coroner was examining the body.

The county detective returned presently and motioned the chief to join him out of Slater's hearing.

"I understood you to say," said Cranston, "that he got the cleaver from the kitchen."

"That's right," said the chief.

"Did he say so positively?"

"Well, no, he didn't. Like I told you, he claims he don't remember anything about it."

"I just wanted to be clear," said Cranston. "You didn't look out in the kitchen, did you? You didn't look to see where he got the cleaver from?"

"I didn't," said the chief. "I was busy getting his confession, you understand, and thought it could all be checked up easily enough. Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing," smiled Cranston, "except that there seems to be a snarl in the case already. The only cleaver belonging in the house is still hanging on its usual hook in the pantry. How are you going to make that match up?"

The chief scratched his chin and chewed. He couldn't see how this could make any difference one way or the other.

"There might 've been two," he said.

"The cook says not; so does the maid."

"Well," said the chief, "what's it matter, anyhow? Slater admits the killing. That's all there is to the whole thing; that's all that counts for anything."

"You mean he brought the cleaver with him?"

"Why—uh—maybe, maybe not. It don't matter so far as I can see. A cleaver's a cleaver any way you look at it. That's what the killing was done with and he admits the killing."

"You might have to prove he ever saw this particular cleaver," Cranston pointed out, "and show where he got it; place it definitely in his posession, I mean. You can't say he got it in the kitchen if he didn't."

"What's it matter?" persisted the chief. "He don't deny—"

"Not now, he doesn't, but wait till a lawyer takes hold of him. You'll hear another song then, I bet. And you'll hear plenty about the two cleavers if they're not all straightened out when he goes on trial. If you were to ask me, I'd say that this is part of the trick."

"What trick?"

"That," said Cranston, "is what we've got to find out. Has any word been sent to Marshall's wife?"

Shaking his head, the chief took opportunity to begin shedding responsibility. He wasn't so keen about claiming the case as his own; not when Cranston saw tricks in it.

"I told the district attorney I'd leave everything lay for you and here it is. I thought you might not want Marshall's wife here too soon, considering how things look. She's only in Philadelphia, you know, and can get here in a couple hours. You want her notified to come?"

"We won't bother," said Cranston. "Let her relatives send word. Doc seems to be through. Let's see what he's got to say."

The coroner found that Marshall had been dead about eight hours which placed his death at some time between midnight and two o'clock.

"He was struck three times," said the doctor. "One blow, delivered with the blunt side of the cleaver, with the back, that is, caused a fracture ranging from the base of the brain up over the right ear. That was not necessarily a fatal blow. Either of the others, struck with the cutting edge of the weapon at the base of the skull, must have been almost instantly fatal. The spinal column is severed at the junction to the skull."

"Figuring that the blow with the blunt side of the cleaver was given first," said Cranston, "it would have knocked him out, wouldn't it?"

"Undoubtedly," said the doctor.

"Would you say the other blows were struck while the body was falling?"

"Not in my opinion. They haven't the appearance of haphazard strokes, but lie closely side by side; they're almost one, in fact."

"Indicating," said Cranston, "that the killer knew what he was doing and intended to make a thorough job of it."

"It seems so," said the doctor.

V

CRANSTON restored Slater's memory with almost the first word he addressed to him.

"How do you feel?" he opened pleasantly. "Able to run over your story with me?"

Slater, who had been covertly watching the detective roam with seeming aimlessness about the room, nodded.

"I'm all right. I want to help all I can."

"That's the way," said Cranston. "Now tell me who was here last night besides yourself?"

Slater started to shake his head, but checked the motion while his face screwed up with thought.

"By God!"

He jumped up, his face kindling.

"You hear that, chief?" he cried. "Here's what I've been trying to remember. There was another man here. He came—it must have been around midnight; about the time I was passing out. I remember him now and —and—"

"Easy," said Cranston. "Easy; there's no rush. Who was he?"

"I don't know. Yes, I do. Wait—wait," said Slater feverishly, "give me time and I'll figure him out. It's funny how a word brings back something you've forgotten.."

"Isn't it?" agreed Cranston. "Take it easy, Slater. Sit down and take your time. What we want is the other man's name, where he comes from, and why he came here."

"West," said Slater, "something like that—West—something. Wait! Westham—Weston—that's it. Westham or Weston—yes. He came about midnight—about the time—"

"Where does this Westham or Weston belong?"

"Somewhere up-State! I can't remember the name of the town."

"He came from up-State—you're sure of that?"

"Sure. He's a farmer."

"A farmer," nodded Cranston. "That should help. And what did he come here at midnight for?"

"He came to make trouble," said Slater. "And that's why John Marshall wanted me here—I see it now. That's why he was drinking so much. He didn't want me to go."

"Because he expected trouble?"

"Yes. It all comes to me now. You know John Marshall's business, don't you? He sold bonds, mostly to the farmers. It was his own idea going after them and—"

"I know about him," said Cranston. "What did he and this other man talk about? Give us all you can remember."

"Westham was sore," said Slater. "He said John Marshall had sold him some bonds that weren't any good. He wanted his money back. John Marshall told him the bonds were all right and that he'd sell them in the market and get as much as Weston paid for them. Weston wouldn't listen to that. He wanted his money right away."

"And this Weston or Westham or West-something," said Cranston, holding Slater's eyes. "What's he like?"

The reply was slow, as if a genuine effort lay behind it.

"He was big—about the size of the chief. Round-faced with dark hair and— I'm sorry, but you know how I was. I couldn't see anything very well about that time."

"Round-faced, dark-haired, big," said Cranston. "That's not much to work on."

"No," said Slater regretfully, "I know it isn't, but for the life of me it's all I remember about the man."

Cranston was equally regretful.

"It's too bad," he said, "but we'll have to make the most of what we have. We have a name even if it is a kind of indefinite. It should lead us somewhere."

"I should think," suggested the coroner, "that Marshall's files would supply the full name. If he sold bonds to the man there must be some record of the sale."

"Yes," said Cranston, frowning at him to be still, "we can look it up there. Let's have your fingers now, Mr. Slater, and we'll check them up with the cleaver."

Slater grinned jerkily as he complied.

Cranston produced an ink pad and prepared paper.

Slater's hand trembled in his as he applied the finger tips to the ink.

"Steady," he smiled. "Nothing to be nervous over."

"No," said Slater, taking a long breath, "but it's not a pleasant experience."

"It could be worse," said Cranston, taking the impression of the right hand. "Easy—don't press too hard."

A sardonic smile flitted across Slater's lips as he watched the detective compare the prints under a magnifying glass.

Cranston spent barely a minute on them.

"Not a bit alike," he pronounced. "There's a dozen clear points of difference and hardly one of even resem-

blance. That let's him out, chief. We'll have to find another prisoner."

VI

JOHN MARSHALL had been dead two weeks and his murderer was still at large when Cranston asked Slater to meet him at the Marshall house.

"I've got a man I want you to look over," said Cranston.

Slater grinned into the telephone.

"You mean you've got Westham?"

"This one's name is Westcott," said Cranston. "He's the only big, round-faced, dark-haired farmer with West in his name that we can dig up. Be over at the Marshall place to-night and I'll bring him for you to look at."

"But why at the Marshall house?"

"Because sometimes it helps in making an identification if you see the party in the place."

Slater laughed when he told Inez Marshall about it.

"It would be a joke, wouldn't it," he said, "if I identified him."

Inez Marshall didn't laugh with him.

She hadn't laughed much in the past two weeks. Her full lips had taken on a sullen cast. Her dark eyes had exchanged their sparkle for an introspective moodiness, especially when they rested on Slater.

Something besides the death of her husband had affected her. She did not really mourn him, but she did have a decent feeling of regret over the violence of his death. Against her will it made her cold, morbid.

And this other thing which kept nagging at her consciousness—she could not make up her mind about it. About Slater. There was a change in him, an indefinable something which she could neither measure nor analyze satisfactorily. He seemed different, but she could not tell how.

She did not know whether to hate him or go on loving him.

"I can't see the joke," she said coldly.

"I was only fooling," said Slater.

Cranston came in a closed car with Chief Rowan and the promised suspect. But he did not bring the man into the house.

"The man I have with me," he said deliberately, "is a butcher."

Slater's lips tightened.

"Well?"

"Nothing. I thought you might like to think that over."

He turned to the woman.

"Mrs. Marshall, did Slater ever suggest getting rid of your husband?"

"What do you mean by the term get rid of?"

"Exactly that," said Cranston. "In plainer words, did Slater ever suggest murdering him?"

Slater laughed. "Of course, I did!"

She silenced him with a gesture.

"We did talk of getting rid of my husband, but not in that way. We spoke of my getting a divorce or of letting him get one. Why?"

"I wondered," said Cranston. "How much insurance did your husband carry?"

"Sixty thousand dollars."

"With double indemnity, I suppose, for violent death?"

"Yes."

"And you are the sole beneficiary?"

"I am; yes."

"Look here," said Slater, "I don't like your insinuations. What do you think you're getting at?"

Cranston smiled at him frozenly.

"I told you, didn't I, that the man I've brought to-night is a butcher?"

Slater jumped up.

"We'll have no more of this, Cranston. Bring in your man and if I can identify him I will. Then you'll get out and stay out."

"Sit down," said Cranston quietly, pushing him gently to a chair. "I want to tell you a story before I bring in the butcher. I want to tell you about the night John Marshall was killed. And I want to tell you, Mrs. Marshall, who killed him.

"Your idea was good, Slater," said Cranston, "clever. You killed John Marshall and sat there all night waiting to be found on the scene. You stirred around when you heard the servants moving—make out that you were just awakening from a drunken sleep.

"The idea was good. There you were and there you admitted that you had been accused by John Marshall of an affair with his wife. You claimed that you could not remember what had happened after you got drunk—that, since you were the only person present, you apparently had killed him.

"You admitted all that, knowing that, when your finger-prints were compared with those on the handle of the cleaver you would be cleared. Then your admission that you might have been guilty would act to your benefit. It would show that if you did not remember whether you had or had not committed the murder you could not be expected to remember anything about who did.

"You follow me, Mrs. Marshall?"

She nodded; and she, too, was very still, her eyes burning on Slater.

"You gave us the job of finding the man whose finger-prints are on the cleaver," continued Cranston, "and that man never had been near this house; he had not even ever been in this town. You gave us the job of finding a man whose finger-prints apparently would convict him of murder, but who probably did not even know that this murder had been committed. You sent us looking for a man who, if we should succeed in locating him, would have a perfect alibi although the most conclusive evidence said he was guilty. And with such conclusiveness against another man, notwithstanding that he could prove he was not guilty, there wasn't a chance in the world of ever convicting you. The reasonable doubt against your guilt would be too great.

"That's how you figured it, isn't it?"

Slater puffed his lips in a snarl.

"I hear you," he said. "Go ahead. It's a good story."

"The big trouble with your scheme, Slater," continued Cranston, "was that you admitted your guilt too readily—and that you didn't have the finger-prints in human blood. If you could have managed to do that, you'd have got away with it. We'd have had a man with an ironclad alibi but guilty, according to the more ironclad sort of evidence—and we'd never have been able to touch you.

"And then again, Slater, you thought we'd never be able to find the butcher you got to handle the cleaver you were going to kill John Marshall with. You had to try quite a few butchers, didn't you, before you got one to use the cleaver you claimed to be selling without wiping his hands.

"You thought there were so many butchers in New York that we'd never be able to find this man. But New York is an easy place to find a classified man like that in. It can be done within a couple of hours through a single police order. We did it, when finally we got the scheme, by ordering every patrolman visit every butcher shop on his beat.

"We got our man, Slater, and he's outside. The man you figured would save you, but who now is going to identify you. We're going to prove that cleaver was in your possession, that you brought it to this house and killed John Marshall with it. We're going to prove that no one else was here and that none but you could have killed John Marshall. The reasonable doubt is out.

"What do you say?"

Before Slater could speak, Inez Marshall's words lashed him:

"I know now what you meant when you said that I'd never come back to John when I went to Philadelphia. I thought you meant that you were coming to me, that we were going away together, but now I see. You murderer!"

The Invisible Web

A True Story

EDITOR'S NOTE.—*This is one of the series of true stories by Mr. Ashton-Wolfe about the men working under Dr. Edmond Locard, detective genius who is the head of the laboratories of the French Secret Police in Lyons. Mr. Ashton-Wolfe worked with Dr. Locard as one of his detectives and thus gathered the material for these amazing stories.*

No. 10—The Mystery of the Chinese Boxes

Tracing the Mystery of the Looted Chinese Shops, French Secret Police Discover the Murder Trail of a Super-Criminal

By H. Ashton-Wolfe

LAUGHTON and I were for once smoking a restful pipe of peace and trying to imagine a crimeless world, when the door was flung wide and a short, red-faced little man came bustling in, wheezing with the exertion of climbing our four steep stairs.

"Am I addressing the chief of the Criminal Investigation Office?" he gasped, wiping his forehead with a huge silk handkerchief.

Laughton grunted and pressed a bell.

"I don't know how you got here, monsieur; this room is strictly private. Did the gendarme let you pass?"

The little man waved his hands excitedly. "There was no gendarme. I am Gustave Carlin, the antiquarian of the Rue Chataigne; you have heard of me? I apologize for the intrusion, but the matter is urgent. My shop was broken into last night."

"You should have informed your local police station."

"I did—and they thought the occurrence so strange they sent me here—"

"Was anything stolen?"

"That's just it—nothing was stolen, but I have a unique collection of inlaid Chinese lacquer boxes, and every one of them has been smashed to pieces. One especially fine specimen, from the Peking Royal Palace, was in a safe. The safe has been opened, and although it also contained some coins and gems, they are all intact; only the box was taken out and torn apart."

Laughton glanced at me and shrugged his shoulders, then placing

his pipe in the rack on the wall, he motioned M. Carlin to a chair.

"Give me a few details, monsieur, and then I'll send one of my men with you to investigate."

Our pompous little visitor pulled a huge notebook from his pocket.

"This morning, when I tried to insert my key in the lock of the shop door—"

"You do not live on the premises, then?"

"No; I am a bachelor, and live in a flat. To continue—when I tried to insert my key, I found that the lock was broken and the door open. I switched on the light—the shutters were still up—and saw terrible confusion. Several fine vases had been smashed, cases pulled open, trays upset."

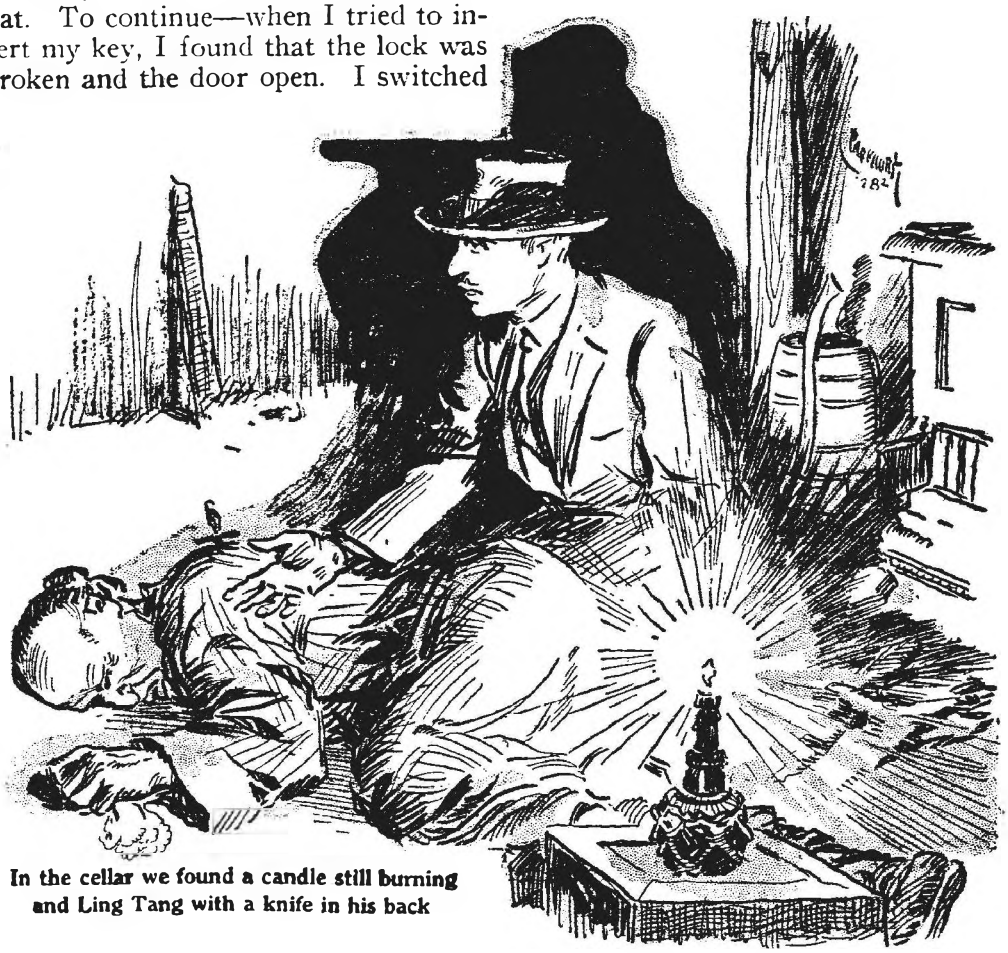
"Why did you not call the police at once, instead of taking stock?" Laughton asked harshly.

"How do you know—"

"You informed me a moment ago that nothing was missing. That means you counted your goods and probably destroyed valuable traces. It's always the same. If you will wait outside, monsieur, I will send one of my men back with you."

Rather crestfallen at my friend's harsh manner, M. Carlin withdrew, muttering apologies. Laughton at once pressed a bell and, while waiting for an answer, pulled out a sheaf of documents.

"This is the third case of the kind this week," he said to me. "You probably have not heard—but two well known curio dealers have had their premises ransacked yet nothing stolen.



In the cellar we found a candle still burning and Ling Tang with a knife in his back

Only in every case Chinese inlaid lacquer boxes have been smashed. Of course, it's obvious that something very valuable is believed to have been hidden in such a box. I imagine that it was sold by some one who at the time knew nothing of what it contained."

"But surely no one would sell a valuable box without looking inside?"

"A secret compartment, perhaps—perhaps— Hello, Voltaire, here's another case of an honest burglary. M. Carlin this time."

Voltaire had arrived in answer to the bell, but he did not smile at Laughton's flippant air.

"They are not all so honest, Laughton," he said. "The chief of the Fenestrelle district telephoned me an hour ago. I've just come from there. A firm which deals in all manner of Chinese goods was entered some time last night. This time a dead man was left behind—a Chinese. He was stabbed in the back."

Laughton jumped up excitedly.

"Murder—good Heavens! Has the man been identified?"

"Not yet. But the records are busy searching."

"Right—then we'll go together with M. Carlin, and afterward to this place. Come along," he added, turning to me, "we shall need you."

We were soon at M. Carlin's shop, which a policeman was guarding. As the owner had stated, everything was in wild disorder, and the floor littered with pieces of wood from broken boxes, and fragments of smashed vases. A rapid examination revealed the fact that the safe, an old-fashioned affair, had been cleverly opened with a key. In front of it we found a tiny scrap of yellow paper bearing several Chinese ideographs. M. Carlin was certain that it did not belong to him. It was the only thing we found.

The burglars had taken care to leave no marks of any kind. The shopkeeper admitted that lascars and Chinese seamen often came to his place with curios. Any of these might have obtained an impression of the locks of his safe and door, while he examined the goods they brought.

The scrap of paper was at once sent to the laboratory for translation, and after advising M. Carlin to move nothing until we had sent an expert, we drove to the house where the dead man had been found.

There, fortunately for us, nothing had been touched, for the manager had locked the room the moment he caught sight of the huddled body and had telephoned for the police.

The victim was an Oriental—probably a Chinese—and, dressed in blue overalls such as seamen wear. He was lying face downward in front of a large cupboard, which had been forced. The haft of a long dagger protruded from his back. The doctor, who was at once sent for, declared that the man had died instantly. Death had taken place some time during the preceding night. On the floor were several of the now familiar boxes, smashed and cut to pieces.

To our delight we found that several fragments bore clear fingermarks on their polished surface. These were immediately packed and sent to the laboratory.

A photograph of the murdered man was later recognized by a stevedore who informed us that he had been employed unloading rice from barges at the riverside warehouse of Messrs. Rolett. Unfortunately the manager could give us no information about the man, who had only been in his employ two weeks, but he believed that he had come from Marseilles.

We at once communicated with Inspector Daumains, and caught the next train to Marseilles. The knife which we had brought with us was identified by a detective as having belonged to a huge Chinaman known as Ling Tang, who owned a restaurant and hotel for Orientals near the Joliette docks.

"A dangerous man." Daumains in-

formed us. "My officer tells me that he has not been seen for several days. His wife is a Frenchwoman and she is looking after the business. The place is the rendezvous of all our worst criminals.

"We shall have to take a squad of men. Even our harbor police are afraid to go there. I feel convinced Ling Tang is lying low. We'll raid it to-night. I imagine that he is your man. We'd better wait until just before midnight."

Dressed in rough clothes and well armed, we gathered at the little harbor police station, where only trained fighters, prepared at any moment to battle for their lives, are stationed.

Daumains said: "The uniformed police will follow at a distance. I'll walk in front, you and Voltaire keep close behind; we must act suddenly."

The maze of tiny alleys and cobbled streets surrounding the docks was dark and mysterious. Swirling streams of water foamed and gurgled beside the narrow pavements, sweeping with them a part of the refuse constantly thrown from the windows. The air was heavy with the tang of unfamiliar foods and spices; from open doorways the reek of wine and rum came in waves, while rotting tropical fruit added an odor of sweet decay, intoxicating in its intensity.

Shrill voices babbled in the monosyllabic tongues of China, and now and then harsh guttural Arabic startled us with its fierce menace. On all sides were cafés or eating-houses. It was strange to see the women shuffle past in silken smock and trousers, while the men wore long flowing robes.

Suddenly Daumains stopped and lighted a cigarette—the prearranged signal—and we saw a large house with an illuminated Chinese sign running vertically down the center. It was Ling Tang's restaurant. Again Daumains struck a match and puffed at his cigarette. His men at once formed into groups, arguing and quarreling as though befuddled with wine, but alert and ready for instant action.

Abruptly, with a quick motion, Daumains pushed open the door and we rushed inside, shouting:

"Hands up and don't move—police!"

But Ling Tang's was not so easily raided. We had hardly completed the last word when every light went out and blows from cudgels, chairs and bottles rained down on us. Whistles shrilled, while hoarse voices cursed and yelled.

I felt a crushing impact which hurled me against a table, and for a moment the world was full of shooting stars. My only desire was to get away from the rushing, fighting, hurtling forms, which I heard but could not see.

Then a blinding magnesium flare suddenly froze the fighters into immobility, and at once the police were among them with snapping handcuffs.

It was like a nightmare, and my dazed senses only slowly recovered their balance. Daumains laughed when he saw me ruefully finger a bad scalp wound which was evidently the result of a blow from a bottle.

"I told you this was not Paris. We have his wife, but Ling Tang is nowhere to be seen."

It was a fruitless search—the Chinaman was not there. When his wife and the men we had arrested were questioned the next day, they were unanimous in declaring that Ling Tang had fled panic-stricken a week previously to Barcelona. She remembered that he had forgotten his knife in his hurried flight, and she could not conceive how it had got to Lyons.

Something her husband had said made her think that the enemy he feared was a Chinaman, but it might be the man who had been living in the hotel for a month and who had suddenly disappeared the day after Ling Tang's flight.

Her description of this man came as a shock. It was Valet, *alias* d'Artag-

nan—a bandit leader who had escaped from the police van after being arrested a week ago. An examination of his room made this certain, but, although every likely haunt was searched, no trace of him was found.

Ling Tang was arrested in Barcelona two days later, following upon our cable to the Spanish police. He was brought back to Marseilles, but his alibi was unshakable. He could not have been concerned in the murder in Lyons. The man was skillfully questioned, but we learned nothing that could help us, and were forced to release him.

After making arrangements for a close watch to be kept on Ling Tang, we returned to Lyons with Daumains, who had been ordered to coöperate with us. Laughton was pacing up and down the platform when the train arrived. His first words were startling.

"I believe Valet and his girl lieutenant, Chiffon, are behind this business," he exclaimed. "There seem to be several rival gangs at work. A big Oriental shipping house was entered last night. We are keeping the news out of the papers. Thermite was used on the safe. That's Valet's method. Money has been taken this time, but I don't think that was what they were after, for it was only a small sum. Something very valuable is being sought. Come along, we'll lay all the facts before the laboratory chief and Judge Duprez."

The magistrate compared our reports thoughtfully for a long time, then he looked at Laughton and asked:

"Whose were those finger-prints on the broken boxes?"

"We have none like them in the records, monsieur; they do not look like those of a European."

Judge Duprez turned to the laboratory chief. "Is there a difference then, doctor?"

"Oh, yes, there is a difference in shape between negro, Oriental and European fingers. I should say that these belonged to an Oriental."

"And the message on the slip of paper—has that been translated yet?"

"Yes—the language is Cantonese, but it was only the name and address of the curio dealer."

"Cantonese, you say. Then the burglars who broke into M. Carlin's shop were Chinese, and probably strangers to Lyons, since they carried his address with them. And the finger-prints found at the place where the Chinaman was killed are Oriental in shape and unknown. Thank you, doctor."

Then abruptly the magistrate turned again to Laughton and asked: "Come—you have a theory: What is it?"

Our colleague frowned thoughtfully for a moment, then he answered:

"A very valuable document has been hidden in a secret compartment of a box like those which have been smashed, I imagine, and was sold unwittingly. Ling Tang knows all about it and perhaps confided in Valet. Some countrymen of Ling Tang are also anxious to obtain the box.

"But Valet, who is a devil and afraid of nothing, is determined to kill any one who interferes with his plans, and he probably threatened Ling Tang, causing him to flee to Spain. I felt convinced that it was Valet who stole Ling Tang's knife and stabbed the Chinaman with it."

M. Duprez nodded assent.

"Yes," he said. "That is probably what happened. The important point is, did they get what they were after?"

"We shall soon know, for if they succeeded no further burglaries at curio dealers will take place. We must endeavor to find out if any have bought or sold a Chinese lacquer box lately. I do not think that they were after a document. I have just received a report from the authorities at Saigon which is at least a curious coincidence.

"A rich merchant was murdered there about six months ago. He was believed to have had in his possession the famous Sing Tao diamond which disappeared years ago from the Royal

Palace in Peking. The stone was not found among the dead merchant's effects and it has not been traced.

"Now Ling Tang came to Marseilles about that time and he complained to the harbor police that he had been robbed of all he possessed on the ship—which was the Jules Cambon—"

Daumains jumped up excitedly. "Of course, yes—I remember that."

"Well, there may be a connection between these various events. Try to discover what it was that was stolen from the Chinaman. I doubt, however, that Ling Tang will speak if he is the man who killed the merchant in Saigon. Let me have a detailed report when you know anything further."

When we returned to Laughton's office a gendarme ushered in M. Rolett, the head of the well-known firm of rice importers.

"I have just received this letter," he exclaimed, holding out a sheet of paper with shaking hand. "My life is threatened—what does it mean?"

Laughton took the letter and pointed to a chair, then when M. Rolett was seated, he read the note, which was short and deadly:

> You bought a Chinese box a month ago from a curio dealer for five hundred francs. That box belonged to my family and was stolen from me. Bring it to-night at twelve to your fourth warehouse on the Rhone. I shall pay you a thousand francs for it. If you don't I shall kill you. If you go to the police about it, you will also die suddenly. This is no joke.

"No signature and a sprawling, disguised hand," was Laughton's comment. "Did you buy such a box?"

"Yes, it is at my house, empty; very beautiful workmanship, but not worth more than I gave for it."

"Voltaire," said Laughton, without replying to the question, "go at once with M. Rolett and fetch the box. Take a car and a police driver."

When they had gone Laughton walked up and down excitedly. "We shall know the truth soon."

We were all waiting anxiously for the solution of the mystery when suddenly the telephone shrilled, and Laughton sprang to the receiver. We knew before he spoke, by the expression on his face as he listened to the tiny, far-away voice, that something terrible had happened. At last he replaced the instrument on its hook and turned to us with a helpless gesture.

"A heavy lorry collided with the car in which Voltaire and Rolett were returning with the box. Both were thrown into the road and stunned, the driver was killed. The box has disappeared and the lorry got away. It was Voltaire speaking. He has been badly cut about the face and head. He swears the man driving the lorry was a Chinaman. He is at the Delvoye hospital and will come here at once. Rolett is seriously injured. What a mess!"

Daumains suggested we hurry to the hospital, but Laughton restrained us.

"No—we might miss him and we cannot talk in public—we'll wait here."

An hour later, Voltaire, his face and head bandaged, hobbled in and sank into a chair. We were all terribly concerned at our comrade's narrow escape. His story merely confirmed what he had stated on the telephone.

They were returning to headquarters when their attention was attracted by a young man who was driving a powerful car almost abreast of their own, and who was making signals of some kind. Voltaire believed that he was endeavoring to warn them, but before they could act, a heavy lorry coming toward them suddenly swerved and smashed into their front wheels.

The shock was so terrific that Voltaire lost consciousness. When he recovered, a crowd surrounded the wreck, but box and lorry had disappeared. An ambulance at once rushed them to hospital, where it was seen that their chauffeur was dead and M. Rolett injured in the legs.

"Did you notice the driver who tried to warn you?" Daumains asked.

"Yes," Voltaire replied. "I believe it was that daredevil Chiffon, dressed as a man, with short-cut hair."

We all looked in astonishment at Voltaire.

"Chiffon," Laughton asked, "dressed as a man? Why should she try to warn you?"

"I feel sure that she has deserted Valet's gang."

Laughton turned to Daumains.

"What made you ask so eagerly?"

"Because while in hospital I received a letter from the girl in which she stated how sorry she was for what happened. There was some more to it, just girlish nonsense"—and Daumains blushed at our astonishment—"but she concluded by saying that while Valet was free she would watch him and try to prevent bloodshed."

Laughton stepped fiercely toward Daumains, his mouth twisted with rage.

"And while we've been hunting high and low for Chiffon, leader of a gang of burglars and worse, you kept this information to yourself, you—"

Voltaire heaved himself painfully out of his chair and placed both hands on Laughton's shoulders, twisting him round until they were face to face.

"Chiffon is trying to help us. Don't ask too much."

For a moment Laughton glared, then he burst into hearty laughter. At the welcome sound Daumains stepped forward.

"Honestly, now," he exclaimed, "the letter gave me no clew to her whereabouts. What could I do?"

At that moment a gendarme entered with a letter for Inspector Daumains. For a moment he hesitated, then, with a flushed face, he held it out to Laughton.

"It is from Chiffon, naturally, since we were discussing her. She says the Chinese box is safe in her possession. It rolled to the ground when the lorry crashed into the car. She got away before the man in the lorry could prevent it. It was a stranger, she adds, and not Valet, but Valet's men were close behind. I am to go to a house near the river to-night, when she will hand me the box and show me where Valet is hiding. Meanwhile she is following the lorry. You see, Laughton, the girl is now our ally, and a plucky one at that."

"Yes," Laughton conceded after reading the letter. "She is certainly trying to help us. No doubt, as Levallois thinks, she only wanted adventure when she became a member of Valet's band, and never bargained for murder. Still, I don't know what M. Duprez will say to all this. Our duty is to arrest her! Well, we'll go to this house to-night. Let us hope that it will mean the end of Valet."

Just before the appointed hour we crept silently up to the little dwelling indicated in the letter. It was just a cottage not far from the river, surrounded by trees and tangled undergrowth. Not a light was to be seen, and on the dingy windows were several notices advertising the place for rental. Police were stationed in the shrubbery and on the path, where we had noticed a closed car without lights. When we were certain that all possible means of escape were guarded, Daumains tried the door, but it was locked and bolted.

"Strange," he whispered. "The door was to be open. Perhaps we had better wait a little longer."

Suddenly we heard a loud crash inside the house, then a shrill, prolonged scream in a woman's voice, followed by a bellow of rage. Somewhere at the back of the cottage a pane of glass splintered, bodies crashed through the undergrowth, and as we rushed toward the sound a motor burst into life, and a chugging slopping sound, which rapidly diminished, made us realize that a motor launch was cutting through the water at full speed.

While detectives ran to the sloping bank flashing their lights in every direction, several cyclists rode off in haste

to warn the river police by telephone to stop and search all craft up and down stream. Daumains had meanwhile succeeded in gaining an entry through a window, and opened a door to us. The house was empty, but in the cellar we found a candle still burning on a wooden box, and in front of an iron stove in which a fire had been recently lit was Ling Tang, a knife in his back —dead.

There was no sign of the lacquer box, and when we turned the body over Daumains pointed with a groan to a piece of fine linen clutched in the Chinaman's hand. It was a woman's handkerchief.

"Chiffon must have been followed by Ling Tang," Laughton said gruffly. "She should have come to headquarters instead of running such a risk. Now, Voltaire, let us see if we cannot trace that devil Valet. He must have been in hiding and killed Ling Tang, afterward abducting the girl right under our noses."

Our work lasted till dawn, and this time it was not without result. The candle bore several finger-prints, which, thanks to the soft wax, were beautifully reproduced on the handle of the knife, and they belonged to Valet. In the stove were the remains of charred wood and fragments of ivory, and lying just above these were the ashes of a sheet of paper which had been burned, but which fortunately had not crumbled. The laboratory expert was able to remove it intact by using a special instrument and treating the fragile flake with a gelatine solution. It was then placed on glass and photographed, whereupon writing became faintly visible, white upon black. It was a message from Chiffon, and read:

DEAR M. DAUMAINS:

I am afraid d'Artagnan and another man have watched me all day. They may come before you and I may be killed, so I am writing this letter and intrusting it to my faithful friend, Jim Custer. D'Artagnan has his retreat a mile down the river in a houseboat. There was a big diamond in the box. I've hidden it in the mattress of the bed upstairs. I had—

Here the writing ended abruptly. No doubt Valet or the Chinaman had come upon the scene and burned the letter, or perhaps Chiffon had herself destroyed it to prevent Valet from knowing where the diamond was hidden. We were forced to conclude that the former had happened, for although we tore the mattress to shreds nothing was found. But we knew at least where the beast was hiding.

This time our plans were well laid. M. Duprez was determined to take no risks, and a cordon of more than two hundred police was drawn around the silent and apparently deserted houseboat. We knew that the man we sought was inside, for trackers dressed as laborers had examined the ground on both banks. The launch we had heard on the preceding night was moored to the houseboat, off the shore, and no footprints showed anywhere in the clay soil.

Spies had informed us that Valet was not alone, and it was decided that we should wait until dark in order to take them by surprise and carry the place with a preconcerted rush. Chiffon was probably held a prisoner by the bandit and would be in great danger. Therefore, Daumains and several men were to break into the place from the back with heavy axes while we attacked from the landing stage.

The hours were heavy with suspense while we lay hidden and watched, but at last a series of tiny flashes from both banks warned us that the moment for action had arrived. Like a swarm of ants the police converged upon the floating retreat from all sides. A whistle blew and with a rush we were at the doors. Armed police climbed to the roof, others tore open the shuttered windows, and, heralded by a storm of yells and pistol shots, we were inside.

Valet and several sinister ruffians,

automatic pistols in their hands, with reserve weapons dangling by straps from their wrists, met us in the narrow passage. At that critical moment the splintering crashes of Daumains's attack caused the bandit to waver for a second and gave us our opportunity. The hand-to-hand battle was fierce and short, but even in face of our overwhelming numbers, Valet, snarling and cursing, succeeded in pushing his men before him and pulled open a trapdoor in the floor. He was about to drop into the water when a tiny agile figure sprang at him from behind, yelling in English:

"Now, you hound, I've got you."

It was Jim Custer, the ex-jockey. Valet fought like a demon, and fired again and again into his opponent's body, until Custer staggered back, mortally wounded. But with a last effort the Englishman raised his own pistol just as Laughton sprang forward. There was a crashing machine gun rattle of five shots in quick succession—the jockey's weapon was a parabellum—and Valet dropped across the body of the plucky little fellow. Both were dead. The remainder of the men were already chained and helpless.

Laughton and I raced for the back of the boat from which Custer had appeared, anxious for the safety of Daumains and Chiffon. We need not have felt concerned about them. Just inside a tiny cabin, of which the partition had been smashed by an ax, we perceived our colleague. He was holding a slim handsome boy in his arms.

"Chiffon!" he cried joyfully.

Laughton shrugged his shoulders, but shook hands with Chiffon nevertheless—and so did we all.

M. Duprez allowed the brave girl to remain free, on the understanding that Inspector Daumains guaranteed her appearance at the trial.

The diamond—a wonderful blue stone weighing forty-five carats—was found on Valet. It was claimed by the family of the dead merchant in Saigon. From Chiffon and the captured men we learned that Ling Tang had indeed murdered the merchant and fled to Marseilles with the stolen jewel, to be robbed in his turn of all his possessions by several of his countrymen, who knew nothing of the gem hidden in a secret compartment of the usual lacquer box so much in favor in the East. They had sold this box, together with other stolen goods, in Lyons.

Ling Tang had traced the box to this town and confided in Valet, whom he was sheltering and whose help he needed. Valet, true to his treacherous nature, at once decided to kill the Chinaman and possess himself of the stone. Among his men were the coolies who had robbed Ling Tang and who thus learned too late of the treasure which had slipped through their fingers. Therefore three distinct groups worked feverishly with the same object in view. Valet had simply watched the Chinese and had killed the first one in the belief that he had found the jewel.

It was Ling Tang who had wrecked the car when he discovered that Valet was on the right track and that M. Rolett was bringing the stone to headquarters. Both had seen Chiffon drive away with the box and had followed her to the empty cottage, where she was waiting with Custer for Daumains.

Custer had burned the letter intrusted to him when Ling Tang and Valet arrived, while these two were fighting. He had then offered to help Valet, hoping to be allowed to remain near Chiffon and aid her to escape.

The men were all deported for life, but, in consideration of her youth and her plucky action in helping the police, Chiffon was acquitted. She refused to listen to Levallois, who pleaded ardently that she should return home. Instead, she married Daumains, who resigned from the police. They are now living in South America, and from the letters which Laughton receives from time to time, are quite happy.

When the pigeon got abreast of the guard tower its flight suddenly halted

Fine Feathers

It Was What Went Out of the Prison that Solved the Mystery of What Got In

By Joseph Fulling Fishman

"THERE isn't any doubt about it," old Dr. Cosgrove, the prison physician, said positively, "the stuff's coming in and it's coming in in considerable quantities. Martingale's the fourth one I've noticed in two days. He was loaded to the ears. I tried to quiz him a little, but he was so hopped up that he didn't know what I was talking about."

Deputy Warden Fletcher, more or less affectionately known as "Old Calamity" to the three thousand prisoners in the institution, gazed thoughtfully at the speaker. "I rather suspected the other day," he finally announced, "that some of it might be coming in. I had Axelman up on the carpet for something or other and I thought he acted rather silly. He's such a fool naturally, though, that it's pretty hard to tell whether he's full of 'hop' or not. He's a confirmed 'junkie' and, of course, he'll get hold of it if he can. Who were the other three you noticed?"

"Bleibtrey, Selig and Janssen," Dr. Cosgrove replied.

"Did you quiz 'em?"

The doctor shook his head negatively.

"All right, thank you, doctor," the deputy went on as the physician arose to leave. "I'll talk to 'em, although

I don't suppose it 'll do much good. There's no liar on earth to beat a 'cokie.'"

Old Calamity was right. The three prisoners virtuously and insistently denied that they had had a single shot of dope since they had been in the institution, although Selig betrayed by the nervous, jerky movements of his hands, and the spasmodic twitching of his eyelids all the evidence a trained observer would need to prove a recent narcotic debauch. The deputy ordered the three taken out, stripped and thoroughly "frisked," while he sent for Martingale, the prisoner whom the doctor had already questioned. One look at him showed Old Calamity that Martingale was still "hopped up plenty," as the convicts expressed it. He boastfully admitted that he had had several shots, which he would not have dared to do when he was in his right senses, but when the deputy, by skillful questioning, attempted to obtain the source of his supply, he was met by the usual story that a prisoner whom he didn't know, but who had been released in the past day or two, gave it to him in the yard.

In the midst of the questioning, Guard Elker, who had been frisking the other three prisoners, reported that he had found a quantity of morphine hidden under some adhesive tape strapped to Janssen's instep. Janssen was brought back. With a promptness which Old Calamity thought rather suspicious, he stated that his cellmate, Macauley, had given it to him. The deputy knew that he was up another blind alley. Janssen was merely trying to "frame" his cellmate, as they could not get along together and had been trying to get rid of each other. Old Calamity was too thoroughly skilled in the ways of convicts to pursue the inquiry any further along that line. With an instinct born of years of experience in matching wits with prisoners, of meeting intrigue with intrigue and guile with guile, he realized that a long, patient investigation would be necessary if the source of the narcotic supply was to be found and stopped. It was merely another of the dozens of investigations of every kind and description which he was called upon to make every year, and in his shrewd, patient, persistent manner he began, "laying his lines" which, with his perfect confidence in himself, he felt would not come in empty.

But in spite of his best efforts he seemed to make not the slightest progress. He felt reasonably certain that one of the fifty or sixty prisoners acting as "trusties," whose business took them outside the walls, was smuggling the narcotics in. Some of these men were "runners," who carried messages to various parts of the institution, including the barns, chicken farm, hog pens and other buildings on the institution's grounds, but outside the walls. Others were teamsters, who hauled supplies from the freight station in town and to and from the farm colony belonging to the institution, which was three miles out in the country. Still others operated the little hand cars which ran to the stone quarries at the end of the farm. And there were several more who went to and fro on unusual duties who were really stoolpigeons through whom Old Calamity kept his finger on the pulse of the huge institution and checkmated the hundreds of plots for his undoing constantly being hatched among the prisoners.

But although the deputy assigned Mr. von Klaus, the most thorough and painstaking guard in the institution, to supervise a simultaneous search of all these outside trusties, not a grain of morphine or cocaine was found. A similar frisk made three weeks later, after the excitement had had time to die down, brought similar unfruitful results. But in the meantime the "junk" was drifting in, steadily and persistently, and in ever-increasing quantities, and every prisoner and guard in the institution knew it. In-

evitably it began having its effect on the discipline. In the tailor shop two prisoners under its influence engaged in a vicious knife fight in which one of them was severely cut. In the stone shed a drug-crazed inmate suddenly hurled a hammer at Mr. Kraus, the foreman, missing him by the fraction of an inch. Another who had been a notorious dope peddler and addict on the outside attempted to set fire to his cell and was only saved by the prompt action of the cell-house guard.

The third search was supervised by Old Calamity himself. But once again it revealed not a grain of any kind of narcotic. The deputy went carefully over every inch of the trucks used in hauling materials to and from the institution. Nothing was found. The following Sunday while the trucks were in the wagon shed and the prisoners in at services, the deputy again went over the trucks, but this time with a magnifying glass. He found little to interest him until he came to the one-ton wagon which ran between the prison and the farm colony, three miles out in the country. Here he picked up two or three small, fuzzy objects, placed them carefully in a used envelope which he took from his pocket and returned to his home on the grounds of the institution.

Early the following morning Old Calamity called up the chief of police.

"George," he inquired of that rather surprised official, "have you got any Maxim silencers?"

"I don't think so," the chief replied, rather hesitantly, "how many did you want?"

"Just one for a shotgun," the deputy said. "Can you get hold of one for me?"

The chief said he probably could. Three days later he appeared in the deputy's office with a large package which, when opened, revealed not only the silencer, but a shotgun of the kind the deputy had said he wanted. "Up to some of your tricks?" he inquired curiously. He had an immense respect for this quiet, gray-haired man. More than once Old Calamity had helped him solve mysteries for which he refused to take any credit or publicity.

Old Calamity smiled. "Oh, nothing much," he replied pleasantly. He never took any one into his confidence when it was not absolutely necessary, and, although he trusted the chief, he knew that the chief had a wife and the wife had a particular friend, and so on and so on.

After the chief had left, Old Calamity sent for Mr. Eckner, the guard stationed in the tower at the end of the prison grounds on the road to the farm colony. The deputy instructed him as to what he wanted done.

"I'll have the shotgun in your tower when you come on duty in the morning," he told Mr. Eckner, who, too surprised to ask any questions, saluted and walked back to his post. "Vot comes next?" he muttered to himself on the way out, adding that "Dot dep'ty vas von too many for him."

Scarcely had he gone than Dr. Cosgrove appeared in answer to the deputy's telephone request.

"Doctor," Old Calamity inquired, "can you get me a certain kind of powder?" He explained in great detail just what he desired.

The doctor smiled. "That's almost like asking for something which is but isn't," he said, adding thoughtfully: "I can't think of anything of the kind offhand, but I might be able to mix you up something."

"It must be white," the deputy added.

The doctor whistled softly. "That makes it even worse," he said. "It doesn't have to be something that's been handled by a red-haired girl nineteen years old who lives on a side street, does it?" he inquired sarcastically. He was used to strange requests from Old Calamity, but this was a little bit the strangest of any he had ever had.

"Oh, no, not at all," Old Calamity

said solemnly, pretending not to see the sarcasm. "The girl can be twenty, or even twenty-one years old for that matter."

The doctor rose. "I'll try to mix up some kind of a witches' brew for you," he said, "but I'm not particularly confident of success."

But he underestimated his own ability. For, less than two days later, the deputy had in his possession an innocent-looking white powder which the doctor declared would meet all requirements.

Nothing further could now be done until the following Wednesday. That was bathing day for the farm gang, all of whom were brought in at about three o'clock in the afternoon to undergo their "semiweekly." A few minutes after the farm gang, followed by two guards armed with rifles, filed inside the prison wall, a small gray-clad figure suddenly ducked into the bushes from the road which it was traversing and crawled forward about two hundred yards to the edge of the potato patch at the end of which stood Mr. Eckner's tower. The owner of the figure, a diminutive prisoner known as Wee Willie, lay on his back and carefully scanned the horizon in the direction of the farm colony. Several times the sudden appearance of birds flying toward the institution caused him to sit upright in a rather startled way, as though something he had been expecting was about to happen. But each time he sank back again with a look of disappointment.

After several such disappointments a somewhat larger speck appeared from over the trees at the east end of the prison farm and flew in a straight line toward the institution. A few seconds later it was easy to see that the bird was not a sparrow as the others had been, but a pigeon, in all probability one of the large number which "Chicken George," the half-witted convict in charge of the chicken yard, kept as pets. When the pigeon got abreast of the guard tower its flight suddenly halted and, despite what was undoubtedly a heart-breaking effort, dropped slowly and flutteringly to the ground. Almost before it had expired Wee Willie had it in his blouse and was back on the road on his way to the institution, trying not to betray the excitement and the importance which he felt.

Instead of going through the east gate, Wee Willie detoured and made his way to the deputy's home. Triumphantly he laid on the table on the inclosed porch the pigeon which Mr. Eckner had shot. A grim smile of satisfaction spread over Old Calamity's face as he untied the little container on the bird's leg and spread on a piece of paper on the table the morphine with which it was loaded.

"That's good work, Willie," he told the expectant prisoner who was grinning up into his face. "I'll see that you get a break at the next parole meeting. That's all, until to-morrow."

"Willie," the deputy said the following morning, "how'd you like to ride a few miles in a packing box?"

Willie looked incredulous. "I've ridden in everything that's got wheels," he said, "but that's a new one on me. Y'ain't kiddin' me?" he inquired suspiciously.

Old Calamity shook his head. "No, indeed," he replied, "I mean it. I'll make you pretty comfortable, see that you don't have to stand on your head or anything like that. What do you say?"

"Sure," said Willie promptly, wondering what was coming next. The following day, when Mr. Ashley, the foreman at the Farm Colony, cautiously opened the box and allowed him to crawl out, he made a mental resolve that traveling via the packing box route was out forever, so far as he was concerned. "I thought me knees would grow right into me chin," he complained to Mr. Ashley. "He certain'y took me over the bumps." He

was carried back to the prison that night in Mr. Ashley's car.

That Friday afternoon just as Buck Henderson, the prisoner who drove the truck to and from the farm colony, was about to start on his afternoon trip, Old Calamity swung himself up on the seat beside him. "Guess I'll ride over with you, Buck," he said, adding, apparently at random, "Never can tell; mebbe I'll see something interesting."

Buck's head swung round the fraction of an inch. Out of the corner of his eye he attempted to scan the deputy's face. A second's inspection convinced him that the remark was meaningless. The deputy was looking straight ahead with the same calm, placid expression which he always seemed to wear.

For a few moments they rode along in silence. Then the deputy began talking about the condition of the crops and this, that and the other which concerned the institution. Buck listened politely and tried to appear interested, although nothing in the world interested him except that which pertained to his own financial gain. They had gone about three miles and had just got over the brow of a hill out of sight of the penitentiary when Old Calamity said quietly. "Stop here a minute, Buck."

"Sir!" Buck exclaimed, his heart giving a sudden bound and his lips suddenly going dry.

"I said, 'Stop here a moment,'" the deputy repeated without a sign that he had noted the trepidation of his companion, "this looks like a right interesting place." He jumped down from the truck, walked casually to the side of the road and stood looking at a rusty old gallon tin can, of the kind which the institution used to "put up" tomatoes and other vegetables for the winter. The can was sunk into a hill of dirt and looked as though it had lain in this one spot for years.

Buck apparently was looking straight ahead, for he was missing nothing that was going on. For two full minutes Old Calamity stared straight ahead over the landscape.

"And now, Buck," he said in his winning and gracious manner that made him loved by the better class of prisoners as much as he was feared by the worse, "I'll take the pigeons. Keep 'em under the seat, don't you?"

"The pigeons!" Buck repeated automatically.

"Sure," said Old Calamity, "the pigeons you use for running the 'junk.'"

There was a moment of intense silence. Then without a word Henderson stood up, lifted up the seat on which he had been sitting, and from the depths of the tool box drew forth a small burlap bag. His face a curious study of panic, mixed with a desire to appear nonchalant and "game," he handed the bag to the deputy who reached into it and drew forth two pigeons from the flock on which the half-witted Chicken George lavished such unaccountable affection. The deputy carefully examined the little metal containers on their legs and then handed them back to Henderson.

"Hold 'em a minute, Buck," he directed. He then stooped down, dislodged the tin can with a vigorous pull, reached inside of it and brought to light a smaller tin wrapped in oil skin which was no doubt part of a stolen "sou'-wester" such as the farm gangs used in rainy weather. Inside the can, wrapped in heavy paper was a half pound of a bitter-tasting white powder —morphine.

"Had quite a load of it, didn't you, Buck?" the deputy inquired cheerfully. "Must have been making quite a lot of jack, huh? Who's shooting it for you inside?"

Henderson wet his dry lips. "I can't tell you, deputy," he said respectfully, but firmly. "He played fair with me and I can't double cross him. I ain't never stooled on no pal yet."

"I know you haven't," Old Calamity replied without the slightest appearance of anger. He smiled up at him. "I knew you wouldn't squeal, so I've taken other means to find out." He took from his pocket a paper containing a small quantity of the white powder which Dr. Cosgrove had prepared for him and poured it into the small metal receptacle around the pigeons' legs. He then untied the cord which bound their legs together, held one and then the other of the birds aloft in his hand for a moment, then opened his palm and watched them speed by fast airline back toward the penitentiary. Then, slipping the package of morphine into his pocket he again swung himself up alongside the now calmer Henderson.

"Well, Buck," he said, "I guess we'll turn around and go back."

The following morning, very much to every one's surprise, the deputy warden was present at the inspection of the day shift of guards. Usually he left such routine matters to his head keeper, Captain Collins. The deputy glanced slowly up and down the line. But instead of observing their general appearance he seemed to be looking for one particular thing. His eyes came to rest on Guard Morrison, who had on a pair of white cotton gloves. Cotton gloves were not a part of the regulation uniform.

"What's the matter with your hands, Morrison?" the deputy inquired solicitously.

"I burned them, sir," Morrison replied.

"How?" the deputy wanted to know.

"I don't know, sir," Morrison replied. "They started burning me last night and seem to be a little worse today. I don't know what caused it."

"Maybe I could tell you," suggested the deputy helpfully.

"How's that, sir?" Morrison inquired, a puzzled look coming into his eyes.

"I say, maybe I could tell you," Old Calamity repeated.

"I—I—that is—I don't understand you, sir," Morrison muttered wonderingly.

"No, but you will," said the deputy. "Lock him up, captain," he went on, turning suddenly to Captain Collins who was staring stupidly, "and phone the D. A. to come up." Without another word, the deputy turned and walked over to the doctor's office.

Dr. Cosgrove examined the package which the deputy handed him. He was particularly amazed at the quantity of morphine it contained.

"That's some catch," he said admiringly. "No wonder a lot of the 'junkies' around here have been getting their shots regularly of late. There's enough in there to keep the place supplied for a month or two."

"Yes," the deputy agreed, "and there was plenty more where that came from."

"Have much difficulty finding it?" the doctor inquired off-handedly, as though he weren't particularly interested. He knew there was a story back of it. He also knew that Old Calamity never told a story about himself if he were directly asked. So the doctor used strategy. It worked.

"A little bit," Old Calamity said. "I had von Klaus frisk the outside boys and the trucks several times. The trouble was he only frisked them coming in."

"Only coming in!" the doctor exclaimed. "Why, they couldn't hurt any one by carrying stuff out, could they?"

"Oh, yes, they could," said Old Calamity, "so I took a look over some of the trucks myself. I found two or three small bits of fluff in the tool chest of Henderson's truck. I never knew 'em to use fluff in fixing trucks, so I thought it looked a little funny. I examined them under a glass and found out they were feathers—pigeon feathers. I didn't know what Henderson

had to do with pigeons unless he was using them to carry something in. I had a stool watch for a day or two and found out that pigeons were flying back to the institution from the direction of the farm colony. So I got a gun with a silencer and had one of the guards bring one of them down. It was loaded with junk."

"Why'd you use a silencer?" the doctor inquired casually.

"Suppose the boys had heard a shot?" the deputy asked, a bit impatiently. "You can't fire a gun around a prison without a lot of questions being asked, can you?"

The doctor took the rebuke in good part. He was getting the story and that was all he was interested in.

"So you grabbed Henderson going out?" he said, as he placed a pair of forceps in the sterilizer.

"Not much I didn't," went on Old Calamity. "If I had done that all I would have found was a couple of pigeons.

"I knew Buck wouldn't stool. He's no squealer and all you ever get out of him is what he thinks you know already. So I had some one ride on the truck with him to see where he hid the stuff."

"But how could you do that? He wouldn't disclose his hiding place if there was some one else on the truck, would he?"

"Not if he knew it," said Old Calamity, "but I had this man in one of the boxes on the truck, with two or three knot holes through which he could see what was going on. I arranged with Ashley over at the Farm Colony to watch out for him and see that he was taken out and sent back."

The doctor was careful not to show the admiration he felt.

"So you went out and dug it up?" he inquired getting ready for his regular morning tour of the cell house, "and that's all there was to it."

"I went and dug it up," admitted the deputy, "but I wanted to find out whether Buck had an inside connection and who it was. I suspected it was a guard because it would be pretty hard for Buck, who's outside all day, to get it around the institution the way this junk's been going. That's the reason I had you make up that powder that would burn the skin, but still wouldn't do any serious damage. I went out with Buck and sent back the two pigeons he had loaded with that powder instead of junk. This morning I found Guard Morrison's hands burned from some cause which he didn't know. Morrison works out around the barns and the chicken farm where Chicken George keeps his pigeons."

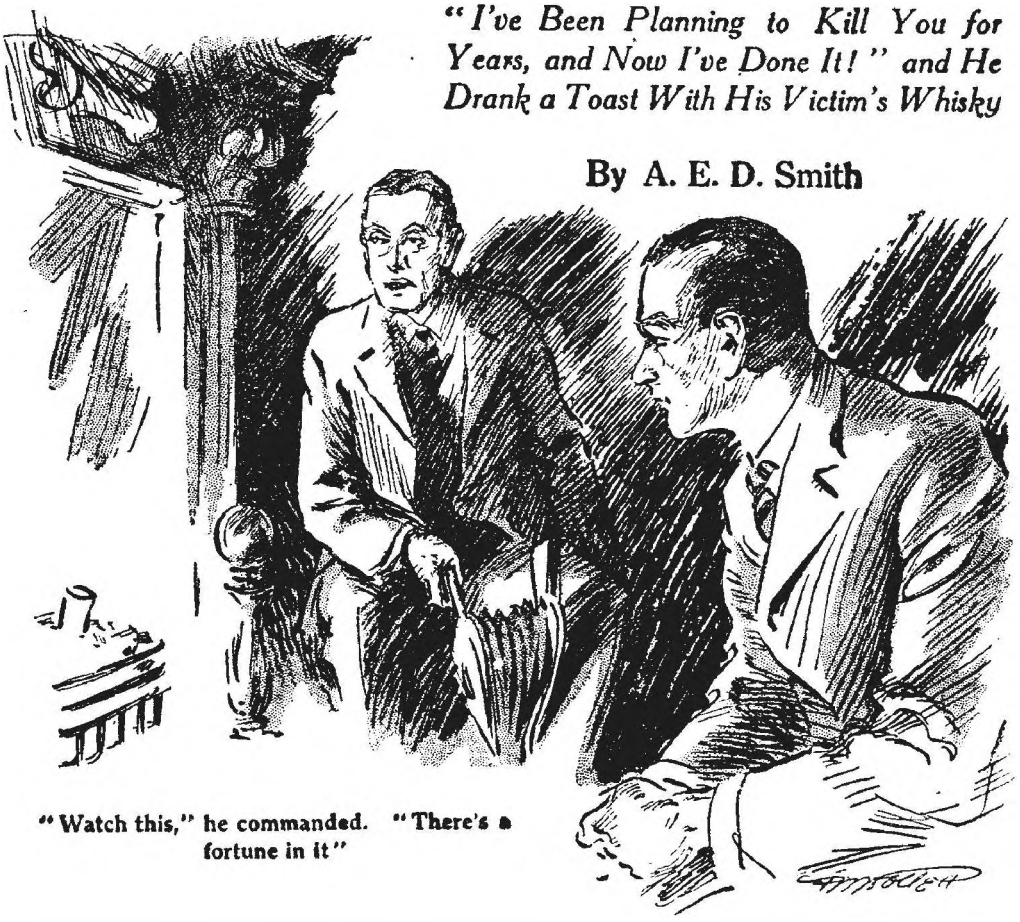
The doctor shook his head despairingly. "They'll be bringing it in in airplanes next," he said.

"Well," said Old Calamity philosophically, "if they were good boys they wouldn't be here."

Pliable Glass

"I've Been Planning to Kill You for Years, and Now I've Done It!" and He Drank a Toast With His Victim's Whisky

By A. E. D. Smith



"Watch this," he commanded. "There's a fortune in it"

TWICE in my life I have killed men who would have killed me. The slaying of the first was a commendable action in the eyes of my fellows and helped to put an extra strip of ribbon on my tunic; the slaying of the second would probably be regarded by a judge and jury as plain murder. Yet, though I am often haunted by the last agonized look of that German boy officer whom I shot a fraction of a second before he would have shot me, the memory of my cousin's face, baffled and hate-distorted as he fell back dead in his chair, troubles me not one whit.

I am one of those undeserving, undistinguished people upon whom the wry gods so often lavish their gifts. Unmerited good fortune has been mine from the beginning. Chance of birth gave me a decent name and more money than I could spend; sheer luck brought me unscathed through the war; and luck again was mine when I wooed and won the most wonderful woman in the world.

It was a few days before my wedding that George Breuxdell paid me his last visit. I was writing in the library when the footman brought in his card, and George himself followed at the servant's heels.

"Hullo, you've turned up again!" I exclaimed, not too cordially, I'm afraid.

"When did you arrive? I thought you were somewhere at the back of beyond."

I had never had much use for my cousin. A shiftless, evil-living fellow with a twist since boyhood for getting into scrapes with a stink to them. The only good point about him was that he had had the grace to spend most of his time abroad. I heard from him once or twice a year, generally from some outlandish corner or other, and on the rare occasions when he was home I usually had a call from him. The object both of his letters and his calls was always the same—his need of money.

He grinned at me maliciously.

"Pleased as ever to welcome the family bad egg, aren't you? However, don't be alarmed—I'm not staying, and it's duty, not need, that brings me along to see you this time. I landed only a few days ago, and have just heard of your forthcoming marriage. Surely you don't object to your only male relative rolling along to congratulate you!"

Dissipated and evil-looking as ever, there was yet some change in him that puzzled me. It was not so much his appearance of unwonted prosperity—he had arrived in a smart Daimler, and his clothes were the latest and best. It was his entire change of demeanor. He seemed to have taken a fresh grip of life. The old shifty, casual manner had given place to an air of purpose, and his whole bearing suggested arrogance and secret triumph.

After refreshments had been brought in he began to tell me something of his recent doings. He had taken a wide beat since I had last seen him. Ten months on some mysterious business in East Africa, and then a year in the States, where, he gave me to understand, he had held some kind of a job in a chemical works.

"Be thankful that such beastly scratching for a living is not your lot," he grumbled. "You were always a lucky fellow, James; lucky in everything—in peace, in war, and now in love." He looked at me sourly, and his mouth twitched. "Aye, and now in love; though I'm hanged if I can make out what a spirited filly like Kitty Trehune can see in a sober old hack like yourself. It's not as though she hadn't pots of money of her own."

I ignored the implied insult. The fellow wasn't worth quarreling with, and, after all, I could afford to be generous.

I merely observed: "Of course, I'd forgotten. You met Miss Trehune last time you were home, didn't you?"

"I met her once or twice before then," he replied, reaching for his glass. "An entirely charming girl, and if— I say, this is real good dope. You were always famed for your whisky."

"I get it direct from a Speyside distillery," I said. "None of your blender's concoctions for me. By the way, what did you mean by that 'if'?"

He eyed me with a sardonic grin.

"Oh, well, life's full of 'ifs,' isn't it? Some of 'em with mighty big meanings. Take one instance. 'If' my respected guv'nor, instead of yours, had been the elder son, I'd have been sitting in your place, and you, instead of I, would have been the poor outcast devil condemned to scrabble for a living among the world's muck-heaps. In that case, I might have contemplated matrimony myself."

"The scrabbling is your own fault," I reminded him. "You've chucked away plenty of chances."

"I know. Always the bad lad, wasn't I? I'm not complaining. We can't help the way we're made."

He took a mouthful from his glass, rolled the liqueur whisky around his tongue, and gazed appreciatively about him.

"This library of yours gets me anew every time I see it," he remarked enviously. "Small wonder the guidebooks say it's one of the finest rooms in England. There's not a stick in it

that isn't worth a small fortune. Why, the value of this thing alone would keep me in clover for a year!"

He indicated the small table upon which our glasses and the decanter stood—a masterpiece of Indian craftsmanship with a chased silver top inlaid with mother-of-pearl. "My hat; silver-topped tables, and I've spent half my life lifting my drinks from zinc-covered counters! You've even got silver finger-plates on your bally doors. Hullo, what's that!"

He paused, looked sharply toward the door, and, motioning me to keep quiet, listened.

"Speaking of doors, I believe your butler or somebody is eavesdropping on the other side of that one."

"Nonsense," I said. "It's the last thing in the world Phelps would do."

"I'll bet you a dollar some one is listening there at this minute," he persisted.

I stole across the room and flung open the door. Nobody was there.

"Strange," observed my cousin. "I could have sworn I heard somebody loitering outside. This excellent whisky of yours must be affecting my senses."

"If you'll look in that cabinet just behind you," I told him, "you'll find a box of cigars fit to go with the whisky."

"Righto. This it?" He brought back the box and resumed his seat. "Here's luck once more," he said, emptying his glass. I followed suit, and pushed the decanter across to him.

"Thanks. No more just now. Let's smoke and talk for a bit." He lit his cigar and, leaning back in his chair, eyed me queerly for a moment or two.

II

"NOTICE anything different about me this trip?" he suddenly demanded.

"Well, for one thing, you're looking very fit, and, for another, you've been alone with me for half an hour without asking me for money."

"Thanks; I was expecting that," he retorted, with a half sneer. "Suppose I told you that I never wanted any of your help again? Suppose I told you that the black sheep had made good—that, in fact, he had every hope of shortly paying back in full the many—er—past kindnesses of his impeccable and altogether estimable cousin?"

"I'd be glad to hear it," I said dryly. "What is it—company promoting, a new gambling system, or something merely honest?"

"You're smart, aren't you? As a matter of fact, it's pliable glass."

"I don't get you," I said.

"I hit upon the thing by accident when I was working on something else in this chemical factory I told you of. Always had a taste for chemistry, as you know. Pliable glass—stuff that you can bend anyway, but that still retains all the essential properties of glass. Pass me your tumbler, will you?"

He took a phial from his vest pocket, poured a few drops from it into my empty glass, made a little hollow in the middle of the fire, and placed the glass in it. Taking up the bellows, he blew the coals into a white heat.

"Watch this," he commanded. "There's a fortune in it—a fortune as big as your own."

We both bent forward and watched the glass. There seemed nothing extraordinary in its behavior. It stood for a few minutes unchanged in the middle of the glowing coals, then slowly sagged, lost form, and became merely a grayish blob of melted glass.

"I don't quite see—" I began, and, looking up, met my cousin's mocking eyes.

"So you think the experiment has failed?" he chuckled evilly. "Well, it hasn't. It's got rid of the only possible evidence."

"The evidence!" I echoed.

"The evidence of the poisoned glass, you fool. Servants have a habit of leaving the things unwashed, and

you never know what an analyst can do."

He poured out another glass of whisky, gulped it, and strode over to me, his face aflame with hate.

"You swine, I've got you at last! I've been planning to kill you for years, and now I've done it. I slipped the stuff into your glass when I sent you on that fool's errand to the door—a secret poison, wormed out of a nigger in Zanzibar. It takes about twenty minutes to act, and paralyzes before it kills. Try, if you like, to get up from that chair."

I sat very still.

"Is it Kitty, by any chance, as well as the money and the title?" I asked quietly.

"Aye, it's Kitty," he snarled. "At least, she's the biggest reason. Wasn't it enough that you had everything, curse you, without robbing me of the only woman I ever cared a rap about? I started for England the minute I heard of your engagement, determined to kill you, if it meant the hangman for me. But it isn't going to mean the hangman."

"I see," I observed thoughtfully. "By the way, have you forgotten who it was that gave you a decent start in life; who it was that twice saved you from jail; who it is that has helped you a score of times since?"

"Pile it on," he jeered. "Always the example, weren't you? Unctuously superior, swelling with righteousness, patting yourself on the back every time you tossed a bone to the poor beggar dog. Curse your alms-giving! I tell you I've never had a fifty-pound note from you without wanting to set fire to it and stuff it down your throat."

He helped himself to another stiff drink, staggered a little, and went back to his chair.

"This potent Speyside stuff of yours is beginning to go for my legs," he laughed. "Do you mind if I sit down to watch you die? For you'll be dead in five minutes, you know, and I shall be ringing for the servants and explaining to them that you've had a sudden heart seizure. That's the beauty of this East African poison. It leaves absolutely no trace. There'll be no trouble at all about the death certificate; and Kitty will get her baronet just the same—only it will be Sir George instead of Sir James Breuxdell. What do you think of it, Cousin James?"

"I think, Cousin George," I said taking a cigarette from my case and carefully lighting it, "that while you are possibly a better chemist, I am the better actor of the two. When I went on that fool's errand to the door I saw your movements reflected in the polished silver finger-plates, and while you were on that other little errand to the cigar cabinet, I turned the table and the glasses around."

CHARACTER REVEALED IN YOUR HANDWRITING

EDITOR'S NOTE — *After making character analysis, through handwriting, his hobby for more than a score of years, John Fraser has recently won wide renown in New York City as a popular lecturer on this subject.*

He conducts a thriving business of analyzing character from handwriting; and many notables in this country and abroad have complimented him on the accuracy of his findings.

JOHN FRASER

By special arrangement his personal analysis is given to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY *readers for ten cents, or free with a one-dollar subscription for thirteen issues. Please fill out the special coupon.*

my reading, I wish much success in a undertakings.

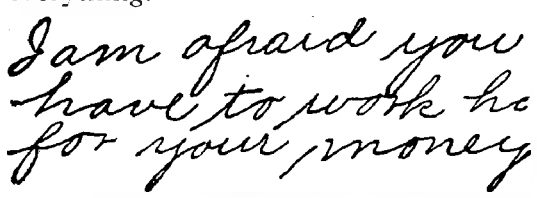
W. S., Montreal, Canada—You give me the impression that you are a practical, hard-headed individual. You can drive a hard bargain, shrewd to the finger tips and somewhat mercenary at times. I observe that you are self-restrained and cautious. The money-making instinct is very pronounced indeed.

Then again I see that you are a great talker. The art of stretching is quite familiar to you. Everything you speak about is "a wonder." In fact, you are a wonder yourself. At least, you think you are. Jack Brag is usually a poor specimen of humanity, and you would do well to come down to earth, and "be yourself" for a little while. Loud braying always reveals an ass.

Away from business you are a "good sport." I believe you would be good-natured and "the life of any party." You have the earmarks of a gentleman, all right, and when you are in the company of ladies, you are gracious in the extreme. To come back to your foibles, I notice that you are very opinionative, and rather narrow in your ideas of men and things. You are "thrawn," as they say in Scotland. You ought to know by this time that such tactics are nothing but detrimental to a man's success.

There is nothing standing still in this great universe of ours, and why should a puny human being like you come to a full stop. So many people of your type are like the oak leaves, they keep hanging on, never realizing that they are mentally dead. Throw aside those

grave clothes of the mind, and get in line once more with red-blooded optimists who see "books in the running brooks; sermons in stones, and good in everything."



J. M. L., Cincinnati, Ohio—By your handwriting I see that you are a very outspoken fellow. You don't believe very much in concentrating on one thing. You are never happy unless you have two or three "irons in the fire" at one time. You are restless and constantly on the move. A hard man to satisfy. You have never got really started with one job, when you are head over ears in another. A fine starter, but a bad finisher.

As for the spending of money you are free-handed. Too much so sometimes for your own good. This leads me to say that your heart controls many of your actions. You are very susceptible to sentiment. You like to be made a lot of, particularly by the ladies. In some respects, I would call you a "lady killer," though your quiet, reserved manner would be somewhat detrimental to your success in this direction. One can never tell, however, "still waters run deep," and many girls prefer your type to a more boastful and self-important individual.

You appear to be a man of good judgment, and have many constructive ideas in your head. You are also thoughtful for others. There is nothing mean about you. My opinion is that you would make much more of your talents and ability if you were more self-assertive. You hang back too much for your own good. You are apt to let people "walk all over you."

You are discreet and careful about making statements. You never commit yourself knowingly. Altogether, you are a fellow who could do good work if you would only throw overboard a lot of that femininity which you have acquired. Nobody wants a womanish man any more than we love to see a mannish woman.

Fill out the coupon with specimen writing and send it with ten cents, or one dollar for a thirteen-weeks' subscription to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. *You will receive a letter from Mr. Fraser giving his analysis of your character.*

To John Fraser, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway N. Y. City

Signature.....

Street..... City.....

2-2

What a cigarette meant *there*

20 degrees below, and no tobacco, through lonely weeks of glittering silence. Then a speck on the hard, bright horizon; another musher, outward-bound . . . and *cigarettes!* What price cold or Arctic hardship then!

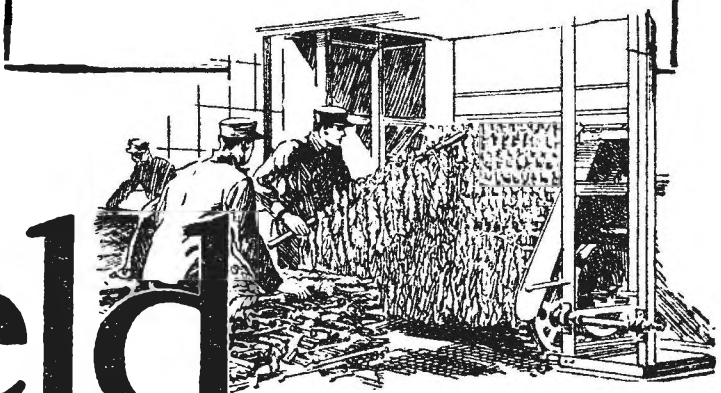
What a cigarette means *here*

220 degrees above, as endless belts carry the choice tobacco for Chesterfield inch by inch through the great steel ovens.

Here, in penetrating heat, science corrects and perfects the curing commenced in the farmer's barn. Dried, then cooled, then steamed to exact and uniform heat and moisture, the tobacco is ready for the final mellowing—two long years ageing in wood—that only Nature can give.

Man, Science, Nature—all work together on Chesterfield. And in the bland, satisfying smoothness of Chesterfield itself is ample proof that their patient, costly team-work is good!

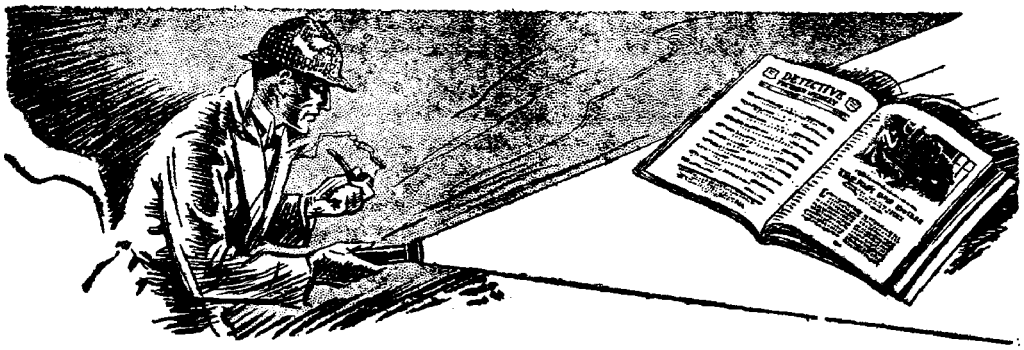
Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.



Through long steam-heated ovens, new tobacco passes in slow endless procession for drying and "conditioning."

field

. . . . *and yet* THEY SATISFY



FLASHES FROM READERS

Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

ONE DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY fan becomes so genuinely enthusiastic about our magazine that he is moved to write its praise in poetry. Here is his novel and entertaining letter, written in a sort of Walt Mason style. And, by the way, we understand that Walt, the well-known rimer, is himself a constant reader of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

DEAR EDITOR:

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY is the one I like the best; I always get my money's worth, and it gives my mind a rest.

I'll say John Fraser knows his ink, he reads it like a book. 'Twas he who made me stop to think that I should always look with favor on another's claim—the other fellow's side—nor be too quick to place the blame when thoughts alone decide.

And Mansfield Scott sure knows his stuff. I think his stories fine; although, like others, they are tough, with crime in every line.

But Seven Anderton knows how to make a fellow smile; and I am sure that time will show his tales are worthwhile.

Ye Ed. also deserves some praise, and thus I end my rime: the menus which you serve and raise, are bargains at a dime!

With kind regards, I am

Yours sincerely,

AL HANSEN,
Fresno, Calif.

NO DATE THURSDAY NIGHT

"My every Thursday night is devoted to devouring your whole magazine and nothing else . . . every Thursday night is no-date night for yours truly!" Who said girls don't like DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY?

TO THE EDITOR:

I've been reading your magazine ever since I was a little kid, about five or six years, but only recently have I got down to business and taken it regularly. My parents don't approve of detective fiction, but I think it is a great deal more wholesome than the sickening stories that so many magazines contain now. They are real brain stimulants, and make one think for himself.

I'd like to say a few words about some of the stories. They are *all* good, and I never miss even one. My every Thursday evening is devoted to devouring your whole magazine and nothing else.

"The Mystery Maker" was exceptionally good, and judging by its ending do you think maybe we'll have another *John Stayne* story soon, huh?

A lot of folks have been kicking about the true stories, but don't you *dare* have any fewer than six in each issue. "The Invisible Web" series is great.

"Camera-Eye" Sheridan is also fine, and I hope we'll hear lots more about him in every coming issue, for some time at least.

But, *please*, I do want to register one "kick." It's about "The Telephone Murders." To be brief—which is hard for me—why did the author have to place the scene of the story in France and then have for his heroine a girl whose manner of speaking and acting was anything but French.

It would have been a darn good story if the locale had only been the States, where she so evidently belonged.

I guess that constitutes my say, except that I still think you put out the most interesting magazine on the market, and Thursday night

is going to be "no-date" night for yours truly for some time to come.

Very sincerely,
I. V.,
St. Paul, Minn.

ARTY BEALE BACK

Here is one of a number of approving letters on "Killers Have Blue Eyes." The hero of that yarn, *Arty Beale*, will be with us again. Watch for him.

DEAR EDITOR:

One of the stories in this week's magazine inspires me to drop you a line. That story, "Killers Have Blue Eyes," is keen.

Every now and then an exceptional story appears in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. The kind I mean that a fellow has to think about and laugh long after it is read.

It would seem mild to write you that I like DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. I have read it so long now that it has become a habit and it fills a place in my reading that no other magazine could fill.

It has given me so much enjoyment reading the hundreds of real good stories between its covers that I hardly know how to express my thanks. On top of this I am making a request.

Away back in the winter of 1924 and 1925, or thereabouts, when DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY was known as *Flynn's*, and all of the continued stories that it contained then kept me cross-eyed to keep track of them, you published a little story that was a K. O. The story was "Dinners for Two."

Will you please publish that short story again? There must be thousands of your present readers who have not read it. I for one of those who have, would like to read it again.

With best wishes, I close.

Sincerely yours,
A. F. CARPENTER,
Andover, Ohio.

THE PRICE OF COFFEE

Here's a reader who "feels like a man caught receiving goods under false pretenses" every time he gets a DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for only a dime. It's a full meal for the price of coffee, he says.

DEAR SIR:

The issue for December 1 is a humdinger. Say, what have you got on Ware, Maxwell, and Perry, that you can afford us a story from each in the same issue? Henceforth, I'm going to delve into them there funny figures you call "Cipher Secrets," for sure as you're a foot high you're not pulling this Santa Claus stuff because you love us. Each time I call for my copy I have two-bits ready, expecting an increase in price.

Gosh, I can't savvy how you can afford to give a full meal for the price of coffee and—please, sir, put me wise else you will have me feeling like a man caught receiving goods under false pretenses.

In the meantime don't permit these chronic kickers to influence you in making any radical changes. There are a few of the stories that don't jibe with my experience with things worldly, but I'm not mentioning any names; only be wary of fiction stories that stress the nationality of their characters. In true stories this is permissible, but never in fiction—and you will please note that my coupons give preference to true stories.

Mr. Fraser is a wonder. I was among the first to take advantage of the offer, and I'll say I got some surprise. The only information I provided was my name, yet his analysis was near identical with my horoscope.

In conclusion I wish to praise those responsible for the unbiased and diplomatic manner in which the true stories are published—minus the morbid "close-ups" and all taint of fictionizing, you know.

With hopes that *Calhoun* never falls in love, and that *Riordan* doesn't foul his squad by adding a skirt, and best wishes to the editors and aids of "our magazine."

I remain,
Very sincerely yours,
C. E. SHULER,
Ventura, Calif.

"HERE'S MY VOTE"

Editor,
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

I did not like.....

because.....

Name.....

Street.....

City.....*State*.....

2-2

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

MORE than likely you succeeded in solving last week's "dagger crypt" without having to transform it, as suggested, into a letter cryptogram. Nevertheless, G. H.'s very interesting novelty affords good material for demonstrating the method referred to. So here's how it's done.

Begin with any symbol, say the first, and substitute a certain letter, as A, for it whenever it occurs. In the same way use B for another symbol; C for a third; and so on until every symbol is represented by its corresponding letter. The "dagger crypt" so treated will stand as follows, where it can be solved exactly as any other letter substitution cipher:

ABC	DEFEFGED	HIEDJBKLH
- - -	*r e - e - - e r*	*s - e r - - - - s*

MNOKPOQ	FEO	IBR	MB	SIE
d a - - - g	*- e -*	*- - -*	*d -*	*- - e*

MNQQEDH	HSDPLE	ABC.
d a g g e r s	*s - r -*	*e - - -*

Thus, the symbolism employed by G. H. suggests *daggers* for the ninth group, providing six letters at the very outset. Upon substituting these throughout, as shown, the meanings of several partly deciphered words will soon be evident. MB, for example, must be *do;* and *the* is worth trying for SIE.

Or you can get busy, if you choose, with some of the long words. A dictionary will soon show that the second group—note the repeated F—is *remember.* And with a little study the fourth group—observe the two O's—will develop into *dancing.*

Any of these suppositions will, of course, provide additional letters which can be similarly used in deciphering other words. And by continuing the method the whole translation, as given herewith, will soon be revealed.

The first two of this week's crypts can readily be solved by guessing short words. In No. 1 the single letter word must be *a, I,* or *O.* Then compare CK, KP, KVR, and KVPJFV. Noting in No. 2 that your predominating symbol is U, you should soon get the much repeated SRU. No. 3 even with the obvious final letter in the ninth group, will still make you sweat. You can get it, though, if you stick to it.

No. 1—A bit of scientific lore.

CYYPEXUHF KP C FRENCH LYURHKULK KVR RCEKV UL LKUQQ BPJHF KVPJFV CK QRCLK C KEUQQUPH BRCEL PQX.

No. 2—Appearances are often deceptive.

SRU GIVT, SRU UJUO, SRU LVXASUABALU YUIJ VZSUA QULUMYU XO; GXS NVOS VZSUA VZ BKK SRU OEUULR.

No. 3—By G. Fulton.

ROLIPOLY WOMMENM KODOWKOYN NTALOBM QUAWOXM XZQ HEYTOB MKQAAEMZ KLQRANLM' VOELTM WQTS ZNWY UTLOTMQINY ET ZESZWOTY KOELTM.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1—You remember Sherlock's "Dancing Men." How do the daggers strike you?

2—To end all ills is the one end and aim of the medical profession.

3—Dry agents, raiding night clubs, arrest unfortunate visitors and confiscate much valuable liquor.

The answers to this week's cryptograms will appear in the next issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. Keep your crypts coming, fans, and let us know how you made out with this week's problems.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

"GET this, mavourneen, and never forget it! Wid all the crooks and the informers and the stool pigeons and the grafters, there is always straight men to fight 'em. The straight wans are outnumbered nowadays, but they go down clean and there's always enough of 'em to make the blacklegs walk wid the fear of the Lord in 'em!"

Thomas Cassidy speaking—ex-Inspector Cassidy, the city's fightinest" cop.

Those words right from his stout Irish heart marked the beginning of war, Cassidy's private war against crime. Old Cassidy, retired, was a six-foot-four giant who had never learned to be a crooked cop. And now, with the city shot through with corruption, he was going to teach 'em honesty with the dose of old-time strong-arm and a hefty nightstick.

He didn't need many in his army: O'Malley, the chief; Garrett, of the Twenty-Eighth, and three ex-rangers from the Arizona bad lands—Slim Carter, Smoke Collins, Bronco Patterson.

It was battle to the death, and the old war horses knew it. Corruption's million-dollar machine wasn't going to let go easily.

But Cassidy's army was bold and hard. In the shadow of a warehouse they fought it out, while machine guns rattled and pistols barked. There was Cassidy with a club that was deadlier than bullets, and Collins, Patterson and Carter with the frozen smiles and the flashlike draw.

This is a melodramatic, red-blooded yarn of an honest cop's fight with the racketeers. It is a real war, fought to a thrilling end. Read:

Cassidy's War

Complete Novelette

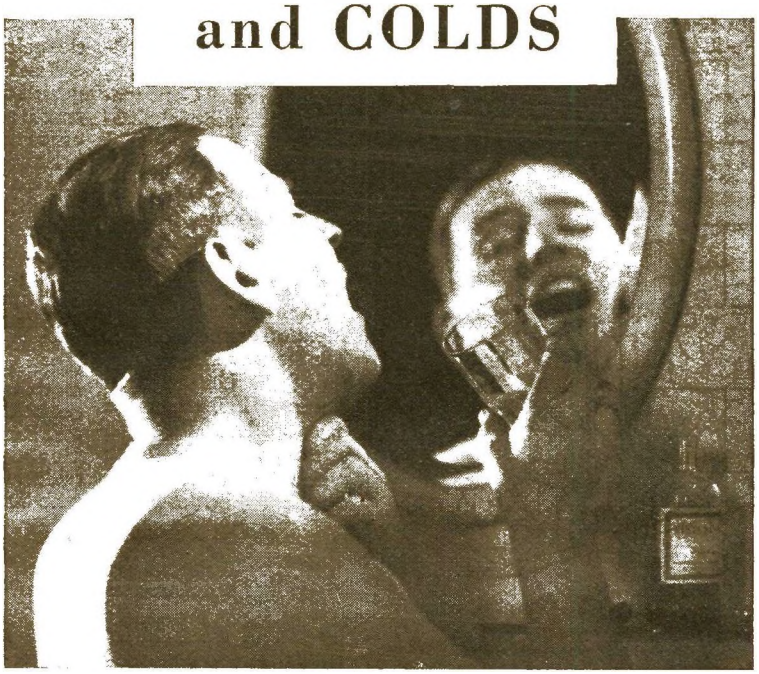
BY W. WIRT

And this great list of mystery story writers in next week's DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY:

EDGAR WALLACE—ERLE STANLEY GARDNER—MAXWELL SMITH—CHARLES SOMERVILLE—MARTIN J. PORTER—G. C. HENDERSON—JOSEPH HARRINGTON—J. JEFFERSON FARJEON.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—FEBRUARY 9

How to avoid SORE THROAT... and COLDS



Tests show amazing power against bacteria

Kills typhoid germs in 15 seconds

More than fifty diseases, some slight, some dangerous, have their beginning in the nose or throat.

Therefore, an irritated throat demands immediate attention. It may be the symptom of a cold—or worse. The germs causing the irritation must be killed before they get the upper hand.

Listerine, used full strength as a gargle, is a powerful aid in killing germs. Repeated tests by laboratories of national repute prove it. For example, Listerine, full strength, in 15 seconds destroyed even the virulent M. Aureus (pus) and B. Typhosus (typhoid) germs.

Yet Listerine is so gentle and safe it may be used undiluted in any cavity of the body.

Now you can understand why millions rely on Listerine to avoid ordinary sore throat and colds entirely, and to check them should they gain a throat hold. You'll be amazed to find how quickly Listerine brings relief.

If, however, a feeling of soreness persists, call your physician. It is no longer a matter with which an antiseptic can deal.

Keep a bottle of Listerine handy at home and in the office, and at the first sign of throat irritation gargle repeatedly with it full strength. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo., U. S. A.

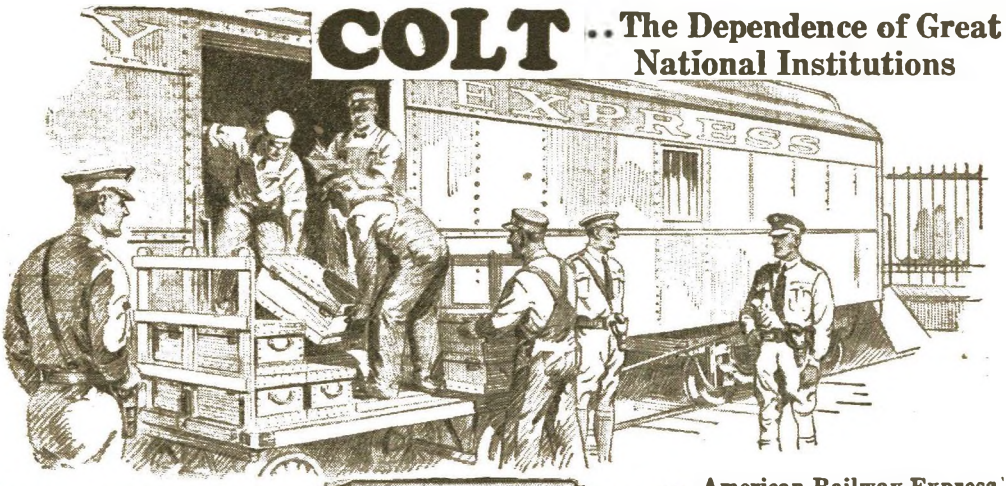
Prevent a cold this way? *Certainly!*

Countless colds start when germs are carried to the mouth on food. By using Listerine on the hands before every meal, you attack such germs and lessen the risk of cold. Remember this, mothers, when handling baby's food.

LISTERINE

The safe antiseptic

COLT .. The Dependence of Great National Institutions



American Railway Express shipments are constantly under the watchful eye of COLTS

.. not "just a fire arm" but a COLT

YOU cannot afford to be less particular than those men whose lives and livelihood depend upon the integrity of their fire arms.

For 93 years Colt's has continually devised new tests of materials, workmanship and performance, until, to produce the Arm illustrated—the Colt Official Police, .38 cal. Revolver—entails 564 machine and 124 hand operations and 322 visual and gauge inspections—1010 separate steps in all.

These tests begin before the steels are forged into shape and end only after the finished Colt has been targeted by an expert marksman. The Colt Positive Lock embodied in Colt Revolvers makes accidental discharge impossible.

It is this unbelievable accuracy of manufacture which distinguishes Colt Revolvers and Automatic Pistols as the safest and most dependable Fire Arms.

Colt's Service Department will help solve shooting problems; suggest the Arm best suited to your needs; assist you in forming or joining a Revolver Club.

Colt's new Catalog No. 28 is the most complete Fire Arms Manual ever issued. Write for it; also for your copy of "Makers of History," the thrilling story of Colt accomplishments.

COLT'S PATENT FIRE ARMS MFG. CO.

SMALL ARMS DIVISION

HARTFORD, CONN., U. S. A.

Phil. B. Bekeart Co., Pacific Coast Representative, 717 Market Street, San Francisco, Calif.

A COLT PRODUCT ... *The* ARM OF LAW *and* ORDER

Most Amazing INVENTION in 25 years

"Cleans Up" for Agents

FREE MACHINE FOR AGENTS

$90 WEEKLY IN SPARE TIME!

Men, here is a wonder—the most sensational invention of the age! If you're looking for a rapid fire seller—an item that nets you 100% profit—an item that sells itself to 7 out of 10 men **on demonstration**—I've got it in Ve-Po-Ad, the amazing new vest pocket adding machine!

Sells for $2.95—You Make $1.65

This most remarkable invention does all the work of a $300 adding machine, yet fits the vest pocket and sells for only $2.95! It sells on sight to storekeepers, business men, and everyone who uses figures—and makes you over 100% profit on every sale! Ve-Po-Ad does any kind of figuring in a jiffy, yet weighs but 4 oz. Counts up to a billion. Shows total visible at all times. Perfectly accurate, lightning fast. Never makes a mistake or gets out of order. Over 100,000 in daily use!

Get Your Machine FREE

Live wire salesmen are dropping everything else and flocking to Ve-Po-Ad. Ve-Po-Ad brings them quick money and lots of it. Shapiro out in California made $475 in one week! You can "clean up" too! Only 10 sales a day in spare time will bring YOU over $35.00 a week! You need no previous sales experience—Ve-Po-Ad sells itself! If you are really interested in earning a steady, substantial income, write at once for full details of my **MONEY-MAKING PLAN** and **FREE VE-PO-AD** given to new Agents. Do it **NOW—TODAY!**

C. M. CLEARY, Dept. 902
184 W. WASHINGTON STREET CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Those who Summer abroad will Winter in BERMUDA

A new American fancy, this winter siesta in Bermuda . . . and the 48 hours each way. A sailing every Wednesday and Saturday on the new 20,000 ton motorship "Bermuda" and the famous "Fort Victoria."

ROUND TRIP FARES FROM **$70** *Inclusive Rates on Application*

FURNESS

Bermuda Line

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Men Past 40

MAKE THIS AMAZING TEST

Medical science claims that 65% of all men past middle age are victims of prostate trouble, either in a mild or severe form. Loss of vitality, sciatica, bladder weakness, nervousness, aches in back, legs and feet, frequent urination and chronic constipation are a few of the more common symptoms ofttimes mistaken as attributes of old age. A new drugless gland stimulant, perfected by a well-known American scientist, now offers victims of this devitalizing ailment a wholly advanced method that has shown startling results in many of the 50,000 cases where it has been used. Test it on our Gilt Edge Agreement, that UNLESS YOU FEEL TEN YEARS YOUNGER IN ONE WEEK, YOU PAY NOTHING. This bonafide guaranty accompanies each treatment. Send today for the intensely interesting booklet, "Why Many Men Are Old At Forty," written by the scientist who discovered this method. It contains information that every man should know and explains in a pleasantly frank manner all about this common ailment which ofttimes makes a man old before his time. It is absolutely FREE. Send for it today. Simply address: The Electro Thermal Company, 3014 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio. Western Address: Dept. 30-P, 303 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif.

TREATING DIABETES

by diet alone is merely treating symptoms and not the disease. Naturally if no sugar is taken into the system there will be none to excrete. My book

'EAT TO GET WELL'

telling how to stop useless starving and gradually eat what you need will be sent FREE to any diabetic sufferer. Write M. Richarts, Dept. 718, 220 W. 42d St., New York.

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A Perfect Looking Nose

My latest improved Model 25 corrects now ill-shaped noses quickly, painlessly, permanently and comfortably at home. It is the only nose-shaping appliance of precise adjustment and a safe and guaranteed patent device that will actually give you a perfect looking nose. Write for free booklet which tells you how to obtain a perfect looking nose.

M. Trilety, Pioneer Noseshaping Specialist
Dept. 3212 Binghamton, N. Y.

FREE TRIAL BOTTLE OF Marvelous New Discovery for Gray Hair

Amazing new discovery —REVA—restores hair to a youthful, natural color. **No need to fuss with messy dyes. REVA** is a clean, colorless liquid. **Same bottle used for all colors. No samples of hair are needed.** Applied to scalp—not to hair. Anyone can apply easily at home without skill or outside aid. Restores so **naturally** your friends cannot notice change. Does not streak or crack hair. Will not wash off or fade. Hair keeps uniform color. Does not get gray at roots. **REVA** also acts as hair tonic. Overcomes dandruff. Thousands have used successfully. Satisfactory results guaranteed. Test FREE a full sized bottle in your home. Ask for particulars. **Write Today**

REVA CORP., 4242 Lincoln Ave., Dept. 162, Chicago

BECOME AN INTERIOR DECORATOR

A Dignified, Exclusive Profession which is not overcrowded. Offers exceptional chance for lucrative career. Trained men and women in great demand on staffs of leading decorating houses. Salaries from $5,000 up attainable. Opens up opportunities for engaging in own business. Qualifies you expertly to serve your friends and save, by avoiding mistakes, hundreds of dollars in furnishing your own home. Enriches your knowledge of art. Easy to master under our fascinating method of instruction. Certificate awarded by approval State of N. Y. Operated by Arts and Decoration Magazine, the outstanding authority on the building and decorating of model homes. Established 1923. Write for information and splendid brochure — FREE.

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Make Money Wearing This FREE CAP

Just Wear This Beautiful Hand-Tailored FREE Cap and Make Big Money in Your Spare Time!

I want to give you a FREE Cap. I know your friends will be delighted with its class, style and fit and you will make a generous profit taking their orders. These caps are genuine hand-tailored made to individual measure. **Nine out of ten men will order right away.** Big profit on every sale.

$20 A DAY EASY FOR YOU *Send Name Quick—No Money* Allen made $40 in one day. Tobias made $17 in 4 hours. You can do as well. Send your name right away and I'll tell you how to make $20 a day, also secure a Taylor Cap for your use. Write at once.

J. W. Taylor, Pres., TAYLOR CAP MFRS., Dept. 31-O, Cincinnati, Ohio

REGAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT CO. M-3
3211 W. Grand Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

I am interested in the Regal Octofone. You may send FREE complete information.

Name.....

Address.....

FREE! This Nerve Chart

If you will mail the coupon below, this nerve center and vertebrae chart, showing how the nerves radiate from your spinal column to all organs of the body, will be mailed to you without one cent of expense. It is a chart which should be in every home.

Where is that PAIN?

It may be in the neck, back, hips, stomach, liver, legs or arms—wherever it is the chart will help to show you the location and cause of your ailment.

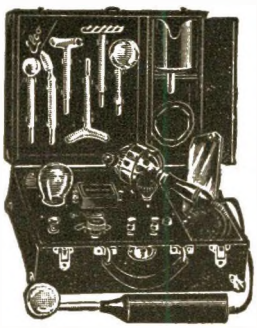
Stop that Pain

By Relieving the Cause with

Violet Ray — Vibration Ozone — Medical Electricity

The Four Greatest Curative Powers Generated by This

Great New Invention!



Elco Health Generators at last are ready for you! If you want more health—greater power to enjoy the pleasures and delights about you, or if more beauty is your desire—*write!* Ask for the book on these inventions which has just been prepared. It will be sent to you without cost. It tells you how Elco Health Generators aid you in leaving the lethargy and hopelessness of bad health and weakness behind forever. Re-vitalize yourself. Bring back energy. Be wholly alive. Write today!

Here's What Elco Users Say—

"Wouldn't take $1000 for my Elco." "Has done me more good in 2 weeks than doctors did in three years." "Cured my Rheumatism." "My Eczema gone." "Cured my stomach trouble." "Cured my weakness." "Now I sleep soundly all night." "Thanks to Elco, my strength and vigor are back." "No more pain." "Colds never bother me now." "Chronic Constipation banished."

Elco **Electric Health Generators**

These great new inventions generate Violet Ray, Vibration, Electricity and Ozone—combined or separate. They operate on the electric light in your home or on their own motive power at less than .50 cents per year. Elco Health Generators are positively the only instruments which can give you in one outfit Electricity, Violet Ray—Vibration and Ozone—the four greatest curative agents. Send the coupon below. Get the Free Book NOW!

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MAIL COUPON for FREE BOOK

Do not put this paper down without sending the coupon. Don't go on as you are with pains and with almost no life and energy. You owe it to yourself to be a better man or woman. You were put here to enjoy life—not just to drag through it. So do not rest another day until you have put your name on the coupon here. That will bring the whole story of these great new inventions. Do it today—now.

Health Power Beauty

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2322 Indiana Avenue — Dept. 11-42 — Chicago

Please send me your free book, "Health—Power—Beauty" and full information of your 10-day Free Trial Offer.

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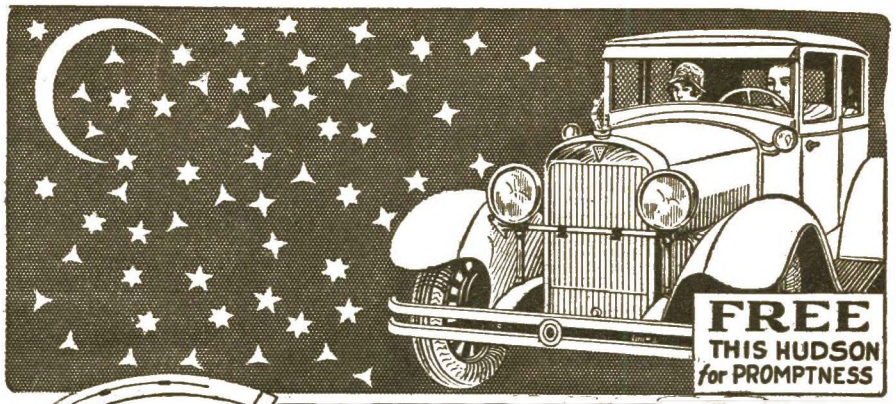

FIND THE LUCKY Stars

WIN $1000.00

Anyone with a sharp eye may win this **big cash prize of $1000.00** and in addition a **brand new Hudson Coach** for promptness, if on time — or $2400 in all. Why not you? Think of having a **new Hudson Coach** given you for your very own, and **$1000** in cash to do with as you wish, or if you prefer, **$2400** in all.

Sixteen Big Prizes

You've always heard of Lucky Stars, here's your chance to find them and enjoy the Good Luck they bring. There are four kinds of Stars in the group—three-pointed, four-pointed, five-pointed, and six-pointed. Which of these four kinds are the Lucky Stars? A line connecting all the lucky stars will form a horseshoe. When you find the group which forms the horseshoe you can thank your Lucky Stars.

THIS IS NOT A MAGAZINE CONTEST

Anyone Who Can Solve Puzzles May Win

To quickly advertise the name and products of the Paris-American Pharmacal Company and make them better known we are dividing our profits and absolutely giving away 16 BIG CASH PRIZES, ranging from $1000 down, and a NEW HUDSON COACH for promptness—if the first prize winner is on time. What's still more—we will reward hundreds of others with $1.25 worth of our products, and duplicate prizes will be given on all awards in case of final ties. It costs you nothing to solve this puzzle. You do not have to subscribe to any magazine or secure any subscriptions to win any of the 16 BIG CASH PRIZES, ranging from $1000 down, or the Hudson Coach for promptness, with the $1000 Cash FIRST PRIZE. Neither is it necessary to sell anything.

***If you find the* LUCKY STARS *cut out this puzzle and* SEND YOUR ANSWER QUICK**

Some sharp-eyed person is going to win the $1000 cash and the Hudson too, if on time. WHY NOT YOU? The Hudson, remember, is a prize for PROMPTNESS, if you win the $1000 you want to get the Hudson too. SEND YOUR ANSWER TODAY. We will let you know at once how close you are to winning, how to get the **$1000.00 cash** first prize and make the Hudson yours; there will be no delay in giving you your award for solving this puzzle, so mail your answer AT ONCE.

PARIS-AMERICAN PHARMACAL CO., Dept. 291, Fifth and Court Ave., Des Moines, Iowa

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TRAVEL FOR UNCLE SAM

Be RAILWAY POSTAL CLERK, $158-$225 month; travel, see your country. Short hours, pleasant work, paid vacations, steady—no strikes. Experience unnecessary. For details, write Norton Inst., 1402 Temple Court, Denver, Colo.

I'll Pay Your Bills

No investment needed — I furnish all capital and go 50-50 with my partners.

and give you a steady income for the rest of your life, if you'll take care of my business in your locality. No experience needed. Full or spare time. You don't invest one cent, just be my local partner. Make $15.00 a day easy. Ride in a Chrysler Sedan I furnish and distribute teas, coffee, spices, extracts, things people eat. I furnish everything including world's finest super sales outfit. Lowest prices. Big permanent repeat business. Quality guaranteed by $25,000.00 bond.

GET CHRYSLER COACH

This is part of my FREE outfit to producers. It is yours to keep—no contest.

GET FOOD PRODUCTS

I'll send big case of highest quality products, 32 full size packages of home necessities.

Write At Once

Write quick for full information. With person I select as my partner, I go 50-50. Get my amazing offer for your locality. Write or Wire.

Chest of Food Products to my Representatives

C. W. VAN DE MARK

Dept. 913-BB, 117 Duane St. Cincinnati, Ohio

How I Lost 97 Pounds

Before 279 lbs.

I weighed 279 lbs.!

After I had tried many ways to reduce, a medical advisor of one of America's leading insurance companies told me of a new way . . . a natural way, pleasant and healthful. No dangerous drugs, no tiresome courses in dieting or exercise; no thyroid or glandular extracts, no sweat baths, lotions, soaps or creams. It was easy, natural and absolutely safe.

Send your name and address and I will send you all particulars at absolutely no cost or obligation to you.

Today 182 lbs.

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BUNIONS GONE IN 15 DAYS

I end bunions with my new Pedodyne Solvent treatment. Pain stops almost instantly. Actual reduction of the enlarged growth starts so fast that your next pair of shoes may be a size smaller—often two sizes smaller. It's perfectly marvelous and you can prove it by actual test.

TRY IT AT MY RISK

Just send your name and address so that we can arrange for you to try Pedodyne on your own bunion and prove the quick, sure amazing results. No obligations. Address

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GET RID OF YOUR FAT

Free Trial Treatment

sent on request. Ask for my "pay-when-reduced" offer. I have successfully reduced thousands of persons, without starvation diet or burdensome exercise, often at a rapid rate.

Let me send you proof at my expense.

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Travel On "Uncle Sam's" Pay Roll

$1900 to $2700 A YEAR

Many Government Jobs Open to Women Mail Coupon Today Sure

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Sirs: Rush to me without charge, (1) 32 page book describing Government jobs, (2) List of U. S. Government jobs now open to men and women 18 up. Tell me how to get a position.

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$2.00 DOWN

BALANCE EASY TERMS

HERE'S your chance to own that genuine Model T Corona you've wanted—on the easiest terms ever offered—at ONE-THIRD OFF regular price! Complete in every detail; back spacer, etc., NEW MACHINE GUARANTEE. Recognized the world over as the finest, strongest, sturdiest, portable built. Only a limited number of these splendid machines available. To get one, you must act now!

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Experience the joy this personal writing portable typewriter can give you! Use it 10 days free! See how easy it is to run and the splendidly typed letters it turns out. Ideal for the office desk, home, traveling. Small, compact, light, convenient. Don't send out letters, reports, bills in poor handwriting when you can have this Corona at such a low price or on such easy terms.

Carrying Case Included—If You Act Now

Leatheroid carrying case, oiler, instructions free on this offer Send no money—just the coupon. Without delay or red tape we will send you the Corona. Try it 10 days. If you decide to keep it, send us only $2—then $3 a month until our special price of $39.90 is paid (cash price $36.40). Now is the time to buy. This offer may never be repeated. Mail coupon now.

MONEY SAVED *By Using This Coupon*

Smith Typewriter Sales Corp.
[Corona Division]
469 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Dept. 313

Ship me the Corona, F. O. B. Chicago. On arrival I'll deposit $2 with express agent. If I keep machine, I'll send you $3 a month until the $37.80 balance of $39.90 price is paid; the title to remain with you until then. I am to have 10 days to try the typewriter. If I decide not to keep it, I will repack and return to express agent, who will return my $2. You are to give your standard guarantee

Name .....

Address .....

Employed by .....

Now You Can Reduce 2 to 4 Lbs. in a Night

Eat what you please
Wear what you please
Do what you please
Take no risky medicine

Send the coupon for your first three Fayro Baths

Thousands of smart women have found this easy way to take off 2 to 4 pounds once or twice a week. These women take refreshing Fayro baths in the privacy of their own homes.

Fayro is the concentrate of the same natural mineral salts that make effective the waters of twenty-two hot springs of America, England and Continental Europe. For years the spas and hot springs bathing resorts have been the retreat of fair women and well groomed men.

Excess weight has been removed, skins have been made more lovely, bodies more shapely and minds brighter.

The Hot Springs are now Brought to You

A study of the analyses of the active ingredients of the waters from twenty-two of the most famous springs have taught us the secret of their effectiveness. You can now have all these benefits in your own bath. Merely put Fayro into your hot bath. It dissolves rapidly. You will notice and enjoy the pungent fragrance of its balsam oils and clean salts.

Then, Fayro, by opening your pores and stimulating perspiration, forces lazy body cells to sweat out surplus fat and bodily poisons. Add Fayro to your bath at night and immediately you will lose from 2 to 4 pounds in an easy, refreshing and absolutely harmless manner.

Your physician will tell you that Fayro is certain to do the work and that it is absolutely harmless.

Fayro will refresh you and help your body throw off worn out fat and bodily poisons. Your skin will be clearer and smoother. You will sleep better after your Fayro bath and awaken feeling as though you had enjoyed a week's vacation.

Lose Weight Where You Most Want To

Fayro reduces weight generally, but you can also concentrate its effect on abdomen, hips, legs, ankles, chin, or any part of the body you may wish.

Results Are Immediate

Weigh yourself before and after your Fayro bath. You will find you have lost from 2 to 4 pounds. And a few nights later when you again add Fayro to your bath, you will once more reduce your weight. Soon you will be the correct weight for your height. No need to deny yourself food you really want. No need for violent exercise. No need for drugs or medicines. Merely a refreshing Fayro bath in the privacy of your own home.

Try Fayro at our Risk

The regular price of Fayro is $1.00 a package. With the coupon you get 3 full sized packages and an interesting booklet "Health and Open Pores" for $2.50 plus the necessary postage. Send no money. Pay the postman. Your money refunded instantly if you want it.

If each healthful bath of Fayro does not reduce your weight from 2 to 4 pounds, we will refund your money without a question. You risk nothing. Clip the coupon and mail it to-day.

Fayro, Inc. MC-2-29
821 Locust St., Pittsburgh, Pa.

Send me 3 full sized boxes of Fayro in plain package. I will pay the postman $2.50 plus the necessary postage. It is understood that if I do not get satisfactory results with the first package I use, I am to return the other two and you will refund all of my money at once.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

If you live outside the United States send International Money Order with coupon.

HERE'S PROOF

Read what Fayro Baths have done for others

"Three Fayro baths reduced my weight 11 pounds in 8 days. I feel better than I have felt for years."

"I weigh 16 pounds less and feel younger and sleep better. Fayro is wonderful."

"My double chin vanished in the magic of Fayro baths."

"My hips were always too prominent until I commenced Fayro baths. I have lost 12 pounds."

"Thank you for Fayro. I lost 14 pounds in three weeks; feel better and certainly look better."

"Since childhood my thick ankles have always been a source of embarrassment. Fayro baths have reduced them beautifully. Thank you very much."

For obvious reasons, names are not quoted, but every letter published has been authorized and names and addresses will be given on request.

H A V E A C A M E L

Camels, of course

The more you demand of a cigarette, the quicker you come to

CAMELS