DETECTIVE
FICTION WEEKLY

NOV. 23
10¢
Canada 15¢

With Thrilling True Stories

FORMERLY FLYNN'S

Lester Takes the Cake

by Erle Stanley Gardner

A Leith Novelette!

Great Stories by

J. Allan Dunn

Harold de Polo

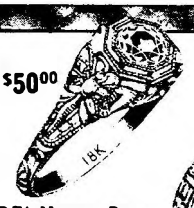
Charles Somerville

and others

Newest Styles
Dignified Credit at Saving Prices

10 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

12 Months to Pay



$50.00

DT1-Newest Butterfly design of 18K Solid White Gold engagement ring set with sparkling, genuine blue-white diamond. $4.08 a mo.

$29.50

DT28-Gorgeously hand engraved 18K Solid White Gold "Bridal Blossom" wedding ring; 3 fiery genuine blue-white diamonds. $2.37 a mo.

$75

DT23-Modern, square-prong engagement ring in new "step" design 18K Solid White Gold set with specially selected dazzling, genuine blue-white diamond. $6.16 a month.

$50

DT7-New, massive, gentleman's ring of 14K Solid Green Gold and 18K Solid White Gold top; with a flashing, genuine blue-white diamond. $4.08 a month.

Sent for $1 Balance 12 MONTHS TO PAY

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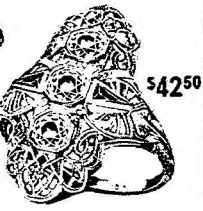
DT27-The "Bridal Blossom"—Hand pierced lace design engagement ring of 18K Solid White Gold, genuine blue-white diamond of rare brilliance. $3.46 a mo.

$48.50

DT12-Dazzling cluster of 7 perfectly matched genuine blue white diamonds; hand pierced 18K Solid White Gold lady's mounting. Looks like $750 solitaire. $3.96 a mo.



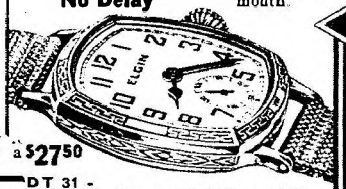
$42.50

DT10-Gorgeous lace design hand pierced 18K Solid White Gold dinner ring; 3 fiery, genuine blue-white diamonds, 2 French-blue sapphires. $3.46 a mo.

$29.50

DT26-Latest style, modernistic effect 18K Solid White Gold lady's ring; fiery genuine blue-white diamond. $2.37 a month.

No Red Tape
No Delay



$27.50

DT 31-Nationally known **ELGIN** or **WALTHAM**! Handsomely engraved new style case. Guaranteed Elgin or Waltham movement. **Warranted 14K White or Green Gold filled 25-year case.** Latest style flexible mesh wrist band to match. $2.21 a mo.

$37.50

DT8-Diamond wrist watch. 14K Solid White Gold engraved case; **2 genuine diamonds, 8 emeralds or sapphires.** Guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Pierced flexible bracelet with sapphires or emeralds to match. $3.04 a month.

ONE FREE

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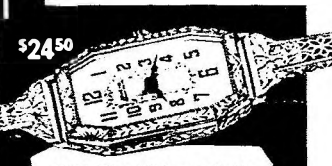
DT22-Gentleman's massive, hand engraved ring of 14K Solid White Gold. Imported black Onyx with a genuine diamond and any carved initial or emblem desired. $2.21 mo.



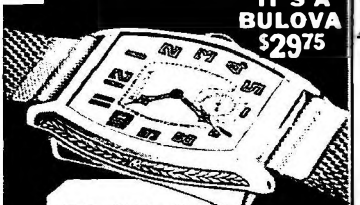
$24.50

DT9-The "Princess Pat"—14K Solid White Gold engraved case, guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Engraved genuine "Wristacrat" flexible bracelet to match. $1.96 a month.

$27.50

DT19-Nationally known 15-jewel **WALTHAM** movement; 20-year warranted engraved White Gold filled, 12 size, thin model, decagon case. Tested and regulated. White Gold filled knife, fine Waldemar chain. All complete in handsome gift case. $2.21 a mo.

IT'S A BULOVA $29.75



DT5-Nationally advertised guaranteed 15-jewel Gent's BULOVA watch. White Gold filled case, "dust-tite" protector; radium dial and hands; latest style woven wrist band to match. $2.39 a mo.

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ESTABLISHED 1895

ROYAL DIAMOND AND WATCH CO.

Address Dept. 42-Y, 170 Broadway, New York

IT ISN'T SUCH A BUM WORLD AFTER ALL!!

WHEN YOU WORK UNDER A SIMON LEGREE STRAW BOSS WITH A TIME CLOCK STARING AT YOU ALL THE TIME—

AND YOU NEVER HAVE ANYTHING IN YOUR POCKETS EXCEPT A HOLE —

AND BILLS KEEP PILING UP ON YOU TILL YOU CAN'T SEE HOW IN THE SAM HILL YOU'RE EVER GOING TO GET OUT OF DEBT—

AND THEN YOU FIND IN A LITTLE BOOK THE KEY TO SECRETS WHICH HAVE MADE THOUSANDS COMFORTABLY WELL OFF AND EVEN RICH—

AND YOU START USING THOSE SECRETS YOURSELF AND LEARN WHAT IT IS TO REALLY MAKE BIG MONEY AS A SALESMAN —

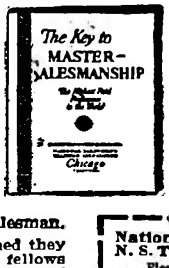
OH FELLERS IT ISN'T SUCH A BUM WORLD AFTER ALL

When Men Raise Their Pay $3,000 to $7,000 a Year ...*After Reading This Little Free Book!*

A MARVELOUS little free book is bringing vital news to thousands of men today and making momentous changes in their lives. Just sixty-four pages—about seven ounces of paper and printers' ink; but there are thousands of men holding down big-pay jobs all over the United States and Canada with earnings running up to $10,000 a year, and even bigger, who started by reading this great book.

Take, for instance, Frank J. Walsh, of Ludlow, Massachusetts. Just a few years ago, Walsh was struggling along on $1,000 a year. In just one evening, reading this little free volume, he made the change in his life that raised his pay over 600%

About the same time that Walsh was getting his start two other men—C. V. Champion of Danville, Illinois, and R. B. Hansen of Akron, Ohio—were reading it too. Both were factory hands at the time—but today both of them are *presidents* of prosperous and growing companies with incomes over $10,000 a year! Just lately a California cowboy named William Shore spent an evening reading this book, in a ranchhouse. It wasn't many months later that he told us of one week when he made $525 clear, as a salesman.



Men from all walks of life—men who never dreamed they could master the secrets of salesmanship—regular fellows just like anybody else, without any extra advantages of money or education—that's what these men are. This little book, and the marvelous N. S. T. A. Demonstration Method, are specially planned to help just that kind of men—ambitious average fellows. The N. S. T. A. does something which people said could not be done—*it makes* salesmen—successful high power earners, out of average men with normal every-day brains. It has proved that salesmen do not have to be "born." It teaches, in easy, yet thorough lessons, right in your home, the secrets which great salesmen have spent years on the road to learn.

You can't keep a good man down—not if he really is a good man and will take advantage of his opportunities to rise in life. This book, "The Key to Master Salesmanship" brings ambitious men the chance they've all been looking for—the chance to get away from dull routine timeclock jobs at low pay. It shows them the way to a free employment service which gives N. S. T. A. members the pick of over 50,000 high-pay jobs every year.

Right now this book, "The Key to Master Salesmanship," which showed these men how to get started on the road to success and independence, will be mailed as a gift to any ambitious man—absolutely free and without obligation. Why not see for yourself what amazing pay-raising secrets it contains? There is no better way to invest a two cent stamp! Simply fill out and mail the coupon to us today.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION

Dept. S-752, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Illinois

National Salesmen's Training Association, Dept. S-752, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Please send me free and without obligation my copy of "The Key to Master Salesmanship," and full details of your Free Employment Service and other special Earn While You Learn features.

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City.....State.....

Age.....Occupation.....

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XLVI — *Saturday, November 23, 1929* — NUMBER 1

NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

TRUE STORIES

SERIAL

FEATURES AND FACTS

This Magazine is on sale every Wednesday throughout the United States and Canada

THE RED STAR NEWS COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N. Y., and
LONDON: HACHETTE & CIE., 16-17 King William Street, Charing Cross, W.C. 2
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Entered as second-class matter September 4, 1924, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879

Classified Advertising

The Purpose of this Department is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

Classified Advertising Rate in The Munsey Combination Comprising:

All-Story (Combined with Munsey) - - - - - - -
Argosy - - - - - - - -
Detective Fiction Weekly -
Minimum space four lines.

Combination line rate **$3.00** less 2 per cent cash discount.

Dec. 28th Classified Forms Close Nov. 30th.

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UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY—$100 WEEKLY SELLING BETTER QUALITY, ALL-WOOL, union-made-to-measure suits and topcoats at $23.50 and $31.50. Build big repeat business. Liberal bonus for producers. Large swatch samples FREE. W. Z. GIBSON, INC., 500 Throop, Dept. K-409, Chicago.

BIGGEST SURPRISE OFFER EVER MADE. BE SURE TO ANSWER THIS AD. My line of Soaps, Coffee, Tea, Spices, Toilet Articles, Household Specialties, pays you bigger profits. M. G. BOTH, President, 2714 Dodier, St. Louis, Mo.

WE START YOU WITHOUT A DOLLAR. 150% PROFIT. SOAPS, EXTRACTS, PERFUMES, TOILET GOODS. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY. FREE SAMPLE CASE. AUTO FURNISHED. CARNATION CO., 140, ST. LOUIS, MO.

MISCELLANEOUS

YOU READ THESE LITTLE ADVERTISEMENTS. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read *your message*—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe *your own services*? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Munsey Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

HELP WANTED—MALE

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INVENTORS: WE HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS 30 YEARS. IF YOUR INVENTION OR PATENT HAS MERIT, SEND DETAILS OR MODEL, OR WRITE. ADAM FISHER MFG. CO., 249 ENRIGHT, ST. LOUIS, MO.

MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

MONEY MADE IN MICHIGAN POTATOES. $10 DOWN NOW AND EASY TERMS BUYS LAND NEAR MARKETS, LAKES, STREAMS. WRITE TODAY. SWIGART & CO., M-601, 32 NO. STATE ST. BLDG., CHICAGO.

RUPTURE IS NOT A TEAR

NO BREAK TO HEAL

Rupture is not a tear, but purely a muscular weakness in the abdominal wall. Trusses merely brace these muscles but do not strengthen them—on the contrary, the gouging of the ordinary truss pad often increases this weakness as it tends to shut off circulation of the blood.

STUART'S ADHESIF PLAPAO-PADS are entirely different—being mechanico-chemico applicators—made self-adhesive purposely to keep the muscle-tonic called "Plapao" continuously applied to the affected parts, and to minimize danger of slipping and painful friction. The adhesive fabric is soft as velvet and clings to the body without straps, buckles or springs. Easy to apply—comfortable—inexpensive. Awarded Gold Medal, Rome, Grand Prix, Paris, Honorable Mention, Panama Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, etc. For almost a quarter century stacks of sworn testimonials from many different countries report success—without delay from work. The epidermatic absorption of Plapao utilizing "mechanico-chemico therapy" tends toward a natural process of recovery, *after which no further use for a truss.*

Stop wasting your time and money on old-fashioned devices. Learn how to close the hernial opening as nature intended, so the rupture can't come down. Send no money; just mail the Free Test coupon below. For your own good—write today—tomorrow may be too late.

FREE TEST COUPON

Plapao Laboratories, Inc., 449 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Send me a Free 10 day test supply of the remedial factor Plapao and 48-page illustrated book on Rupture; no charge for this now or later.

Name.....

Address.....

"How I Licked Wretched Old Age at 63"

I Quit Getting up Nights—Banished Foot and Leg Pains . . . Got Rid of Rheumatic Pains and Constipation . . . Improved Embarrassing Health Faults . . . Found Renewed Vitality.

"At 61, I thought I was through. I blamed old age, but it never occurred to me to actually fight back. I was only half-living, getting up nights . . . embarrassed in my own home . . . constipated . . . constantly tormented by aches and pains. At 62 my condition became almost intolerable. I had about given up hope when a doctor recommended your treatment. Then at 63, it seemed that I shook off 20 years almost overnight."

Forty—The Danger Age

These are the facts, just as I learned them. In 65% of all men, the vital prostate gland slows up soon after 40. No pain is experienced, but as this distressing condition continues, sciatica, backache, severe bladder weakness, constipation, etc., often develop.

PROSTATE TROUBLE

These are frequently the signs of prostate trouble. Now thousands suffer these handicaps needlessly! For a prominent American Scientist after seven years of research, discovered a new, safe way to stimulate the prostate gland to normal health and activity in many cases. This new hygiene is worthy to be called a notable achievement of the age.

A National Institution for Men Past 40

Its success has been startling, its growth rapid. This new hygiene is rapidly gaining in national prominence. The institution in Steubenville has now reached large proportions. Scores and even hundreds of letters pour in every day, and in many cases reported results have been little short of amazing. In case after case, men have reported that they have felt ten years younger in six days. Now physicians in every part of the country are using and recommending this treatment.

Quick as is the response to this new hygiene, it is actually a pleasant, natural relaxation, involving no drugs, medicine or electric rays whatever. The scientist explains this discovery and tells why many men are old at forty in a new book now sent free, in 24-page, illustrated form. Send for it. Every man past forty should know the true meaning of these frank facts. No cost or obligation is incurred. But act at once before this free edition is exhausted. Simply fill in your name below, tear off and mail.

THE ELECTRO THERMAL COMPANY
3023 Morris Avenue **Steubenville, Ohio**

If you live West of the Rockies, mail your inquiry to
The Electro Thermal Co.,
303 Van Nuys Building, Dept. 30-Z
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

THE ELECTRO THERMAL CO.,
3023 Morris Ave., Steubenville, Ohio.
Name.....
Address.....
City..... State.....

$1,000 Reward!

In a dirty, forlorn shack by the river's edge they found the mutilated body of Genevieve Martin. Her pretty face was swollen and distorted. Marks on the slender throat showed that she been brutally choked to death. Who had committed this ghastly crime?

Crimes like this are being solved every day by Finger Print Experts. We read in the papers of their exploits, hear of the mysteries they solve, the rewards they win. Finger Print Experts are the heroes of the hour.

More Trained Men Needed

The demand for trained men by governments, states, cities, detective agencies, corporations, and private bureaus is becoming greater every day. Here is a real opportunity for YOU. Can you imagine a more fascinating line of work than this? Often life and death depend on finger print evidence—and big rewards go to the expert. Many experts earn regularly from $3,000 to $10,000 per year.

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Now, through this amazing new, simple course, you can learn the secrets of this science easily and quickly at home in your spare time. Any man with common school education and average ability can become a Finger Print Detective in surprisingly short time.

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IF YOU ACT QUICK—We will send you free and with no obligation whatsoever, a copy of the gripping, fascinating, confidential report Secret Service Operator No. 38 made to His Chief. Mail coupon NOW!

Write quickly for fully illustrated free book on Finger Prints which explains this wonderful training in detail. Don't wait. You may never see this announcement again! You assume no obligation. Mail coupon NOW—while this offer lasts!

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Address .....

.....*Age*.....

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME XLVI | SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1929 | NUMBER 1

"Robbed," yelled the clerk. "Grab him! Hold them both!"

Lester Takes the Cake

At Last Sergeant Ackley Gets His Chance to Trap Leith—He's Invited to a Gem Robbery

By Erle Stanley Gardner

CHAPTER I

Lemon Pie and Layer Cake

LESTER LEITH stretched forth a graceful arm and jabbed an impatient finger upon the electric bell button.

The bedroom door opened and disclosed a surprised valet.

"What is it, sir?"

Lester Leith motioned toward the window.

"Machine guns, Scuttle. I dreamt I was in a battle."

The valet grinned.

"Oh, that, sir, that's just an automatic riveter working on some steel framework next door."

"Scuttle, don't ever refer to anything that makes such an infernal racket as 'just an automatic riveter.' And, another thing. Don't look so damned cheerful. What time is it?"

"Nine o'clock, sir."

Lester Leith sat up in bed, reached languidly for a cigarette.

"Scuttle! Do you mean to tell me any one gets up at such an ungodly hour?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, indeed. So it seems. And not only do they get up, but they insist upon raising the devil with my sleep. What can we do about it, Scuttle?"

The valet leaned forward. His beady black eyes glistened like twin chunks of obsidian. His lips twisted eagerly.

"The crime news, sir. There's been a most wonderful crime, sir."

Lester Leith yawned.

"Tut, tut, Scuttle. I like to read of crime during the evening for intellectual enjoyment. But now's no time for thought. It's the middle of the night. Nine o'clock in the morning! How horrible! How atrocious!"

The valet lowered his voice, made the tones seductive.

"A ten-thousand-dollar diamond necklace, sir."

"Indeed, Scuttle. Now you *do* begin to interest me. Am I to infer that this diamond necklace disappeared and has not been recovered?"

The valet nodded, rubbed his hands, twisted his great sweep of black mustache in an oily smirk.

"Yes, sir. And the police can't find it. It vanished right under their noses."

Lester Leith straightened, threw back the covers.

"Indeed, Scuttle, I *am* interested. Give me the details."

But the valet was suddenly wary.

"Your bath first, sir. Then some coffee, sir, and a little crisp toast and bacon, with just a bit of that tart marmalade, sir, and then you'll sit in your chair by the fireplace and I'll give you all the clippings, sir."

Leith yawned, stretched, nodded, grinned.

The valet watched him narrowly through hostile, squinted eyes. Did Lester Leith realize that the supposed valet was, in reality, a police spy? Did he know that the reason for switching the conversation to the living room was because there was a cunningly hidden dictograph concealed there? That every word spoken within that room was relayed two floors down where Sergeant Ackley sat with two police stenographers, waiting, tense, expectant, drawing the net ever closer?

But if Lester Leith knew he gave no sign. He tubbed, rubbed down, shaved, dressed, ate, and sprawled in the big easy chair, directly under the eager disk of the concealed dictograph.

"You were mentioning a crime, Scuttle?"

The valet pussyfooted his huge form to a place where his voice would register clearly over the hidden wires and purred an eager acquiescence.

"Yes, sir. At Goldman's, sir."

"Tut, tut, not Goldman, the jeweler?"

"Yes, sir. Goldman, the jeweler."

"And what happened? Ah, I see you have the clippings in your hand!"

"Yes, sir. Just a moment, sir. Shall I read them or shall I give you a summary of the facts?"

"Give me a running summary of

the facts, Scuttle, and then I'll glance over the clippings if the crime seems to have its points of interest."

"It all started over George Cripely, sir. He was employed at Goldman's, and he was discharged. They rather fancied he'd been getting some of the smaller stones at rather less than cost. At any rate, sir, he was discharged."

Lester reached for a cigarette.

"At rather less than cost, eh, Scuttle? Come, come, you're developing tact, diplomacy. Too bad our dear friend, Sergeant Ackley, couldn't have heard that!"

And the valet, pausing only long enough to flick his boiled-lobster eyes toward the spot where the dictograph was concealed, nodded, wet his lips with the tip of a nervous tongue, and went on:

"Yes, sir. Cripely was discharged, sir. Then he returned to the store yesterday, sir. He had with him a companion, sir, a Miss Nell Spratt. He walked up to the counter, bold as brass, sir, and said he wanted to purchase a diamond necklace.

"The girl was rather striking, sir. Very striking, in fact, sir. From the newspaper account, one gathers that the employees all watched her. She had a beautiful figure, and the newspaper states that—let's see just how it was the newspaper did state it, sir—ah, yes, here it is: 'The suspect was accompanied by a companion whose well molded figure had taken full advantage of latest styles to proclaim itself to the masculine world.'"

Lester Leith chuckled.

"Rather neatly turned, eh, Scuttle?"

"The expression, sir?"

"No, the figure."

The valet glanced up sharply, but Lester Leith's lazy-lidded eyes seemed devoid of guile.

"Yes, sir, so I gathered, sir."

"And then what happened?"

"The clerk brought out the diamond necklaces, sir. He had, of course, no means of knowing who Cripely's companion was. And she carried a package, sir, a package that she sat down on the counter. From subsequent events, sir, it seemed that the package contained an alarm clock.

"Well, sir, as I said, sir, Cripely looked at the necklaces. The companion glanced at them, over his shoulder, picked out several for comparison.

"And the store policeman came on the job, sir."

CHAPTER II

An Alarm Sounds

LESTER LEITH, who had been listening to the account, blowing smoke, the while, straightened in his chair.

"What's that, Scuttle? The store policeman?"

"Yes, sir. You see, sir, on account of Cripely having been discharged, and on account of the suspicions that the management held, sir, the clerk pressed the button which summoned the special officer on duty at the store, sir.

"That officer wasn't intrusive. There was a chance Cripely held no hard feelings and had brought a very valuable customer to the store, sir. Such things have happened, sir. So the officer merely watched the couple.

"Well, sir, Cripely became more and more attentive to the necklaces. The woman seemed to lose interest and wandered about the store. And then the package, which had been left on the counter, sir, let out the very devil of a noise, sir. It was the alarm clock, sir. It had been wound and set, sir.

"Cripely grabbed the package, sir,

ripped off the wrappings and silenced the alarm clock. Naturally, when he did that, he tossed the necklaces down to the counter, sir.

"And that was where the clerk was wise, sir, or else stupid, sir. They can't tell. For he immediately inspected the necklaces. And one of them was an imitation, sir.

"He made a sign to the officer, and the special officer placed Cripely and his companion under arrest. Cripely was searched, but they couldn't find any trace of the necklace.

"And they detained the woman, of course. Finally they were all sent to headquarters, and there the woman was searched by a matron. The search was most complete. Yet they failed to find the necklace."

The valet finished his recital, gazed with fixed intensity at Lester Leith.

"Ah, yes, Scuttle. Yes indeed, rather strange. You made a remark I didn't quite gather. You said that the clerk was either quite clever or quite stupid when he called the officer and when he inspected the necklaces. Just what did you mean, Scuttle?"

"I meant this, sir. The clerk might have been the one to make the substitution. No one thought of searching the clerk, sir. You see, because Cripely had been discharged, he was somewhat under suspicion, sir. And the clerk was considered absolutely honest.

"But Cripely claims he had telephoned the store that he was coming in with a customer, asked for a commission. He claims he talked with this clerk who waited on him. And he claims that the clerk, seeking to capitalize on the circumstances, had switched necklaces as soon as the attention of every one was distracted by the alarm clock, and that the clerk had pocketed the original.

"Of course, the clerk was running around in the excitement that followed the arrest. And, of course, he had ample opportunity to have ditched the necklace. Cripely didn't, and yet they couldn't find any trace of the necklace on Cripely or on his companion."

Lester Leith blew a smoke ring. Then he blew a smaller smoke ring through the first. Once more his chuckle rattled through the tense silence of the room.

"I see, Scuttle. And if the clerk had waited until after Cripely had left the place before making his discovery, the police would never have suspected him. It was only when they failed to find the gems on Cripely and knew that he had had no chance to dispose of them that they began to heed Cripely's story and suspect the clerk? Is that it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yes indeed, Scuttle. And the further fact that the other suspect was a woman. That complicated matters. The store hardly cared to assume the responsibility of having its special officer search the woman. They were almost forced to wait until they got to a matron."

"Yes, sir."

"And now the police feel that there may be something in Cripely's story. They say it was a physical impossibility for him to have ditched the necklace anywhere.

"I see, Scuttle. They searched the package that the alarm clock was in, of course?"

"Yes indeed, sir. They even took the alarm clock to pieces and searched it."

Silence fell on the room. Lester Leith continued to blow smoke rings.

"I have heard," he said, after awhile, "of crooks pulling a swindle

something like that. One of them chews gum and sticks the gum to the under side of the counter. The other pushes a gem up into the gum. Then, later on, he comes back to the store and pulls the gum from the counter."

The valet snorted.

"Old stuff, sir! The police have gone over the under sides of the counters. And you've got to remember, sir, that this was no mere isolated stone. This was a necklace of diamonds. Not very large stones, to be sure, yet fairly large and well matched."

Lester Leith nodded, yawned.

"Well, what other crimes have we?"

The valet's face darkened.

"Nothing, sir. I thought you'd be interested in that crime, sir."

"Why, Scuttle?"

"Because you always are, sir, in crimes where the loot isn't recovered, and—er—"

Lester Leith finished for him.

"And Sergeant Ackley thinks I solve such crimes, go out and locate the missing loot, hi-jack the criminal out of it and return to my life of lazy indolence, eh, Scuttle?"

The valet squirmed, gulped.

"Yes, sir. That's about the size of it, sir."

He waited for further comment, but a series of twisting smoke rings that drifted toward the ceiling was his only response.

"Do you think the clerk was guilty?" asked the valet, after a bit.

Lester Leith yawned.

"It's hard to say, Scuttle. This is once where the newspaper hasn't given sufficient details to interest me. And there are so many ways in which Cripely could have committed the crime that it's hard to tell just what did happen."

"So many ways in which Cripely could have committed the crime!" echoed the astonished valet. "Why, sir, the police simply can't figure out a single way in which he could have possibly committed the crime. That's what makes them suspect the clerk."

"Yes?" drawled Lester Leith. "How about the woman? She was wandering all around the store. She wasn't searched until some time later. Cripely might have slipped the stones to her."

"But the clerk swears he is certain the stones were all genuine up until the moment the alarm clock went off. And, while they didn't search the woman at once, sir, they did keep her under such close watch that it was impossible for her to have slipped anything from her person, or to have planted anything."

Lester Leith stretched, yawned, threw the cigarette into the fireplace.

"It is really too early to take any great interest in anything. And I don't like the sound of that damned riveter. I'm afraid I shall have to go out—and I don't know where to go.

"By the way, Scuttle, one point. Was that imitation necklace rather cleverly made, or was it very crude?"

The valet jumped, snapped to rigid attention.

"Why do you ask that question, sir?"

"Because I want to know, Scuttle."

The valet flushed.

"That's one of the peculiar features of the case, sir. The imitation was so crude that it's hardly conceivable any one could have been imposed on by it even for a minute. It was nothing but glass, sir, strung on a thread, and the particles of glass weren't even cut to make them glisten. It was a frightfully crude piece of work."

Lester Leith reached for another cigarette, lit it, inhaled a great drag and sent twin streams of blue smoke pouring from his nostrils.

"Ah, yes," he drawled, and there was something in his tone that was like the purr of a stalking cat approaching its prey. "Do you know, I rather fancied as much."

"But," protested the valet, "that's the point that baffles the police."

"It would," smokily agreed Leith.

"But," continued the valet, conscious of that spying contrivance which reported the conversation to the listening police, "if they were going to use an imitation at all, why not use a good one? Whoever used that imitation must have used it to cover up the theft. Why not put in an imitation that would not have been discovered for an hour or two, perhaps a day or two?"

CHAPTER III

Lester Makes a Wager

LESTER LEITH blew a smoke ring, traced its perimeter with the tip of a well manicured forefinger.

"You haven't answered my question, sir," muttered the valet, reproachfully.

Lester Leith grinned.

"I haven't, have I, Scuttle?"

The face of the spurious valet purpled with rage.

"Probably because you don't know," he gritted. "It's damned easy to sit there and blow smoke rings. You can sit in an easy chair and patronize the police, but if you were put in their place you couldn't do any better!"

Lester Leith half turned to one side to survey his enraged servant.

"Tut, tut, Scuttle. There seems to be a certain feeling in your remarks. One would gather that you had a certain sympathy with the police."

The valet, conscious of his slip, reminded also that the critical ears of his superior had been listening in on the conversation, became suddenly humble, cringing:

"I'm sorry, sir. I didn't mean it that way, sir, but I have a beastly headache, sir, and I'm a little nervous. I couldn't help but think that you hadn't made a single constructive suggestion. In fact, sir, you never do. You read the newspaper accounts of crime, sir, but, if you find any solution, you don't communicate it, sir. You use it yourself—er—that is, sir, you keep it to yourself."

Leith smiled.

"Therefore, you think that I haven't found anything out? H'mmm! Well, now, Scuttle, I'll just make a bit of a wager with you."

"Yes, sir?"

"Yes, I'll just wager I could go into that same jewelry store, with a female companion, and work exactly the same crime on the same clerk, in the same manner. And I'll bet the police couldn't find a single clew, couldn't find the necklace I stole."

The valet gasped, then raised his voice so that no word of the incriminating conversation would be lost upon the ears of the stenographers in the police room below.

"Do — you — mean — that — you — would — steal — a — necklace?" he asked, pausing carefully between each word so there could be no possibility of talking too fast for the stenographers.

Lester Leith walked blithely into the trap he had avoided for so many weeks.

"I mean that exactly, Scuttle. I could go down to Goldman's, have a female companion, look at necklaces, steal one of the necklaces, and the

police, summoned instantly, of course, would be unable to find a trace of the gems. Of course, Scuttle, I would have to introduce a little variation, just a little. I wouldn't have my companion carry an alarm clock into the store. I would have her carry something else."

The coarse lips of the police spy quivered in their slavering anxiety.

"You mean to actually steal? Not to take as a joke, not to subsequently return, but to actually steal?"

Lester Leith sighed.

"Tut, tut, Scuttle, you're painfully obtuse this morning. Perhaps it's the early hours. Perhaps it's that automatic riveter. Yes, I said steal, and I meant steal. Of course, Scuttle, I'd want your word of honor that you wouldn't betray me."

The eager valet nodded.

"Oh, yes, sir, of course. That would go without saying."

Lester Leith smiled.

"Quite right. That would go without saying."

"You—er—you'd keep the diamond necklace, sir?"

"Of course I would. Come, come, there's no need for all this beating around the bush. For a long time you've really suspected I was the mysterious phantom hi-jacker that's been flitting around here in criminal circles, robbing crooks of their loot.

"You might as well admit it, Scuttle. Deep down in your heart you've felt that I had you read these crime clippings for a purpose. Come now, haven't you?"

The valet nodded.

"Yes, sir, I have. If you'll just confide in me, sir, I promise you that I'll assist you to the limit, sir. To hell with laws. They're made for the rich to usurp the poor. I wouldn't hesitate a minute to help you break the laws!"

Lester Leith sat bolt upright in his chair. He himself began to talk with slow, distinct articulation.

"Tut, tut, Scuttle. Let's not misunderstand one another. I am telling you nothing. I admit nothing. I only offer to wager you that I *could,* now mind you, I don't say that I *will,* I only say that I *could,* go to the same store and commit the same sort of a robbery."

The valet sneered.

"I thought so! Always leaving a loophole, always hedging. I offered you loyal support, and what do you give me? Nothing except a lot of cheap talk. Talk's cheap. All right, if you're so confident you could go down there and rob a diamond necklace, let's see you do it!"

Lester Leith hesitated.

"Go on," taunted the valet, his purple face thrust close, the lips twitching, the eyes glittering, the veins on the forehead corded into ridges. "Go on! You made your play. I'm calling you. I'll bet you couldn't do it. All you could do is talk about how it could be done. Let's see you actually *do* it! I'll accept your wager. Put up or shut up."

Lester Leith regarded his valet gravely.

"Scuttle, you forget yourself! I might offer to wager with you, but you are still my valet, and you must keep your place. I'm sorry now I mentioned the matter. But, since you seem so doubtful of my sincerity in the matter, I'll just wager you an even hundred dollars that I can and will go down there, take a diamond necklace, and the police will never be able to convict me."

"Done!" yelled the valet.

"Very well, Scuttle, it's done. But there's no need for so much noise, no

occasion for such an unseemly racket. And, of course, your attitude in this matter has become such that you'll understand a continuation of our relations is practically impossible.

"Your taunts, your insolence is hardly that which one expects from a servant in the way of respectful attention. This a servant must have to be valuable. Having lost that attitude, Scuttle, you have lost your value."

The valet blinked.

"Excuse me, please, sir. I assure you, if you overlook it this time I won't offend again. It was a mere slip, because I differed with you so strongly, sir. It's a physical impossibility to commit the crime, the way you outline it, sir. Why it couldn't be done on another jewelry store, to say nothing of being handled in the same way with the same clerk in Goldman's store, sir.

"And I felt so positive, sir, that I was perhaps a little out of place, sir. But I beg your pardon, sir."

Lester Leith sighed.

"For the present, Scuttle, your apology will be accepted. But we'll discuss the matter later. I'm afraid you're losing some of your respect for me. Perhaps it's those constant accusations of Sergeant Ackley's.

"However, let it pass for the moment. We have other things to do. If I'm going to win that wager I'd better be getting about it. I shall need certain things. Of course there'll be the female companion—and then there'll be certain packages she will have to carry, and then there'll be the crude necklace to be used as a substitute.

"Do you know, Scuttle, I think I should have two paper bags. In one of them I want a lemon pie and in the other a layer cake. And I shall want bits of glass strung together."

"A lemon pie, sir!"

"Yes, a lemon pie. And in a paper bag, Scuttle."

"And a layer cake?"

"Yes. A layer cake. That, also, should be in a paper bag."

"But what, in heaven's name, sir, do you want with a lemon pie and a layer cake in a paper bag?"

"Not in *a* paper bag, Scuttle. That denotes a singular. I want them in paper bag*s*. Sound the *s*, meaning plural, two or more bag*s*. I want a layer cake in one paper bag, and I want a lemon pie in the other paper bag. And don't forget about the glass necklace.

"I shall leave these matters up to you, Scuttle. As my valet you must assist me, whether your interests as an adverse party to the wager suffer or not."

The valet gulped.

"Yes, sir. And the female companion? How about her, sir? I can get you a very attractive girl, sir?"

CHAPTER IV

Fine Work, Beaver

LESTER LEITH shook his head in stern negation.

"No, no, indeed, Scuttle. A gentleman must always insist upon consulting his personal tastes in the matter of his neckties and his women.

"No, indeed, Scuttle, I shall get my own accomplice, and I rather fancy I shall get a brunette this time. I shall want a woman with fire, a woman with glossy black hair, a woman with full lips, a woman with an undulating walk. Her every motion must be an invitation, her glance a caress.

"No, Scuttle, I should hardly trust you to find such a woman. It will, in fact, keep me pleasantly occupied during the rest of the morning. And the difficulty is enhanced by the further

fact that such women as I have described are rarely abroad in the morning—unless their sleep is disturbed by a riveter, Scuttle, and that's hardly likely."

The valet watched him with puzzled eyes.

"A layer cake, a lemon pie, paper bags, glass necklace," he muttered.

"That's right. You attend to those details, and I will see about the young lady. If I should send one up here to wait, please see that she's made comfortable. I shall probably canvass the employment agencies. Good morning, Scuttle!"

And Lester Leith, clamping a soft hat upon his head, grasping his stick firmly in his right hand, twisted the knob of the door and shot into the hall after the manner of a man who has urgent business awaiting him.

Behind him, the spurious valet knitted his brows in puzzled thought, waited a few minutes, then opened the door and oozed into the hall.

Tiptoeing his ponderous way down the carpeted treads of the stairs, the police spy descended two flights, paused before a door and gave a certain scratching signal upon the panels.

The door flung open.

Sergeant Ackley's beaming features smiled upon his spy.

"Fine work, Beaver! Fine work! You've got him nailed to the cross. But get a bigger bet. Put me down for a couple of hundred, hell, yes, five hundred, a thousand!"

The grinning sergeant drew the spy into the room, kicked the door shut.

At a long table two stenographers were waiting, notebooks covered with pothooks and angles before them. A plain-clothes man tilted a chair against the wall and surveyed the newcomer with languid interest. Sergeant Ackley sank back in his swivel chair, still beaming.

"Aw, the bet don't cut no ice," rumbled Beaver, the man whom Lester Leith had nicknamed Scuttle.

"The hell it don't. Look here, the bet is that the police can't convict him of a crime after he lifts the necklace. Why, it's a cinch! Even suppose he was so damned slick he could lift the necklace and we couldn't find it on him. We've still got him. This talk you've had amounts to criminal conspiracy. When he steals the necklace that's an overt act. We can use his own statements and get a conviction, even if he could work out some scheme by which he could make the blamed necklace vanish into thin air.

"Look alive, Beaver. Look alive! I don't believe you know how good a break you've got. You just stumbled into it by accident."

The spy grunted.

"Yes, I did! Fat chance! I've been worming my way into his confidence for six months. I've been drawing his bath water and pressing his clothes, cooking his breakfasts, cleaning up his cigarette stubs, and putting up with his infernal air of patronizing ridicule. He Scuttles me this, and he Scuttles me that, and he Scuttles me the other, and I'm supposed to keep my temper no matter what happens."

Sergeant Ackley nodded grimly as he twisted the end from a black cigar and scraped a match across the bottom of the table.

"A good man, Beaver, never lets his personal feelings interfere with what he's doing in the line of duty. A good man never loses his temper. Remember that, Beaver. Write it down if you have to. It's your one vice.

"Lord, how I wish the bird had fallen for your suggestion to furnish the

broad. We've got a couple of police lures that work the streets for mashers that'd do the job to the queen's taste. But we've got him anyway. I'll be down at Goldman's myself, and I'll have a couple of picked men—no—I guess I hadn't better attract too much attention. I'd better handle it alone."

The spy scowled.

"Aw, sergeant, don't hog it all. I've worked hard on this thing, and I'd ought to be in on the killing. It won't hurt you none."

The plain-clothes man tilted his chair forward, opened his eyes, started to say something, waited.

"No. You don't understand. It's not because I wish to hog the credit. It's simply because too many men will excite suspicion. You forget there's already a special on duty at the store. No. I shall handle it alone."

The plain-clothes man sighed, tilted his chair back against the wall and resumed his gum chewing.

One of the stenographers flashed the other a broad wink.

Beaver, the spy, bowed his head.

"Very well."

"And you'd better get busy getting those things, Beaver. A layer cake and a lemon pie! Bah! He's gone nutty."

Beaver straightened, his hard, round, boiled-lobster eyes glittered meaningly into Sergeant Ackley's face.

"You'd better get busy and figure out what he wants that stuff for. He's never made a slip yet. He always asks for some fool thing that sounds plumb crazy on the face of it. But, before he gets done, it comes in handy. You'd better watch out or he'll slip it over on you again."

Sergeant Ackley jerked the soggy cigar from his mouth, spat out a mouthful of smoke and jerked his thumb toward the door.

"That 'll do, Beaver. I know how to handle this case. Don't spoil a good record by impertinence, and remember what I told you about losing your temper. That's going to make a bad blot on your record some day.

"You can get them to fix you up a glass necklace at the department, or there'll be some glass stuff at the five and ten. Get him something awfully crude. That's what he said he wanted, and that's what we'll get.

"In the meantime I'm going to drift down to Goldman's and explain the case to the manager. I'll be back here though. I want to get a line on the broad he picks.

"On your way."

And the spy, wordless in chagrin, half opened the door, oozed his bulk into the corridor and flat-footed toward the elevator.

Sergeant Ackley followed after an interval of a few moments.

CHAPTER V

A Sweet Little Girl

IT was two o'clock when Lester Leith opened the door of his apartment, bowed, ushered in a striking brunette.

"Right in this way, Miss Rayon. Scuttle, the valet, will make you comfortable."

The girl turned snapping, black eyes to Lester Leith. There was a subtle invitation in the very manner in which she turned her head, in the angle of the chin as it topped the rounded point of a perfect shoulder.

"Scuttle! What a funny name!"

Lester Leith nodded.

"It's a nickname. I never did learn his real name. But he looked so much like a reincarnated pirate that I christened him Scuttle—ah, here he is now.

"Scuttle, this is Miss Jean Rayon, an actress, temporarily out of employment. You'll observe that she fits into the description I had worked out for my accomplice.

"And I want her to understand the terms of our bet, Scuttle. I am to go to Goldman's Jewelry Store, stand at exactly the same counter, and in exactly the same place that George Cripely stood. I am to lift a diamond necklace, leave a glass necklace in place of it, and I am to conceal the genuine necklace so the police can't find it. We have a wager of one hundred dollars on the outcome. Is that right?"

The valet could hardly take his eyes from the seductive figure, but he glanced at Lester Leith, shook his head.

"No, sir, the bet was that the police wouldn't be able to pin a case on you."

And his eyes went back to the brunette.

Lester Leith laughed.

"Right you are, Scuttle. Miss Rayon will hold the stakes. And don't stare so. I can assure you that Miss Rayon, in private life, is a very estimable young woman. But she's playing a part now. She's assuming the part of a vamp for the afternoon, and I warn you, Scuttle, not to succumb to her wiles, or you'll have a broken heart.

"But to get back to the stakes, Scuttle. Get your hundred dollars. And I'll put up a hundred."

The valet reached in his pocket, pulled out some bills. "There's sixty dollars here, sir. If you'd advance me forty—there'll be a two weeks' salary payment due on Saturday, sir."

Lester Leith's hand flashed to his pocket.

"Not at all, Scuttle, not at all. It's a pleasure. I'm glad to see you betting. It's a sign of an adventurous disposition, isn't it, Miss Rayon?"

The girl flashed her dark eyes to Scuttle's face.

There was, in the glance, a tangible something, almost as perceptible as in the caress of a dog's tongue. She deliberately swept her eyes from chin to forehead, forehead to chin. Her half parted, red lips disclosed a fleeting glimpse of pearly teeth, a red tongue.

"I simply *adore* adventurous dispositions," she said and gently elevated the tip of her shoulder.

The valet gasped.

"Come, come, Scuttle. Look alive. You have the layer cake, and you have the lemon pie?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the glass necklace?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, you may get them for us. We'll be leaving. And, by the way, Scuttle, what do you think of Miss Rayon's wearing apparel? That is, do you think it matches the newspaper description of the wearing apparel of George Cripely's female accomplice?"

"My God, yes!" exclaimed the valet.

"We have had the best shops in town working frenziedly," beamed Lester Leith. "There are trivial imperfections which could not be remedied in the short time allotted, but, on the whole it's rather striking.

"Well, we'll be off. And please, Scuttle, don't make the mistake of confusing Miss Rayon's stage personality with her real self. As I told you, she's acting a part."

Lester Leith gathered up the paper bags, peered at their contents, inspected the glass necklace, then held the door open for his accomplice.

"All set, Miss Rayon."

At the door, she turned, swung her very short skirt in a half circle as her tilted head regarded the valet over shoulders that slanted seductively.

"I just *adore* tall men with mustaches!" she breathed, and the very whisper was a caress upon the ears.

"Wait a minute!" yelled Scuttle. "Let me warn you, Miss Rayon—"

But Lester Leith had the girl by the arm. The door slammed. The police spy sat down in a chair.

"Oh my God!" he exclaimed to himself.

Then he arose, walked to a mirror and preened his sweeping mustache with thumb and forefinger.

The door banged open.

"Scuttle, we've overlooked something."

"Yes, sir. What is it, sir? Do come in, Miss Rayon."

Lester Leith jabbed the tip of his cane toward a pile of newspapers.

"We were to stand at exactly the same place George Cripely stood, have exactly the same clerk wait on us. And I haven't the name of the clerk, and I don't know just where it was that Cripely stood. Do the newspapers give any photos, and diagrams of the store, the name of the clerk?"

Scuttle nodded.

"Yes, sir. I have them here. The clerk was Robert Farley, sir, and the parties stood at the extreme southerly end of the second counter on the west of the store, sir. That's where the diamonds are kept, it seems, and Mr. Cripely remained right at the corner of the counter. The woman wandered around some, looking at various things.

"Might I have a word with Miss Rayon, sir? Just a suggestion I might make to her, sir, so that, if you—er—if you lost the bet, sir, she wouldn't be involved, sir?"

Lester Leith shook his head, firmly, emphatically.

"No, Scuttle, it wouldn't be fair. Come, Miss Rayon."

And he drew the protesting girl into the corridor.

"But I'd simply *adore* talking with him. He's such a splendid specimen—"

The banging of the hall door clipped off the sentence.

Scuttle cursed, went to the telephone, called Goldman's Jewelry Store and asked to speak with Sergeant Ackley.

"They're on their way, sergeant, and go easy with the young lady. She's just an innocent little kid that he's roped in to do his crooked work— Yes, they're coming— No, no, she's not a common type— Rather striking and her skirts are very—er—stylish; but she's as sweet and refined as any girl you ever saw— No, no. How in hell would I know how he made her fall for him! It's just his way, damn him!"

And the spy slammed the receiver viciously into place.

CHAPTER VI

A Few Swift Gestures

THE arrival of Lester Leith made quite an impression at Goldman's.

The clerks had been repeatedly warned to act natural, comport themselves as though nothing out of the ordinary was happening. They overdid their parts. There was in evidence too much elaborate carelessness.

But Lester Leith seemed not to notice. He turned, held the door for his companion.

Masculine eyes swept over Jean Rayon in swift appraisal, and continued to appraise.

The girl's walk was slightly exaggerated. Her close fitting skirt, revealing a perfect figure of rounded curves and supple motion, was daringly short. The limbs that were disclosed were graceful, well formed.

"I am looking for Mr. Robert Far-

ley, and we wish to purchase a diamond necklace," announced Lester Leith casually to the elderly gentleman who bowed him a welcome to the store.

"This way, sir," said the gentleman.

And his were the only masculine eyes in the place that did not dwell upon Jean Rayon as she walked down the aisle.

At the second counter from the end on the west side of the store, Lester Leith leaned against the counter, hooked his cane over the edge of the show case, and gripped the corner of the molding with well manicured hands.

"You are Mr. Farley?"

"At your service, sir."

"And the diamond necklaces?"

"Are here, sir."

The tray of necklaces was placed upon the counter, each nestling in a special case, each case fitted into a tray, all sparkling, glittering, scintillating.

And then instructions were forgotten. The entire store crouched tense, expectant.

In the inner room, his eyes glued to a special peep hole in the polished walnut paneling, Sergeant Arthur Ackley held his breath. His face twisted and writhed, unconscious evidence of the inner suspense, the nervous strain under which he labored.

The girl stood slightly to one side. Her languid form draped against the show case would have ordinarily arrested attention. But now all eyes were fastened upon Lester Leith.

Slowly, deliberately, with a tantalizing disregard of time, Lester Leith inspected the necklaces.

"This is a beautiful one," he said, at length. "What is the price?"

The clerk lowered his voice.

"Ten thousand dollars."

"Ah, yes, yes indeed. And this other one?"

"That, also, is ten thousand dollars. The tray contains ten-thousand-dollar necklaces. Now we have another tray of necklaces at fifteen thousand dollars, if you should be interested."

Lester Leith shook his head.

"No. I think these are as high as I should care to go. Let me see now if I understand you. This tray contains necklaces each of which is priced at ten thousand dollars."

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, indeed. Therefore, if I should pay you twenty thousand dollars in cash—cash, mind you, I would have the privilege of picking out and purchasing any two necklaces now on the counter?"

The clerk's eyes widened.

"It's rather unusual, sir."

"Yes, yes, my dear man. I am an unusual character. But my understanding is correct, is it not? Twenty thousand dollars in cash and I can pick out any two of the necklaces now on the counter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah," muttered Lester Leith, and his tone was as the purring of a cat approaching a dish of cream. "Here, then, is your twenty thousand dollars."

He flipped a slender, well manicured hand into an inner pocket, brought out a bill fold. From that bursting bill fold he took crisp one-thousand-dollar currency.

"One thousand—two thousand—three thousand—four thousand—ten thousand—fifteen thousand—eighteen—nineteen—twenty thousand dollars. Would you mind verifying the amount, my good man?"

The clerk counted the money.

"Yes, sir. The amount is correct, sir."

"Yes, indeed, and I now have the privilege, or perhaps I should say, the

duty, of selecting two of the necklaces now on the counter?"

"Yes, sir. It's rather unusual, sir, but—"

There was the piercing shrill of a woman's scream as it knifed the air.

The clerk looked up.

Jean Rayon, lounging against the counter, her arm stretched along the wooden molding of polished mahogany which rimmed the heavy plate glass, had upset one of the paper bags.

The lemon pie tilted out, hung poised on the edge of the counter.

As she screamed, the pie toppled over, hit her dress, slid down her stockings, plumped to the floor, a shapeless mass of soggy, sticky sweetness.

The girl gave another scream, darted back from the counter. Too late. The falling pie had smeared her clothes.

She raised the skirt, held it before her for inspection.

And then her laugh rang out, a rippling cadence of genuine amusement. And the laugh was like the woman. In its throaty abandon there was a certain voluptuous note that arrested attention.

Men ran to her, everybody shouted at once. Only the clerk at the diamond counter held his place.

Lester Leith reached her side, not as promptly as the others, however; he had hesitated for a moment while his hands had made certain swift gestures. A glittering necklace skidded upon the glass counter as he flung the bauble from him to go to the girl's assistance.

"My dear Miss Rayon! This is indeed a shame! I shall telephone a modiste immediately. Perhaps Mr. Goldman can give us a dressing room where you can wait—"

A masculine voice raised in a hoarse shout.

"We've been robbed. Grab that man!"

Lester Leith turned, his face showing an expression of courteous inquiry.

"Robbed?" he asked.

"Robbed!" yelled the clerk. "Grab him! Hold them both!"

There was a patter of running feet. The special duty policeman hurtled forward, grabbed the unresisting Lester Leith by an arm. The clerk rounded the counter, his finger pointing.

"He switched necklaces. Left a glass necklace. Search him!"

A glass necklace dangled from the finger of the pop-eyed clerk.

"It happened during the excitement! Just the same as Cripely did yesterday!"

"I say, my man," drawled Leith, "aren't you getting a bit impertinent?"

CHAPTER VII

Not Robbed, But —

ABE GOLDMAN, veteran of many a confidence racket, waddled out from an inner office. His shrewd face was stamped by years of business successes and reverses. His deep eyes carried great pouches beneath them. Those eyes flitted from Leith to the girl, from both to the special duty officer.

"Bring them into the office," he said.

And Lester Leith was swept into that inner office as a chip is swept on the crest of an incoming tide.

"Search him!" yelled the clerk.

And Abe Goldman nodded.

Eager hands explored Leith's pockets, brought out a various assortment of objects. There were money, keys, cigarette lighter and case, fountain pen, pencil, handkerchief, knife—no trace of a necklace.

Abe Goldman twisted the cigar in his paunchy lips, twitched the puffs under his eyes a bit as his cheek muscles tightened.

"Where's that other guy?" he asked.

Lester Leith smiled.

"Rather laid yourself open for a damage suit, haven't you, Goldman?" he drawled.

Goldman never flickered so much as a flash of expression. His eyes were as steady as ever.

"We were warned about you," he said. "Where's the other guy?"

And Sergeant Arthur Ackley, striding into the room with his chest expanded, a satisfied smile on his face, answered the question.

"Here I am, sir, Sergeant Arthur Ackley, ready to expose one of the slickest thieves in the country."

"You!" exclaimed Lester Leith.

"None other—in person!" gloated the sergeant.

"The man has no necklace on him," said Goldman in steady tones. "On the strength of your warning I ordered a search. I hope you haven't laid us liable to a damage suit, sir."

Sergeant Ackley laughed.

He pulled the moist cigar from his lips, tried to blow a smoke ring, failed, sneered at the man before him.

"Well, I'm Sergeant Arthur Ackley, and I don't make mistakes. I told you this man was going to pull a fast one. Every one of your clerks was on the job. Your special duty officer was on the job, and still he pulls the wool over their eyes."

"There's no necklace on him," said Goldman. "I ordered him searched. How about the woman? Did he slip it to her? Shall we have a matron come? There is a great responsibility in this searching business, you know."

Sergeant Ackley laughed, then he thrust that laughing, gloating face close to the expressionless mask of Lester Leith's features.

"Ha, ha, ha! Another triumph! But it was nipped in the bud. You didn't know that I was ready for you, did you? Just shrewd detective work, that's all. I figured you'd read about Cripely's arrest. It was a toss-up whether Cripely or the clerk was guilty. If you could stage the same game with the same clerk and make it stick they'd come to the conclusion the clerk was the guilty party.

"And you sure were slick about it. But I was on the job, watching with my face against a little window. Didn't know that, did you? Well, you've come to the end of your rope."

Abe Goldman interrupted.

"You can keep the praise for the papers, sergeant. Tell it to the reporters. I want to get my store cleared. This business isn't helping trade. Where is the necklace? It's missing. There's a glass substitute. The man hasn't got it on him. How about the woman?"

Sergeant Ackley shook his head.

"You could search her until the cows came home!" he gloated. "There isn't a thing on her."

Then he laughed at the look of mystification which came upon their features. Sergeant Arthur Ackley was living one of the supreme moments of his life and he sought to prolong it.

But Goldman was impatient, and Sergeant Ackley hungered for their praise, their eager adulation. So he sprung his little surprise.

"The bag with the layer cake," he said. "When the woman screamed and held out her skirts all of you men looked. I didn't look. I was on the job. I did my duty. I kept my eyes on Lester Leith.

"What happened? Ha! I'll tell you what happened. Lester Leith made a swift pass with his hand toward the layer cake. There was something in his hand that glittered. After an instant he took his hand out of the bag. Nothing glittered. Clerk, get that bag!"

They regarded him in awestruck silence.

The bag was produced. Sergeant Ackley ripped open the paper. Ostensibly the cake was as before, save for a certain dent in the frosted surface, a little ridge on either side.

"He stuck his forefinger into that cake. From the palm of his hand the necklace dropped into the hole. Then his thumb smoothed back the frosting!"

"Incredible," said little Abe Goldman, short, paunchy, unemotional.

"Be careful with that cake, sergeant," warned Lester Leith in a drawling tone of calm superiority. "It's a birthday gift."

"Yeah! You would want me to be careful! Well, look at this!"

And he took a knife from his pocket, opened the small blade, probed into the cake as a physician might probe a wound.

The knife blade grated. Sergeant Ackley's wrist twisted, and a glittering string of scintillating gems came into the light, a trifle smeared with moist cake, but sending their sparkling coruscations glittering through the somber room.

"Identify them!" yelled Sergeant Ackley in triumph.

The clerk leaned forward.

"Those are the ones. The price tag's still on them."

Sergeant Ackley set down the knife with its pendant string of glittering gems. Slowly, deliberately, conscious that the eyes of every person in the room were upon him, he pulled handcuffs from his hip pocket.

"A long, long time I've waited for this moment," he said. "I pray that you resist me, you damn, drawling, sneering, dirty double crossing crook!"

"Tut, tut, sergeant. There are ladies present, and aren't you getting just a bit premature?"

Sergeant Ackley shifted the handcuffs to his left hand. His right hand bunched into a fist. His gloating eyes fastened in malevolent hatred upon Lester Leith's finely chiseled features. Abe Goldman took the cigar from his mouth.

"None of that. Not in here. Farley, are you absolutely sure of that necklace?"

The clerk nodded.

"It's the one."

"What one?"

"The one he stole."

Goldman sighed. His shrewd mind grasped that here was something that was not what it seemed on the surface.

Lester Leith turned toward the clerk.

"The one I *what?*"

"Stole!" snapped the clerk.

"Tut, tut," cautioned Lester Leith, "you've got your verbs mixed, my man. That necklace was the one I *bought*."

And the clerk, suddenly reminded, jumped a foot, let his jaw sag while his eyes widened until they were about to drop from their sockets.

Sergeant Ackley's right fist slowly opened. The left hand with its glittering handcuffs dropped to his side.

"*Bought!*" said Abe Goldman. "How's that, Farley?"

The clerk nodded, tried to speak, failed, gulped again.

"My God, he's right! It *is* the one he bought!"

Goldman's eyes suddenly became hard as agates.

"Then why did you accuse him of theft?"

The clerk leveled a trembling forefinger at Sergeant Arthur Ackley.

"The cop. He came in here and described this chap, said he'd come in and lift a necklace from me. He came in and bought two necklaces. Then there was excitement, and he dropped a glass necklace on the counter, mixed it in with the others. I had my attention on the girl. I looked back at the counter, saw the glass, remembered what the officer had told me, and—and—well—"

Abe Goldman shifted his glance toward Sergeant Ackley.

"There may be a damage suit in this," he said dryly.

Sergeant Ackley's face suffused with color. He twisted the moist cigar in nerveless lips, lips that trembled. Abe Goldman was in right with the city administration.

"But why," demanded Sergeant Ackley, in a voice that was but a feeble echo of his usual booming tones of rasping authority, "did this guy stick that necklace in the cake and drop another fake necklace on the counter?"

Goldman's eyes shifted to Lester Leith's, stared hard at him for a full minute.

"That's what a judge would want to know, if you started a damage suit against us for false accusation," he said.

Lester Leith's face was a mask of pained surprise.

"Dear, dear," he said. "I never thought of that. But it's the most simple explanation in the world, gentlemen. You see, this is Miss Jean Rayon's birthday. I wanted to surprise her with the gift of a diamond necklace, and I wanted the surprise to be genuine.

"So I pretended I was going to come here and try to steal a necklace. I even made her think so. And I made my butler and valet, a chap I call Scuttle, think so. I even made a trifling wager with Scuttle.

"I intended to buy the necklace, stick it in the cake when nobody was looking and then have the clerk wrap up the glass necklace for me. Of course, Miss Rayon would know that the necklace I was having wrapped up was glass, and she'd be completely mystified. Then when I parted company with her, I was going to say: 'Jean, you take the cake,' and I was going to give her the cake. Then she'd find the diamond necklace in it when she came to eat it. I even thought we'd have a little party in my apartment and I would serve her the piece that had the diamond necklace in it.

"It was a most tasty little surprise, and now you sleuths have ruined it!"

Abe Goldman sighed.

"That," he remarked judicially, "is a damned lie. But you look just goofy enough so some fool jury might believe it!"

Lester Leith became haughty.

"I am afraid I care to have no business dealings with your house, sir. Will you please instruct your man to return my twenty thousand dollars? My attorney will continue this discussion."

Abe Goldman chewed the cigar.

"There's more to this than appears on the surface," he muttered.

"There will be," promised Lester Leith.

Jean Rayon held out her sticky, soiled dress.

"And how about poor, little me?" she shrilled.

Abe Goldman looked, sighed, looked again.

Lester Leith extended a protecting arm.

"Not here," he said. "We will go directly to my apartment to change. Mr. Goldman, will you please compensate in some measure for the damage done us by calling a cab?"

Goldman sighed, jerked a thumb toward the special duty officer.

"Get 'm a cab, Bob. Just the same, mister, I'll fight any suit for damage you bring. The whole thing smacks too much of a frame-up. I won't pay a plugged nickel for compromise!"

Lester Leith shrugged.

"I had hardly intended to commercialize the incident, but I did intend to exact an apology to the young lady, and, perhaps, a new costume for her."

Abe Goldman's eye lit.

"That all you want?"

"That's all I want."

Goldman's hand shot out.

"Damned if I don't believe you. Leith, I apologize. Miss Rayon, you'll find a credit slip mailed you, care of Mr. Leith, at the best shop in town for the most expensive outfit in the place."

And he broke off as twin arms snapped around his neck, drew the paunchy face toward half parted red lips.

"You *dear!*" she exclaimed.

Five seconds later Leith coughed apologetically.

"Air?" he asked.

Goldman jerked his red countenance away, suddenly embarrassed.

"Bob, where the hell's that cab?"

"In front, sir."

Sergeant Ackley, moving on rubber heels had sneaked toward the door.

"No, you don't!" yelled Abe Goldman. "I've got something to take up with *you!* Farley, give this man back his money, see him into his cab. Sergeant, you sit down. I'm going to talk to you."

Lester Leith bowed suavely.

"Ah, good day, *gentlemen,* and—Jean, you take the cake!"

They entered the cab, Lester Leith carefully counting the twenty thousand dollars. Just before the special duty officer slammed the door, Lester Leith thrust out a detaining hand.

"My glass necklace," he said. "They've forgotten that."

And the officer trotted into the store, returned with the crude glass gewgaw. Lester Leith took it, smiled his thanks. The cab door slammed, the vehicle lurched forward and moved away. Within a few blocks he ordered the driver to halt, and, excusing himself to the girl, sauntered around a corner into a bank, where he obtained access to a safe deposit box listed under a name that neither Scuttle nor Sergeant Ackley would have recognized.

CHAPTER VIII

Ackley Has an Inning

THE valet stared at the bedraggled form of the girl, her dress and stockings smeared with the remnants of a lemon pie.

Lester Leith, in the doorway, snapped the man's attention back to earth.

"Scuttle, Miss Rayon has met with an accident. It's impossible to get her accurately fitted, but we have here a ready-made dress we've picked up, also some stockings and shoes. Will you kindly draw a bath and lay these things out for Miss Rayon?"

The police spy glanced his dumb amazement, then nodded.

"And may I caution you," remarked

Lester Leith in his dry voice, "that Miss Rayon has been acting a part. In reality, Scuttle, when she's not in character, she's a very modest and very estimable young lady of unimpeachable character."

The valet gulped, nodded.

"This way, ma'am."

The girl followed him. Her soiled skirt was lifted in her hand. Her red lips parted in a smile of good-natured recognition of the spectacle she made.

There was the sound of running water, the murmur of voices, and the valet oozed his bulk back into the room.

"I wonder—" he began.

The words clipped off as the door banged open. Without the formality of knocking, Sergeant Ackley slammed his way into the room. His face was livid, his lips writhing in an ecstasy of rage.

"Tut, tut, my dear sergeant," remonstrated Lester Leith. "You grow more and more intolerant of my rights. You usually go through the formality of knocking. Scuttle, the night latch please. Let's have no more heavy-fisted policemen walking in upon us."

Sergeant Ackley stopped the pseudo valet with a gesture.

"Cripely's confessed!" he snapped.

"Indeed?" Lester Leith's tone was a combination of superior condescension and mild exasperation.

"Yes, damn you, indeed! He confessed while I was at Goldman's and they telephoned the confession to me there!"

Lester Leith reached for a cigarette, lit it, flung himself into a chair.

"Indeed?" he asked again, his voice masked in utter unconcern.

The police spy, masquerading as a valet, caught the significant look in Sergeant Ackley's eye, and moved closer.

"Yes," rasped Sergeant Ackley, "and he told the whole scheme. He went to the store with his woman companion. The episode of the alarm clock served to distract attention for a second. That was all the time he needed."

Sergeant Ackley paused.

Lester Leith blew a smoke ring.

"George Cripely had been a wood joiner at one time. When he knew he was to be discharged he became bitter in his resentment and resolved to get even. So he put in his spare moments when no one else was about in working over the wood molding on the corner of the diamond showcase. He hinged a section some five inches long, hollowed it out, fixed it so it would flip back and forth by a gentle pressure, and he joined the wood so cleverly it was almost impossible to detect the flaw."

Lester Leith blew another smoke ring, traced the whirling perimeter with the tip of a well manicured forefinger.

"Really, sergeant," he drawled, "if you came here in such excited haste just to tell me this, your efforts have been in vain. I deduced as much as soon as I read the newspaper account of the crime. It was obvious—particularly when I knew the man had two weeks' notice of his discharge.

"If he hadn't arranged some clever hiding place he'd have had the imitation necklace one that would have fooled the clerk until after he and his companion had left the store. As it was, he wanted the theft to be discovered in time to be thoroughly searched before he had left the place. Under the circumstances, there was only one deduction."

Sergeant Ackley rasped an oath.

"Of course, you knew it, and you

went to the store with this elaborate stage setting of yours. And while you were buying the necklace, you fooled around until you found the section of the counter that had been tampered with."

CHAPTER IX

Scuttle Gets Slapped

LESTER LEITH stifled a yawn with a courteous palm.

"Indeed?"

"You're damn right, indeed. They telephoned me from headquarters when Cripely confessed, and I went to the counter myself. I found the place, but the necklace was gone!"

Lester Leith tried sending a small smoke ring through a large smoke ring. Sergeant Ackley's face was a purple mask of wrath.

"And so you played it damned slick. You were careful to ask if you could buy any two necklaces *on the counter* for twenty thousand dollars. Then you put up the twenty thousand.

"Where you fooled us was when you stuck your hand into the cake. You put in two necklaces. One of the ones the clerk had been showing you, and the other the one Cripely had hidden, and you were damned careful to have the Cripely necklace down underneath the one you'd been looking at.

"If nobody had tumbled to the hiding place you'd have walked out with both necklaces and later demanded your twenty thousand dollars back.

"If any one had tumbled to the place where the missing necklace was —as I did—you had a perfect defense —you'd bought it. And if I'd had sense enough to probe down and find the second necklace, you even had a defense for that. It was on the counter, and you'd purchased it.

"It was one of those damned crimes where you had a perfect defense all the way through—"

Sergeant Ackley broke off, leveled an accusing forefinger.

"Lester Leith, where's that cake?"

Lester Leith shrugged his shoulders.

"Miss Rayon took it."

Sergeant Ackley glanced at Scuttle.

"It's in the paper bag," he prompted.

Scuttle nodded. He oozed his bulk through the bedroom door. From the bathroom beyond could be heard the splashing of water.

Lester Leith smoked in contemplative silence.

The pseudo valet returned with the paper bag.

"She carried it in," he muttered.

Sergeant Ackley pulled out the cake, thrust a forefinger into the hole which remained plainly visible in the frosting.

For a second a look of startled, fierce incredulity suffused his features, then he gave an exclamation of joy.

"Trapped, by God! I thought, of course, they'd ditched it!"

And his grimy forefinger pulled to light a cake-covered bit of glittering jewelry.

"Trapped!" he yelled. "Run to earth!"

Lester Leith moved no muscle. He remained in his chair, calm, relaxed, the smoke eddying up from the end of his cigarette.

"By God, this is the time I've outsmarted him!" yelled Sergeant Ackley. "Get the handcuffs. Get the girl. Get the wagon. Get the plain-clothes men up from below. Get Goldman on the phone. By God, I'll show—"

His voice trailed off into silence. The wind whooshed from his lungs as though some one had smashed him in the stomach.

Lester Leith sighed, moved the end

of the cigarette to lips that were parted in a half smile.

"The damn thing's glass!" exclaimed Sergeant Ackley.

"Quite so, sergeant," soothed Lester Leith. "You'll remember I sent back for my glass necklace. I really couldn't think of a better place to put it than to drop it into the hole in the cake. Sorry you were fooled, sergeant. Better luck next time, eh?"

Sergeant Ackley muttered an oath.

"You put it there just to tantalize me some more, you damn, drawling, sneering, smoke-ring-blowing crook!"

He drew back his arm, held the cake poised for a moment, then dashed it into the fireplace. The cake shattered against the sooty wall, dropped to the hearth.

Lester Leith never moved.

"Scuttle," he said, "you'll have another mess to clean up. The sergeant's lost his temper again."

There was no answer.

Lester Leith half turned in his chair.

"Scuttle, where's Scuttle?"

There showed only the half open door into the bedroom. There was now no sound of splashing water.

"What the devil?" drawled Lester.

There was the sound of bare feet, the smack of a blow that sounded explosively loud. Scuttle oozed from the half opened door with sudden speed. Upon his left cheek were stamped the livid marks of four fingers, the unmistakable imprint of a woman's hand, swung in a terrific slap.

Lester Leith laughed.

"I told you, Scuttle, that Miss Rayon, when out of character, was a very estimable young lady of unimpeachable morals."

And then Lester Leith turned lazy-lidded eyes to the glowering sergeant.

"You know, sergeant, Jean is a very remarkable girl. You have to hand it to her, sergeant, *she takes the cake!*"

There was an oath, the banging of a door.

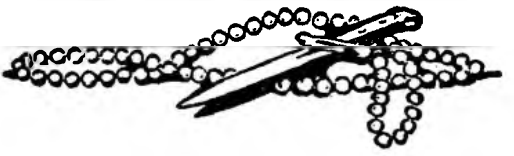
Lester Leith was alone. Sergeant Ackley had stormed through the front door in a rage. The humiliated, crest-fallen police spy who posed as valet, had oozed through the door into the kitchenette.

"Under the circumstances," mused Lester Leith, "I think Scuttle will concede the bet."

And he blew a smoke ring, traced the whirling edge of the curling smoke with the tip of a delicate forefinger.

His chuckle was plainly audible to the mystified police stenographers who waited, two floors below, taking down the sounds that came to them over the telltale wires of the dictograph.

The police might suspect what they pleased, but there could be no conviction unless they actually found the stolen necklace in Leith's possession. Without corroborating circumstances they dared not even make a formal accusation. They had only the word of a self-confessed crook that the necklace had ever been placed in that counter with its concealed hiding place in the molding. And any one of half a hundred men might have removed that necklace, the janitor, the clerk, even Sergeant Ackley himself.



Dugan moved like a lightweight, keeping the table between him and the mob

The Hunch

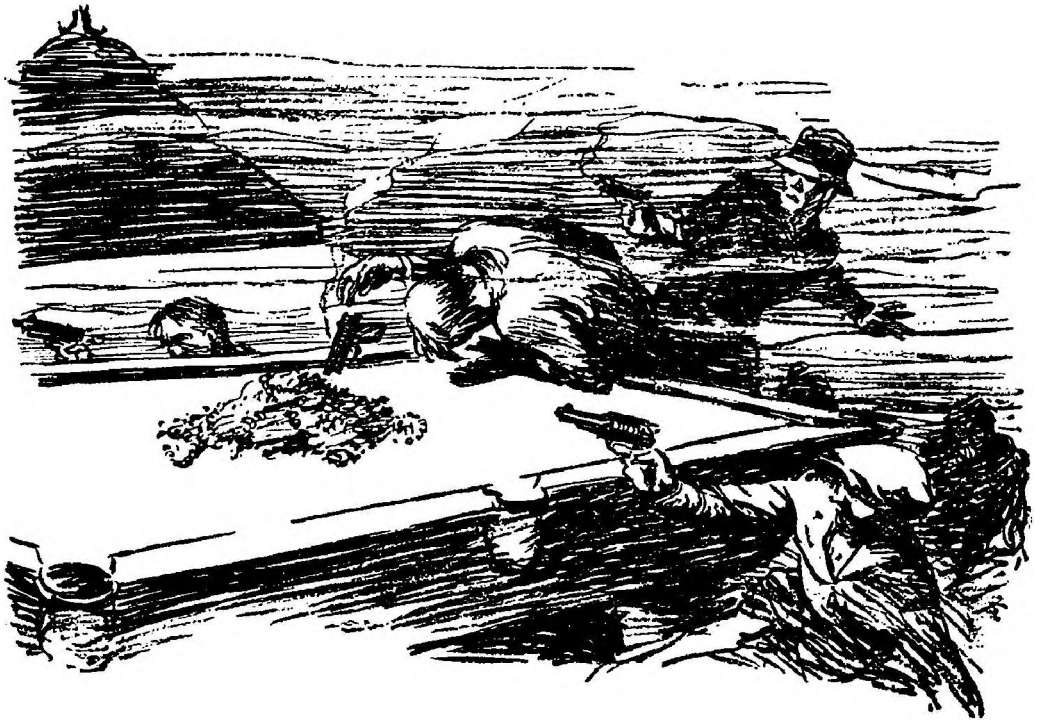
Gangsters Are Superstitious—Which Gives Jimmy Dugan A Break In Running Down Chick Miller's Mob

By J. Allan Dunn

THE humpback shivered as he came up to the slushy, windy street from the cellar of the flophouse, where he had been allowed to toss on a heap of sacking for the past few days, in exchange for handling ashes and garbage.

That haven had been denied him now, miserable refuge as it was. A more favored applicant had supplanted him. He stood hugging his distorted figure, his disreputable clothes inadequate for protection. It was a villainous day on the East Side, close to the river. Snow that was half sleet fell persistently, the wind came off the water with merciless chill that bit through to the bone.

He blew on his grimy hands, thrust them into his pants pockets and slouched along the sidewalk dispiritedly, limping a little on one leg, his shoes outworn, not even mates, shoes that looked as if they had been rescued from a rubbish heap. So did his clothes. So did he.



Slowly, he made his way to where the lights of a cheap restaurant glowed through a dirty, steamy window. Street lamps were not on, but they were needed within doors. It was nine o'clock in the morning, but the night seemed lingering.

Tugs hooted, sirens roared. Up and down the river, the craft moved murkily. Trucks and cars sludged through the streets. Nobody was abroad who was not forced to be and the humpback was a miserable, melancholy figure that might well have been evoked to fit the scene, evolved from the wretchedness of all outdoors.

The restaurant was known as the Bon Ton, as if some one had chosen the name from sheer mockery. To the underworld it was styled Mother Beman's. It supplied longshoremen, truck drivers, the daily drift of the streets that bordered the river.

Above it was a lodging house that advertised "single beds for single men" at fifty and seventy-five cents the night—payable in advance. The restaurant had the ground floor. There was a counter at one end of the restaurant, flanked by two doors, one of which led to the kitchen, the other to an extension at the rear, a single story, occupying the original yard.

Few went through to the back and those at times when the restaurant was apt to be empty. The door opening on the short passage from the front could not be passed without release from a floor latch behind the counter by Mother Beman herself or her solitary assistant, a frowzy wench named Lena. The door at the end of the passage had a trick lock. None but the initiate were allowed.

The extension had four small tables and chairs, like those of the restaurant.

There was a stove for heating, other chairs of greater comfort, a rug or two, a bench, a pool table with its rack and marking wires. It was subdivided into one large room and two small ones at the back; the whole a sort of club room.

No stranger gained admission. None tried in that neighborhood. It would have been not merely dangerous but extremely liable to be fatal. There was a way from the back room into the rear of the house behind it on the next street. The windows had their panes painted. One of them was a dummy. It could swing like a door for a hasty exit into the neighboring yard.

A den of rats, or weasels, well provided with getaways, with a front that, if it was not impregnable, could not be stormed without warning, for both doors to the restaurant passage were of steel veneered with wood. In a way a stronghold, the assembly place of gangsters, gunmen, members of Chick Miller's racket.

That was a racket that covered many illicit enterprises, anything not too big for them to handle. The gang was not large enough yet to provide protection for rum or dope runners. But the stealing of a truck laden with profitable and easily disposed of merchandise, the looting of chain store cashiers, "L" station nickel-shooters, pay rolls, freight cars, stores and lofts; all such matters were in their line. With them, inevitable killings.

Bandits, all of them, and the back room at Mother Beman's their headquarters. The pool table had held other objects beside pool balls. Loot had been spread there for division or the appraisal of a fence. Once a dead man —of their own—had been laid upon it temporarily. The stain of his blood was just over the middle pocket.

Now the place was empty. The racketeers were asleep. They would come trickling in during the afternoon, or after nightfall, to eat and drink, to charge themselves with heroin, to discuss campaign. No gun moll entered there. No woman but Mother Beman. Not even Lena.

II

THERE was nothing very maternal about Mother Beman's appearance. At the best of times it was calculating, avaricious, suspicious, no matter how affable a front she tried to put on to those who brought her in good money—like Chick Miller and his gang, to whom she acted as cover and rented the clubroom in the back.

The adjective that best described her as she looked at the shambling, cringing figure of the humpback, standing irresolute, uncertain of his reception, just inside the door; was forbidding.

"I told you yesterday you couldn't bum a meal here," she said. "I've nothin' to give away. I've too hard a time of my own. Get out! Unless you've got cash."

"I've got somethin' to show you," said the humpback, his tone conciliating, whining. "I want to make a deal with you."

She eyed him sharply. She was used to dips, to the small fry of the underworld, as well as the lordly gangsters, the cannons. Mother Beman was wise in the ways of crookdom. She caught the gleam of bright metal as the humpback brought something from an inside pocket.

It was a gold cigarette case, a thing as far apart from its bearer as might be imagined. Mother Beman put out her hand for it, but he retained it.

"It's a fourteen carat," he said.

"You could melt it down fer twenty bucks, easy. You could hock it fer more."

"Why don't you?" She knew well enough, but she wanted him to acknowledge his dependency.

"I'd look well hockin' it, wouldn't I? They'd offer me five bucks or hold it an' call the cops. Where would *I* melt it? But I'll trade it you fer a job—dishwashin', moppin', anything to stay in where it's warm. Jest give me my meals, enough to git some smokes—call it a couple of bucks a week—with a place to flop, an' you git this fer premium, see, chucked in. You needn't be afraid of me not workin'. I'm strong enough."

He scrutinized her in turn, not for any sign of friendly feeling, but gauging the greed that might cement the bargain.

"Where did you git it?" she demanded.

"I found it. What do *you* care?"

She examined it, the stamp of the gold guarantee, the weight of it. Her dishwasher had been drunk and dropping dishes for two days. He had not yet showed up. He claimed to have met with an old pal, but Mother Beman was not a target for excuses. This case was worth more than twenty dollars, however she handled it. If the hunchback didn't suit, she could fire him at the end of a week.

"What's your name?"

"They call me Humpy—Humpy Lewis. I've been up at Regan's flophouse. I ain't a New Yorker. I come from Albany. Is it a deal, Missis? I ain't eaten for thirty-six hours."

"Come back in the kitchen. You can sleep in the basement. There's a cot down there. Lena, Humpy here is goin' to wash the dishes. Fix him up a meal."

Mother Beman had performed some sort of conjuring trick with the gold case. It had disappeared. The frowzy Lena looked without much interest at the new helper. There was a **cook,** a colored woman, who arrived at eleven o'clock. Before that hour Lena handled the stove for the short-order breakfasts.

She set food before the new helper and he ate hungrily. Lena watched him for a minute or two and then turned away. As she stood behind him she managed to touch his back—for luck. It might help her to pick a good number in the Chinese lottery down the street. Anyway, if the drunken dishwasher had not shown up, Lena would have had to wash the dishes—and Humpy brought her luck already in saving her that extra labor.

Humpy set to work after his meal. He had two essentials for success in his job. He was willing and he was not clumsy. Lena reported him favorably. Mother Beman nodded briefly.

"I'm goin' out for a while," she said. "If that drunken bum shows up, tell him he's fired."

As he worked Humpy observed his surroundings. He saw a hatch in the back wall, a shelf below it. He tested it and found it fastened, apparently from the far side. He asked Lena about it when she came into the kitchen.

"Where does that go?" he asked casually.

"There's a clubroom back there. It ain't nothin' to do with the restaurant. If they want grub they open it up an' we serve 'em."

Humpy evinced no more interest. The cook came in, rolled her eyes at him, went to work.

"They say 'humpies' are lucky," Lena whispered to her.

"Wal I suah could stand some luck," the colored woman answered. "All mah dreams done go wrong. I lose me fo' bucks playin' policy las' week. An' I got a misery in mah back."

She got Humpy working for her, lifting heavy pots, scouring others.

"I reckon you're all right," she said finally. "You ack like you wanted to please folks, fo' a change."

The day wore on, cold, blustery still snowing. Mother Beman had made a quick and satisfactory deal for the cigarette case she was quite sure had been stolen. But there was nothing Humpy could steal in the kitchen, or the basement. He fitted in. He was an acquisition.

Chick Miller came into the Bon Ton in the middle of the afternoon. He ate in the regular restaurant. His air was surly. Before he had finished, a rat-faced man with skin like a fishbelly, joined him, ordering coffee only, smoking innumerable cigarettes. They had not much to say to each other. Mother Beman watched them closely.

It looked to her as if things had gone wrong with the racket. She did not mix up with it herself, did not want to know. She wanted her rent and she liked the extra money she got for helping to cover them, but she had also to cover herself. She held no friendship for them, but she would not snitch on them. She was no stoolie. She was not even curious about their jobs though, sooner or later, from the gossip picked up here and there, she guessed what their lays had been.

But there was undoubtedly something that had slipped a cog, somewhere. It looked to her as if they had got in too deep. Shorty Davis, the man who had joined Chick, was less upset than his leader, but Mother Beman knew from all the signs that Shorty was cocked with dope.

Chick didn't touch it. Two or three more of the racket did. There were six of them in the gang, principals, with some underlings who acted as lookouts, brought in tips, but were not allowed the use of the clubhouse.

"They've bumped some one off," Mother Beman told herself. "And it don't look so good. They're afraid to fence the swag. Maybe broke."

She thought over various murders and robberies committed lately. There were plenty of them. It is not often a day passes in New York without adding to the quota of crimes with which sudden death, premeditated or not, is connected.

A shrewd, wise woman, Mother Beman. Her estimate was right.

III

RABOWSKI was—or had been—a Russian Jew who had a little shop in Greenwich Village, on the west side of Seventh Avenue. He repaired watches and mended jewelry. He sold quaint pieces about which he always told a history—and never told the truth.

It was a dingy little shop. It did a fair trade in curios. Rabowski slept back of it, for convenience, for economy and for the safety of his wares. He was a fence. The safe in the back room was a good one, a very good one, and there were times when it held an astonishing amount of valuable stones. Gems, taken from settings, which Rabowski melted down and disposed of swiftly. He did not keep loose stones long. He turned them over quickly, making speedy profits. He always had cash on hand for those who dropped in to see him and strolled into the back room, if the store was

empty and the street clear of dicks.

So far, Rabowski had had no trouble with the police. He was a humble person with a gabble of broken American, a conciliatory manner, an air of general deprecation of himself. But he was getting rich.

He had occasional dealings with Chick Miller, but he never went to the clubhouse. He made his cash deals at his own place.

Nobody paid much attention to the fact his little store was closed until the third day, when a customer spoke to a policeman about it, complaining that Rabowski had promised him his watch should be repaired by the day before.

"Yiddish holidays, mebbe," said the harness bull.

"He lives back of the shop," persisted the complainant.

But Rabowski was not *living* there any more. His body lay on the floor. He had been shot—twice. Once from behind, once again in front, through the head. The first bullet had gone through the upper ventricle of his heart.

"A miracle that he could manage it," said the autopsy surgeon, "but he must have done it, after they left him."

What Rabowski had done, fighting off death, was to start to scrawl a message with his dirty forefinger for pen, and his own blood for ink, on the bare floor where he lay on his face.

The safe was closed, the combination set. When it was opened it was practically empty of anything of especial value. It had been open when the bullets rushed from the muffled rods to send him down.

Chick Miller had been there, with Shorty Lewis and Gyp Lonergan.

The scrawl on the floor commenced with a wavering C, the next letter was incomplete. There was a blundering upstroke that might have turned into an l, or an h. Rabowski had run out of ink—though there was plenty in a crimson puddle beside him—and out of life.

Chick Miller and his two men were well away. They had decoyed Rabowski with a show of loot, struck a bargain with him, killed him after he had opened the safe to get his money, gone with their loot, with the cash, and not as much else as they expected. The loose stones they hoped to find had been taken down town by Rabowski the day before. There were some good pieces of jewelry, eight thousand dollars in currency.

A little over a grand apiece. It had not lasted long. Chick and his men were only suckers with easy money. They and their broads blew it in. Broadway got it. Uptown night clubs where they swaggered for a few hours, shops where the broads bought what they had wanted, swift gleaners of gangsters' harvests.

Centre Street said nothing about the red writing on the floor. Deputy Commissioner Connelly had his own opinion of premature publicity. One of the old school, Connelly. They said he kept lengths of rubber hose in his own office for criminals who were slow in talking. Some thought him slow-witted, laughed at his liking for crossword puzzles, styled him an old fogey—and Connelly laughed at them.

He had a clew and he was going to make the most of it.

That bloody attempt at a message might mean Clancy. It might be the start of some moniker like Chi'—for Chicago. He could fit that with certain racketeers—and he checked them up. Or it might have been meant to stand for Chick—Chick Miller.

The press had been howling about the number of arrests—all too few—the lack of convictions, the thirty thousand active crooks who preyed on New York. This time, an arrest was going to be backed up with proof that no mouthpiece could make light of. Connelly set the machinery of his department to work; he chose his best man for a special detail.

That was Dugan—Jimmy Dugan—first-grade detective. He had come up from harness bull by the use of luck, his own pluck, his wits and the brains he had trained for a plain-clothes job.

His was the third generation of the Dugans to serve on the force. His father had been Sergeant Dugan and Connelly had known the sergeant well—and liked him. Jimmy was the first to become a dick. The commissioner believed he would go far. He thought that Jimmy had the natural instinct for detective work and, for all he was of the old school, Connelly admired education. For himself, circumstances had forced him to get along with it.

Dugan had done well. He had been applauded by the press, commended and promoted. But nobody knew, save Connelly, that he was on this mission. One he might never return from.

The deputy commissioner picked up his favorite stub of a pencil, wetted it, chewed on his cold cigar and applied himself to the crossword puzzle in the evening edition of his pet paper. But it would not work out. His heart was not in it.

He had heard nothing from Dugan for a week. He might easily be fixed so that he could not report; he might have nothing to report; he might be in jeopardy; he might be dead, a floater in the river. Chances of the game.

The chief commissioner was getting restive about the Rabowski case, among others. He threatened to take it over himself, and Connelly chafed under the suggestion. The chief meant well, but he was an amateur.

The telephone rang and Connelly answered it, rolling his cigar to the corners of his lips.

"Who? Ah, good! Good girl! Where are you phonin' from?"

The call came from a public booth and Connelly nodded silent approval. He listened closely, made a note or two. His eyes shone brightly as he hung up the receiver.

"A good girl, Mary Brady," he repeated softly. "An' the lad is safe, so far, and on the trail. Thank God, for that! He'll come through."

He took up his pencil again, found a keyword for the puzzle, set it down and went ahead, scratching his neck at the back now and then, but finally filling in all the blanks to his satisfaction.

Dugan had been heard from. And the clew was proving itself worth while.

IV

IT was eleven o'clock at night. Mother Beman was preparing to close up the Bon Ton. Chick Miller and his five lieutenants were in the clubroom at the back. They had drifted in casually through the afternoon and evening, taken their opportunity to get through unobserved. Now all the gang that counted, that had any voice in the matter and equal division of the spoils, were present.

The colored cook and frowzy Lena had gone home. Sandwiches and coffee had been served through the slide. Humpy had some work to do before he was at liberty to go to his cot in the basement. He got little time off for himself.

He did not seem to mind. He

hummed as he worked. He was in out of the cold; he had plenty to eat. It was a good thing for him, Mother Beman told herself, as she came into the kitchen with her mangy fur coat on, arctics over her shoes. And a good thing for her. The other dishwasher had never come back and Humpy was far more satisfactory, and cheaper.

She glanced with keen eyes round the room, saw the slide was closed.

"Good night, Humpy," she said. "You're doin' all right," she added grudgingly. "If you keep it up."

"I know when I strike the right place," said Humpy. "Could I draw a dollar or so? I need smokin's an' I gotta have a clean shirt."

She took two dollars from her bag.

"That's for this week. You need a shave, too, while you're about it. You don't look human."

Humpy grinned. He knew he did not look very prepossessing with that growth of whiskers, his unkempt hair. He thanked her, filled his bucket for mopping.

"Need a new mop," he suggested.

"There's plenty wear in that one." She rapped on the slide in a signal that brought it open, a few inches. Humpy could hear the murmur of discontented voices that paused to see what was wanted.

"I'm closin' up," said Mother Beman. "Anything I can get you boys before I go."

"Nothin'."

"I'm not pushin' you boys, but the rent's way overdue an' I got to pay mine termorrer."

"You'll git it," the voice replied surlily and the slide jammed.

For a moment she surveyed it angrily and then, just as a man might have, shrugged her shoulders. She had merely spurred them a little. They had been loafing for days. Lying low. Now they might get busy.

Humpy went ahead with his work. There was a trap and ladder stairs that led to his basement bedroom. The house was warmed by gas-heated radiation. There was no furnace. In the clubroom they had the big stove, their own supply of coal. He had nothing to do with them. They barely dreamed of his existence. But he was careful to make no noise.

When the slide was slammed it had sprung back from its frame a little. They had not locked it in their wrath at being asked for the rent. It could not be called open, but it was not entirely closed and sound came through it. Humpy stopped his mopping to listen.

This should be the consummation of all that he had played for, had gone through. That afternoon he had called up Mary Brady, operative for the Garrity Detective Agency, his girl friend, whom some day he hoped to make his wife and to take out of the hazardous game she played, they both played, sometimes together.

A wonderful girl, Mary Brady, not just to look at, but she was clever and courageous as well. Dugan was glad she was not in on this grim adventure. His disguise as a hunchback had carried him far, but if he made one slip he knew what would be the penalty, a corpse floating down the river in the slushy tide, under the falling snow, out to sea.

But he had been able to use Mary. He had relayed his report to Commissioner Connelly through her, knowing it would reach him correctly, not daring to try a direct call himself. Dugan's language had been veiled. He had called himself Humpy, and a listener-in, even if suspicious, would not have seen anything in it but a cause of

laughter in the thought of Humpy calling up a dame. But Mary had understood.

He couldn't hear very much, only a word now and then that rose above the general pitch. There was a lot he had not been able to find out, that he had to fill in by deductions. Some things he could not discover, such as the exits from the back room. He inferred that they were these.

The main point was that he was close to them, unsuspected, practically unseen. If they had known a dick was washing dishes for Mother Beman they would not give him the chance of a drowning rat in a bucket of water with a cover over it.

That situation had worked both ways. He had caught occasional glimpses of the restaurant through the service slide from the kitchen, but Mother Beman saw to it that the slide to the clubroom was served only by herself.

He did not know how many were in that back room. Four, at least, it might be six. He knew Chick Miller by sight, and Shorty Lewis. He had seen both of them in the restaurant that afternoon. Chick was leader. Both were undoubtedly on the other side of the wall, the original wall of the house, brick, impervious to sound, even a microphone.

There was only the slide, and Dugan hesitated to shift it. It was a break that it was partway open. He could tell that all were in an ugly mood, in a conference that was not congenial. And he strained his ears to catch what words he could.

There was no proof, so far, that they had bumped off Rabowski, and this case was to be cinched, Connelly said. To arrest men without certainty of conviction was only more ammunition for those who had the force under fire. Proof he had to get, through his ears, with his eyes, by tangible handling and production of visible evidence.

It was Connelly's hunch that the scarlet scrawl on the floor of the murdered Rabowski's inner room pointed at Chick Miller. Examination of stoolies had not corroborated this. They seemed more afraid of Chick's vengeance than the wrath of the police. Chick was regarded as a venomous snake who struck for the love of it, struck suddenly, with deadly accuracy.

The only positive information had been the news that Chick and his gang hung out in the neighborhood where Humpy had since appeared. Even then Mother Beman had not been mentioned.

And now Dugan had a hunch of his own, powerful, driving, convincing. He felt certain that things were coming to a head. From Chick's attitude he fancied that the leader also had a hunch that he was under suspicion, that he might be counted on to make some action—perhaps to temporarily dissolve the gang and slip away, or take them with him.

The last was not too likely. Racketeers, in cities where the pickings are good, resent the entry of other gangsters. But Dugan was sure Chick was up to something. If he could only hear more of what was being said, see what was going on.

So insistent had been his hunch that he had suggested, through Mary Brady, in covert language, that men be on the alert in the neighborhood that night and from then on. He might not be able to manage the gang himself, to cope with odds of six to one, six blazing, well aimed guns. And, if he communicated with the dicks he was sure

were hovering outside, they might not be able to get through before Chick and his gang had bolted out their get-aways. Dugan was very sure those existed.

Also, above everything, he *must get proof.*

He bent all his alert wits to stringing together a context from the fragments he could overhear. A harder job, he thought, whimsically, than any of the cross-word puzzles the deputy commissioner pored over. Sometimes he got Jimmy Dugan to help him, but now Dugan had to play the game solo.

There had been no finger-prints in Rabowski's. That sort of evidence was rare these days. The crooks were too wise. They used collodion on their finger ends, or rubber gloves. The game, the pursuit of criminals, was not so easy. It was well enough for the press to rave about lack of convictions, but gangsters were not fools. The detective was called in after the deed was done, after tracks were covered. It took intuition, experience, luck.

In scores of cases Centre Street was certain of the criminal, but the ways of the law demanded certain evidence. It was no wonder that Connelly, knowing his city, sure of his man, used those lengths of rubber hose before he had to turn him loose, to sneer at the force and try another coup.

Inside came a high-toned voice, querulous, half whine, half snarl. A brisker, deeper answer, authoritative. They might get into a quarrel among themselves. There might be gunplay.

Dugan did not know how he could get into that back room. He knew by now of the latch that opened the first door though he had never tried it, even when he was alone at night in the kitchen. The second door would be barred. And all the time he listened his hunch whispered to him—*this was the night!* It was now or never.

V

"WHAT'S eatin' *you?*" demanded Shorty Lewis of Chick Miller. "We're flat, until you fence that stuff. If you're scared to, if you've lost yore nerve, split it. I'll take a chance on my whack. Hell, we could take it to Philly!"

"You *would* make a fool play like thet. Who's runnin' this racket? If you think my nerve is gone, suppose you start somethin' an' you'll find out.

"We're in the red, I tell you. Shut up an' listen. Jerry Flynn is telephone operator at headquarters. He ain't been married long an' what he hears his wife knows. She's a jane an' excited over first-hand news. I'll bet even Jerry don't figure all she gets out of him.

"All right. I got my frail, Flo, planted in the same apartment house, see? She's got friendly with Jerry's expense account. She did it easy an' she did it slow, but now they're pals. Flo never asks for anything, but this other jane jest naturally has to spill it."

"Well, what did she spill?" asked Gyp Lonergan.

"Plenty. Plenty that ain't been given out to the press. Stuff that that stiff Connelly kept for the chief commissioner's ears. An' one thing"—Chick grinned—"is that the chief ain't satisfied over the Rabowski case an' threatens to head in on it himself."

"That ain't bad news," said Shorty. "*Him!* Know his new moniker? The Parkin' Commissioner."

"It ain't *good* news. Connelly 'll turn over what he knows. An' some of that we didn't know. Rabowski wasn't croaked when we left. He starts to write my name on the floor in his own

blood. Enough of it to give Connelly the hunch it might be us. What do you think of that?"

There was s i l e n c e while they thought it out. Then Shorty rasped out a string of oaths.

"The lousy Jew!" he ended. "You should have shot him through the ears before we left."

"Why didn't *you* think of it?" retorted Chick. "He looked dead enough with two slugs in him. Your's at his heart and mine between the eyes."

"You can't kill his sort like you would another man," said Gyp disgustedly. "Go ahead."

Chick whirled in his seat.

"I thought I heard something," he said.

"You did," said Shorty. "So did I. A damned rat. The dump's full of 'em. Go on with yore spillin'."

Back of the slide Dugan took a deep breath. He had eased the slide, ever so little, with the ice pick—and it had squeaked. He had oral evidence now. Not enough, with a smart mouthpiece to tell the jury that every dick was prejudiced, would swear away a man's life to bolster their own reputations.

Not enough, but, for a moment, his blood ran scalding hot in his veins and then cooled down. There were his men. They must not get away. But how was he to trap them?

"Well," said Chick, "that ain't all. This Rabowski kept a book with a list of the stuff he buys regular, or has to repair. He set down a description of every bit of jewelry we copped. And that stuff is all antiques. The stones ain't worth a damn out of their settings. I could have sold it, to be shipped out, if it wasn't for that book of his. Those descriptions have been broadcast to every place where we could get a decent price. There ain't a fence or a pawnbroker 'ud handle 'em. You might peddle out one here an' there to some small guy, but you'd take yore chances at that. That's why I've hung on to 'em."

"The lousy Jew!" said Shorty once again.

"We're bein' tailed," said Chick. "Connelly's put Dugan on the job—a week ago."

"*Dugan!*" They all knew Dugan. Dugan had broken up three gangs. Dugan was not an ordinary dick. He had been a flatfoot harness bull, but, since his first promotion, he had shown himself far from the regulation detective. Connelly's best bet.

"If he's been on it fer a week," growled Gyp, "he ain't turned nothin' up. If we've been tailed I ain't seen no shadows. An' I can spot one a mile! Have you seen any?"

Chick shook his head in denial.

"If I had, the eels an' crabs would be havin' a picnic," he said. "But Dugan ain't been at headquarters for a week. I know that. An' he's no slob. I'm lookin' up every stranger that's been seen round here inside the last few days."

"You've got a job on yore hands," said Gyp sarcastically. "Listen, Chick, looks to me this was the time to make a sneak."

The six looked at each other. They had sudden visions of what was absolutely in existence, shadowy forms lurking in the neighborhood, waiting for the tip to close in. They looked at their exits. Their m o u t h s were parched, for a moment panic threatened.

"I'll take my divvy an' breeze," said Shorty, "if that's the right dope. I'll take a chance. If we're spotted, we're spotted, but we know how to git erway

clean. We don't have to go out the front door in this dump. Flash the stuff, Chick."

Chick Miller looked round the little circle. His gaze was somber. He saw his visions fading. The Rabowski job had been a mistake, had not broken right. And the breaks were what counted. Who could figure on a man, shot through heart and head, surviving to blotch the floor with a clew for Connelly, keeping a book that described his legitimate dealings? And the safe had been empty of the unset gems he was sure Rabowski had there.

They blamed him for it. A leader cannot make a mistake. His grip had slipped. He was no longer a mastermind, just one of a gang under suspicion. With Dugan on the job. He would have shot it out with Dugan, though he knew the dick had a reputation with a gun. But this was dealing with a ghost.

"I guess it's ripe to beat it," he said. "We'll split the swag, if that's the way you all feel about it."

They felt that way. He could see it in their eyes. He took off his coat and exposed that flat automatic in its shoulder clip. He opened his vest, his waistband and shirt and loosened the wide canvas belt he wore.

From that he spilled on the pool table the booty from Rabowski's safe. Most of it had been bought from immigrants. To them it was of what value they could raise on it. Gypsy jewelry, peasant jewelry, of quaint design. Rabowski had not paid much for it. In Greenwich Village it brought high prices. Women looking for bizarre ornaments bought it eagerly, but intrinsically it was of small worth, the gems only semiprecious. But the settings, worth so little melted down, were unique.

Garnets, topaz and amethyst gleamed on the green cloth. Hungarian opal, olivines, sapphires, stuff that had been handed down for generations. Twisted ropes of pearl, dangling earrings, bracelets, brooches. It was a brave show. Sold in the right American market there was plenty of money in it. Not otherwise.

"We'll throw the dice for choice," he said, a little dully, his dream of high-racketeering dim. "Then we'll blow. If they've got us faded we'd better light out."

"The only stranger I know of," said Shorty, as one of them looked for the dice and its leather castor, "is the 'humpy' Mother Beman hired to do the diswashing. He's been hanging' round here for about a week.

It was then that Chick showed his qualities of leadership.

"Workin'—here?" he asked out of the corner of his mouth, in the thief's whisper. "Pipe down, you fellers."

"Aw," said Shorty, "you can't count him in. He comes from Albany. Had a job up street, flunkeyin' ashes at Regan's."

Chick held up an imperative hand for silence. He pointed at the slide, remembering the sound he had heard. He was ferret now, as well as snake. The slide was unfastened, slightly open.

"I want to take a look at this guy," he whispered. "Ginger, you start the phonograph. Gyp, you an' Shorty go out front an' bring in this dishwasher. They got a spy planted on us, to my mind. We can't take any chances."

He held dominance again. The man who directed action. The jewelry still lay scattered on the pool table, with the dice. It was of small moment. If they found a spy they would not care what he saw, or heard. He might have

heard too much already. His shrift would be a short one.

Gyp and Shorty went tiptoe to the door that led to the passage, their guns in the clear, opened it and passed on. Chick opened the slide, looked through and saw the hunchback swinging a mop industriously.

"You want anything?" asked Humpy.

"Not right away. You might stick around for a few minutes."

Dugan nodded. He guessed they had heard that squeak that had startled him for the second. He knew they would hold him. The moment had come when he would be among them. He had what he wanted. The evidence was on the table. He was prepared for what would happen, as well as a man could be in the character he had assumed. In no other manner could he have hoped to get close to them.

Now they had forced his hand, but he was ready to play it.

He was still mopping when the kitchen door opened and the two gunmen came in on him.

VI

"HE ain't got a thing on him," said Gyp. "We frisked him."

Chick was not satisfied. His eyes evil, he went over the hunchback, who stood in the midst of them as if half stupefied at what had befallen him. Chick patted his pockets, felt for a shoulder gun, examined the sleeves of his upheld arms. He was satisfied finally that their prisoner was weaponless, harmless, but he was not through with him.

The grilling was thorough. The hunchback told a straight story, even to the premium of the gold cigarette case he had given Mother Beman. He got that in Albany, he said.

"Who planted you in this job? Who put you on to it?"

"I don't know what you're drivin' at. I grubbed here while I had money. It was the softest job I could land. I get my eats an' it's warm."

Chick went on with his third degree questioning, savage. He was practically convinced that the man was what he claimed to be. A stranger. But he had seen what was on the pool table. He might have heard a lot. There was only one way to make sure of him. He said so.

Shorty demurred, not from mercy, but superstition.

"It ain't good luck to bump off a humpy," he said. Two or three of the rest agreed with him.

"What do you want to do, make a mascot of him?" snarled Chick. "Let him in on the swag?"

"This whole job is hoodoo'd," said Shorty. "Don't queer it any more. It won't hurt if we leave him here, long as we're goin' to beat it."

"He'll talk if we don't bump him off. He's a bum an' he'd squeal all he knew for ten bucks."

Chick's hand went up to his gun. Dugan felt death standing very near. He played his part, dumb, inert, his eyes roving around as if for sympathy, missing nothing.

"You ain't goin' to kill me, like I was a sheep?" he bleated finally. Then he straightened up as best he could and looked Chick fairly in his murderer's eyes, eyes of pale blue.

He had not been able to calculate all the chances. He knew they might be desperate before he got to close quarters. And now, with his hand forced, he had a card or two to play, if he could use them. First his wits.

"Go ahead then, you butcher!" he said. "But your pal is right. Kill a

humpy an' the hoodoo's on you. I may be a bum, but if I had a rod I'd beat you up."

Their faces showed amazement, a certain delight. It was as if a rabbit had suddenly defied a bulldog. And the threat of hoodoo had its effect.

"Damned if he ain't got nerve," said Gyp. "Chuck him in the back room, Chick. Let's divvy up. We can figger what to do with him later. He's harmless now." He took up the dice box, rolled the cubes in a double six. Chuckled. "That gives me first pick," he announced.

"The hell it does!"

"Who said you had first throw?"

"We ain't started."

"It's the spots that count. It don't matter who throws first," said Gyp. "Bu I choose that necklace and pendant for my moll. It'll hit her right in the eye. Some one beat *that* throw. If you tie it, we throw off."

The gambling spirit had caught them. And the mood of quarrel that goes with it. Chick intervened.

"I'm runnin' this," he said. The dice had given him an idea. Humpy's threat of hoodoo had not passed him over, but he had a diabolical thought. "Gyp's throw stands. An' when we're through we'll let the humpy roll 'em. If he throws a natural we'll leave him here, gagged an' tied. If he shoots craps—that's *his* bad luck—not ours. He'll be his own hoodoo an' we'll scrag him."

It appealed to them. They had had more than sandwiches and coffee, some of them. They had sniffed Happy Dust. Chick was a man of wit and resource. They hustled the hunchback into a back room. It was the one without an exit, without window or door, other than the one through which they thrust him, unarmed and powerless. Chick's proposition struck their crude ideas of humor, settled the stir of superstition that pervaded them. To let him try his own luck—let them out. It was a rare jest.

VII

DUGAN, in darkness, wiped the sweat from his forehead. It had been a close call. It was not all over yet. But he got busy while the dice rolled on the green cloth, stained with blood near the middle pocket. He could hear them calling out, elated or set back, imagine them bending over the spoils.

His hump came off. He stood erect, his eyes blazing, even in the black room. His jaw was set, bossed with tiny muscles, his pulses beat evenly. A gun was in each hand as he kicked the door open and walked in on them.

"I'm Dugan," he said. "Put up your hands. Line up to the wall, all of you!"

For just a pulse beat they stood staring at him, seeing those flaming orbs, gaping at the transformation.

"Dugan!" The name held them. And he could not be alone.

Then they reacted. They were in their own stronghold, six to one.

Two on the far side of the pool table ducked, squirming under it, shooting at him. Chick was the first of them to fire—the first to go down.

Dugan had not practiced on the force range for nothing. He had coördination of eye and brain and muscle. He was not naturally two-handed, but he had trained his left hand to take the recoil of a gun and his right was part of the weapon. He flung lead left and right, moving swiftly.

Chick was on the floor, gasping, a bullet under his heart—where Rabowski had been first hit, but Chick had got his from the front. Dugan leaped

over him, his two guns belching as he sprang toward the switch he had located.

Not to throw it. He wanted light. He was shooting it out. Shorty had started for it, but Dugan brought him down, stumbling, pitching forward, to claw the floor, scrabbling for the gun he had lost from nerveless fingers.

Dugan sought the open door. He saw the men under the pool table and he moved like a lightweight in the first round, evading their efforts to get him.

It was all happening with lightning swiftness, punctuated with the roar of his own two police thirty-eights, the muffled pop of the racketeers' weapons. The room was filmed with powder smoke, reeked of its gas.

He was hit. In the thigh. But the bone was untouched, and he did not heed the hot gout of blood. He could lose a little. Lead seared his ribs. That was Gyp's slug, but Gyp spun about. There was a hole in his forehead as he crashed down. Then Shorty.

Three gone. Ginger was behind a table, using it for a screen. Dugan rushed him, leaping to one side. He felt the wind of the bullet, but he got his man. Ginger collapsed with a splintered hip, out of the fight.

Now Dugan flung down a table, crouched back of it, fighting it out with the two under the table, inching forward. The table top was soft pine. It did not splinter. It stopped the bullets, though two bored through, their momentum killed and one struck him on the shoulder, a bruise rather than a wound.

One of the two started to twirl, like a teetotum, slowing down. He had been hit in the head. His frenzied struggle hindered the last man, and Dugan thrust the table away and crouched, his gun covering him.

"Drop your rod an' come out," he ordered. Sullenly the gangster obeyed. The room was a shambles. Dugan could never have handled it if he had not got the jump on them. Chick was dying. Gyp and Shorty Lewis dead. *Good gangsters.*

And Dugan's guns were both empty. He picked up a weapon. Ginger was groaning, crawled to a corner. The man who had played top under the table was still. Not killed, but senseless from a gouge along the top of his skull. The sixth man cowed. The only one who had not been struck.

Dugan surveyed his morgue, sized up the wounded. He kicked their guns together, into a heap. Ginger was beyond effort.

"Open that door, you!" he said to the survivor. The shaded light shone on the glittering heap of jewelry that Rabowski had listed. Evidence that was hardly needed. The men who had killed Rabowski had paid the penalty.

Dugan limped close back of the lone gangster as he opened the door, then the next. He marched him through the restaurant, held him in the entry while he whistled.

Shadowy forms appeared.

"You'd better call an ambulance," said Dugan. "You might get a hearse," he added, with a grim attempt at humor as he felt his leg give way, saw the street lights go dim through the flakes of snow that were falling. "Take in this bird. The rest are in—"

VIII

"I DON'T need to go to hospital," he insisted to Connelly. "I can get patched up at headquarters."

He was not quite himself, despite his protest. He knew he was in the back of a closed car. He knew Connelly

was there by his voice. But there was somebody else, a hand in his, softer tones than the deputy's, but not less authoritative.

"You're going to the hospital, Jimmy."

Dugan succumbed.

"Oh, all right, Mary," he said. "I thought I told you to stay out of this?"

"I did," she said. "It was all over when you called us. Now *you* obey orders."

"You'll never need tattooing for identification, Dugan," said the surgeon a little later. "You've got scars enough for three war veterans."

"Chart 'em, doc," said Dugan. "Anybody waitin' outside?"

There were two. Connelly and Mary Brady.

"We got Rabowski's jewelry," said the deputy commissioner. "And we found your hump in the back room. That was a good make-up, Jimmy."

"I had to have some place to pack my guns," said Jimmy. "It looked like the best way to get next to them. And they were a foxy bunch. They frisked me, but they didn't find as much as a penknife. It was a lucky hunch, commissioner. If you'll get me a taxi, I'll go home."

"You'll go in my car," said Connelly. "You and Mary. I'll see if it's ready." He went out of the room with twinkling eyes.

"I'll say it was a lucky hunch," he chuckled to himself. "Lucky for the force. We need that lad."

"Mary," said Jimmy, as he tried his bandaged leg, found it sound, "I didn't get a chance to get shaved for a week. If it wasn't for my whiskers—"

"I like them," said Mary Brady.

Perhaps she did. They did not seem to interfere.

Wanted: A Hawkshaw of the Air!

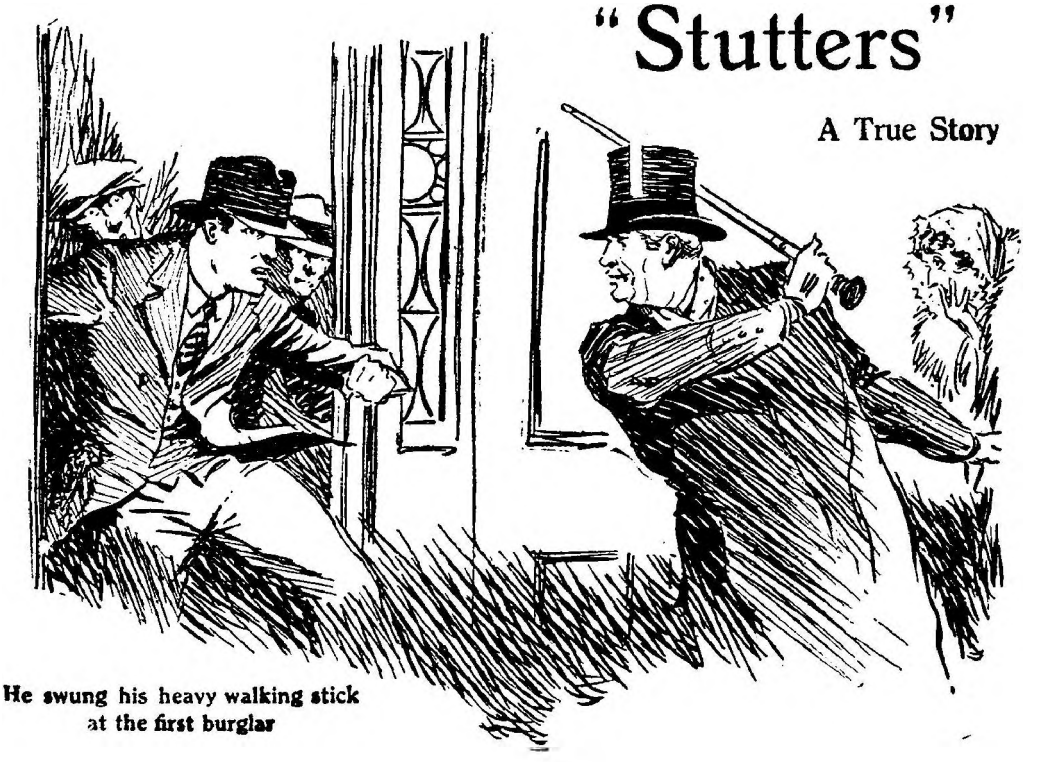
THIS is an air age, and members of the Toronto Federation of Racing Pigeons are in a frame of mind, no doubt, to hire the services of an aërial detective, if such a person has yet appeared. Recently two thousand of their prize birds were released at St. Mary's, ninety-seven miles from Toronto. Some mysterious disaster must have overtaken them, for of this great flock only twenty-four returned. The birds were valued at twenty-five thousand dollars by their owners.

The mystery may never be solved. All the birds were of prize breeds and each was marked with an aluminium identification tag. No bodies or no tags have been discovered. Somewhere along the route the birds may have received a great fright, or they may have encountered larger birds of prey, or they may even have crashed into the First Pursuit Squadron of United States Army planes, returning to Detroit that day.

Only one other comparable loss is recorded in homer pigeon history. A few years ago six thousand pigeons were lost over the English Channel. Their bodies were later washed up on the shore.

"Stutters"

A True Story



He swung his heavy walking stick at the first burglar

A "Dinner Bandit" Who Caused Iron Bars To Be Placed On New York Police Headquarters Windows

By Charles Somerville

DETECTIVE JOHN FITZPATRICK hung up the receiver of his desk telephone at the Forty-Seventh Street police precinct station, a branch bureau of New York headquarter's central office. He had concluded a conversation with the warden of Sing Sing Prison.

"Well?" asked his "side-kick," Detective Edward Burgess. "what about it?"

"Just as I doped it out," said Fitzpatrick. "It's 'Stutters' all right. He's our bird. He was released from Sing Sing about two months ago. It's exactly two months ago that this series of turn-offs started. Stutters, sure as shooting, is the gent we want. These recent jobs have been along the lines of his regular lay. And his earmark is on every one of them—the earmark that isn't any mark at all—leaving no sign as to how the devil he got into the places. Not a mark of a jimmy on doors or windows. I'd like to know what kind of a magic wand that crook carries!"

The jobs to which Fitzpatrick referred numbered seven and had netted the criminal performing them loot in cash and jewels to the tune of nearly one hundred and fifty thousand dol-

lars. They had been what are designated by metropolitan detectives as "dinner" and "theater jobs." By this is meant robberies committed during the dinner hour when the members of a household and their servants are all assembled in dining room and kitchen and the burglar is thus afforded a free run of the bed chambers and libraries where valubles, aside from table silverware, are customarily kept. A theater job is one where "lookouts" and "pathfinders" report an entire family to be absent on a certain night for the purpose of attending a theatrical performance or a social function that will keep them away till a late hour. Between the time the servants retire and the family returns, the "Dutch houseman" makes his entrance and pillages the place.

In the spring of 1915 there had been seven such robberies in swift succession—about one a week—in which the perpetrator or perpetrators made rich hauls. In no case was less than ten thousand dollars in cash and jewelry stolen. In one robbery fifty thousand dollars had been taken.

Fitzpatrick was an older hand at thief catching at the time than Burgess. He had studied the characteristics of the handiwork of the most adept burglars. Scarcely one of these but had a peculiarity of method which to Fitzpatrick and other detectives of equal experience and acumen stamped the identity of the criminal on a job as clearly and indelibly as if he left his signature behind him ere departing with his plunder.

It was the fame of Stutters in the underworld that he never left the slightest evidence behind of the manner in which he had effected entrance to a dwelling. And he was also identified as going in exclusively for dinner and theater work.

Fitzpatrick had been minded of this, but his first information was that in these cases Stutters could not be the offender because he must still be an inmate of Sing Sing. But there had been something of a miscalculation at headquarters as to the amount of time off Stutters could receive for good behavior. It was opined and reported to Fitzpatrick that the crook couldn't be out of limbo yet. However, the more Fitzpatrick studied the robberies the more certain he became that the jobs were the handiwork of Stutters—could be that of no other. Hence his call to the warden at Sing Sing when the miscalculation of headquarters became apparent. Time off for good behavior had set Stutters free something over sixty days before. Which was the time the special plunderings in hand had begun. They ranged mostly in upper Fifth Avenue. The majority of the victims were very wealthy and of social prominence.

It was evident also to both Fitzpatrick and Burgess that the criminal was employing an expert fence. Many of the articles stolen were engraved with monograms and crests and were to be easily identified therefore. Many of the rings had their gems set in special and individual designs, fully described, and also easily to be identified.

The most thorough watch on the pawnshops of the city, the most thorough scouring of the possessions of known fences had not turned up a single thing stolen on the recent dinner and theater raids. It was patent that the mysterious housebreaker had an agent forwarding the stolen articles to remote points in the country or, possibly, exporting them to Europe for sale.

"I wonder," came the suggestion from Burgess, "if 'Scush' Thomas wouldn't be worth the once or twice over on this lay?"

"My boy," said Fitzpatrick, "you've said something. If we can find out that Stutters is playing with Scush I'll bet any man real money we are coming out on top in this case."

Working together, Fitzpatrick and Burgess had "come out on top" in the handling of several strikingly difficult cases, not only that of robberies but of murder mysteries.

Scush Thomas was a fearsome person—a real bad man. His underworld standing was on a par with such vicious gunmen as Big Jack Zelig, Johnny Spanish, Owney Madden, Gyp the Blood, Lefty Louis, One-Eye Geegan and Happy Jack Halloran. He had been arrested three times for murder—one charge having been that he had decoyed a man named Henshaw, then his partner in a saloon enterprise, into another and very obscure drinking place in Fortieth Street, west of Eighth Avenue, and, having taken a position near his intended victim, he suddenly switched out all the lights in the place. Under cover of the ensuing darkness he shot Henshaw to death.

He was tried and acquitted on this murder charge. The testimony was all necessarily gangster evidence and it wavered and weakened under the cold eye of Scush as he sat in the court room with his own life at stake. Similarly on the other two occasions the evidence at first accumulated began to melt away soon after his arrest and the authorities were powerless to hold it together.

Both Fitzpatrick and Burgess knew that Scush was at this time conducting a barroom and hotel at the northwest corner of Thirty-Eighth Street and Seventh Avenue. They also knew that it was a rendezvous of the elite of crookdom, resident and transient. They took no measures to close the place. In fact, did their utmost to encourage it by a seeming ignorance of its existence. They let it "go by the board" when it came to their ears that Scush Thomas and his cronies believed the detectives to be timorous of interfering in any way with the resort, both on account of Scush's boasted political "drag" and for the safety of their own persons.

But were the truth known, Fitzpatrick and Burgess constantly kept the resort honeycombed with stool pigeons and out of information thus derived had landed many a big fish in their net, including fugitive criminals from other cities.

Moreover, that Scush Thomas's rendezvous was also a clearing house for stolen goods they were convinced, but had not been able to pin the fact that he was a fence on him. Their stool pigeons had not been able to get the inside track on the information as to what points Scush was shipping stuff stolen in New York, or with whom he was dealing in New York in the sale of stolen jewels shipped to him from the West, South and North.

But in the bagging of notorious gunmen and yeggs and thieves generally who sought refuge in his hotel they had been remarkably successful. And without the crooks knowing that their presence had been betrayed by agents working from the inside. The detectives had always been careful in "knocking off" such crooks to make the arrest outside of Scush Thomas's resort, following their men when they went on outings or to a theater, or were spending the night in some other thieves' resort.

An especially alert stool pigeon was now set to work to ascertain if Stutters was "playing around" with Scush. The report was gratifying to the detectives. Stutters had been a habitué of Scush Thomas's place since his release from prison. He did not live in the hotel—roomed elsewhere—but was a visitor at least three times a week in the two months that he had been at liberty. It was evident that he and Scush had important, secret business together because these visits invariably called for long conferences between the pair in the small private office Scush maintained on the second floor of the establishment.

The stool pigeon had not dared scrutinize the movements and conferences of Stutters and Scush too closely. He couldn't say whether Stutters was passing his loot to Scush for disposition. But every sign pointed to this being the fact.

Another stool pigeon had been detailed to trail Stutters from Thomas's rendezvous and had done so successfully. Fitzpatrick and Burgess knew where, on the upper East Side, Stutters was rooming. They were discussing the advisability of a raid on Stutters's flat in the hope of finding incriminating loot on the premises when the affair took a course of its own and in a highly dramatic manner.

Following dinner, the wealthy owner of a private residence at Seventh Avenue and One Hundred and Twentieth Street escorted his entire family to the theater. An amiable man, he also sent the four servants of his household to see a show this same night. This despite the fact that in the various bedrooms and in a drawer of his library table were cash and jewels worth not less than seventy-five thousand dollars. But there was a burglar attachment on all the doors and windows in which he had full faith, and this was set by the servants who left the house after the master and his family had departed for the down town playhouse.

Whatever the manner of entrance, Stutters effected it without setting off the alarm which would have rung in the office of a private protective agency. Once thus safely inside the house, it was a simple matter, of course, to shut off the alarm entirely from all doors and windows.

The house selected for robbing must have been under close espionage for some time. The good nature of its owner had doubtless been learned, for he seldom, if ever, took his family to the theater that he did not furnish his servants with money to seek entertainment likewise. He had supreme confidence in the effectiveness of his burglar alarm. Moreover, Seventh Avenue is a main street and policemen are numerous.

Nevertheless, Stutters and two pals, indubitably aware that the coast was entirely clear, entered the house and most thoroughly ransacked it. They missed nothing in the way of valuables save the silver tableware of large dimensions, which they figured would be too conspicuous to carry out of the house into so public and, up to midnight at least, crowded a thoroughfare as Seventh Avenue.

They spent such a considerable time in the house that they went beyond the limit of safety. Skillful as they had been in getting past the burglar alarm on entering, they were stupid in the getaway. They suddenly realized that the minutes had slipped past till it was well after eleven o'clock and that the householder and his family or the servants might be returning. They decided they must hasten away. But such was

their hurry they didn't take time to see if the lane of departure was safe.

The consequence was that, led by Stutters, the three burglars emerged into the vestibule of the house at exactly the time the owner of the premises entered it. He was a white-haired man, but valiant. He seized the situation on the instant. He made no parley. Instead he swung his heavy walking stick with a mighty swing across the eyes and bridge of the nose of Stutters, laying a long gash into the man's features.

Hard as the blow was it didn't rob Stutters of his wits. For himself and his pals to have rushed past the man and his family could only mean one thing—the raising of a hue and cry in a crowded street and a mob and half a dozen policemen in pursuit of them in a mere flash of time.

He wheeled back, half blinded by the blood streaming over his eyes, and curtly called to the other two:

"The roof!"

They turned back and leaped up the three stairways, the valiant householder behind them, seeking to bang them on the heads with his cane. But age went against him and after the second flight he was winded, the younger men distanced him, climbed the iron ladder on the top floor and made their way through the scuttle to the roof. This was probably their manner of entrance, for they did not require time to open it. It was already open.

The fugitives ran the length of the block along the roofs and, coming to the house at the corner of One Hundred and Twenty-First Street, successfully jimmied open the heavy sheet-iron covered scuttle door and slipped down the stairway, unchallenged, to the street.

His pals, believed to have been Red Lyons and Bud McInerny, notorious burglars, were never positively identified. They slipped away successfully. But Stutters knew that for him to travel the streets with blood pouring down his face must attract attention.

Again his wits worked sharply. There was a traffic policeman standing in the midsection of Seventh Avenue and One Hundred and Twenty-Second Street. Stutters made straight for him.

"Say," he said in his stuttering manner of speech, "I guess I better have an ambulance. I was coming downstairs in my house," he pointed toward One Hundred and Twenty-First Street, "and I tripped on a torn stair carpet and fell the whole flight and struck on my face. I hit against a steam radiator at the bottom and it's cut me up pretty badly. I'm getting pretty weak, I've lost so much blood."

"You are sure bleeding some. Better come around to the station house—it's only two blocks away and we can give you first aid there—stop the bleeding till an ambulance surgeon can stitch you up."

That couldn't have listened so good to Stutters. But he might not reasonably object. He figured to go through with it. So he allowed himself to be led to the West One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street police station and was taken into the detectives' room, where a sergeant, known to be expert in such things, soon had him bandaged in a manner to stanch the flow of blood despite a severed artery over one eyebrow.

It was, however, a case for a surgeon's needle and an ambulance call was duly turned into a near-by hospital. The ambulance was within two or three minutes of arrival when the householder from One Hundred and

Twentieth Street and Seventh Avenue, still toting the walking stick smeared with the blood of the burglar, arrived to report the robbery of his home. He placed the extent of the pillage at the figure already named — seventy-five thousand dollars.

"One of the crooks ought to be pretty easy to pick up," he commented, "because I landed him a mighty good crack with this stick across the eyes and it cut him up. He spilled blood all over the stairs to the roof, and I guess he could be traced along the roofs to where he might now be hiding. He might be hiding in one of the row of houses along the block, although I suppose all three of them have got away by this time. But I figure he'll have to have medical attention. This old, spiny blackthorn certainly gashed his face and gashed deep."

"Well, now ain't that funny!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"What's funny?" indignantly demanded the citizen. "Coming home to meet three robbers leaving it and then getting away with the loot? What's funny about that?"

"No—no. I didn't mean that. It's this though. Would you know the man you hit if you saw him again?"

"I certainly would. There's a big arc light on the corner of the street that shines right into my vestibule. I had a good, fair look at his face. I can't say about the other two. They hadn't come out of the dark hallway into the glare from the arc light. But the fellow I hit—I could pick him out of a thousand."

"Well, then, the funny thing I mentioned, sir," said the lieutenant, "is the fact that we have a man in the detectives' room that we've just bandaged up. His face was all cut—"

"Across the nose and forehead?"

"How about that, sergeant?" asked the lieutenant to the officer who hand rendered first aid.

"Yep—cut across the bridge and eyebrows."

There was the resounding jangle of a gong outside the police station just then.

"There's the ambulance come for him now. This fellow ran right up to a policeman, though, and said he had hurt himself hitting his head against a steam radiator, after tripping and falling downstairs. But I guess you'd better have a look at him."

"I certainly do want a look at him!" exclaimed the owner of the looted home.

The identification he made of Stutters was positive. Instead of a clean, cool cot in a hospital, the burglar was, after the surgeon had taken about seven stitches in closing the gash in his face, locked up in a cell in the station house. But he vehemently denied his guilt, cried out the identification was all wrong, but declined to say in which of the row of houses he lived in order to spare, he said, his old mother the shock of hearing that her son had been arrested in connection with so disgraceful a charge. He promised to clear everything up the next morning and told the citizen who had called him a burglar that he would make him sweat because of the false identification and would on the morrow proceed to sue him for having done so.

But this bluster didn't in the least arouse doubt in the mind of his accuser, despite that search of Stutters brought forth none of the stolen jewels from his pockets or any other possible place of concealment about his person.

"That's the fellow I met coming out of my house," reiterated the elder accuser.

One by one, the detectives of the precinct had a close-up view of Stutters during the night, but to none was he known, and the first news to the police that the Stutters of nation-wide notoriety as a dinner and theater crook had in an effort of strategy delivered himself into the hands of the law, was when the alert stool pigeon planted in Scush Thomas's resort brought the information in the very early morning hours to Burgess and Fitzpatrick.

A tip came to the detectives that their agent was anxious for an interview, and a secret place for the meeting was named. The stool was in a state of excitement.

"They got Stutters up at the One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street station," he said, "only the bulls up there don't know what they got! He pulled a job with Red Lyons and Bud McInerny to-night."

Then he went on to give the details of the misadventure of Stutters as I've already told them and added:

"Lyons and McInerny came down to Scush's after making their getaway. They got the swag with 'em too."

"Sure?"

"I seen some of it. I'm in the back room playin' I'm potted and fast asleep when they come in and sends word to Scush to come in the back room. And they tells him all about the job. And they starts to show him some of the stuff. But he says: 'You damn fools, slap it back in your pockets. If you want me to handle it, come upstairs into me office and I'll talk it over.'"

"Guess we'd better go down there, Ed," said Fitzpatrick to Burgess, "and take the three of them."

"No," said the stool. "Wait! Wait till I spill all I got to tell you. You wouldn't have a clean case on McInerny and Lyons because the gent what's robbed says up at the police station he couldn't identify the other two birds in the job—says they was back of Stutters in the dark and he didn't get a good look at their mugs.

"But, listen—to-morrow will be the jake time to knock 'em off."

"Why to-morrow?"

"Well, they got it all doped up to save Stutters."

"A rescue?" demanded Burgess.

"Yep—and a swell game they figures tryin'—two games. If the first don't go over, they got a second hunch ready to put into play. And they ain't bluffin'. They means it. They are sore at theirselves for not stickin' to Stutters and landin' him in a taxi instead of lettin' him go make that play to the cop. It was a blamed good play at that if the cop had just turned in the ambulance call straight and hadn't got the notion of takin' Stutters around to the house for first aid. Like it turned out—not so good. But it's a big stretch that Stutters will be in for on account of this job and his record and all, and they swore to God there in that back room to-night they wasn't goin' to stand up and see him have to take it."

"Well—well?" demanded Burgess. "What are they fixing to pull?"

"Stutters is due to be handed up into Harlem Court to-morrow morning—I mean this morning—and the gent will identify him again and, of course, he'll be held for the grand jury."

"Sure, we know that," said Fitzpatrick impatiently. "What's doing?"

"First they are going to lay for the gent who was robbed on his way to court. They're going to tackle him, and offer to return every blamed thing they robbed him of if he'll back down

on his identification of Stutters. Though they ain't hoping an awful lot along that line. They says they figure themselves that this gent ain't the kind of a guy to listen to that line of jabber."

" Well, and if he turns them down like they seem to expect—then what?" asked Burgess.

" They figure to raise hell."

" How—where?"

" In the court room. Right smack in the court room. Damned if they don't!"

" What's the game?"

" Well, they'll have a mouthpiece (lawyer) for Stutters and through that guy he'll be tipped what to expect. These guys will be ready when they bring Stutters in and takes the cuffs off him and as he is pushed up in front of the beak (judge) to start their stuff. One of them is going to drag out an ammonia gun and let go with it, blindin' the court officers and cops, and the other crook is going to start shooting a revolver—not at anybody—but sockin' the bullets into the floor, but at the same time cloudin' the whole court room with smoke. An' between the ammonia fumes and the powder smoke and the general all-around rattle Stutters is to break for a getaway. If he makes the street they'll have a car waitin' for him to jump him off and away before the smoke and the ammonia clears."

" Do they mean that, or were they drunk when they talked it?"

"Cold sober. They sends a lobbiegow — messenger — to somebody — I didn't get the name—for the ammonia gun and he comes back with it."

" All right, kid. Good work," said Fitzpatrick, " and give us a ring at the One Hundred and Fifth Street house to-morrow morning when these birds start out of Scush's for Harlem—they are staying there, ain't they?"

" To-night—sure."

" Well, be on the job."

" Sure."

As to Lyons and McInerny both detectives already knew the men well by their underworld reputation. McInerny especially was trying to live down the professional disgrace of having robbed the home of a banker of merely twelve hundred dollars the while he missed a roll of fifty thousand dollars in a rear compartment of the same bureau drawer out of which he filched the lesser sum. The sleuths, however, went to police headquarters and consulted the Rogues' Gallery that they might have a clear, unmistakable impression of the appearance of the two men.

Strictly obedient to orders, the secret police agent gave the waiting Fitzpatrick and Burgess a call next morning at the Harlem police station to the effect that Bud and Red had started out on their rescue mission of the impounded and accused and identified Stutters. The Harlem police court is in West One Hundred and Twenty-Third Street and Burgess and Fitzpatrick watched the two crooks in Seventh Avenue at One Hundred and Twenty-Second Street awaiting the passing of the robbed householder whom they intended to intercept. Satisfied of the identity of the two men, the detectives were not for allowing them to attempt even so much as the first step in their plan of rescue. It is the business of policemen to prevent crime as well as to take offenders, and Fitzpatrick and Burgess did not intend to delay matters until Red and Bud should attempt their plan of throwing the Harlem Court into confusion by ammonia gun and powder pistol.

Instead Red Lyons and Bud McInerny each felt himself suddenly seized by the nape of the neck, in the grips of unshakable, sturdy hands, while the free hand of each detective made a swift "frisk" of his prisoner's clothing for weapons. A third detective, Reilly, was on hand to leap in front of the criminals and cover them with a drawn pistol at the instant they were seized from behind.

Lyons was found to be carrying the pistol, McInerny the ammonia gun. On Lyons was also found a packet containing most of the stolen jewelry, but not the cash.

The crooks were too completely surprised to attempt resistance. By the time they realized what had happened, the nippers were on their wrists and resistance they knew to be useless.

That is to say for the time being.

But within an hour Bud McInerny, a short, slender, wiry weasel of a little fellow was to attempt one of the most thrilling and spectacular escapes known in the history of the New York police.

Detectives Fitzpatrick, Burgess and Reilly took their prisoners directly to headquarters, after informing the Harlem branch and the district attorney's office of their capture. There the criminals were arraigned before Deputy Commissioner Dougherty, who ordered their captors to take them to the identification bureau to be checked up as to Rogues' Gallery photographs and finger-prints. He suggested that fresh photographs and finger-prints be taken.

It was then things, fit to make the most lurid movie thriller appear tame, began to happen.

The present Inspector Shelvey, then a sergeant, was in charge. Nippers had been removed from the prisoners. Burgess had Lyons in tow, for Lyons was a husky and so is Burgess. McInerny was in the care of Detective Reilly. Both criminal and officer were slender, not much more than lightweights.

The room of the Identification Burear is on the southeast corner of headquarters—overlooking Grand Street at Centre Market place. If you glance up at the windows of it now you will see that they are all heavily barred. It was the events of this particular morning that caused these bars to be placed on the windows. Until then they were free openings.

Shelvey was nearest the windows with his back toward them as he faced the detectives and their prisoners across a large table. Having their men safely landed in headquarters it was natural that the detectives somewhat relaxed the tensity of their vigilance.

Yet Burgess kept a sharp eye on Lyons who was known as a "cop fighter." But Lyons, it appears, was resigned to capture. McInerny also had given the same impression. But all the time he had riot in his heart. And as Shelvey reached for the slender criminal's hand to make a fresh finger-print, things crashed.

The hand that Shelvey reached for doubled into a hard and bony fist that suddenly swirled with smashing force against the jaw of Detective Reilly. There was knock-down steam in the punch and Reilly went sprawling to the floor, his grip on McInerny's arm broken.

In the time of a lightning flash, the slender crook swung himself over the table and past Shelvey and to the corner window of the room. The time was spring—the window open. And through it without hesitation the burglar jumped. It was a perilous leap. The stone pavement of Centre Market

place was twenty feet below. He might not swing down on his hands and drop. He had to clear a high, spiked iron fence that stands out from the building for at least ten feet. But he never paused at sight of the spiked iron fence. He spotted, however, a fifteen-year-old Italian boy passing at the moment, and he ruthlessly leaped for the lad, using the boy's body to break his own fall. He struck on the lad's back, crushing him to the ground and breaking both the stripling's legs.

Unhurt himself he was instantly up and away.

As unhesitatingly as McInerny had gone out of the window, Shelvey went after him. He, too, cleared the high, spiked iron fence for the twenty-foot drop, but there was no human cushion to palliate his fall. He landed, sprawled, and was helpless to arise. For he had broken both ankles.

At the instant of McInerny's dash for the window Detective Phalen had entered the room. Detective Burgess swung his prisoner, Lyons, to Phalen.

"Hold this fellow and floor him if he kicks up!" he cried to his associate and himself made for the window, whipping out his pistol as he rushed.

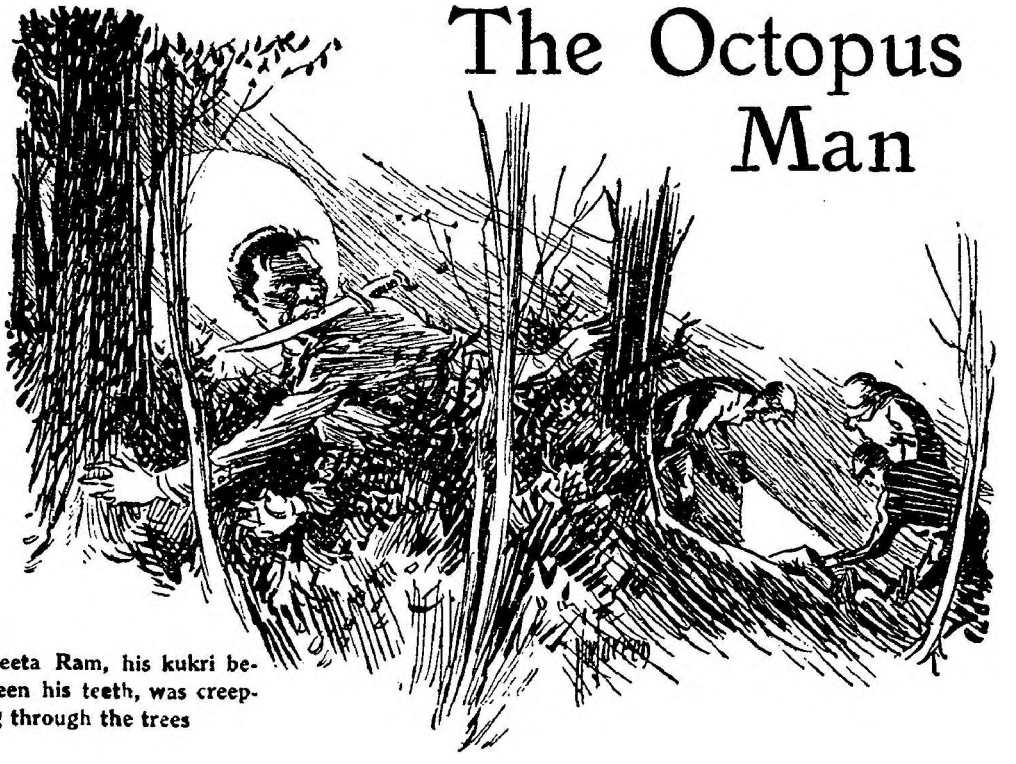
McInerny had gained the other side of the street. Burgess, sure of his marksmanship, sent a bullet ripping through the air after the fleeing crook. It struck at McInerny's very heels, ricocheted off the pavement, flew across the street and struck a venerable "old clothes" dealer on the thumb of the right hand. He collapsed and yelled with pain.

At this juncture Detective Ernest Moore turned south into Centre Market place and was in a position to head McInerney off. He drew his pistol and fired at the recoiling criminal and at the same instant Burgess let go another shot from the window of headquarters. McInerny went down with a bullet in his back. Moore and Burgess never quarreled as to who bagged the burglar. Presumably, however, since the bullet struck into McInerny's back and Moore had come upon the crook face to face, it was Burgess's shot.

At Bellevue Hospital, when he was first received, the doctors didn't think much of McInerny's chances. He had a bullet wound perilously near his spine which had penetrated his body. His good fortune was, however, that the bullet went completely through him, and such was the astonishing vitality of the slenderly made crook that six weeks later Burgess was arraigning him in court.

Heavy punishments were meted to Stutters and Lyons, but probably, in consideration of the suffering and closeness to death which had befallen McInerny, a minor charge was all that was offered against him. He was given only a featherweight sentence of thirty days.

The Octopus Man



Cheeta Ram, his kukri between his teeth, was creeping through the trees

Cheeta Ram, the Gurkha, Carves His Way Through the Guards to the House of Horrible Death

By Garnett Radcliffe

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

EBENEZER DREEN, an American millionaire visiting England, is kidnaped by a crime king who calls himself Harris and has organized a band of crooks known as the Flower Gang. Harris is holding Dreen for a ransom of three-quarters of his fortune, but Dreen refuses. Harris tries to kidnap Dreen's wife, but fails because of the timely interference of Captain Waring, a young friend of Dreen.

Captain Waring discovers the hiding place of the crooks, but he, too, falls into their hands.

Harris has ordered Waring thrown into a strange cell named the "birdcage."

In the meantime, Pamela Wainwright, fiancée of Dick Waring, is keeping Mrs. Dreen hidden in an isolated cottage.

Harris sends an agent to capture Mrs. Dreen, but the agent fails in his mission, and goes back to Harris to report his reasons for not carrying off Mrs. Dreen a prisoner.

Harris orders the agent decapitated, and the order is about to be executed when Dick Waring, who has

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for November 9

escaped from his cell, bursts in on the crooks.

CHAPTER XII

Moresby's Chance

WHEN I say that everything that happens in this world can be traced to a psychological cause, I hardly know whether I am uttering a profound truth, a platitude, or a fallacy. Nor do I greatly care. What matters is that Waring's rather dramatic appearance in the council chamber of the Flower Gang *was* due to a psychological cause. It was due to an innate weakness in the character of his guardian.

If Larkspur's father and mother had done their duty when he was an infant and had severely repressed his predisposition to the torturing of frogs and other small animals, the probabilities are that Waring would not have escaped from his cell when he did, Sung Ling's sword would have fallen, and Sir William Moresby's head would have followed suit about a fraction of a second later. Quite probably the fact that Waring *did* escape and thus prevented these things from happening could—if any one were disposed to take so much trouble—be accounted for by some incident that happened when the world was young and Larkspur's ancestors were running about in woad and red clay. The thread between cause and effect can be lengthened indefinitely.

Directly Waring had succumbed to the effect of the drugged cigarette and was lying prone and unconscious upon the laboratory floor, Mr. Harris had lost no time in summoning half a dozen Flowers. He ordered them to bind and gag the helpless man and to place him in a furnished cell adjoining the birdcage. A sinister motive underlay that order. He intended that Waring should pay the full penalty for his presumption, but before any further steps could be taken it was essential that he should first have recovered fully from the effects of the doped cigarette. To torture a man who could feel nothing would be a waste of both time and ingenuity.

So Waring's arms and legs were bound and he was laid on a bed in the cell. It might have been supposed that, seeing he was unconscious and the door of the cell was locked, sufficient precautions had then been taken, but the chief of the Flower Gang was not a man to leave anything to chance. As an additional safeguard he ordered that a Flower with a loaded revolver should stay inside the cell. This task was intrusted to a twenty-year-old degenerate called Larkspur, who had escaped from Borstal in order to enlist under Mr. Harris's banner.

Larkspur did not find his task a very congenial one. He regarded it as a waste of time, for in his opinion the only really profitable moments were those spent in the infliction of pain. He loved inflicting pain. Sung Ling, the professional torturer, was the hero of his boyish dreams and he had often volunteered to assist the Chinaman at his duties.

But in the cell there was nothing to be hurt. When Larkspur had satisfied himself that there was not even a fly or a spider within reach, he sat down and bit his nails in a paroxysm of thwarted energy.

Presently his glance fell upon Waring and he jumped to his feet with a glad cry. Brain wave! He had a grudge against Waring for having loosened two of his front teeth during the struggle in the ambulance. Now

was the time to get his own back. He lighted a cigarette, puffed it to a nice red glow, and approached the bed.

Now it was a very rare occurrence for Mr. Harris to make a mistake, but on this occasion he had committed a slight error of judgment. Either he had overestimated the strength of the drug contained in the cigarette; or, which is more likely, he had underestimated Waring's recuperative powers. The strength of the Indian Army officer's head and nerves was such that he had begun to throw off the effects of the drug hours before the expected time. But he was by no means fully conscious, nor had he as yet any recollection of what had happened. He lay in a nebulous, confused state, half way between waking and sleeping, and wondered vaguely what it was that prevented his arms and legs from moving.

Suddenly a shock of stinging pain in his right cheek galvanized him into violent movement. Automatic reflex action caused him to try to spring up. He found he was unable. Instantly a blind, unreasoning terror, akin to that felt by an ensnared animal, caused him to put all his strength into one prodigious effort to break free. Had he been in the full possession of his senses, he would have found it impossible to break the ropes, but in his semi-delirious condition he put forth such strength as to snap them like rotten packthread. What his objective mind could not have done, his subconscious mind accomplished with ease.

Larkspur, who had not apprehended the least danger from the placing of the tip of his cigarette against the cheek of a bound and unconscious man, was appalled. Had he thrust the cigarette into a bowl of nitro-glycerine the resulting explosion could hardly have been more terrific. He had just time to spring back and dash squealing for the door. The idea of using the revolver never entered his startled head. The door was locked on the outside. Mad with terror, he seized an article of crockery and hurled it at Waring's head.

It was a bad move. The article of crockery did not do the least material damage to Waring, but it did cause him to realize, despite his general haziness, that there was an enemy in the vicinity. And when Larkspur drew a knife and flew at his throat like a cornered rat, he acted automatically in the same way as he would have done had he been fully conscious, but with more violence. His great hands shot out, clamped themselves about the Flower's throat, and gave one quick wrench. No more was needed. A sharp snap as of a breaking stick, and there was yet another vacancy on the roll of the Flower Gang.

Waring reeled to the door and tried it. When he found it locked, the hereditary fear of the trap that is latent in every human being, again overcame him. Without pausing to reason, he hurled himself against the door. It splintered, but still held. Hardly knowing what he did, Waring caught up Larkspur's body and crashed it against the door with all the terrific strength of delirium. The door was fairly torn from its hinges by the impact. In another moment, Waring was staggering and reeling down a passage with Larkspur's body in his arms.

The sound of voices led him toward the committee room. On the way he encountered an elderly Flower called Auricula, which was generally shortened to Orry. Orry made the mistake of trying to stay Waring's advance with a hatchet. Next day the owner of the hatchet had a prolonged and

messy job when he sought to disengage his property from Orry's ribs.

After that incident—it had only served to strengthen Waring's impression that he was in the throes of nightmare—he went on to the committee room, kicked the door open, and, as was related at the end of the last chapter, stood swaying in the doorway and shouting.

"Where am I? Where the hell am I, I say?"

Now, when I state that this unexpected apparition created a sensation in the committee room rather akin to that which a rogue elephant might produce at a vicarage garden party, I do not intend to cast any aspersions upon the nerve of Mr. Harris's colleagues. True, they lost their heads, but then there was every excuse. Waring really was a rather terrifying spectacle. Covered with blood from head to foot, with dishevelled hair and staring eyes, he looked more like an escaped and violent lunatic than anything else. Even Sung Ling was taken aback. He lowered his sword and allowed Sir William Moresby to creep away after the manner of a wounded mouse escaping from a cat without attempting to delay his departure.

But there was one person in the room who never lost his head. Mr. Harris had remained motionless at the head of the table, staring at Waring with unblinking eyes in which there was neither anger nor fear. Even when Waring came reeling toward him he made no move. He merely said,

"That young fool has got loose again. Catch him, and make sure you tie him up securely."

He spoke in the same voice as that in which he might have requested a servant to remove a troublesome wasp from the breakfast table.

The words seemed to break the spell that had fallen upon the room. There was a rush that would have gladdened the heart of a football reporter. But the man at whom they rushed was of abnormally powerful physique and fighting mad.

Exactly what happened is rather difficult to describe. In his madness Waring seemed to develop the strength of a bull and the agility of a kitten. At one moment he would be on his back with a dozen men on top of him, the next instant he would be on his feet and flinging men about like rag dolls. Then he got the chair. It was a heavy, substantial oak chair, but in his hands it seemed as light as a walking stick. Whirling it round his head he burst through the ruck until he had reached a corner. There he turned at bay, the chair poised above his head.

"Come on," he said through clenched teeth. "The more the merrier."

During the struggle the last lingering effects of the drug had begun to wear off. His mind was not yet quite clear, but it was very nearly so. Every instant, memory was coming back.

No one displayed any undue eagerness to accept his invitation to "come on." Everybody waited for some one else to lead the way. At last Colonel Lowry elbowed his way to the front. He had a revolver in his hand which he levelled at Waring's heart. It was the only revolver in the room and, as a matter of fact, it should not have been there at all. For certain reasons, Mr. Harris had made a by-law prohibiting the wearing of firearms at committee meetings, and by bringing his the colonel had laid himself open to a fine of twenty pounds.

"Put your hands up," he snarled. "Up with 'em or I shoot."

The answer was the chair. It caught the colonel fairly amidships and doubled him into a ball of gasping agony. Almost as fast as the chair had done, Waring flashed from his corner, seized the revolver, and flashed back again. As he did so, one of the Flowers flung a knife.

The revolver spat and the man fell back with a bullet between the eyes. Waring had fired from the waist in the very act of turning.

"Up with 'em," Waring roared. "Be quick. By God, if there's any bunkum—"

A second shot that took a chip out of the ear of one of Sung Ling's assistants showed that he was out to kill. The revolver swept round in an unwavering circle. As it passed the hands went up. Even Mr. Harris at the head of the table, raised his.

"The first man who moves before I reach the door dies," Waring announced. "When I say 'about turn,' turn round and look at the other side of the wall. And—if you value your dirty skins—*don't move*. Now—about turn."

They obeyed like a well-drilled squad. Waring must have been more than human had he not felt some elation at that moment. He had fought with all the odds against him, and had won. Once clear of the room he was confident of his ability to escape altogether. Then would be the time to think of revenge—

With the revolver covering the backs of his motionless enemies he began to walk backward toward the door. Suddenly something that felt like an agile monkey sprang upon his back. A damp, sticky cloth that smelt of lilac was thrust over his nose and mouth. He threw his hands up to tear the thing off, but as he did so his strength seemed to flow away, leaving him so weak that his hands dropped helplessly to his sides.

It was Sir William Moresby. When Waring had saved his life from Sung Ling's sword by his dramatic appearance, he had crawled behind one of the secretaries' desks and had lain there quaking during the struggle. But in Waring's victory he had seen his chance to rehabilitate himself in the good graces of his chief. He had a little bottle of the same drug that had been administered to Dreen in his waistcoat pocket. To open the bottle and soak a handkerchief in its contents, had been the work of a minute. Then he had crawled from his hiding place, jumped up Waring's back as a cat might climb a tree, and pressed the poison-saturated cloth over the soldier's face.

The effect of the drug was astoundingly rapid. One whiff and Waring was as weak as a little child, able to stand and no more.

Even if he could have raised the revolver he could not have pressed the trigger to save his life. In any case he didn't get the chance. Sir William sprang to the ground as nimbly as a monkey and snatched the weapon from his nerveless grasp.

"I've got him!" In his excitement Sir William's voice ran up to a thin squeak. "Mr. Harris—gentlemen—you may turn round. I've saved you."

At his words the raised hands came down together as if worked by machinery. Turning round, the astonished Flowers beheld the man who a bare minute before had been flinging them about like ninepins standing with bent head and swaying knees as if he would collapse at any moment. By his side stood Sir William in Napoleonic attitude.

"I've saved you," he said again. He smiled triumphantly.

CHAPTER XIII

The Face at the Grating

OF course it was Mr. Harris who took command. Waring, who was surprised to find that his mind was working clearly, although his body seemed hardly to belong to him, almost admired the manner in which the chief of the Flower Gang gave his orders. In the space of a few minutes, every one working under his directions, the room, which looked as if it had been wrecked by a tornado, was put to rights. Fresh furniture was produced from somewhere to replace that smashed during the struggle. The dead and badly wounded were removed. Superficial cuts were bandaged by Sung Ling, and in a remarkably short space of time everything looked very much as it had before Waring's invasion. Champagne bottles and glasses, brought by a grinning negro, added the final touch of normality. Then, when the glasses had been filled, the leaders had resumed their seats at the long table, and the secretaries were once more established at their desks, business was resumed.

It was not to Waring, but to Sir William Moresby that Mr. Harris first addressed himself. He leaned forward with his chin on his hand and uttered the single monosyllable:

"Well?"

"Sir," said Sir William, with a slight tremor in his voice, "I apologize for being still alive. But, although I reasonably might do so, I am not going to plead that my continued existence is not due to any fault of my own. I shall content myself with saying that I am glad that during my last minutes on this earth I was able to do you a service. With that thought uppermost in my mind I shall die gladly. Sung Ling—"

"Sir?"

"Cut my head off."

As he said this Sir William went back to the mat and knelt with bowed head as before. Sung Ling glanced at Mr. Harris, who nodded slightly. Sir William, who had not in the least expected his *beau geste* to be taken quite so literally, turned pale. But it was too late to do anything then. He had asked Sung Ling to cut his head off and apparently Sung Ling had every intention of doing so.

"Stop!" said Mr. Harris suddenly. "Sir William."

"Sir?"

"You met Lady Pamela Wainwright this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"And I understand that you did not give her any reason for suspecting you. She still believes you to be a *bona-fide* mental specialist?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! You will take advantage of the fact that you have her confidence to entice her here as soon as possible. Go first to Queensmarry. If she has left, follow her. The moment she enters this house you can consider your execution indefinitely postponed."

"Very good, sir."

"Go at once and make your arrangements," Mr. Harris said. "Remember I want Lady Pamela Wainwright to be brought here unharmed as soon as possible. I leave the details to you."

Sir William rose to his feet and bowed without speaking. Then he donned the coat and collar and tie he had never expected to wear again, and left the room.

Waring found his voice. The sound of Pamela's name on those foul lips had momentarily deprived him of speech.

"Look here, fatty," he began, "you leave Lady Pamela out of this show. What the devil do you want her for? If it's money, you're all wrong, for she's as stony as I am."

"It is not money," Mr. Harris said coldly. "It is revenge. Revenge on you, my young friend."

For a horror-stricken instant Waring saw clearly into the diabolical workings of the creature's brain. It was to punish him, Waring, that Pamela was to be brought to this house of horrors. Through the spectacle of her suffering, his manhood was to be broken as it could be broken in no other way.

But he was not going to allow Mr. Harris to see how shrewdly he had been hit. Never give yourself away—that was his motto. So in reply to the hideous threat he merely smiled.

"I don't think I mind your threats very much," he said. "They have been pretty futile hitherto. I'm afraid you're addicted to the bad habit of talking off the top, John Bunny."

Mr. Harris paid not the least attention to what he said. He turned and beckoned to Meadow Sweet.

"Bring in the Strangler."

The negro hurried away, to reappear a few minutes later followed by a big, black-mustachioed woman who led by the hand an object that seemed to Waring's eyes hardly human.

The French degenerate who had been christened "the Strangler" by the press was immensely tall and emaciated to the last degree. His head was as small as that of a child of three; but, as if nature had tried to counterbalance her parsimony in one direction by lavishness in another, his hands and feet were enormous. Especially the former. They were shapeless and covered by a growth of brown hair so that dangling at the end of his thin arms they appeared like a pair of monstrous spiders suspended by threads. This resemblance was heightened by the fact that his long fingers continually closed and opened and writhed as if controlled by some intelligence other than that in the tiny head.

The big woman dropped a curtsy to Mr. Harris. She was the Strangler's nurse, or rather, keeper, and had the unique distinction of being the only woman with whom he had come in contact whom he had not strangled. Some people maintained that she was his mother, but she herself denied it.

"*Monsieur* desired to see me—yes?" she asked.

"I wished to see Hugo," Mr. Harris corrected. "How is he, Mme. Bernier? Quite well?"

"*Merci, monsieur*—he ees pretty well. Hugo, make the gentleman your best salute."

If the gesture that the monster by her side made was his best salute, it would have been better dispensed with. At the same time he opened his child's mouth and gave vent to a low, hissing scream.

"Cecille Collier—*comme ça*. Marie Perdrier—*comme ça*. Blondie Matmontel—*comme ça*. Marie Perrault—*comme ça*."

As he uttered the names his hands illustrated his meaning with gruesome gestures. They fluttered at the ends of his long arms as if animated by some separate life of their own.

"It ees his list he tells," Mme. Bernier announced. "He tell you of the girl he have strangled. It ees better not to interrupt till he have finished."

Now it was while the Strangler was enumerating the names of his past victims—it took some time, for the list was a long one—that an incident happened which, although it did not make much impression upon Waring's mind at the time, he was later destined to remember. The appearance of the Strangler was so revolting that he had been forced to turn his eyes away. They glanced round the room until they came to rest at a small grating in the wall directly behind Mr. Harris and about six feet above his head. The purpose of the grating was obviously to admit warm air from the central heating apparatus.

But it was not the grating itself that arrested Waring's attention. For a fleeting instant he imagined that he saw a white face—a face that he had seen before, but where he could not imagine—pressed against the grating. And the impression he got was that the owner of the white face was gazing down on Mr. Harris's unconscious head with an expression of intense malignancy. But when he looked harder it was gone. The vision had been so fleeting as to leave him uncertain as to whether or not he had imagined the whole thing.

Sincerely he hoped it had not been a trick of his imagination. If the face had been fact and not fancy, then there was some one in the house beside himself who hated Mr. Harris—a possible ally against the Flower Gang. But who the person was he could not imagine. Most certainly it was not Dreen. And yet he had the vague feeling that he had seen the face before.

"Captain Waring," Mr. Harris's voice cut across the thread of his thoughts.

"What?"

"This night two things are going to happen which you will be powerless to prevent. I am going to tell you what they are that you may have mental torture added to your other suffering. In the first place, Lady Pamela Wainwright will be brought here. In the second, Mrs. Dreen also will be brought and the woman called Mrs. Robbins and the district nurse will be strangled by this, my most trusted emissary. Yes, I know exactly where Mrs. Dreen is concealed. She is in an isolated cottage on the Queensmarry estate—the cottage in which Mrs. Robbins lives."

Waring stared at him in amazement. He knew Mrs. Robbins and he knew that her cottage would be a very likely place for Pamela to have selected for the concealment of Mrs. Dreen, but he could not imagine how Mr. Harris had found it out. It must be remembered that he knew nothing of the forged letter or of Sir William Moresby's failure that morning. He had heard the orders Mr. Harris had given to Sir William, but at the time he had thought them a piece of bluff invented to frighten him. Now he realized that Mr. Harris really had found out about Pamela and Mrs. Dreen and he knew that they were both in most deadly danger.

At the same time he also realized why Mr. Harris had summoned the Strangler to the room. It was that he might picture the horror creeping through the Queensmarry woods and attacking the defenseless women in the cottage. So this was mental torture! Despite himself the thought of those alive hairy hands burrowing into old Mrs. Robbins's throat made him sick with horror. And the worst part was that he would have to remain a prisoner impotent to help.

"You devil!" he said hoarsely. "Is that how you wage war—murdering old women?"

The cold eyes watched him with a sort of dispassionate interest. So might one fancy an octopus watching the struggles of some wretched half-dead fish.

"Another thing I should like to point out," Mr. Harris went on, "is that you have only your own supreme folly to thank for all this. If you had not interfered with my plans you would to-day be a free and happy man. But you saw fit to blunder into an affair that in no way concerned you and you must not complain if the machinery crushes you. Not only have you got yourself into a predicament from which you cannot escape, but you have aiso dragged in those nearest and dearest to you. Whatever happens to Lady Pamela and Mrs. Robbins this night will be your fault. You led and they followed. Think of that—"

Mental torture! Truly his fiendish cunning had found the only way in which he could hurt Waring. The soldier who would have defied any physical pain inflicted on his own body was well-nigh broken by the thought of the horror he had brought upon the women that trusted him.

"Do what you like to me and let the women off," he said. "They've done nothing."

"No, but you have," Mr. Harris smiled, "and it is through them that I hope to punish you. But the worst is yet to come. Before you die yourself you will have to watch something. I believe that Lady Pamela is a healthy young woman. In Sung Ling's careful hands she might survive ten days."

Mental torture! Waring was as strong and balanced as any man could be, but his nerves had been weakened by the drugs and he was hardly master of himself. He was overcome by a sick, despairing feeling that this monster could and would accomplish all that he threatened. It seemed futile to battle against him. Mrs. Robbins would be murdered, Pamela would be tortured, Dreen's money would be stolen—nothing could prevent this slow devil consummating his schemes. Drive him back in one direction, and he advanced in another. He was remorseless and implacable as a stream of lava.

Waring glanced at the faces of the other men round the table. They were cruel, bad faces, but at least they were human. The fat man with the cold eyes at the head of the table was not. He was the incarnation of slow, creeping evil. The others were merely his minions. He had hypnotized them until they were mere automatons—puppets to carry out his will.

"There's one more thing," Mr. Harris was saying. "I am particularly anxious, Captain Waring, that you should not go to sleep to-night. I don't think you would, but just in case I must take a precautionary measure. It will be rather unpleasant, but not so unpleasant as your own thoughts. Sung Ling—"

"Yes, sir?"

"Captain Waring will wear the helmet to-night. Take him away now and place him in No. 8."

Sung Ling bowed and motioned two of his assistants to take Waring's arms. They led him from the council chamber to a bare, furnitureless cell where, fastened to an immense staple in the wall, there was an iron chain that might have held an elephant. At the other end of the chain was an iron collar which Sung Ling locked about his neck. His hands were then handcuffed behind his back. Even if he

had been in full possession of his strength he could not possibly have escaped, and, weakened as he was by the drug, he could not even stand on his feet for the weight of the great chain. Twice he had escaped—he was not to have a third chance.

"Presently I bring helmet," Sung Ling grinned and vanished, leaving Waring alone with his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIV

Pamela Goes to London

ALTHOUGH I hate to have to make such a confession about my heroine, I must admit that when, as I related at the end of the fifth chapter, Sir William Moresby raised his hat and drove off in the ambulance without Mrs. Dreen, he left Lady Pamela Wainwright in what Mrs. Robbins would have termed a "state of mind." I might almost say that Pamela was furious. Perhaps she had some excuse. It was, as she said to herself, a bit thick that she should have to continue to be saddled with a mental Miss Dreen because of the obstinacy of a Scotch district nurse. And it did not tend to lessen her annoyance when she reflected that Dick, the real culprit, was having a gorgeous time at Brighton with Froggy Hennigan and his motor boat.

But there was one bright spot in the surrounding blackness. That morning Lady Queensmarry had presented her niece with a crisp ten-pound note. To the impecunious Pamela this was riches indeed. If only Dick had been there to help her to "burst" it she would have been completely happy despite the worry of Miss Dreen.

"I'll run up to town and buy a hat," she decided as she walked slowly back to the house. "Cheeta Ram can come, too. There's no need for him to stay on guard any longer."

She gave an order to the butler for Cheeta Ram and the Austin directly after lunch. They were there all right when, that meal being finished and her aunt's ear-trumpet informed that she was going up to London, but would certainly be back to dinner, she hurried out. Cheeta Ram was looking worried. Pamela allowed him to drive as she was wearing a new pair of gloves which she was anxious not to dirty.

Before they had gone very far the Gurkha began to unburden his mind.

"Him no doctor sahib come this morning," he said. "Him bad man. Me know. Me think bad trouble come all along sick memsahib in cottage. Better me stay behind."

This speech annoyed Pamela. She was getting tired of being told that perfectly innocent people were "bad men."

She remembered that it was Cheeta Ram who had been mainly instrumental in awakening Dick's suspicions about the ambulance. Probably if he had kept his mouth shut they would never have had all this bother with Sir William Moresby.

"You're talking absolute rubbish, Cheeta Ram," she said sharply. "That was a *pukka* doctor sahib came this morning. Captain Waring Sahib has seen him and knows that he's all right. I had a letter from the Captain Sahib this morning. He's at Brighton.

"Captain Sahib gone to Ber-righton?" Cheeta Ram repeated. "Me go, too. Captain Sahib want orderly with him always."

"He doesn't want you," Pamela said. "You're a nuisance, Cheeta Ram, seeing bad men behind every bush! Captain Sahib very angry with

you. It was all the rot you talked that made him chase that ambulance and take the six men-sahib out. It was a *pukka* ambulance. Captain Sahib get much trouble along you talking rot."

For a long time Cheeta Ram gave no answer to this scolding, and suddenly Pamela heard a sound that made her blood run cold. It was an unmistakable sniff. She looked at Cheeta Ram in terror. Yes, big tears were hopping down the little man's brown cheeks.

"Bad-tempered brute," said Pamela to herself. "You ought to be shot."

Of course, she should have remembered. Often Dick had told her how Cheeta Ram, terrible little fighter as he was, was as sensitive to abuse from those he loved as any woman. This tiger of Nepal, who thought nothing of stalking an armed Mahsud and cutting his head off with a kukri, would weep like a child at a harsh word from his master. Dick, having learned this from experience, was always very, very careful to restrain his tongue if at any time he had to rebuke him, and he had warned Pamela to do likewise. It was culpable of her to have forgotten.

"Cheeta Ram," she said presently. "I was wrong about the Captain Sahib not wanting you. You had better go down to Brighton at once. I'll drive myself back to Queensmarry."

Cheeta Ram's tears dried as if by magic. He beamed and it was like the sun breaking through a cloud.

"First me go Captain Sahib's flat," he said. "Captain Sahib want more socks. Me bring them with me to Ber-righton."

"Good idea," Pamela approved. "Take plenty."

They arrived in London without further incident and parted on good terms outside Swan and Edgar's. The arrangement was that Cheeta Ram was first to drive to Waring's flat in Jermyn Street and collect the socks and other necessaries. Then he was to garage the Austin in Fenchurch Street, go to Victoria Station and thence by train to Brighton. Pamela gave him the address of the Porley Hotel in Bedford Square and directions for finding it. She herself had planned a shopping expedition, a movie and a very good tea before driving in the Austin back to Queensmarry.

She began to walk down Regent Street with her eye on the shop windows. She intended to lay out her wind-fall of ten pounds to the best advantage. One item was to be a new flying helmet for Dick.

On that hot July afternoon the West End was crowded, but not by Londoners. Country dialects and American twangs filled the air. The people that jostled Pamela on the pavement had an unfamiliar appearance. Their clothes were countrified or foreign-looking and they seemed terrified of the traffic. It was as though the mere fact of finding themselves in London had shattered their provincial morale.

Then in the distance Pamela caught a glimpse of a slim young man who was neither hayseed nor tourist. From the crown of his bowler hat to the sole of his spatted shoes he was London. He was strolling down the shady side of Regent Street as if he had recently bought the earth and was beginning to regret the transaction.

Pamela stared. Surely there could not be two such receding chins in the world! And who else would wear a monocle with a half-inch broad, black silk ribbon? It was! She darted across the street heedless of the traffic and seized the young exquisite's arm.

"Froggy! I thought you were in Brighton. Where's Dick?"

Froggy Hennigan, for it was he, did not reply at once. He never did. As he himself expressed it, the jolly old thinking machine needed a little time to get under way. To give the vacuum time to cease to be a vacuum he smoothed out the fingers of his lemon-colored gloves and propped himself on his silver-knobbed cane to the inconvenience of passers-by.

"Thought London was empty!" he said. "D'you know, Pam, you're the first person I've seen to-day. Positively."

"But I thought you were in Brighton," Pamela said. "Motor boating with Dick. I had a letter from him this morning."

"Brighton? Does one go to Brighton?"

Pamela sighed. Froggy, never too bright at the best of times, had struck a bad patch that afternoon.

"Listen, Froggy, and stop me if I'm going too fast," she said. "I had a letter from Dick this morning telling me that he had met you by accident yesterday and had gone down to Brighton with you. He said you were going to have some motor boating and that he'd probably stay a week or more. If that's right, what are you doing up here? Have you left Dick in Brighton or has he come up with you?"

"Both," said Froggy. "He did come up and he's gone back again. He's in Brighton this minute."

Now when Froggy Hennigan uttered that lie he was acting from what he considered the very finest motives. He was doing it to save old Dick's bacon. Old Dick—this is the conclusion the thinking machine had reached while Pamela was speaking—old Dick had gone off somewhere for some reason of his own without telling Pamela and had invented the story about motor boating with him, Freddy, in order to throw his fiancée off the scent. Naturally he had not foreseen when he wrote the letter this unexpected meeting in Regent Street. But it would be all right. He'd lie like a Trojan, bear out old Dick's story, and Pamela would be none the wiser.

"Nuts on motor boats, Dick is," Froggy said, and as he spoke he wondered what or who it could be that had enticed Dick from Pamela. She was looking extraordinarily pretty that afternoon. Old Dick was a lucky dog if he'd only known it.

"I'm so glad," Pamela cried. "I mean I was just a bit uneasy about Dick. It seemed so queer, his going off like that directly after the row with Sir William Moresby. Did he tell you about it?"

"Oh, yes," said Froggy. "He told me."

He was rather pleased with himself. For once in a way the old thinking machine was functioning admirably.

"And what did you think about it?" Pamela asked. "Didn't you think it queer of Mr. Dreen behaving like that? Dick and I couldn't know, could we? We thought we were acting for the best."

"Quite," said Froggy. "Let's stroll."

They turned and began to walk down Regent Street. Froggy Hennigan lit a cigarette with shaking hands. The strain was becoming awful. How long could he keep it up? One false word, and he might get his friend into trouble.

"Sir William called for her this morning," Pamela rattled on. "I liked him frightfully. Unfortunately the perfect ass of a district nurse wouldn't

let him take her away without Dr. Duke's orders. I was sick! Of course, I'm frightfully sorry for her, but she can't stay at Queensmarry forever, can she? I mean for her own sake it's better she should go to the home. Do you know Sir William at all?"

"Rather," Froggy gasped. "Used to stay with him."

"Not really!" Pamela sounded surprised. "As a friend, I suppose! I mean you weren't a—er—patient, of course!"

Froggy was experiencing the same sensation as Captain Webb must have done when the barrel neared the falls. In what direction was he being borne?

"I *was* a patient," he ventured. "Nearly two years."

"I'm so sorry," Pamela said softly. "I'd no idea you were as bad as that. I won't tell any one," she added consolingly.

"Thank you," said Froggy, and wondered what the dickens it was she had said she wouldn't tell.

After that Pamela fell silent, to his great relief. She was thinking about Dick, and for the first time in her life she was thinking of him as something less than perfect. Loyalty and love compelled her to make every excuse for his behavior, but it was hateful that the necessity for making excuses should exist at all. Never before had she had to make excuses for Dick. As a *fiancé* he had been a preëminent success.

Having begun the afternoon with Froggy she continued it in his company. His conversational powers might be limited, but as a carrier of parcels he had his points. Also it was consoling to Pamela's self-esteem to find that, even if Dick did temporarily desert her, there were other pebbles on the beach. She felt rather grateful to Froggy in consequence.

CHAPTER XV

A Neat Job

THEY had tea at Rumpelmayer's and then sat through the first part of the program at the Criterion movie in the Strand. They would probably have sat longer had not Pamela happened to notice an illuminated clock. It told her that the hour was ten past five.

"Oh!" she jumped up in dismay. "I must rush. I've got to go round to Fenchurch Street to collect the Austin. Aunt Matilda hates any one being late."

She hurried out of the theater, and Froggy perforce followed with the parcels. In the entrance she nearly collided with a dapper little man with white side whiskers.

"I beg your pardon. Why, it's Sir William Moresby! How funny meeting you again like this."

Froggy, hurrying behind her with arms full of parcels, heard the name and nearly fainted. Of all the bad luck! Here was the very bird whose patient he had claimed to be for two years.

"A really fortunate coincidence," Sir William was saying. "Curiously enough, Lady Pamela, I was actually on my way to telephone to you when our paths crossed."

"About Miss Dreen?" Pamela asked.

"Yes. To tell the truth, she is rather on my mind. I had to come up to town this morning after my—er—rather unsuccessful visit to you, and I was wondering if it would be possible for me to call again at Queensmarry on my way back to Moreton. Do you think the nurse would be any more

amenable to reason, or do you think there'd be any chance of Dr. What's-his-name having returned? That was what I had intended asking you over the telephone."

Sir William's acting would have deceived a *Sherlock Holmes*. He had no intention of failing a second time. Before leaving the headquarters of the Flower Gang he had telephoned to Queensmarry giving a fictitious name. To the butler who answered the call he had explained that he was a friend who was very anxious to meet Lady Pamela. The unsuspecting butler had told him that she had gone up to London and that he had overheard her saying that she would probably have tea at Rumpelmayer's in Bond Street. That was all Sir William needed to know. He had rushed up to London in the fastest car in the Elmgrove garage, shadowed Pamela from Rumpelmayer's to the Criterion, and waited for her at the entrance. Thus it was the "fortunate coincidence" of the meeting had come about.

Pamela suspected nothing. She was delighted to think that perhaps Miss Dreen would not pass another night in Mrs. Robbins's cottage after all.

"Oh, I do hope you will take her away," she said. "Yes, you must call in at Queensmarry. I'm sure Dr. Duke will have come back, and, even if he hasn't, I'll simply make the nurse hand her over. When are you leaving town?"

"At once," Sir William said after a second's hesitation. "But there's no great hurry. If I could give you a lift—"

His heart pounded as he waited for her answer. At the back of his mind there was a horrid vision of Sung Ling waiting for him with uplifted sword. Oh, to have her safely in his car and to know that his execution was indefinitely postponed!

Pamela, utterly unconscious of all that was passing in his mind, was calmly considering whether or not she should accept the offer of a lift. It was very tempting, but then there was the question of the Austin to be considered. She didn't want to have to pay garage expenses, and she did want to have the Austin at Queensmarry. Regretfully, she decided that she would have to forego the treat of having a ride in Sir William's luxurious limousine.

"Thanks very much, but I think I'll go back in my own car," she said. "If you get to Queensmarry before me you'd better wait. I—"

"By jove, if it isn't Sir William!" Froggy bleated. "How are you, sir? You remember me, don't you?"

His nerve had suddenly broken. Had he had the sense to keep quiet all would have been well, for Pamela had completely forgotten his existence. But he hadn't had the sense to keep quiet. Sheer nervousness had forced him to claim acquaintanceship. He had so dreaded the moment when Pamela would bring him to Sir William's notice that he had actually forestalled it.

For a moment Sir William was completely flabbergasted. Under his self-possessed exterior his nerves were on edge. Either this young man with the receding chin and the monocle was a simpleton, or else he was very deep indeed. Sir William's guilty conscience made him suspect the latter.

"You treated me for nearly two years," Froggy babbled.

"Of course," Sir William said, and as he spoke his hand slid into the pocket of his overcoat where reposed an automatic. He would have preferred

not to have had to run the risk of murdering this young man in the Strand, but he was determined not to be balked a second time. If the young man proved troublesome he would have to die. There were no two ways about it. At least Cheeta Ram was nowhere in the vicinity.

His hand closed on the butt of the automatic and his eye measured the distance between Pamela and the limousine. Yes, it could be done. Then he could pretend Pamela had fainted and drag her into the car.

"I remember you quite well now," he beamed on his prospective victim. "How are you keeping? Fit, I hope?"

"Quite, thank you," said Froggy, and fell silent from sheer amazement. His bluff had succeeded! He'd taken the old cock in and he felt proud.

Sir William turned to Pamela.

"Well! Which is it to be? My car or yours?"

"Mine," said Pamela. "But I'll tell you what you *could* do. If you'd give me a lift round to the Fenchurch Street garage and save me getting a taxi I'd be awfully grateful. Do you mind?"

"Delighted," he said. "And what about you? Coming too?" He glanced at Froggy. Pamela answered for him.

"He must come," she declared. "He's got all the parcels."

"Splendid," said Sir William, and only his innate prudence restrained him from breaking into a war dance there and then.

The uniformed chauffeur had sprung out and was holding open the door. Pamela got in, followed by Froggy with the parcels. Sir William remained on the pavement.

"Aren't you coming inside with us?" Pamela asked.

"I think I'll go in front, if you don't mind. More room for my knees. The Stack garage in Fenchurch Street, is it?"

"Yes," said Pamela.

The chauffeur closed the door and resumed his seat at the wheel. Sir William climbed in beside him. The limousine turned from the curb and slid smoothly into the stream of traffic.

"Nice old buffer," said Froggy. "He remembered me at once. Jolly good doctor, too!"

"He didn't cure you," Pamela said absently. Her eyes and her thoughts were on the shop windows gliding past. Neither of them noticed a faint hissing sound that came from beneath the seat. It was the sound of gas escaping from a cylinder.

"Open the window," Pamela said suddenly. "It's frightfully close."

Froggy leaned forward and tried to obey. Either the catch was a very difficult one, or else his fingers had become curiously clumsy. There was a roaring in his ears. His heart was pounding furiously and an iron cap seemed to have descended upon his head.

"Not feeling quite the cheese," he muttered. "Pamela—I—"

Suddenly he lurched off the seat and fell face downward on the floor. Pamela made no move to help. She was lying back unconscious in her corner.

Sir William had turned round and was watching with his face pressed against the glass. When he saw Froggy Hennigan fall he pressed a switch by his side and the hiss of escaping gas ceased immediately. Then he pressed another switch and the blinds automatically descended over all the windows of the body of the limousine. No one could now see into the car from outside.

Sir William turned to the chauffeur.

"Home, Nasturtium," he said, and

Nasturtium turned the car in the direction of the Waterloo Road. It had been a neat job neatly carried out.

CHAPTER XVI

Cheeta Ram

MR. PARKER, the venerable butler at No. 94 Madison Square, who looked like an archbishop and was a thorough old scoundrel at heart, was happy.

There were two reasons. In the first place, Ebenezer N. Dreen had, on taking over the house, installed a most admirable cellar. Now that the Dreens were gone and the rest of the staff had been sent back to headquarters, Mr. Parker had the run of that cellar. He had been left as a sort of caretaker, and he had fulfilled his duties by getting as drunk as possible and remaining as drunk as possible. The debauch had commenced on the morning of Mrs. Dreen's removal and had continued until the evening of the next day without intermission.

A second reason for Mr. Parker's happiness was that his wife, who, it will be remembered, had been dispatched to the Winchley infirmary as a blind, had not yet returned. To tell the truth, Mrs. Parker was in difficulties. She had entered the infirmary under the pretense of being a housemaid called Simpson who suffered from hallucinations. So well had she acted the part that when she suddenly declared she was cured and wished to return home Dr. Lazenby refused to let her go. Then Mrs. Parker lost her temper and said that she wasn't Simpson at all, but Mrs. Parker, and that she'd got a husband whom she couldn't trust out of her sight for a moment. This, according to Dr. Lazenby, was the worst hallucination she had had yet. By psycho-analysis he proved, to his own satisfaction, if not to Mrs. Parker's, that she was really Simpson and that Mr. Parker did not exist.

Now had Mr. Parker been in his right mind I question if he would have made any violent effort to extricate his spouse from her predicament, for he had found he could get on without her very nicely indeed. As it was he was much too busy even to give her a thought. No. 94 Madison Square had been invaded. If Mr. Parker ventured from his bedroom, which he had had the foresight to stock with an immense supply of bottles from the cellar, he was at once assailed by a host of blue, pink and green rats, snakes, Chinese and red monkeys. Nor were those all. A vision of a terrible little brown man—the same little brown man who had forced him to take refuge on the escritoire on the morning of Mrs. Dreen's departure—continuously haunted him. The fright he had got from Cheeta Ram had sunk into Mr. Parker's sub-conscious mind. He had to keep his bedroom door locked and barricaded lest those visionary Cheeta Rams should get in.

The precaution was useless. At half past six on the same evening that Pamela was captured by Sir William Moresby, Mr. Parker heard a sound outside his bedroom window. Next instant the casement was raised and the little brown man sprang in, leaped on to his chest and held a sharp kukri at his throat.

"Go away," said Mr. Parker. "You don' exshist. Go 'way."

He shut his eyes hoping that when he opened them again the little brown man would have vanished. But he hadn't, for he was no vision, but Cheeta Ram very much in the flesh. And the Gurkha was in no mood for trifling.

"You get up come with me," he said. "You show where ambulance go that morning. Me want to know."

"You don' exshist," said Mr. Parker, but he said it without conviction.

"You come quick," said Cheeta Ram, making his kukri play like a flame about Mr. Parker's face. "You come quick or me cut off nose." And he pricked the butler's ear in a way that left no doubt as to whether he existed or not. Mr. Parker squeaked like a frightened rat, got off the bed and began to adjust his clothes with shaking hands.

It was what he had seen in Waring's flat that had induced Cheeta Ram to pay this visit to No. 94 Madison Square. The Flower who had burgled the flat for the purpose of getting the correspondence from which a forged letter might be composed had been a pretty skillful burglar, but he had not been skillful enough to deceive Cheeta Ram's keen eyes. By a hundred signs invisible to an Englishman the Gurkha had seen that the flat had been entered, the writing table ransacked and letters taken. That had increased the suspicions awakened by Sir William Moresby's visit to Queensmarry in the morning. Instead of taking socks and shirts and setting off at once for Brighton, Cheeta Ram had gone to a certain house in Hammersmith where lived a friend of his.

At his urgent request this friend, who was an English ex-soldier, had put through a telephone call to the Porley Hotel in Brighton and asked if there was a Captain Waring staying there. Naturally the reply was in the negative. There was no Captain Waring staying in the hotel, nor had any one called Captain Waring written to say he would be coming. When Cheeta Ram heard that he knew he was on the right scent. His master was the victim of foul play. Whoever had written the letter that had deceived Pamela Mem-Sahib, it had not been Captain Waring Sahib.

Cheeta Ram's next move was to return to the garage in Fenchurch Street where he had left the Austin. He knew that Pamela Mem-Sahib must return there to fetch her car, and he wished to tell her as soon as possible what he had found out. He waited a long time, but she did not appear. At last he decided that she must have changed her mind and returned to Queensmarry by train. To follow her would mean a further waste of time, besides he was by no means certain that even if he followed her and told her she would believe. It was quite on the cards that she would give him another scolding, "for seeing bad men behind every bush."

Cheeta Ram sat down and considered the problem from every angle. He must find whither the ambulance had taken his master, but how was it to be done? At last he remembered No. 94 Madison Square. Surely there would be some one there who would know and who could be forced to show him! It was worth trying.

He took the Austin from the garage, left an ill-spelled note in case Pamela Mem-Sahib should come for the car after all, and drove round to Madison Square. Having left the car in a near-by mews where it was unlikely to be moved, he reconnoitered No. 94 both back and front. A convenient fire escape gave him what he wanted. He watched his opportunity, climbed the escape and, as has been already related, found his way into Mr. Parker's bedroom.

At last Mr. Parker was ready, even to a bowler hat and overcoat, the

property of Ebenezer N. Dreen. Fright and the exertion of dressing had somewhat sobered him. All the time he was dressing Cheeta Ram hovered about him with upraised kukri and told him what parts of his anatomy he would cut off if he ventured to shout for aid.

"What d'you want now, you black ape?" Mr. Parker asked when he had finished buttoning the overcoat.

"You know him ambulance?"

"What hambulance, gargoyle?"

"Him ambulance take old mem-sahib from here yesterday morning," Cheeta Ram said slowly. "Him ambulance go somewhere far off in country. Me know part road, not all. You come now show all road. You show wrong road me cut off both ears."

He had to repeat it twice before his meaning penetrated the butler's fuddled brain.

"Lumme if it isn't 'edquarters you mean!" Mr. Parker said. "Yes, I'll take you there all right. I only 'ope they skin you and stuff you hup on a pole for the birds to laugh at—you hugly little 'eathen!"

"You come," said Cheeta Ram, and introduced the point of his kukri to the small of Mr. Parker's back. Mr. Parker came without another word. Together the ill-assorted couple went down the stairs and out of the house. Ten minutes later they were speeding in the Austin along the Waterloo Road.

Seldom had Cheeta Ram driven better than he did that night. Although he had only one hand for the wheel —he held the kukri to Mr. Parker's ribs with the other—he coaxed an astonishing speed from the little car. The long summer evening was drawing in as they sped along. Mr. Parker's nerves, which were in no fit state to stand a strain, began to play him tricks. As dusk approached he began to see faces peering at him over the tops of the hedges and once when a bat flew against his face he screamed aloud like a rabbit in a snare.

It was almost dark when they turned off the Southwest Arterial into the rough lane that led to Elmgrove Hall. Cheeta Ram had switched off the lights. The little car crept between high hedges and from the lonely woods on either side sounded cries of night birds, strange and awful to the butler's London ears.

"Him house near here?" Cheeta Ram asked. Instinct told him that what they sought lay in the center of those woods.

"That's the lodge two 'undred yards off," Mr. Parker pointed. "You turns up there to the right. 'Ere, what are you stoppin' for? Oh, Gawd, 'e's going to murder me!"

Cheeta Ram had run the Austin into the ditch and stopped the engine. His keen eyes had seen what Mr. Parker's had not. There was an armed man crouching in the shadow of the trees close to the lodge.

"'Ave you no gratitude?" whimpered Mr. Parker. "'Aven't I shown you the way and all? Where are you, you black beauty? Where are you, I say?"

Suddenly he realized he was alone in the car. Cheeta Ram had vanished. He was alone in the very middle of those sinister woods.

A shot rang out, followed directly by a muffled cry. Mr. Parker leaped from the car and ran blindly toward the lodge. Something dark and formless lay across the lane. In trying to avoid it he stumbled and his hands went into a pool of wet, warm sticky stuff. Then his foot kicked something about the size of a football but heavier.

When he had picked it up and seen what it was he sat down and began to laugh madly at the top of his voice.

Half a dozen men with rifles came running from the lodge. They were Flowers who were posted at the gate to act as a sort of outer guard for Elmgrove Hall. The man that Cheeta Ram had seen had been doing sentinel in the lane.

The foremost Flower, he was an ex-convict called Dahlia, switched a flash lamp on Mr. Parker who was still laughing.

"Gawd! It's ole Nosey Parker!" he cried. "Wot in 'ell are you doin' 'ere, Nosey? Wot's that you're playin' with? Oh, Gawd!"

He sprang back with a cry of horror. The other Flowers crowded round, unable to see in the dim light. Dahlia informed them.

"It's ole Nosey Parker and 'e's as mad as a hatter. Wot d'you think 'e's done? Gone an' cut off the 'ead of Michaelmas Daisy! 'E's playin' with it now. Listen to 'im laughin'!"

There was no need for the last sentence. Mr. Parker's untimely mirth was making the night hideous for miles around. Suddenly—as if in echo to his laughter—there came the deep baying of an infuriated dog somewhere in the center of the wood. It ceased abruptly.

"It wasn't Parker wot killed Michaelmas Daisy!" Dahlia cried. "It was some one else and 'e's goin' up through the woods this minute. That was one of the blood'ounds givin' tongue. Phlox, my bud, you cut back to the lodge and sound the alarm."

Phlox did as he was bid. A moment later the blood-curdling noise of an African sacrificial drum, now high, now low, now groaning like a tortured man, now screaming like an angry stallion, filled the woods. It was the danger alarm of the Flower Gang. It penetrated the thick walls of Elmgrove Hall and the lights were immediately extinguished while parties of armed Flowers hurried to their respective posts. Colonel Lowry, who was one of those that heard, hastened to liberate the bloodhounds. The great brutes, mad for blood, went tearing across the lawns and plunged into the woods in search of prey.

CHAPTER XVII

The Gurkha Meets Harris

ALL this time Cheeta Ram, his sticky kukri between his teeth, was creeping through the darkness of the trees toward the house. The Gurkha was completely happy. He was living life as he understood it should be lived. To stalk your enemy in the dark—spring upon him—flick his head off with one shrewd stroke—what could be better fun than that? He was grinning from ear to ear, for he had already tasted blood. Like a human tiger he had stalked the luckless Michaelmas Daisy and decapitated him with one blow of the kukri. The baying bloodhound he had silenced with his bare hands. Now he was creeping on toward the silent house he could occasionally glimpse looming against the starlit sky.

When he heard the clamor of the alarm he stopped and crouched motionless in the undergrowth. A line of men were coming toward him through the woods accompanied by snuffling hounds. He waited until they had all passed save one straggler, and him he taught exactly how unwise it is to straggle when you are hunting an armed Gurkha in a dark wood.

Five minutes later, Cheeta Ram had gained the edge of the wood. But between him and the house there stretched an expanse of lawn divided into a series of terraces. There was no cover for his approach. And he knew that once he ventured into the open he was liable to be fired at from the house.

While he still crouched, uncertain as to his next move, a searchlight burst forth from the roof of Elmgrove Hall. The great beam first flashed straight up into the sky, then came down in a majestic sweep and began to work slowly along the edge of the wood toward where Cheeta Ram hid. At the same time a hellish chorus from behind announced that the bloodhounds had at last hit the trail.

Exactly how Cheeta Ram removed himself from the immediate danger zone I cannot say. It was not crawling, it was not creeping, it was not gliding, but it was a mixture of all three. Whatever it was it brought him through the beam of the searchlight without being seen and enabled him to pass yet again through the very center of the line of his pursuers, only attracting the notice of one Flower who stepped upon him by mistake. That was the last time that particular Flower stepped upon anything by mistake or otherwise. Cheeta Ram employed the famous back-handed, upward rip, and when he had finished the Flower was dead.

After that Cheeta Ram removed to the other side of the house. Luck had favored him so far, but he could not hope to continue the game much longer. The odds were too heavy. Had it not been for the bloodhounds he could have stalked and killed the Flowers one by one in the darkness, but even a Gurkha of the Guides cannot baffle bloodhounds for long.

The other side of the house was no easier of approach than the one he had just quitted. To add to his difficulties a full moon was rising. The moon, however, revealed three things. It revealed a gravel path, running parallel to the edge of the wood, a rustic bridge, and a grotesquely fat man in a dinner jacket who was leaning over the side of the aforesaid rustic bridge and gazing into the little stream that ran below.

Cheeta Ram wiped the edge of his kukri on the grass and grinned cavernously. Here was another enemy to kill before he himself was killed. Indifferent to the clamor of the bloodhounds who had once again picked up the trail, he began to creep toward the bridge.

It was very typical of the leader of the Flower Gang—for the fat man in the dinner jacket was no other than Mr. Harris—that he should have lingered on that bridge to enjoy the effect of the moonlight on the stream instead of hurrying for safety directly he heard the danger alarm. He must have known that, apart from the chance of meeting the unknown invader, he ran a considerable risk of being shot by his own Flowers or pulled down by his own bloodhounds. Not being altogether a fool he must, as I say, have known these things. Yet he stayed upon the bridge and watched the water. I can give no explanation except to state that he never did do the obvious thing.

He had been on his way back from a supper at the Elmgrove Vicarage when Phlox began to rub the top of the sacrificial drum. To the vicar and his wife, Mr. Harris was simply an eccentric, generous old gentleman who, so he often told them, adored flowers. When they heard the distant murmur

of the drum they had smiled at one another across the vicarage drawing-room and murmured "poachers." It was generally understood in the neighborhood that one of Mr. Harris's amiable eccentricities, so the vicar and his wife believed, was to dislike poachers so much that he kept a positive army of gamekeepers to protect his beloved flowers and birds. The drum was, of course, his eccentric way of warning the keepers to be on the *qui vive*.

What it was that made Mr. Harris turn round when he did, I cannot say. Either he had abnormally keen hearing and had caught the faint crunch of gravel as Cheeta Ram stepped off the turf on to the path, or else he had an extra sense that warned him of the approach of danger. Or again, and this is the most probable, it was simply luck. Whatever the cause, he did turn round just in time to see Cheeta Ram in the very act of springing. The kukri was already on its way to his throat, a glinting half-moon of steel.

Having just said that I don't know what it was made Mr. Harris turn round, I now find that I have to make another and similar admission. I cannot explain just how he escaped. For an agile, cat-brained Mahsud to have seized the minute fraction of time left between glimpsing the half-moon of steel and the actual blow to swing himself over the parapet of the bridge into the stream below would have been a difficult, but not impossible feat. For an enormously stout, short-legged European, one would have said it was totally impossible. Yet Mr. Harris did it. To Cheeta Ram it seemed as though the fat man had transferred himself as noiselessly and swiftly as a drifting shadow from the bridge to the bed of the stream six feet below. It was distinctly uncanny.

The kukri ended its sweep by embedding itself three inches in an oak beam. Cheeta Ram tugged to free it, peering down for his vanished enemy as he did so. The fat man had made no attempt to flee. He was standing knee-deep in the running water, staring upward with cold, prominent eyes and making passes with his hands.

Cheeta Ram ceased pulling at the kukri and stared back. Although he knew it not, he was being hypnotized. Mr. Harris was employing the extraordinary mesmeric power that he never used save as a last resort.

In the space of about three minutes the Gurkha was completely under his will. His hands had dropped to his sides, the pupils of his eyes had dilated. He stood motionless while Mr. Harris splashed his way back to *terra firma*.

Just as he had gained the bridge the pack of bloodhounds, with dripping jowls and reddened eyes, shot out of the wood in full cry. Hard on their heels came a crowd of cursing, perspiring Flowers. Foremost was a gigantic, one-eyed mulatto with a Malay kris whose great bounds kept pace with the running hounds.

"Call them to heel," Mr. Harris shouted. "It's all right, Snowdrop—it's I."

Snowdrop recognized his chief and summoned back the unwilling hounds with a peculiar harsh cry. The obedient brutes lay down and panted on the grass within a stone's throw of their motionless quarry. The Flowers lowered their rifles and crowded round curiously.

"Who's the senior bloom present?" Mr. Harris asked.

"Me, sir," a huge man who looked a cross between an Arab and a Spaniard saluted.

"Oh — Sea-anemone, isn't it?

You've had no casualties, I hope, Sea-anemone!"

"Two, sir. Hollyhock got 'is 'ead cut off and Violet was carved up somethin' 'orrid. 'E took it in the stomach, if you'll excuse me sayin' so, sir. There may 'ave bin others 'urt down at the lodge, but I 'aven't 'eard yet. 'Ave you got 'im, sir?"

"Yes, I have got him. Was Violet —er—very badly cut up? I mean, is he useless?"

"'E's dead, sir."

Mr. Harris smiled.

"You mistook my meaning, Sea-anemone. Anyway, have the bodies brought to the laboratory—Sung Ling will give you a receipt. Now, Sea-anemone, will you dismiss the men and have the all-clear signal given? I shall deal with the prisoner myself."

While Sea-anemone was carrying out these orders Mr. Harris went back to Cheeta Ram. The Gurkha had remained on the middle of the bridge motionless as a mesmerized hen.

"Your name?" Mr. Harris asked.

"Sepoy Cheeta Ram of the Guides Regiment." The answer came mechanically.

"And what was your purpose in coming here?"

"To save Captain Waring Sahib from bad men."

"Oh! And what led you to believe that Captain Waring was here?"

"Him butler bring me."

"Butler? Explain."

"I go big house London and say 'you no show road I cut head off.' He bring me here."

Mr. Harris remained in deep thought for several minutes. At the end of that time he had pieced together the story in his mind. He remembered that either Mr. Sunbury or Colonel Lowry had mentioned that Waring had a black orderly who had given trouble. He also remembered Virginia Creeper's story of the incident at Queensmarry that morning. So this was the little man who had so terrorized Sir William Moresby!

"Walk in front of me," he directed.

With the stiff gait of a mechanical doll Cheeta Ram preceded him across the moonlit lawn. Directed by Mr. Harris, he passed under an archway into a courtyard. A great iron-studded door opened to let them pass and shut behind them with a clang. The courtyard, which was empty, was illuminated by a series of powerful arc-lamps.

"Walk straight across," Mr. Harris directed.

Cheeta Ram obeyed. He walked in a straight line across the yard to where stood a wooden erection not unlike a large hencoop. It was fronted by finely meshed wire. As Cheeta Ram approached something rustled among straw and hissed angrily. A wedge-shaped head with tiny green eyes reared itself behind the wire and swayed to and fro. It was the head of a mamba, the most poisonous snake known to natural history.

"Who is that?" Mr. Harris asked.

"Captain Waring, Sahib."

"You wish to speak to Captain Waring?"

"Yes, Sahib."

"Go in. He is waiting for you."

Without a moment's hesitation Cheeta Ram went forward and began to unfasten the latch of the cage door. The mamba came writhing and hissing to meet him. Mr. Harris stood watching with folded arms and cold, indifferent eyes.

It was at that precise moment that the two-foot long, jagged end of lead piping arrived. Where it came from

it was impossible to say; it might have been flung from the top of the courtyard wall or from the roof of one of the surrounding sheds. But it missed.

Instead of striking Mr. Harris's head and killing him on the spot, it caught the back of his neck, and, such was the maniacal strength of the thrower, it hurled him half unconscious to the ground.

That broke the spell. Cheeta Ram wakened as if from a dream to find that what he had supposed to be Waring was in reality a snake poised to strike. He sprang back with a yell. He had no nerves—at least not as a European understands nerves—but he was intensely superstitious. Without even stopping to kill Mr. Harris he fled for his life.

The door by which they had entered was shut, but there was another leading into the hall itself. The Gurkha darted through it like a rabbit into its hole and found himself in a dark corridor at the end of which there was a flight of stone steps. Down these steps he fled headlong and found himself in another corridor.

While he stood uncertain what to do next he heard a sound that struck even him as being singularly out of place in that grim house. It was the cheerful sound of a barrel-organ being very badly played.

TO BE CONTINUED

Robbing the Holy Places

NOT even the churches to-day are safe from crooks. Recently five masked men armed with shotguns and revolvers invaded a Monday night meeting in the First Roumanian Synagogue in Chicago, held up the members, and robbed them of seven thousand dollars in money and jewelry.

A distinguished lecturer was halfway through an address when the robbers entered. Posing as worshipers, they had no difficulty in passing the rabbi at the door of entrance, but once inside they speedily overpowered this man, donned masks, and forced their victim to march down the aisle ahead of them. The lecturer paused in his address as the strange single file approached, whereupon the bandit leader shouted a loud oath, broke from the ranks, and commanded the congregation to line up against the wall. Three of the crooks guarded the exit while the chief of the gang and one companion moved down the line of victims. They did their work roughly, but thoroughly, stripping rings from the fingers of the women and taking the men's wallets and tie pins. Each victim, after being searched, was forced to lie down on the floor. Included in the loot was a four-thousand-dollar diamond ring, a pair of diamond earrings valued at twenty-two hundred dollars, and a diamond-studded bracelet worth one thousand dollars.

Slightly different was the method of a well-dressed man who strolled into an English church not long ago. He expressed his admiration of the building and to the organist, who happened to be present, he proffered a wish that he would "play something." The organist obliged, and while he was busy the man wandered to the rear of the church and presently left quietly. It was then discovered that he had cleaned out all the poor boxes.

A Brass-Buttoned Alibi

Only broken glass showed where the jewels had glittered

The Red Duke Proves That the Place to Be At the Time of a Crime Is in the Police Station

By Robert H. Rohde

"FANCY!" rapturously murmured the buxom lady at Mr. Reggie Chivers's right. "Jewels from the scepter of a lost civilization! Pearls, my dear, that are older than the pyramids!"

She was not addressing Mr. Chivers, but he cast a twinkling side glance toward her. Then his blue eyes lowered to resume their thoughtful contemplation of the luminous pear-shaped gems glowing against dark velvet in the display case. To himself he said:

"*Lost* civilization be hanged! *Found* money's more to the point. Four thousand quid they should fetch, over the fence and no questions asked—twenty thousand clinking round American dollars! Devil a bit of difference, either, if they were fresh out of the shell!"

His well-cared-for hands crept together. Very gently one palm rubbed the other. A connoisseur by demand of his peculiar profession, Mr. Chivers knew that if he had erred at all in his appraisal of the pearls it had been on the side of conservatism.

"And so blessed easy!" he sighed. "Just a tap on the glass with one's stick—and what ho?" He dallied with

a tantalizing impulse. "Jove, I've better than half a notion to toss finesse overside!"

The glint of a mad purpose had come into his eyes, but it quickly faded as they searched the mirror behind the case in which the jewels lay. Simultaneously he caught his breath and recovered his equilibrium.

"Notion canceled!"

Twiggling a waxed point of his trim, red mustache, Mr. Chivers turned his back on the pearls and languidly moved away through the fashionable throng that Sir Moses Gottschalk's cleverly advertised exhibit had brought to his Fifth Avenue galleries across from the Public Library. Near the door, registering an interest that didn't at all reflect his true concern of the moment, he paused in front of the portrait of a pulpy dowager in a diamond dog collar.

"Caught to the life, what?" he remarked to a hovering attendant. "Gad, if I stood here another minute, I'd expect the lady to unbosom with the details of her last operation!"

On that smiling exit line he took his departure; and when he halted again it was—or so it might have seemed—to give his attention to a Spring pattern in a shirt maker's window several blocks down the avenue.

"Now isn't that disgusting?" he complained.

He was looking, not at the draped silk, but into a slender mirror in a corner of the window. In it he had glimpsed the same familiar red face which, a little earlier, a gold-framed Louis-Something-or-Other glass had showed him peering furtively around one of the pillars in the Gottschalk Galleries. There could no longer be a question that the red-faced man was spying on him. He had dodged into a doorway, but not quickly enough.

Mr. Chivers lighted a cigarette and walked on. At the corner below he suddenly turned. The stout shadow, hurrying to make the crossing before the traffic light changed, all but bowled him over.

"My dear fellow!" expostulated Chivers. "I say, ever think of equipping yourself with horn and bumpers?" His eyes came back from the cigarette, which the shock of collision had sent flying from his fingers. "Jove! An acquaintance, not so? Seems I remember you as a chap who used to follow me about quite a bit. Don't tell me you're at it again!"

The red face grew redder. A gold shield flashed.

"A good one to foller, *you* are!" blurted its owner.

Mr. Chivers arched his eyebrows.

"But, really," he said, "I fancied all that was done with. For a long time, as I jolly well came to know, your Inspector Coakley labored under a mutually disturbing misapprehension in regard to me. Finally, though, I was sure I'd convinced him that—"

"John Coakley's dead."

"You don't tell me!" gasped Mr. Chivers. "I mean to say, is it an established fact? Of course, I read the newspapers. I knew that he'd—ah—dropped out of things, sort of; and only the day before, imagine, he and I had come to an understanding!"

"Not any," sapiently observed the red-faced man, "that was ever passed on to me."

His rising inflection implied that he was ready to be told something, but Chivers shook his head.

"A family matter, dear chap," he said slowly. "Hope I shall never have to go into the distressing details again." He hesitated. "Look here, you'll grant me the privilege of a ques-

tion, won't you? Now, weren't you hanging on my coat tails in the Gottschalk Galleries a little while ago?"

"You bet I was. I picked you up comin' out of the Plaza, and strolled down the avenue after you. Nice poils, ain't they? Or was it just the pitchers you went in to look at?"

"One always finds things of æsthetic interest in Gottschalk's," remarked Mr. Chivers. "You know, old eye, I'd absolutely loathe to feel that I'd dragged you away before you were quite ready. S'pose I just run over my program for the rest of the day, what? Would you still feel obliged to waste shoe leather on me?"

The headquarters man blinked.

"I'll be damned," he ejaculated, "if you ain't a queer one!" His grin was cynical. "Say, do I look *that* easy?"

"I see," observed Mr. Chivers briskly, "that my sporting proposition doesn't appeal. Well, then, be damned to you, anyway!"

His eyes had hardened. Now the blue of them, as they bored into the other's, was the smoky steel blue of a pistol barrel.

"If that rosebud nose of yours is as tender as it looks," said he, "I'd be jolly careful whose business I poked it into!"

Snapping his fingers under the offending member, the red-haired Mr. Chivers swung on his heel and darted across the street just ahead of an avalanche of traffic released by a whistle blast from the avenue. Below the next corner, discovering Red Face still in pursuit, he turned off sharply and cut through to a revolving door which caught him in like a mill wheel.

Fifteen seconds afterward the man with the gold shield, flinging into the same door, found himself jammed in a slow-moving current of humanity. To right and left banks of glittering glass hemmed him in. Behind him a press of elbowing, intent, bargain hunting femininity urged him relentlessly on.

"If this ain't a dirty trick!" he grunted.

And, from his own particular point of view, unquestionably it was. He had walked into a deadfall, for it was into one of New York's biggest and busiest department stores that the red-headed quarry had led him.

To one of Mr. Chivers's small stature, the crowded aisles offered a score of hidden avenues of escape; and he might, as the numerous mocking exit signs impressed upon his pursuer, have regained the street by any one of a dozen convenient doors.

Mr. Chivers, as a matter of fact, had chosen the handiest of them. As his late convoy was borne helplessly toward a distant island of desire, a profane and scarlet chip on a tide set for a banner emblazoned "to-day only—as advertised," the ingenious Reggie was settling back in a taxi headed uptown.

II

THE cab, following the Riverside bus route westward through broad and affluent Fifty-Seventh Street, up Broadway, and to the west again on Seventy-Second Street, deposited Mr. Chivers in front of a sky-scraping apartment house overlooking the river. Dismissing the driver with a lordly tip, he traveled by elevator to the top floor of the building and climbed a final flight of stairs to its roof.

In the living room of a luxuriously furnished pent-house apartment, at whose door a smiling Jap had relieved him of hat, stick, and gloves, he was greeted by a deep and sardonic:

"The Red Duke—in person!"

"Quite so. Not, I assure you, a cinematographic representation." Mr. Chivers plucked a cigarette from his case and beamed upon the heavily bearded speaker. "Gad, Coakley, somehow the sound of your voice sends a shiver through me! It's like a voice from the grave. Y' see, it's just been recalled to me how utterly extinct you are—in the official sense."

Former Police Inspector John Coakley scowled.

"Ain't it bad enough to be a live ghost," he complained, "without bein' forever kidded about it?"

Reggie Chivers shrugged.

"Don't be juvenile!" he begged. "Please think how your income has gone up since you chucked the thankless police grind and threw in with the Underworld Rotary—and my humble self! Oh, your able counsel and inspiring suggestion has earned every dollar, to be sure. Even after the unfortunate accident that's just happened, I'm not complaining."

Coakley, whose astonishing disappearance in a treasure-laden taxi, a few months before, had been written down with the police department's list of unsolved mysteries, pulled at his disguising beard.

"What accident?" he demanded.

"I ran into one of your late subordinates. More precisely, *he* ran into me. A red-faced brute—one Scully, I believe."

Coakley sat up straight.

"Scully, hey?" he repeated. "Tell me about it!"

Mr. Chivers did, succinctly and bitterly, while the ex-inspector's eyes clouded beneath their bushy brows.

"Then it looks," Coakley summed up, "as if the pearl job was off. Classy stones, too, you say?"

"Does one speak of pearls as 'stones'? Well, whether or no, they were the genuine article. Even as we'd have to dispose of them, we'd not have to take less than four thousand pounds."

Coakley made a quick computation and groaned.

"Twenty grand! And how we could use it!"

Mr. Chivers dropped into a chair, and for a space of gloomy silence gazed down upon the teeming river traffic twenty stories below.

"After all," he said presently, "it would have been quite simple if an ill wind hadn't blown the Scully person into my wake. It's a dev'lish bad complication that he saw me looking over the pearls."

"You just bet it is!" remarked Coakley grimly. "If anything *should* happen to 'em, you're nailed. Every man in the department would be on the lookout for you. When Scully got through broadcastin' at headquarters, you couldn't show your face without bein' picked up. And when they had you—say, you can forget that stuff about a man bein' presumed innocent until he's proved guilty. It don't work that way—not in a case like yours!"

Mr. Chivers flecked a cigarette ash from his sleeve with a monogrammed handkerchief of silk.

"There you are!" he exclaimed in a tone of grievance. "Your bobbies chip in with Sir Moses when, on the moral score, there's not an iota of choice between him and me."

He smiled at the quick widening of Coakley's eyes.

"Oh, absolutely there's not," he insisted. "D'you think for a minute that the pearls are what Moe Gottschalk represents them to be? I knew the beggar in London—knew his shady

methods, at any rate. He's a faker. Giving him the short and ugly, he's a swindler. He's had the effrontery more than once to peddle 'old masters' with the paint scarcely dry on 'em!"

Puzzled, Coakley feebly interjected: "But just now you said that these here pearls—"

"Were real? And so they are, old chock—a very decent collection. A jeweler wouldn't ask less than thirty thousand for them. I fancy Sir Moses must have paid close to that figure himself; but Gottschalk isn't a jeweler. He's a dealer in antiques, in objects of art, in the rare, the old, and the beautiful; and a jolly shrewd business man into the bargain, don't forget. So, coming into possession of these baubles, he sets the stage for their disposal at the largest possible profit."

Mr. Chivers, a lover of fine pearls, was warming to his subject.

"Does the rascal show them in London," he continued, "where connoisseurs have learned to be wary of him? Perish the thought! No, he brings them directly to America, and has a publicity agent at work on the press well in advance of their arrival. You've seen some of the rot in the newspapers, Coakley; but have you seen anything that's direct, straight out? I warrant you haven't. There's been a deal of hinting about a rifled tomb in the Valley of the Kings, of intrigue and bribery among Egyptian officials. Unquestionably, too, you've seen quoted the hypothetical surmise of an unnamed archæologist that these same pearls were once among the jewels of Cleopatra."

"Sure! That's what the newspapers were het up about," Coakley agreed.

"As cannily foreseen. And they've given priceless advertising to 'Cleopatra's pearls.' The story, I'll wager, was intended primarily for the consumption of certain of your millionaire johnnies back in the provinces—collectors with more money than brains. When one of them has risen to his bait, I fancy that nothing short of a hundred thousand could persuade Moe to put aside his loyalty to the Royal Museum. Oh, he knows his game!"

Coakley's blunt fingers drummed on the window sill.

"If it's that kind o' racket," said he, "Gottschalk *should* 'a' been taken. Damn Scully!"

Pacing the thick-piled rug, Reggie Chivers twisted the ends of his fiery mustache to finer points.

"I've damned the fellow up and down already, you may be sure," he said, pausing in front of the ex-inspector's chair; "but there's no profit in that, old bean. Wouldn't one's energy be much better spent, don't you think, in—ah—anticipating him?"

He resumed his walking of the rug. After a time he halted again.

"Jove!" he breathed. "It *does* intrigue the imagination, y' know! With his regular attendants, and the crowd, and his two special officers, Sir Moses fancies he has those trick pearls absolutely protected; but I was within an ace of making a try for them this afternoon, just as I discovered Scully in the offing. It would have to be done that way, in the middle of the crowd; for the pearls go into the vault overnight, of course, and there's not a stronger box in the city than Gottschalk's."

"You said it," nodded Coakley. "I could 'a' told you that; but as for the chance of gettin' away clear after a quick kick-in—well, maybe it's just as well you didn't make the stab."

Chivers lighted a fresh cigarette and blew out a curling ribbon of smoke.

"Possibly you're right," he admitted equably. "I'm like that, y' know. For instance, when I'm strolling about the roof here, I daren't go near the parapet. I'd be frightfully tempted to jump, d'you see? Exactly that way is how I felt when I stood looking at the pearls. So—shall I say that perhaps, in a way, I'm in Scully's debt?"

Suddenly a smile flashed to his lips. He snapped his cigarette, half smoked, over to the hearth.

"No, by Christopher!" he cried. "I withdraw the 'perhaps' and remove all qualification. I do unquestionably owe something to Sergeant Scully. He stands, Coakley, as godfather to a handsome young ideal—one that dawned while we were chinning."

He took another turn, stood before the renegade police inspector, and impressively demanded:

"Can you imagine me, say, having a kinsman who's—well, no better than he should be?"

Coakley's eyes smoldered. Latent in him always, despite his fall, was the flinty and uncompromising spirit of the well schooled "cop." It came to the surface now in a loud and unpleasant laugh.

"What," he rasped, "would be hard to imagine about that?"

Instantly Chivers congealed.

"I don't at all like your tone," he said stiffly. "If you don't mind, we'll abandon the subject, and I'll string along with the matter in hand—solo." He clapped his hands sharply. "Mura, my hat and stick!"

III

AS he stepped into a cab below, Reggie Chivers glanced at his watch.

"Nearly three—means I'll have to rush it," he said, and gave a crisp direction.

The chauffeur turned to stare at him.

"I guess maybe I didn't get you right, mister. *Where?*"

"I said," repeated Mr. Chivers icily, "that I wished to stop at a pawnbroker's shop on the way down town. No, I've no particular establishment in mind. First likely one you come to will do."

Unmindful of the driver's amazement, he leaned back with his hands comfortably at rest on the handle of his malacca cane. The taxi swung east, and rumbled down an avenue darkened by an elevated railway structure. It was a thoroughfare of small shops, and Mr. Chivers had already marked the gilded globes glistening ahead as his cab slowed.

"Wait!" he ordered, and vanished into the store.

Within, he cast his eyes over a rack which held a dozen suits of clothing of varying degrees of seediness.

"I want an outfit," he told the pawnbroker's clerk, "for a chap about my own size. Something of fairly recent vintage, what?"

The clerk lifted a sleeve to the light.

"This one here," he said devoutly, "ain't been worn more than half a dozen times. I give you my word, it's a fit—and a buy!"

Measuring the length of a trouser leg, Mr. Chivers nodded.

"I fancy it 'll serve," said he. "Now, if you'll step over to the window, I'll have a look at something else I happen to be interested in at the moment." He pointed with his stick. "What price? No, damn it, I don't care to listen to a sales talk. I'll take it for granted that the thing's in good working order. Just tell me how much. Ah, that's a short cut, what? Sold!"

Quelling the chauffeur's curiosity

with a withering eye, Mr. Chivers stowed his purchases in the taxicab.

"Next," said he, "we'll stop at a drug store—one of those big chain shops, y' know, where they sell a bit of everything."

But chain drug stores were scarce in that neighborhood. The cab was in the vicinity of Times Square when it stopped again.

"This do, cap'n?"

"Top hole! I'll be only a moment."

But it was a good ten minutes before Mr. Chivers reappeared, for after he had made several additional purchases he spent a considerable time in a telephone booth.

Emerging, he bore himself with the faintest air of jubilation.

"Now," said he, "if you'll turn the next corner and drive west, I'll let you know where to stop."

Presently he was tapping with his stick on the glass slide at the driver's back.

To the chauffeur's further surprise, it was one of the shabbiest midtown intersections at which his passenger had chosen to alight.

Five minutes after he had dismissed the taxi, Mr. Chivers had found a promising parking spot for the souvenirs of his singular shopping tour, and was ascending a set of steps guarded on either side by tall green lamps. Pushing blithely through the door at their head, he found himself in a large, bare room at one side of which, railed off, stood a broad, high desk. He looked up hopefully at the gray-haired man in blue and brass who sat behind the desk.

"I say, you're Captain Higgins, what?" he asked.

"Nope, I'm Lieutenant Stark. The captain's stepped out. Anything I can do for you?"

The visitor hesitated.

"Really," he deprecated, "I think not. It's—ah—an extremely delicate matter. The captain won't be gone long, you think? I mean to say, he hasn't left for the day?"

The lieutenant glanced at a walled-off cubicle at the rear of the big room.

"Door of his office is open. He might be in at any moment."

Mr. Chivers looked expectantly about him.

"Gad!" he exclaimed. "You people don't do very well by your callers, do you? Not a chair in the place! Hardly hospitable, what?"

The desk lieutenant smiled dourly.

"Mostly," said he, "we entertain our guests in back. We've got nice, quiet private rooms for 'em there; but I guess, as long as it's Captain Higgins himself you want to see, you might just as well wait in his office. Walk right in there, and make yourself at home."

"Oh, thank you so much!" beamed Mr. Chivers, and promptly he acted on the invitation.

After a little while he put his head out through the half open door.

"Oh, I say!" he called, "You're sure that clock up there is right?"

"To the minute, chief. Twenty-five to four is exactly what the time is."

Audibly Mr. Chivers breathed his relief.

"Then I can wait. I've a horribly important appointment, but it's not until half after."

Chair legs scraped on the floor as he resumed his seat, and presently a curl of blue cigarette smoke wafting over the transom of the private office apprised Lieutenant Stark that, so far as this unusually self-possessed and possibly important caller was concerned,

the hospitality of the house stood vindicated.

IV

IN a larger and far more elaborate private office half a mile distant from that in which Mr. Reginald Chivers had sat him down to await the return of Captain Higgins, Sir Moses Gottschalk scrutinized a card which his secretary had presented to him.

"From the *Standard?*" he queried benevolently. "I'll see him at once. Oh, indeed!"

He was already reaching for a box of imposingly obese and brilliantly banded cigars when the door opened to admit the owner of the card.

"Mr. Hawkes?" he said, using the mellifluous voice reserved for selected patrons and the press. "A pleasure to greet you, sir! You enjoy a good smoke, I hope?"

"Thanks," said Mr. Hawkes of the *Standard*, "but I'll have a cigarette, if it's all the same."

His voice, in quality and inflection, was amazingly like that of Mr. Reggie Chivers, sometimes called the Red Duke. Still more amazing, indeed, was the resemblance in feature and pigmentation. Mr. Hawkes had the same red hair and the same sort of red mustache, albeit not so well tended, perhaps. He had the same small, straight nose, the same firm chin.

"I'm sorry," murmured Sir Moses, regretfully, "that you're not partial to the fine Havana leaf. These cigars are my own importation—made of the cream of the Cuban crop." He rubbed his high-arched nose. "I—er—I suppose you have some questions to ask concerning the Cleopatra pearls?"

"Devil a question," replied Mr. Hawkes calmly. "I'm not a reporter."

Sir Moses Gottschalk's interest quickly and perceptibly cooled.

"Oh!" he said blankly. "Oh, I see! It's in regard to advertising, eh? Well, my dear fellow, to tell you the truth, we've already placed all—"

The red-haired Mr. Hawkes interrupted brusquely:

"I'm not a solicitor, either. I'm a photographer. The *Standard* wants a picture of the pearls for the Sunday roto section."

Sir Moses pondered.

"Why—er—I'm afraid the light—"

"You don't need to worry about the light, or about moving the case. I can get 'em where they are."

"You tell me!"

"Easily enough. I'll take a flash light. There'll be a whiff of smoke, no more. Possibly you won't object to that. The Sunday *Standard*, you know, has a circulation of nearly a million."

Sir Moses waved a slender hand.

"Oh, *that!* But if it will help you out, Hawkes, you certainly may photograph the pearls. I'm always willing to go to any reasonable length for the newspaper men. You—you've brought your camera?"

"It's outside," said the red-haired photographer. He had taken a folding tripod from his pocket, and was lengthening out the legs. "In just a moment I'll be ready."

Sir Moses went bustling into the gallery.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" he called, clapping his hands. "If you'll all be good enough to stand back a bit!"

There was a cleared space around the display case by the time Hawkes had mounted his camera on the tripod. He set it close to the case, after trying a variety of angles. Carefully he fitted together the two sections of a flash lamp and filled the pan with powder.

"Watch your eyes!" he cried, lifting the lamp above him.

A loud *pouf* sounded, and the gallery was filled with a dazzling, blinding light. Heavy smoke billowed about the case, black and impenetrable.

"Now, that's a sin!" Hawkes sang out. "The flash powder must have been damp!"

As he spoke, there was a crash of glass.

"My God!" shouted Sir Moses. "The doors! Watch the doors!"

In another instant the smoke cloud was lifting. First the photographer stood revealed, smudged and contrite, behind his camera; then the smashed show case which had held, a few short seconds ago, the Cleopatra pearls, but now only splinters of broken glass lay on the soft velvet that had set off the jewels so effectively.

With ocular proof of his loss, a glacial calm came to Sir Moses Gottschalk. For a moment, as he coughed his throat clear of the acrid smoke, his eyes dwelt blightingly on Hawkes. Then he addressed the crowd of startled visitors pressing behind the camera.

"You people can see for yourselves what has occurred," he said "Within the last minute pearls worth a fortune have been taken from that case. They must still be within these walls. A number of you I know well, and can trust; but in fairness to all I must ask that no one present attempt to leave until the police have arrived and—ah—given their permission.

Uniformed attendants were at the doors. One of them, more excitable than his fellows, had drawn a pistol. From fifty voices that had been politely murmuring a few moments before there now rose a shocked and not so polite babel of protest.

A distinguished-looking man with gray hair and mustache separated from the crowd and walked to Sir Moses.

"My wife and I were on the point of leaving for the Detroit train," he said evenly. "Do you mean, Gottschalk, that you intend to detain us—by force?"

Sir Moses patted his large nose.

"You—you surely understand my position," he stammered. "As I said, in fairness to all—"

"Very well!" The even voice had waxed testy. "It will cost me dearly if I'm late in Detroit. In that event you may be sure you'll hear from my attorneys!"

Sir Moses, unhappy and irresolute, felt a touch at his arm. It was Hawkes.

"May I make a suggestion?" he whispered.

"You have *another?*" demanded Gottschalk with heavy sarcasm. "Haven't you done mischief enough?"

The photographer, at once apologetic and compellingly urgent, drew him aside.

"I don't deny, Sir Moses," he said, "that I'm in a measure responsible here. I mean that if my flash powder hadn't somehow been exposed to moisture I can't help feeling that this wouldn't have happened. Somebody must have been waiting for an opportunity, and it was I who gave it to him."

"You did!" agreed Gottschalk harshly. "Deuce take you and your camera!"

"But doesn't it occur to you," asked Hawkes, "that the camera may yet point the way out of this—ah—dilemma of yours?"

"In what way? What do you mean?"

"Simply this—the person who nipped the pearls must have darted

toward the case as I touched off the flash. My shutter was open, and I should say the chances are better than ever that I now have his likeness on the plate."

Sir Moses stared.

"Rot! The camera could no more see through that smoke than I!"

"Quite so, but there was an interval, you know, of brilliant light—light too strong for the human eye to withstand. You blinked, I blinked, we all blinked; but the camera didn't, if you get what I mean."

Comprehension and hope dawned together in Gottschalk's small, dark eyes.

"It might be! Well?"

"I suggest that before taking any other step you let me develop the plate. I can do it in a couple of minutes. The negative itself, of course, will tell the story. Our man was either caught in the act by the camera or he wasn't."

"But surely you couldn't develop the picture here?"

"Why not? I've got everything needed with me—part of the modern press photographer's equipment."

"A dark room?"

"For one plate. You don't know the game, Sir Moses! My focusing cloth over the tray will do handsomely. Isn't it worth trying? Do you want the police here, subjecting every one present to search—risking lawsuits against you?"

Quite evidently Gottschalk had been thinking of that. He chewed at a finger nail.

"You're sure it would take only a few minutes? You could use my private office?"

"Better," said Hawkes, "that small room next to it." He hastened to explain, as Gottschalk's eyebrows went up: "I notice a large table there that's clear. No need to disturb the papers on your desk, what?"

Sir Moses nodded.

"Disturbing papers would be a small thing, but have your way." He raised his voice: "I shall ask you, my friends, to be patient for another moment."

V

HAWKES had briskly slipped the plateholder from his camera and started away, the black cloth over his arm. Sir Moses, beckoning to an attendant, followed him.

The photographer, seeing the two at his heels as he entered the rear room of his choice, smiled seraphically.

"My word! Am I under suspicion, too? I say, Sir Moses, won't you close that door, please? And you, admiral—if you don't mind drawing the shade? Ah, thank you both so much! And now a gentle word with you!"

Door shut, shade down, Sir Moses and his guard had turned to find that Mr. Hawkes had thrown off the last vestige of his assumed meekness. He had put down the plateholder, and now the hand that had held it presented in steady grasp a pistol. The barrel of the weapon and the photographer's eyes were of the same cold and ominous shade of blue.

"I beg you to understand, gentlemen," murmured Mr. Hawkes, "that from this point we must carry on in whispers. I am of a lamentably nervous temperament, and I fear that an outcry might have a result which I am most earnestly desirous of avoiding."

With a wave of his pistol he motioned Sir Moses from the door, backed across the room to it, and turned the key.

Gottschalk found a voice—a bitter but discreetly low one.

"So! A wolf in sheep's clothing!"

"Rather good!" smiled Mr. Hawkes. "The run of pressmen *are* a bit like sheep, what?"

With a remarkable deftness, neither letting his chilly eyes wander from his captives nor permitting the gun to waver, he snapped open a thin platinum case with his left hand, persuaded a cigarette from it, and thumbed the wheel of a pocket lighter.

"In another way, Gottschalk," he observed reflectively, through a lazily expanding smoke ring, "that's a jolly good metaphor of yours. It applies equally well to yourself. My word for it, I'm more than a little ashamed of you—ringing in a woman to aid your small enterprise of silk-stocking larceny!"

"My—what?"

Hawkes made an airy gesture with the cigarette.

"My dear fellow, isn't it of historical record that pearls were the olives of Queen Cleopatra's cocktails? To one apprised of her tastes, it's quite inconceivable that she would call for an asp while there were still the ingredients of another pick-me-up in the royal palace! Wasting no more words, I say you're a humbug. I hope this little lesson will be salutary. One can't get away with it forever. If the law doesn't fetch one up—ah, well, justice is broader than the law, what?"

Sir Moses, with beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead in token of the rigors of his restraint, was glaring at the plateholder.

"I shall leave it for you, with the camera," promised Mr. Hawkes generously. "Would it interest you to know that I've never taken a picture in my life, or posed for one? I find it a distinct advantage, in my profession, to carry all manner of business cards. Who knows when I might find it convenient to be a lawyer, a doctor, or a merchant chief?"

He glanced leisurely about him.

"Ah, yes! A much better room than yours, this, for—developing! It has, in the first instance, the obvious advantage of that fire escape; and—my word!—isn't that a towel rack on the wall? A towel or two will be distinctly helpful!"

From his pocket Mr. Hawkes produced a ball of stout twine. He rolled it playfully across the rug to Gottschalk.

"Ho! Well fielded, Sir Moses! Now, if you'd be so kind as to secure the admiral's hands behind his back? If that chances to be a gun bulging in his hip pocket, don't bother. I'll pluck it myself presently."

Purple of face and panting with ill suppressed rage, the knightly proprietor of the Gottschalk Galleries had no course but to oblige. One fascinated look into the gelid blue eyes convinced him of that.

"Do make a good workmanlike job of it," urged Hawkes. "I should detest, y'know, having to fall out with you!"

A moment later he had a smiling compliment.

"Quite professional, I give you my word, Sir Moses! So—your own hands behind your back, if you please. And do kindly remember, as I work, that my pistol's right here beside me."

Adeptly he threw a bight of the cord over the crossed wrists.

"Too tight? Oh, I hope not; but you won't be left here long, I'm sure."

Bound hand and foot, trussed in chairs, gagged with starchy fresh towels from the wall rack, Sir Moses Gottschalk and his glum guard followed Mr. Hawkes with dull eyes as he crossed to the window and raised it.

Over the sill he gave them a cheery wave.

"Do try to think of something pleasant, Sir Moses!" he entreated. "Something rich, provincial, and guileless, fluttering in a net! For one must, y'know, have an eye to the blood pressure—and, seriously, I don't like your color a bit!"

Then the red head vanished, and there was only the gentlest quiver of the steel railing outside the window to mark the light and steady progress of Mr. Hawkes's descent.

VI

"THERE'S somebody waitin' in your office for you, boss," said Desk Lieutenant Stark, looking up from his blotter. "Somebody that looks like—*somebody!*"

Captain Higgins looked at the big clock on the wall facing the desk. It was twenty minutes past four.

"Hell! And me off chasing a wild goose! Some stool phoned in and was going to hand me the lowdown on that Harrington Bank job. Said he didn't dare come near the station. He was to meet me up by the obelisk in Central Park, but—cold feet! How long has this party been here?"

"Best part of an hour."

The voices had filtered to Mr. Reggie Chivers, in the captain's office. He appeared at the door, cigarette in hand.

"I haven't minded the wait a bit, captain," he said amiably. "If it weren't that I'm really in a rush—"

The stick, the spats, the gloves, the carefully cut tweeds, all had their effect on Higgins. He saw in a glance what his lieutenant had meant.

"Too bad!" he said. "It was tough luck you didn't find me at my desk." He crossed the floor and politely nodded the visitor back into the office. "Well, *now*, I'm at your service."

The caller's face, as he seated himself, showed a conflict of emotion.

"It's—ah—a dev'lish disagreeable business that brings me here, captain," he said.

"Usually it is, with most people, but they seem to find us human."

A wan but grateful smile greeted the assurance.

"Perhaps I'd best begin by introducing myself. My name is Chivers—Reginald Chivers. As you may have surmised, I'm an Englishman, visiting in the States. For the last few months I've been stopping at the Hotel St. Swithin."

The captain nodded attentively. To him residence at the St. Swithin meant much. It was a hotel which appealed to people not only of substance, but of a refined discrimination.

"Yes, Mr. Chivers," said he. "It's—a matter of personal loss?"

Mr. Chivers's blue eyes grew somber.

"Rather, let us say, of a very deep personal regret. It goes hard, y'know, when one must, in self-protection, turn upon one's own blood."

Higgins had a knack. He said nothing. His eyes discreetly sought the ceiling.

Mr. Reginald Chivers sighed heavily.

"But I *must* do it," he said. "It is too late now to turn back. I have suffered enough through him. I must make a positive move before I am utterly disgraced and dragged into the mire."

"Right!" encouraged the captain. "Blackmail, is it? Don't be afraid to talk out plain, Mr. Chivers. If more people would do that—"

Chivers made a weary gesture.

"No, not blackmail. Rather more out of the ordinary. It happens that there is in this city, captain, a certain man who very much resembles me—who might actually pass muster for me, unless we were side by side; and the resemblance, I may say, is not entirely a matter of accident. Hilary Holsworth is my own first cousin!"

"Ah!" murmured Higgins. "He's been—impersonating you? Signing checks and running up bills—that sort of thing?"

Chivers slowly shook his head.

"If it were only that! But it's worse. Cousin Hilary, I am grieved to admit, is a man absolutely without principle. He is, in short, a criminal."

Captain Higgins leaned forward.

"Can you prove it? And can you put your hand on him?"

"I can prove nothing; but through him, I can tell you, I have been brought into the most extravagantly embarrassing situations. There was an Inspector Coakley in your department—"

"Yes—John Coakley. A queer case, *that* was! What about him?"

"Coakley evidently had some information of Hilary Holsworth's activities in the States. Because we so closely correspond in appearance, the inspector more than once interviewed me on the supposition that I was Hilary. Outraged, but certain of my ability to establish my innocence of misdeeds to which Coakley made veiled reference, I kept my tongue between my teeth. Family pride, you understand?"

"I understand," said Higgins gravely.

"Eventually, however, with repetition of the annoyance, I made a clean breast of it to Coakley. This was on the day before he—ah—met with his strange accident, if it may be so called. I thought that settled everything; but apparently he had not taken his subordinates into his confidence. Early this afternoon I was approached by one of them on Fifth Avenue. His manner was offensive in the extreme; so, naturally, I told him nothing of all this. I felt that it was a subject to be discussed, if at all, with his superiors, and therefore I come to you."

"Exactly," said Higgins, "what you should have done. Could you locate this Holsworth"

Mr. Chivers regretfully shook his head.

"Afraid not, but a few hours ago I could have pointed him out to you. I could swear I saw him just as I came from the Gottschalk Galleries. It was humorous, in a way, captain, for at that very moment, by Jove!—at that *particular* moment the detective johnnie was trailing me!"

Higgins rubbed his chin.

"You didn't put him wise?"

Chivers smiled.

"I've told you that I resented his manner; and I say, Higgins, put yourself in my place, won't you? Plain self-protection is one thing; but, after all, Hilary's my own flesh and blood, rather—what?"

Higgins saw the point, and grimly returned the smile.

"You're a sport, anyhow, Mr. Chivers," he vouchsafed. "Of course, you might have saved yourself trouble by—"

He broke off to listen to a loud voice in the big outer room. Then heavy feet were crossing the floor, and a peremptory knock sounded at the door.

As Higgins opened it, Mr. Chivers, seated back in a shadow, recognized a familiar face. It was a red face, given over in large part to nose—Sergeant Scully himself!

"Say, cap," cried Scully, "Gottschalk's art joint has been turned off for them poils! The rap came into headquarters just before I phoned down a couple o' minutes ago; and I got a line on it, see? Better shoot some of your men over with me!"

The door opened wider—and so, immediately, did Scully's red-rimmed eyes.

"My Gawd!" he shouted, dazedly pointing. "If I ain't gone cuckoo, *there's* the guy I want right now!"

Springing out of his chair, Mr. Reginald Chivers drew himself to a height which, even at the conclusion of the drawing process, was short of considerable.

"Enough!" he snapped. "My days of persecution are over!"

Higgins put a large hand on Sergeant Scully's heaving shoulder.

"I think," he said, "there's a little mistake here. What time was this job pulled, Scully?"

"Between five minutes to four and five after. But—hey—"

The captain leaned out of the door.

"You say, Stark, that this gentleman has been waiting for me nearly an hour?" he asked the man at the desk.

"Just an hour it was. He was here at twenty-five to four, I know; and it's twenty-five to five now."

Mr. Chivers gasped.

"Good Heavens! And at half past four I was to meet—" He broke off and turned distressed eyes upon Higgins. "I say, captain, she's positively the most exquisite little thing in New York; and, dash it, she waits for no man!"

Captain Higgins spoke in two directions in the same breath.

"Shut your yap, Scully! I'm commanding here! Certainly, Mr. Chivers, shove along—and good luck with the lady. If we collar Cousin Hilary I'll phone you at the St. Swithin, hey?"

VII

THE most exquisite little thing in New York, strange to say, wore a full set of whiskers, and the voice of greeting when Mr. Chivers rushed in, direct from Captain Higgins's office, was a furry bass.

"Back for more advice, Reggie?"

Mr. Chivers replied with a sprightly nod.

"As to the best and quickest way," said he, delving into a pocket, "of disposing of—these!"

Ex-Inspector John Coakley blinked over an extended handful of richly glowing pear-shaped jewels that his educated eye immediately identified as first-grade pearls.

"Holy smoke!" he cried. "From Gottschalk's? You went and—did it!"

"Couldn't resist," confirmed Mr. Chivers modestly. "I say, you don't think four thousand quid would be high?"

Coakley's enthusiasm had swiftly departed.

"But—but Scully! What've you let us in for?"

Mr. Chivers snapped his fingers.

"*That* for Scully! In this little episode, dear chap, it happens that I have a tightly buttoned alibi—and brass buttoned, into the bargain. What if I could prove that I was sitting snugly in a police station when this atrocious raid upon Sir Moses Gottschalk's pearls was made—sitting, by gad, in the captain's office? Suppose I had a police lieutenant to support my alibi at one end and the captain himself at the other?"

John Coakley composed his features into their habitual frown.

"Listen!" he said heavily. "*Listen!*"

"It's quite the fact," insisted Mr. Chivers. "I don't imagine you'd care to hear how it came about?"

And, although Coakley's answer was only a grunt, he plunged into the story of his purchases on the taxi ride.

"What's that got to do with anything?" Coakley interrupted.

"I thought another suit might be better for the job," smiled Chivers. "Pressmen, y'know, aren't so well turned out, as a rule—and, of course, clothing would figure in an identification; so, as I say, I left the second-hand regalia and the camera in a little tailor shop at the corner, waited until I saw Higgins pass on his way to the telephone tryst I'd made with him, and then presented myself at the station house. Graciously, after no more than a hint, I was invited to step into the captain's office."

"Yeah, yeah!" snapped Coakley. "But what I want to know is how the hell you got out without a check on you?"

Ruefully Mr. Chivers shook his blazing head.

"My dear inspector! You should know that station house. The captain's office is on the street level, isn't it? And there's a window opening on a nice quiet alley, what? And the desk lieutenant wasn't going to come looking in every few minutes, would you say?"

His eyes wandered to a decanter on a small table behind Coakley.

"Oh, there's a deal more to it—Heavens, yes! But what do you say if, before I go into detail, we turn off a toast to my cousin, Hilary Holsworth? He's a rascal, mayhap, but he's going to be no end useful to me, I predict; and blood is thicker—what?—than water on the side?"

Bad Health, Longer Term in Jail

IT doesn't pay a man to admit he has bad health when he is up for a jail sentence in Houston. Galveston County jails are not suited for a convalescence and a kindly judge may mete out the same dose that Anatos Mellas received recently for a second offense against the liquor laws.

"I understand your health is bad and would be injured by confinement in the Galveston County jail," Judge Estes said to Mellas.

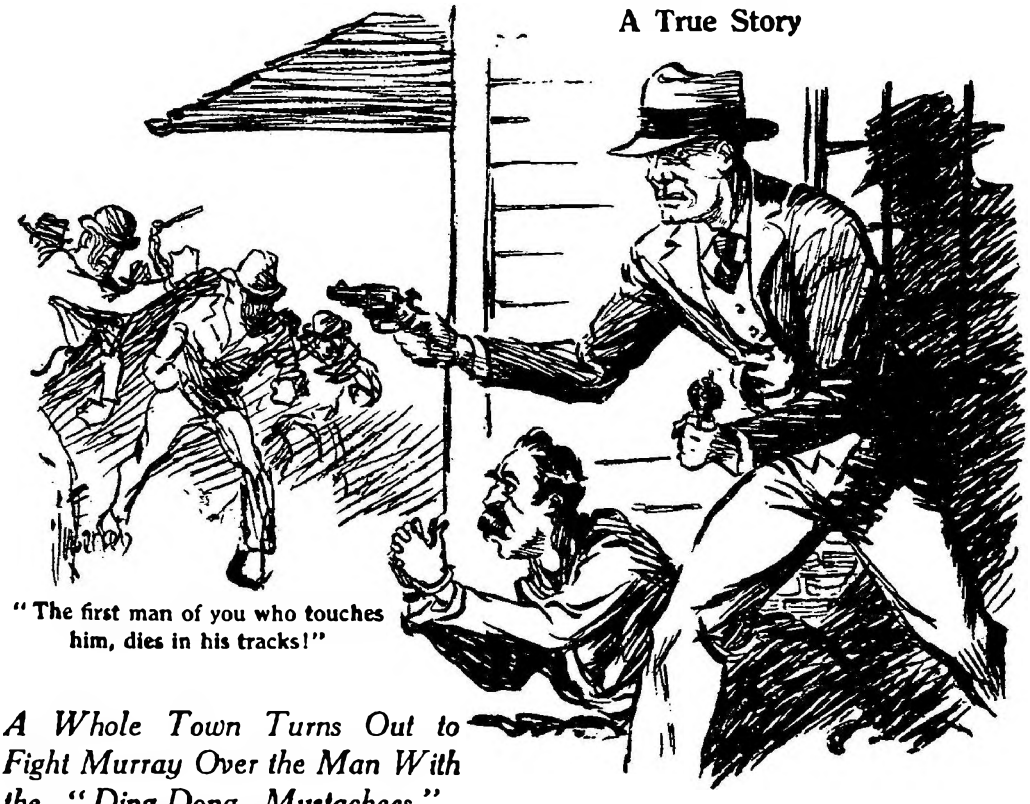
"Yes, sir, judge, it's awful bad," Mellas answered quickly, a note of hope in his voice.

"Then I won't send you to jail." His Honor decided. "I'll send you to Atlanta. But, as they don't take short-termers, I'll have to make it fifteen months.

"For your health's sake, you understand," the judge added.

Manhunts of a Great Detective

A True Story



"The first man of you who touches him, dies in his tracks!"

A Whole Town Turns Out to Fight Murray Over the Man With the "Ding-Dong Mustachees"

By John Wilson Murray and Victor Speer

Each chapter is a separate adventure in Murray's career. Begin anywhere.

CHAPTER XXV

John Stone, Gentleman

JOHN STONE was a cynic, an atheist, and an English gentleman. He came of an ancient and honorable family. His father educated him for the Church of England and his mother's heart's desire was to see him a clergyman. He graduated from Harrow—preparatory school only—and was famed among his classmen for his brilliancy. Instead of training for the pulpit he developed a yearning for the stage and he turned his back on the ministerial career planned by his parents, and devoted himself to the study of Shakespeare and the portrayal of Shakespearean rôles. He married a Miss Morley, a relative of

the Right Hon. John Morley, and after loitering for a year or two he suddenly packed his trunks and sailed, with his wife, for America.

"He settled in Texas," said Murray, "and bought a large ranch not far from Dallas. Subsequently he moved into Dallas and was elected mayor of Dallas and was reëlected. He was such a remarkable man, with such a command of language, that it is not strange he should become involved as the central figure in an affair which drew the attention of the President of the United States, the British ambassador, the Attorney General of the United States, and high officials of both Canada and the neighboring country.

"Stone had a sister, a Mrs. Asa Hodge, who came from England to Canada and lived in Beamsville, County of Lincoln, twenty miles from Suspension Bridge. Her husband was a fruit grower. Mayor Stone of Dallas made occasional visits to New York, and on one of these trips he called to see his sister. One of her children, Maude Hodge, was a beautiful girl of sixteen at this time. John Stone, when he saw her, liked her so much that he took her back to Texas and kept her in his own family, educating her with his own children. Several years later Mrs. Hodge went to Texas to visit her brother and daughter. She did not like the look of things. Maude had grown to a lovely young woman of nineteen, and John Stone regarded her with jealous affection. Mrs. Hodge took her daughter away from Stone and brought her home to Beamsville, very much against Stone's wishes.

"John Stone tarried in Texas for a short time, and then he, too, went to Beamsville, where Maude was living. He started a cheese factory, and moved his family from Dallas to Beamsville. Maude Hodge became his clerk in the factory. At that time Stone was a man about forty-five years old, of remarkable personality and amazing command of language. He was a man of refined appearance, with sandy-brown hair and gray eyes, and rather classic features.

"One of his chief pleasures was to inveigh against churches and clergymen, and to mock at the calling for which he had been educated. He proclaimed himself an atheist, a believer in no church and in no creed. He denounced Christians as pretenders and the Christian life as a delusion and a sham. Consequently, when Maude, his favorite, became acquainted with Miss Chapman, a very fine lady and sister of the Rev. I. M. Chapman, pastor of the Baptist Church of Beamsville, John Stone was displeased greatly. As Miss Chapman's influence over Maude grew, the young girl began to weary of her uncle's employ and went to the factory reluctantly.

"At length, in January, 1886, she stayed away from the factory, remain-

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Editor's Note:—A year ago one of the greatest detectives the world has ever known died. He was John Wilson Murray, Chief Inspector of Criminal Investigation in the Department of Justice of the Province of Ontario. His career was one of the most amazing a man ever had, for more than thirty years in the grim business of the manhunt. Fortunately for readers of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, *John Wilson Murray told the story of his life to his close friend and collaborator, Victor Speer, and we are able here to present the gripping chronicle.*

ing at her own home with her mother. John Stone waited in vain for her return. On January 5 he went to her house. Maude and her mother were sitting in the kitchen, chatting, about two o'clock in the afternoon, when Stone walked in.

"'Is Asa in?' he asked Mrs. Hodge.

"Asa was out. Mrs. Hodge said he would return presently. John Stone stepped over to Maude, opened his coat, drew something from an inside pocket and held it out to Maude.

"'Well, Maude, I guess you and I will close issues,' he said, as he opened his coat.

"The girl saw him draw forth the revolver and offer it to her. She shrank back.

"'Maude, shoot me,' said John Stone, holding out the revolver to her.

"Mrs. Hodge screamed and begged her brother not to shoot. Stone, without a word, fired three shots at his favorite. Mrs. Hodge ran out of the house shrieking. As she ran she heard a fourth shot, John Stone had walked to the door, put the pistol to his head and shot himself.

"Mrs. Hodge and several of the neighbors hurried to the house. Maude staggered out of the door and fell in the yard. She was carried to the house of a neighbor, Mrs. Konkle, and Drs. Jessop and McLean attended her, locating one bullet in the left side below the heart and another near the left shoulder blade. Stone was taken to his own home. The doctors thought both would die. Two constables were set to guard Stone at his own house, night and day. He hovered on the verge of death for five weeks, and suddenly, to everybody's surprise, he began to recover. Toward the middle of February the doctors said he soon could be removed to St. Catherine's jail.

"I talked with him at that time and he impressed me as one of the most fluent talkers I ever had heard. Words flowed in a ceaseless, unbroken stream. His vocabulary was remarkable.

"'It was a high ambition; these things cannot always be accounted for,' he said, referring to the shooting.

"In February a stranger, giving the name of Mr. Matthews, arrived in Beamsville. No one knew who he was or whence he came. He disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared. John Stone also disappeared. This was on February 14. One of the constables guarding him, possibly, was not so much surprised as some others over his escape. I went to Beamsville and traced Stone, where he had driven in a carriage to Suspension Bridge and had crossed to the States and had taken a train. There I lost him.

"I returned to Beamsville and learned that Mr. Matthews had a satchel with him marked 'H. W. M., Balto.'

"I prepared extradition papers and went to Baltimore and found that Hugh W. Matthews, a rich manufacturer, lived in a fine mansion at No. 263 West Lanvale Street, and was a prominent business man of high standing in that city. On inquiry I ascertained that he was a brother-in-law of John Stone. It was March 5 when I arrived in Baltimore and I called on Albert Galt to assist me. On March 6 Galt and I went to the Matthews house and walked in and found John Stone lying on a lounge in the library gazing idly at the ceiling. I had laid information before United States Commissioner Rogers, and Galt arrested Stone.

"In a twinkling the whole household, servants and all, were around us saying John Stone was ill and we could

not take him. Dr. Bacon and Dr. Harvey hurried in, summoned by a member of the household, and told us we must not lay a hand on John Stone, as it would endanger his life. Discretion was the better part of valor. Stone had seemed quite comfortable when we entered, but he seemed to sink rapidly in five minutes. It may have been due to his earlier love for the stage and acting. I was satisfied he was shamming, and I left Galt with him in case he tried to escape again. I went back to police headquarters and saw Chief Frey and told him what had happened.

"'All right,' said Frey. 'If he's ill, there he stays.'

"Frey detailed two more detectives, Tom Barringer and Mark Hagen, to join Galt. The three detectives arranged their tours of duty in shifts of eight hours, and they watched John Stone, keeping him in actual sight day and night.

"I called on Commissioner Rogers and on United States Marshal John McClintock. They said they could do nothing. I went to Washington and called on Sir Sackville West, then British Ambassador, and stated my case. Sir Sackville West called a carriage and drove me to the State Department. Thomas F. Bayard was Secretary of State. He was deaf as a post. We shouted the case to Mr. Bayard. He said he did not know what he could do until the case came into court. I returned to the British Legation with Sir Sackville, who was a very nice little gentleman. He advised me to get an American lawyer. He also gave me a letter to Dennis O'Donohue, at Baltimore, one of the old British Consuls on the continent. After leaving Sir Sackville I went to call on my old friend Senator Daniel W. Voorhees, of Indiana, who had been my counsel before in various extradition cases, including the Meagher case in Indianapolis. He was living at the Portland and was indisposed, but he sent word for me to come right up.

"Three justices of the United States Supreme Court were calling on Senator Voorhees at the time. It was March 22. Voorhees made me blush telling the judges of old cases and heaping flattery on me.

"'What is it this time, Murray?' he asked. 'Out with it. These gentlemen have heard cases stated before now—desperate cases, too, and desperately stated.'

"I told the case right then and there, the whole story, while the four men, three justices of the United States Supreme Court and Senator Voorhees listened.

"'Is he dying?' they asked.

"'I think he is feigning,' said I.

"'Suppose he pleads insanity?' said one of the justices.

"'It would not be upheld,' said I.

"'But if the commissioner decided against you?' he asked.

"'Murray would appeal, so beware, gentlemen, beware,' said Senator Voorhees.

"The three justices departed, and I asked Senator Voorhees to take the case.

"He said he could not.

"'But as an old friend I'll assist you in every way,' he said.

"I explained to him that Stone, through his rich brother-in-law, had retained William Pinckney White—former Governor of Maryland—ex-Judge Garey, W. M. Simpson, and Governor White's son, four able lawyers and influential men, to fight his case for him. Voorhees instantly told

me not to be anxious, but to call the next morning and we would go to the Department of Justice. I did so, and Senator Voorhees and I called on Attorney General A. H. Garland.

"'Mr. Murray is a particular friend of mine, an officer of Canada, who has come here after a refugee from justice named John Stone,' said Senator Voorhees.

"The Attorney General questioned me, and I told him I was morally certain Stone was feigning. Mr. Garland dictated a letter to Marshal McClintock in Baltimore, and suggested a commission of United States surgeons be appointed to go to Baltimore and examine Stone, and see if he could be removed with safety.

"Two United States surgeons proceeded to Baltimore after our call on the Attorney General. I went on the same train. They drove to the Matthews house. There they were joined by the family physicians, Dr. Bacon and Dr. Harvey, and two or three others. The civilian doctors already were in favor of the prisoner, for Stone was a prisoner in the Matthews mansion. After the examination, the opinion of all the surgeons was that the removal of the prisoner would be dangerous, and any undue excitement might cause a rush of blood to the head and rupture a blood vessel, causing death instantly. The two United States surgeons returned to Washington and made a report to this effect. I also returned to Washington and saw Voorhees, and induced him to take the case. We called on Attorney General Garland again, and saw him and his first assistant, Heber May, of Indiana, friend of Senator Voorhees. Then Senator Voorhees and I went to Baltimore, and the three detectives who were watching Stone night and day told Senator Voorhees that Stone was feigning.

"Senator Voorhees, as counsel, had a writ of show cause issued on Marshal McClintock to learn why he could not produce John Stone in court before Commissioner Rogers. The marshal appeared with the affidavits of the doctors that Stone could not be moved. Matters went on, the three detectives keeping John Stone in sight every minute of the time. Sir Sackville West sent me a private note to call on him at the Legation. I did so, and stated what had occurred, and he was greatly pleased over what had been done. Senator Voorhees and I went over what had been done. Senator Voorhees and I went to Baltimore again and again and again, for over four months, each time getting a show cause order, to which Marshal McClintock would reply with affidavits of the doctors.

"In June I called on President Cleveland, whom I had known in Buffalo.

"The Department of Justice ordered a second commission of United States surgeons to examine Stone. They did so, and reported that Stone could be moved with safety, from the fact that wherever the bullet was, it would be embedded permanently now, and not apt to cause any trouble. Tuesday, July 20, was set as the date for the hearing before Commissioner Rogers. It was a memorable hearing in the history of extradition cases. For the prosecution appeared United States Senator Daniel W. Voorhees, Assistant Attorney General of the United States Heber May, Paul Jones, a nephew of Voorhees, and United States District Attorney Thomas Hayes. For the defense appeared ex-Governor William Pinckney White, his

son, and ex-Judge Garey, and W. M. Simpson. The hearing began on Tuesday, and continued every day until Saturday. The defense, as the Justice of the United States Supreme Court had foreseen, advanced the plea of insanity. To this the prosecution objected, and very rightly, stating that was for a jury, and not for a commissioner, to determine; and I believe that Justices of the United States Supreme Court would have taken this view of it. The defense brought witnesses and doctors all the way from Texas to prove John Stone did remarkable and irrational things.

"They swore John Stone imagined at times that he was Napoleon, and that he rode with a cloak and sword on the prairies, that he reviewed imaginary armies and that he delighted imaginary audiences. They swore Maude Hodge, the girl whom he had shot, and who had recovered, and her mother, Mrs. Maloma Hodge swore that on the day of the shooting John Stone's eyes were like those of a raving maniac. Hugh W. Matthews and Mrs. Matthews also were sworn. When it came to the arguments, a two-horse wagon would not carry off the law books used by counsel. I got a post-graduate course in extradition law that I never will forget. Commissioner Rogers decided John Stone was insane. I went to Washington.

"'You'll appeal, won't you, Murray?' said Attorney General Garland.

"'Yes,' said I, 'but I must see the Attorney General of Ontario first.'

"I returned to Toronto, and conferred with Premier Mowat. He thought we had done all in our power, and it would appear too vindictive to push it further.

"I went back to Washington to settle up the matter. I called on Senator Voorhees, and we went to see Attorney General Garland.

"'Murray's come here with a pocketful of Canada money,' said Voorhees to Garland jokingly. 'What shall we do; take it away from him?'

"'Oh, no,' said Attorney General Garland. 'In respect to our friend, we'll bear the burden of these expenses, and his government, of course, will appreciate the splendid work he has done.'

"Attorney General Garland directed that all expenses, the commissioner, marshal, witnesses, doctors, and detectives, amounting to several thousand dollars, be paid by the United States. The three detectives were on duty watching Stone one hundred and thirty days. They received five dollars each a day, or a total of nineteen hundred and fifty dollars. Chief Frey and his staff gave a banquet for me before I left. He and his men stood true through the entire case.

"John Stone was discharged in Baltimore. He went to Texas, as well as ever. Two years later eczema broke out, and shortly thereafter he died. The bullet was found embedded in his brain. After hearing this, I investigated the matter of foreign substances in the brain. I found a case reported in New Hampshire where a man was blasting, the charge hung fire, he tampered with it, and the crowbar was blown up to the top of his head, so that two men had to pull it out, and yet he lived."

CHAPTER XXVI

For a Mess of Pottage

BEN HAGAMAN was his mother's pet. She coddled him as a child, and pampered him as a youth. His father was a rich merchant of Ridgetown, Ontario, and his brother-

in-law was a prosperous, successful business man. His uncle was Benjamin Hagaman, the Chicago millionaire, who was a bachelor, and after whom young Ben had been named.

"Young Ben stood to inherit old Ben's fortune," said Murray. "He was a sunny-tempered, merry, good-looking, likable young fellow, and his shrewd, rich old uncle was very fond of him. All Ben needed to do was to learn the ways of business under his uncle's supervision, and in due time he would inherit millions. Young Ben knew this. His uncle took him when he was of age and taught him something of business, and in the course of giving him practical experience old Ben sent young Ben out to Fargo, North Dakota, and made him paying teller in his bank there. Young Ben seemed to do well, but one day he unexpectedly returned to Canada and settled down again at the old home. No word came from old Ben, and no explanation was given by young Ben. In due time young Ben had married, and had two children.

"Sir William P. Howland, of Toronto, ex-lieutenant governor of the province, met young Ben. Sir William was the head of Howland, Jones & Co., and had large flour mills at Thorold. He needed a bookkeeper there, and when young Ben, son of the rich Ridgetown merchant and nephew of the Chicago multi-millionaire, applied to him, he employed Ben in the capacity not only of bookkeeper, but confidential clerk at the Thorold mills. Sir William intrusted young Ben to keep an eye on Sir William's partner, who was as honest a man as the sun ever shone upon. Young Ben nodded wisely, aware instantly that Sir William might distrust his partner despite their close relations.

"Young Ben quickly familiarized himself with his duties. He learned that grain was bought by the carload, and was paid for by checks drawn by the bookkeeper and signed by Mr. Jones, Sir William's partner. Young Ben was deft with a pen. After the arrival of a consignment of grain valued at four hundred and seventy dollars, young Ben wrote out a check with a little interval after the 'four' in the 'four hundred and seventy.' He took the check to Mr. Jones, who signed it as usual. Young Ben then took the signed check and added 'teen' to the 'four,' making it read 'fourteen hundred and seventy,' and put a '1' after the '$' before the '470,' making it $1,470, and thereby raising the check one thousand dollars. He arranged the indorsement also, and sent it through the bank.

"Between September and December, 1886, young Ben did this sixteen times, getting one thousand dollars each time, or sixteen thousand dollars, apart from the amount actually due for grain. On December 20 he went away, saying he would be back on the twenty-second. He did not return, and the firm's balance at the bank showed sixteen thousand dollars missing. Before disappearing Ben made a farewell visit to Toronto, where he bought some elegant jewelry from W. P. Ellis, including some costly diamonds. Part of the jewelry he succeeded in obtaining on credit.

"Sir William was dumfounded. He could not bring himself to believe that young Ben had robbed him. Yet there were the checks, each for one thousand dollars more than the proper amount. Mr. Jones was sure they had been raised after he had signed them. Finally the matter came to my attention, and on January 24, 1887, I took

it up. I first learned that old Ben, the Chicago millionaire, had washed his hands of his precious namesake after young Ben had made away with some four or five thousand dollars not belonging to him in the Fargo bank. Old Ben had said that ended it between him and his nephew, and he had packed young Ben back home. If young Ben had straightened out and worked steadily, old Ben would have taken him again, for the uncle was fond of the nephew, and was greatly pleased when young Ben went to work for Sir William P. Howland.

"I traced young Ben to Michigan, then to Chicago, and then to Denver. He had money, and spent it freely. He started out as B. Hatfield, then he became W. T. Schufeldt, then he called himself Frank Bruce, and next he was masquerading as J. Peter Sonntag. I telegraphed his description all over the country, and heard from him under these names as having been in these places. His description was such that it was easy to identify him; and so long as he had money he would be in public places, for he was a lavish spender, a high liver, and a gay sport. The love of high living was one of the roots of his evil.

"I conferred with the Pinkerton people, who also were looking for young Ben, and finally I prepared extradition papers and started for the States, and Ben was arrested in San Francisco as he was taking steamer to leave the country. Instead of J. Peter Sonntag, or any of his other aliases, Ben at this time gave the name of plain P. Sontag.

"Benny Peter Sontag Hagaman had been living a merry life in San Francisco. He was a thoroughbred in the Pacific coast city. He frequented Patsy Hogan's, hired a box in a safety vault in a trust company, and had deposited in it thousands of dollars in cash, and a lot of diamonds and jewelry.

"I arrived in San Francisco on February 1. Sir William P. Howland had telegraphed to some friend of his to engage counsel. His friend had engaged Davis Louderback, and he did not prove very satisfactory. I appeared on February 2 before United States Commissioner Sawyer. Ben was arraigned, and remanded for eight days. He prepared to fight extradition, and W. W. Bishop defended him.

"Bishop, Ben's lawyer, and Louderback, my lawyer, hired by Sir William's friend, visited the prisoner several times in jail. Everything uttered before the commissioner was ordered to be taken down, until there were volumes of evidence. Ben was remanded for extradition, and I was informed the papers had gone to Washington for the warrant of surrender. I waited and heard nothing, and promptly telegraphed to the British Legation at Washington that the forms of the treaty had been complied with and copies of the proceedings had been sent to the State Department, and I asked that the warrant of surrender be sent to me as soon as possible. Sir Sackville West replied that inquiry at the State Department showed no papers had arrived there in the case, and the Department knew nothing of it. I called on Louderback, and got very little satisfaction out of him.

"I then called on Commissioner Sawyer. He was a nephew of Judge Sawyer. He said the papers had not been sent to Washington, and had to be paid for before they would be transmitted. He said the charge was one hundred and fifty dollars. I told him I would pay if he would give me an

itemized bill. He refused, but finally gave me a receipted bill for one hundred and fifty dollars. The papers were so bulky that the postage on them was eleven dollars. The postmaster was quite unlike some of the other people I met in San Francisco, and he treated me most courteously, and franked the papers for me, which the commissioner had refused to do.

"While I was waiting for the warrant of surrender to arrive from Washington, I began to puzzle over what further steps might be taken to get young Ben out. I knew that the money he had would be of great value to him in this emergency, and I finally concluded that it was quite possible for young Ben to be brought in on a writ of habeas corpus and discharged without my knowledge, in the event of a failure of counsel to notify me. So I went over the heads of all the lawyers and lesser officials, and called on Judges Sawyer and Hofman and stated the whole case to them, explaining how I considered I was handicapped.

"They told me there would be no discharge of young Ben on a writ of habeas corpus, and I breathed easier.

"The warrant of surrender had arrived, and on March 26 I left San Francisco with young Ben. Before leaving I began a civil suit to return the money and diamonds which the police meanwhile had taken into their keeping. I had Sir William P. Howland employ other counsel, and they recovered over five thousand dollars.

"When young Ben arrived home he was released on eight thousand dollars bail, pending his trial. He came to Toronto while he was out on bail, and called on me for advice. He asked me what he had better do under the circumstances. He wanted my honest opinion, so I gave him a gentle hint.

"'Ben,' said I, 'you have spent eleven thousand dollars of another man's money, and you have put him to great trouble. Your father is rich, your brother-in-law is rich, your uncle is a millionaire. The other man wants his money. If you want to go to the penitentiary, don't pay him; but if you want to keep out of the penitentiary—'

"'What! Pay old Howland eleven thousand dollars?' said young Ben, and he laughed uproariously. 'Not on your life. I'll beat Sir Bill, and I'll not go to the penitentiary either.'

"Foolish young man! I told him so at the time. But he was at the age when all who are younger have it to learn, and all who are older have forgotten what they once knew. He went his way, pig-headed, obstinate, self-willed, and a fool—a pleasant, bright, intelligent, likable fool. His trial came on at the spring Assizes in 1888. Colin Macdougall, an able lawyer, defended him; but he was prosecuted by one of the most brilliant criminal lawyers Canada has produced, the late B. B. Osler. Young Ben was convicted, and was sent to the Kingston penitentiary for seven years.

"I saw him once or twice in the penitentiary. One of the old-time Sunday school texts was, 'The way of the transgressor is hard.' Young Ben had it on the wall of his cell. It certainly was true of him. He came of a refined, rich family, in which he was the mother's darling and a spoiled child. He was to inherit millions, and he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. He stole four thousand dollars and then sixteen thousand dollars, and thereby sold more than one million dollars for twenty thousand dollars, of which he had to repay over five thousand dollars. So he forfeited a fortune for fifteen thousand dollars.

There was no need for him to steal. He had all of life's good things essential to the joy of living—a happy home, a fine family, a lucrative position, and good health. After he fled, his two little children died, and after he went to the penitentiary his wife got a divorce and remarried, and his uncle died, leaving no will; and when he came out into the world, instead of finding himself a millionaire he left Canada a branded man. It was an awful lesson. It began simply in a love for gay company, and it ended in solitude in a stone-walled cell."

CHAPTER XXVII

The Ding-Dong Mustachees

A SINGSONG-VOICED, jet-black-haired, sanctimonious scalawag named J. K. Herres lived near Elmira in the county of Waterloo. His father kept a country store, and was reputed to be fairly well off. When young Herres was not teaching a little school or singing German songs he was gallivanting about the country. He had a profuse rush of hair to the upper lip, and he developed a particular fondness for twirling the drooping ends of his mustaches. He seemed so insipid that one never would have imagined him to be the child of destiny in a stirring event where a whole town turned out to rescue him, while his captor, with drawn guns, backed against a wall with Herres at his feet, and prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible.

"Herres frequently went to Galt in his Lochinvaring tours," said Murray. "In the summer of 1887 he walked into the office of John Cavers, manager of the branch of the Imperial Bank of Galt, and presented two notes to be discounted. One was signed by Peter Leweller, a neighbor of the Herres family, and the other by Herres's father. They totaled nine hundred dollars, and Mr. Cavers discounted them. Herres vanished with the money. Old man Herres and Peter Leweller pronounced their signatures forgeries. The case came to me, and on September 22 I went to Galt, saw Manager Cavers, and thence went to Berlin, the county seat of Waterloo. There I prepared extradition papers, and obtained from Chief Constable Klippert, of Waterloo, a description of Herres. Klippert was one of the best constables in Canada, a shrewd old German.

"'Shon,' he said to me, 'you vill know him two ways, one by his shet-black hair and one by his dingdong mustachees. He has some of the lofliest mustachees you efer see. They flow down like Niagara Falls, only they, too, are shet-black.'

"'But suppose he has shaved them off?' I said.

"'You vill know t'em by the place where they once used to be,' said Klippert. 'And remember—shet-black!'

"I telegraphed all over the country for a trace of Herres, and found none. I learned that he had a cousin who was a lawyer at White Cloud, in Minnesota, and Shet-black Herres, as I called him ever after hearing Klippert's description, had been in correspondence with this cousin, whose address was found in an old coat belonging to Herres. I decided to visit White Cloud.

"On September 28 I started for St. Paul. On arrival there I called at police headquarters and on United States Commissioner Spencer, and prepared the necessary warrant for Herres, if I should find him. I also called on my friend United States Marshal Campbell, who gave me a letter to Congress-

man C. F. McDonald, of White Cloud, a prominent man in that part of the country.

"I went to White Cloud and looked up the cousin of Herres. I learned from neighbors that the cousin had a visitor some time before, a dapper fellow with a remarkably fine mustache. He had tarried only a few days, and then had driven away. He had not shaved it off, was my glad thought. I called on Congressman McDonald, and he gave me letters to prominent people within a radius of a couple of hundred miles. Part of the country round about was thinly settled at that time. I set out to find the man with the fine mustache.

"It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. I traveled all around the country. I saw more smooth-shaved men and more men with beards than I imagined were in that part of the country, but not one man with 'ding-dong mustachees' did I see. I returned to White Cloud without clew or trace of my man. I learned then of a settlement of Germans at Little Falls, and I remembered what I had heard of Herres's fondness for German songs; and one man in White Cloud thought Herres's cousin had a relative in this settlement. Little Falls was several hundred miles from St. Paul, and I arrived there on October 4. It was a little place of about one thousand people, and I think I saw everybody in the town. I found no trace of Herres and was about to give up the chase there, when the school-teaching side of Herres came again to my mind. The idea struck me to try the schools. I did so—no Herres.

"But there were country schools. I called on a storekeeper who was one of the school trustees. Yes, some teachers had been employed for country schools. The clerk of the school board lived near by, he said, and I should see him. To the clerk I went. He immediately wanted to know the names of the teachers I sought. I said I did not recall the names. He said two teachers had been appointed to little rural schools about forty miles out in the country. Both teachers were strangers to him. He gave me their names. Neither was named Herres.

"'One was smooth-shaved, one I did not see,' he said.

"I decided to look at the two teachers. There was a big fellow named Richardson in the town, a sort of marshal or town policeman or constable. He said he knew the country all around there, as he had been born there. I hired a splendid team from a liveryman, a pair of as good horses as a man could wish to drive, with a light cracky wagon. The liveryman loaned me his gun and shooting jacket, cartridge belt and two valuable dogs. I told Richardson we were going shooting. Prairie chickens were thicker than flies.

"We started on Wednesday, October 5. We drove about twenty miles to the crossroads of nowhere. It was dark when we trotted out of Little Falls, and we breakfasted at a crossroads store on the way. I told Richardson, after we were well on the road, the real purpose of my trip. It seemed to make him as solemn as an owl. He was a jolly hunter, but a solemn policeman. Many men are that way. Their business is something awesome or deadly serious, but apart from it they are good fellows.

"At length we came to the first school. The teacher was a little fellow, a Frenchman, and he could not speak German. He was not Herres, and we drove on to the next district

school. The little Frenchman told me of the teacher.

"'He has ze long moostache,' he said. 'Very fine, oh, very fine. Ze long moostache, and I haf ze no moostache at all,' and he clasped his hands and sighed.

"I was sure the other teacher was Herres. When we came in sight of the school I unhitched the horses and tied them, and cut across toward the schoolhouse.

"'If this is the fellow, I will nod to you and you arrest him,' I said to Richardson.

"'I have no authority,' he said, 'and I will not arrest a man without authority,' and I saw he meant it.

"'Richardson,' I said solemnly, 'I am a United States Marshal. I hereby declare you my deputy. You must obey the law and serve.'

"'But I must be sworn in,' said Richardson.

"I pulled out a bundle of papers, ran over them, selected one and told him to kneel down. He knelt amid the briers. I mumbled the form of an oath.

"'I do,' he answered solemnly, to my question of, 'Do you so swear?'

"Then we went on to the schoolhouse and walked in. There stood the teacher, dapper and with a 'dingdong mustachees,' but instead of being 'shetblack' his hair and mustache were brown. He was a bleached Herres.

"'It looks like him,' said I to myself, 'and yet, is it he?' Just then he twirled his mustache. That settled it. There were about thirty children, mostly girls, in the room. They eyed us curiously.

"'Teacher, how long have you been here?' said I.

"'For some time—since school opened,' said he, and his voice had a little singsong.

"'What is your name?'

"'John Walker,' he replied.

"'When did you leave Canada?' I asked.

"'I have never been in Canada in my life,' he said.

"I looked at his school books. All were marked John Walker.

"'Are you German?' I asked.

"'Yes,' said he.

"'John Walker is not a German name,' I said.

"He smiled.

"'You are from Canada,' I said abruptly.

"'I am not!' he exclaimed, and turning to the astonished children, he told them to go out and get their fathers. 'Bring them quickly,' he said, speaking rapidly in German to the children. 'Tell them to bring their guns. These are robbers here.'

"I understood him clearly, and I told Richardson to keep the children in. Deputy Marshal Richardson obeyed by standing against the door. The children began to cry, then scream.

"'That's right!' said the teacher to the children. 'Shout for help! Shout as loud as you can!'

"The whole school began to yell. They ran round the room shrieking and screaming.

"'Keep your seats and scream,' said the teacher.

"They promptly sat down and howled at the top of their voices for help.

"'Come with me,' said I to the teacher.

"'I will not,' said he, and he whipped off his coat.

"I leaped for him, and down we went, upsetting the table and rolling over the floor. He was an active fellow, and I had to drag him out of the schoolhouse.

"'Keep the children in,' said I to Richardson, 'until I fire a shot, then run as fast as you can to the wagon.'

"The teacher quieted down after I got him outside, but I had to drag him across to the wagon. I tied him to a wheel, handcuffed, while I hitched up the horses. Then I lifted him into the wagon and fired the gun. The gun scared him, and he sat quiet. I could see Richardson come running, and I could see the screaming children stream out of the schoolhouse and rush, yelling for help, in all directions. Richardson fell on the way and got tangled in some briers, and after considerable delay he reached the wagon and clambered in.

"'Drive to the nearest railroad station,' I said, and Richardson whipped up the horses and away we went on the road to Royalton, over thirty miles away.

"We could hear the cries of the children dying away as we went.

"'You'll suffer for this, sir,' said the school-teacher to me. 'You will pay for dragging an honest man about like this.'

"I looked him all over, and to tell the truth I felt shaky myself. We got into Royalton late in the afternoon. It was a German settlement of perhaps fifteen hundred population. We drove to the railroad station. The telegraph operator was a German. When the school-teacher spied the telegraph operator he began to yell in German to send a message saying he was kidnaped by robbers. The operator wanted to help. The school-teacher shouted in German.

"'Save me! Save me! I am being kidnaped! Help! Help!' he shouted, as loud as he could yell.

"A crowd gathered. It grew rapidly. All the while the school-teacher kept yelling with all the power of voice and lungs. The crowd began to murmur. I moved back against the side of the station, keeping the school-teacher beside me.

"'Richardson, keep the crowd back,' I said, but Richardson decided he wanted nothing more to do with the affair.

"'I resign as deputy marshal,' he said.

"The crowd drew in closer. I could see men galloping into town, and I knew they were farmers who had been aroused by their children's tale of the struggle in the schoolhouse. They dismounted and told the story given by the children. The crowd surged in. I had the shotgun and a revolver, with another revolver in my pocket. I discarded the shotgun and drew a second revolver. All the while the school-teacher kept haranguing the crowd, inciting them to hang me and praying to them to rescue him. The mob actually surrounded the station.

"'Give up that man,' demanded one of their number, a sturdy fellow not twenty feet from me.

"'The first man of you who touches him or me dies in his tracks,' I said, while the school-teacher begged them to rescue him from my clutches.

"'Do not let him take an innocent man to be murdered,' shrieked the school-teacher.

"The crowd surged in. I gripped both revolvers, thinking: 'Here she comes; steady, old man, steady,' and I decided that the bleating school-teacher would be one of us on the other side when they picked up the bodies.

"'Stand back! Stand back!' I shouted, at bay, one man standing off a whole town.

"I flourished the guns, then leveled them, and just as I expected to have the crash come, a big fellow burst through the crowd.

"'What's up?' he said, as his eyes took in the braying school-teacher and myself, up against the station wall, a revolver in each hand.

"The big fellow's hands flew to his hip pockets. Out flipped two guns as he sprang over beside me and backed up against the wall.

"'A thousand to one,' he chuckled. 'God, but you're a game man.' He looked out of two fearless blue eyes at the crowd. 'Come on, you villains!' he shouted. 'Come on! Who'll be the first to die?'

"It was superb. The man was a whirlwind in his way.

"'I'm Quinn, sheriff of the next county,' he said to me rapidly. 'What's it all about?'

"'I am an officer from St. Paul, and these people are after my prisoner,' I said.

"'So ho!' said Quinn. 'Well, they don't get him.'

"He eyed the crowd.

"'Get back! Back up!' he shouted. 'Back up or I'll back you up! One—two—' he counted.

"The crowd began to give, and the space in front of us grew as Quinn counted one and two. He laughed and I laughed. I turned to the telegraph operator and told him to take a dispatch as I dictated it and send it at once.

"As we stood, revolvers in hand, backed up against the station beside the telegraph office, I sent a telegram to Marshal Campbell saying we would arrive in St. Paul by the next train.

"'It gets in at one o'clock in the morning,' said Quinn, and I put the hour in the dispatch.

"Richardson came up then, and I gave him the shotgun and money to pay the liveryman, and he drove away; and later I wrote to the liveryman, who replied that all was satisfactory. Quinn stood by until the train arrived, and he boarded it with me and rode to the third station beyond. Marshal Campbell met us at the train at one o'clock in the morning in St. Paul.

"'This is Herres,' I said to Campbell.

"Up spoke the school-teacher, as if he were about to shout again for a crowd of rescuers.

"'My name is not Herres; my name is John Walker,' he said. 'Some one will pay for this.'

"It shook Campbell. We stepped aside.

"'Are you certain he is Herres?' asked Campbell.

"'I am not certain, but I'm fairly sure,' said I. 'His hair is lighter, dyed. But I'll be responsible.'

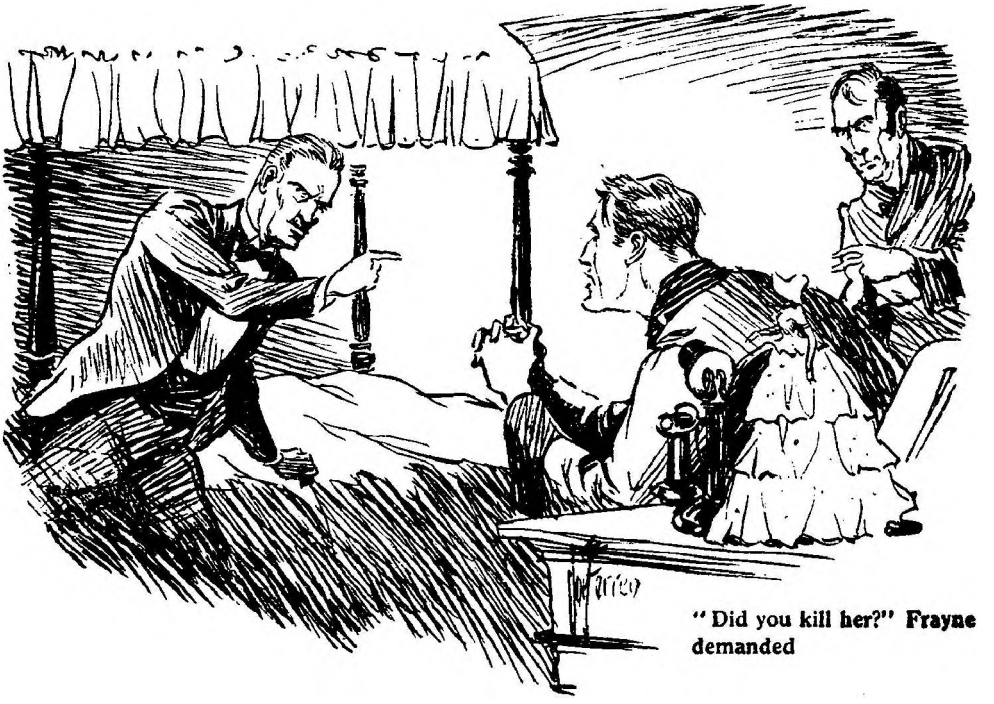
"Campbell locked up the school-teacher. John Walker immediately sent for Colonel Kerr of St. Paul, to defend him. He also engaged a fighting lawyer named Ryan. They wanted to get a change of venue. I had United States District Attorney George N. Baxter as my counsel. In making the affidavit on the application for a change of venue they swore the school-teacher to it. He signed it. Campbell and I eagerly looked at it. The signature was J. K. Herres!

"The court denied the change of venue; then extradition was fought to a finish.

"But I left St. Paul with Shet-black Herres and handed him over in Berlin on Thursday, January 19. He pleaded not guilty to forgery, but was convicted and sentenced to seven years in Kingston, where his 'dingdong mustachee' vanished before the razor of the prison barber."

TO BE CONTINUED

Jig-Saw Puzzle



"Did you kill her?" Frayne demanded

When a Murderer Obligingly Carries His Own Clews Inspector Frayne's Work is Greatly Simplified

By Harold de Polo

"THIS isn't official, chief. It's murder, though—cold and definite murder. Thought you might be interested, sir."

It was Haggerty calling Inspector Frayne, on the special wire that Haggerty alone was allowed to use. Haggerty was also the only subordinate privileged to ring Frayne after midnight, unless the latter was out of town and the matter was of particular importance. Haggerty was Frayne's right-hand man—"Frayne's pet," the envious clique in the department had dubbed him.

"Shoot," grunted Frayne, not committing himself, however.

It was three thirty in the morning, and he had been asleep for an hour or two only, but he was as wide awake as a kid at a circus.

"Up on the Connecticut shore, chief. House party. Small one. About six people. At Angie North's. Mrs. North herself killed. Dagger stuck in her heart. Friend of mine called me—went to college with me. Went into her room and found her dead. Notified no one. Just stepped to the phone and got hold of me. Still there. Asked me to

come up. Asked me if I couldn't persuade you to come up. Circumstances make it look mighty bad for him, he says: He—"

"Particular pal of yours, Don?" cut in his superior.

"Not so much lately, chief. Haven't seen much of him in the last few years. At college, though—"

"Square shooter?"

"None straighter when we played around together, chief," came back Don firmly.

"Hmmm."

Frayne was thinking, brow creased, eyes narrowed to triangles. Not that Frayne had to think whether or not murder interested him. One thing interested Inspector Frayne; he had one hobby, solving murders. It was food and drink to him. It was what made his brain click. It was what made the blood pump through his veins. It was his life.

But Frayne didn't like to butt in; didn't like to arouse professional jealousies. This was technically a matter for the authorities of another State. Nevertheless—

"Heard nothing to make you think your friend isn't still a square shooter?" Frayne suddenly rasped.

"Still one of the best, sir, from all I can tell."

Frayne was getting out of bed now, kicking off the covers as he spoke. His voice was crisp. There was distinct evidence of interest.

"Get one of my personal cars, Don. The coupé. Chilly out. Ready when you get here."

He was ready, too. Shaved and showered and dressed in record time. The hurrying, however, didn't detract anything from his reputation of being one of the best garbed men in New York. His superbly fitting dinner suit, his immaculate linen, his deftly arranged tie—all were faultless.

II

FRAYNE'S coupé, like all of his personal cars, was about the most powerful and fastest boiler manufactured. Frayne could afford that. He was reputed to have an extremely comfortable private fortune. Not that he especially doted on motoring. The speedier a car, though, the speedier one could get to a murder. Simple reasoning.

He wasn't slow in getting to this one. Haggerty could handle a machine with the skill of a racing driver, and most police of several adjoining States knew the siren used on Frayne's cars. Don was using it now. He used it at various intervals during a period of time that didn't quite complete a full hour.

Then they pulled up at the driveway to North Acres, the somewhat famous summer estate that old Jared North had bequeathed to his young widow when he had died. Or when the grouchy millionaire had finally had the decency to die, as numerous people phrased it.

"Better leave the car here, chief," suggested Haggerty. "Tommy said to ring the night bell. Butler will answer it. Tommy said he didn't want to even move from the room, if you were coming. Said he'd certainly read enough about you to know you didn't like things touched," Don finished with a smile.

"Sensible lad," admitted Frayne, getting out.

The butler did respond. Quite rapidly. Imperturbable. British. Blue eyed. His hair was rumpled, but his dressing gown hung faultlessly, the belt of it tied with precision.

"Smart dressing gown," said Frayne, as the man started to speak.

"I—yes, quite so, sir. Thank you, sir. I mean, sir—I mean whom did you wish to see, sir? The hour, sir! Is there some mistake, perhaps?"

The butler seemed surprised. Disturbed, for a moment. Frayne, Haggerty was well aware, had a habit of saying disturbing and surprising things. He always said them on a murder case. The dressing gown of a butler—

"I don't think there's a mistake," Frayne was drawling in his purely social manner. "This is North Acres, isn't it, the residence of the erstwhile Mrs. Angie North?"

"I—erstwhile, sir? You said *erstwhile?*"

"Yes. Dead. Defunct. Erstwhile."

The butler still looked as if he were being spoofed by one of these inexplicable Yankees—but suddenly he smiled understandingly:

"I see, sir. You mean the erstwhile *Mr.* North!"

"No, no," said Frayne, a bit petulantly. "I mean the erstwhile *Mrs.* North. The *murdered* Mrs. Angie North, to be explicit."

The butler *was* stunned, silent for a long minute. Haggerty was secretly admiring his chief. Frayne was certainly sticking to his policy of always trying to jumble up a suspect's head. Every one was always a suspect to Frayne even before he saw them. In a murder case, that is.

"I just don't understand this—this joke, sir. This American humor, sir, if you will pardon my so saying, sir," the servant flung out helplessly.

"Then take me right up to Mrs. North's bedroom and you will understand me," snapped Frayne. "I am Inspector Frayne!"

"Oh, sir. I beg pardon. I did fancy there was something familiar, sir. Your face—the illustrated journals. I—oh, yes, sir. Quite so, sir. Step this way, please."

Once more, as he bowed the police officials inside, he was the thorough British butler.

III

A PURPLE room, the Angie North death chamber. Mauve and lavender and heliotrope, every shade imaginable. Gorgeously deft blending by an unquestionably deft decorator, from the rich purple of the deep, soft carpet to the tint of cloudy violet sky on the ceiling. Old gold draperies cast an alluring light over it all.

"I—oh, dear God, Inspector Frayne, sir. The madam *is* murdered, isn't she, sir?"

The butler's voice was hoarse with shock as he opened the door for Frayne and Haggerty to enter. He himself pulled back with a jerk, a swift shudder going through his body.

"*Don!*"

This came in an anguished cry—but a cry in which there nevertheless was an odd mixture of hope. It came from a youngish man, of the accepted athletic type, who was in pyjamas and robe. He had started to bound forward at Haggerty.

But Frayne held up his hand. The great man-hunter knew how to hold up his hand. He could get silence with it, instantaneously, from any man or woman in any walk of life.

He crossed the room to the great wide bed. Angie North, her blond loveliness as appealing as ever, even in death, lay under the shadow of the dark purple canopy. Death, undeniably, had come without her knowing it. No fear or pain or surprise was on her

face. It was as recklessly insouciant as it had always been in life, suggesting that even in sleep she had refused to part with the gayety for which she had been noted. And loved.

She had needed that gayety. Frayne knew that. Knew that her life had been far from the proverbial bed of roses. She had, briefly, been the victim of a grasping mother, who had found herself impoverished by the death of a hard-living, hard-spending husband. When his effects had been proved to be practically nil, she had decided to search about for dividends on her one and only asset.

Angie, her daughter.

Angie, at the time, had been barely eighteen. Very beautiful. Very innocent. Very loyal. She had been sold, as it were, to the highest bidder. He had been Jared North, the crusty investment banker, some fifty years her senior. She had, presumably, realized her mistaken sense of loyalty to her selfish mother almost immediately after her marriage. Nevertheless, she had bravely stuck—and honorably kept her bargain.

The retired millionaire, it was common gossip, had not been an easy person to live with. Instead of sulking, or complaining, Angie had seemed to say that one might as well take things gamely. She had, however, also seemed to say that one might as well get what one could out of life. She had attempted to do so. She had played hard, as had her father—and she had played just as cleanly.

Tennis. Golf. Riding. Sailing. Some giddy parties and high stake bridge as well, it wasn't denied. As Jared's testiness had increased, so had her own gayety increased. Always, though, there had been no slightest hint of scandal connected with her. She had laughed both at and with life, that was all. She had honestly cried, a little over a year ago, when her husband had suffered the final fit of apoplexy.

She had cried because she had known that a dyspeptic and frustrated old man had died without ever having known happiness.

She knew that. Frayne knew that she had known it. She had been married to Jared for over eleven years.

Now, after barely a year of widowhood, she was there under this silken canopy with a dagger pinned into her heart. An unusual dagger. Not actually a legitimate dagger. It was an ornate thing. Turkish effect. Carved brass handle, studded with imitation jewels. Rubies. Emeralds. Sapphires, Topaz. The blade, however, must have been real. Must have been steel of the finest temper.

It had penetrated the heliotrope silk coverlet and gone straight into her breast.

"Called Jervin, aren't you?"

Frayne had suddenly whirled, unbuttoning his overcoat as he did so. No man had ever unbuttoned an overcoat more rapidly.

"I am, sir. Yes, sir?"

"Don't bother to wake a maid. Bring me a hanger—a coat hanger—from Mrs. North's closet."

Frayne probably surprised the butler as much as he surprised the young man in pyjamas and robe. The butler did as he had been told; the other exchanged a puzzled look with his friend Haggerty.

It was a nice hanger. It was of the wadded type, with frills and padding, covered with lavender silk.

Frayne removed his overcoat, draped it over the hanger; saw that it hung properly, and gave it to Jervin.

"*Inside* the closet," he emphasized.

"That particular shade of blue shows dust."

"Thank you, sir. Surely, si–

But Frayne had turned to the man Haggerty had mentioned as Tommy. He spoke simply:

"Did you kill her?"

The athletic young man flushed—didn't try to hide his grief—and came back quite as simply:

"As sure as my name is Tom Fall, Inspector Frayne, I didn't. I came in here to—"

"Better just answer the chief's questions, Tommy," said Haggerty, with an apologetic nod at his superior. His idol, rather.

"That's fair warning, Don," said Frayne.

"Excuse me, sir," said Don.

"That's all right," nodded Frayne. "This *is* unofficial, as you were careful to tell me."

The man-hunter, pausing, flecked what must have been an imaginary speck of dust from his sleeve.

"Tell your story, Mr. Fall," he said

"About my coming in here—about my being here in pyjamas and robe, sir?" Tommy Fall said with a flush. "I honestly don't want you to get the wrong impression of Ang—of Mrs. North or myself. It *isn't* harmful, sir. I can explain."

"I understand," said Frayne with a grave nod.

"There's no use my telling much about how deeply I loved Angie. I have for years—oh, for five or six, ever since I've known her. I never spoke of it as long as Mr. North was alive. I'll admit I didn't wait long after his death to ask Angie to marry me. I don't think I waited more than a week, to be exact.

"I wasn't the only one, naturally. I suppose it's safe to say there were probably a dozen or more of our crowd who just about worshiped Angie. I think she thought quite a bit of me, and I don't mean to sound conceited by that, sir. It—well, I think it was perhaps between Perry Devens and myself. I think I stood the best chance."

IV

HE paused for a moment. He had held in pretty well until now, but the strain of having stayed in the room with the corpse of the woman he had loved—or professed to have loved—could not have been so easy. His face looked drawn.

"Perry and I were both on this week-end party, sir," he went on. "We both were fighting awfully hard to win, I suppose. I know I was, and I'm sure that Perry was. I suppose I was rash—oh, I know I was rash—but I simply couldn't help it. I knew Angie was going riding with Perry in the morning—at six—and I suddenly made up my mind, just as I was about to get into bed, to ask her once more to marry me. I wanted to make my plea before she went riding with Perry. That—"

Tom Fall shrugged, looked around helplessly, and then faced Frayne squarely.

"Well, that's all, Inspector Frayne. I came in here and—and found Angie as she is. I did some mighty fast thinking, sir. I don't mean I was selfishly worrying about myself. I'll admit I realized it looked awfully bad for me, but I also realized that it might be a hard thing to solve. I knew Don pretty well, although we haven't seen much of each other in the last few years. Of course I'd heard of his connection with you, sir, and so I stayed here and phoned him."

"And that's your story?" asked Frayne.

"It is, inspector."

"You have touched nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Positive?"

There had been a rasp in that last question of the man-hunter's, but Haggerty's college chum came back firmly:

"I swear it, sir. I'd heard so much and I'd read so much about people messing around and spoiling clews that I—I honestly didn't even take a cigarette."

"You mean you touched nothing after you handled the telephone, don't you?" suggested Frayne.

"I *had* forgotten that, sir," Tom flushed.

Frayne was nodding. He was frowning. His eyes were drawn to such fine triangular slits that one couldn't see the expression of them. They were gazing at the floor, at a spot close to the bedside stand on which a reading lamp and cigarettes and matches were in evidence.

"You didn't break that?" asked Frayne, pointing to a bright yellow porcelain ashtray, with a purple flower pattern running through it, that had fallen onto the floor. It had broken into perhaps ten or a dozen small fragments.

"I did not, sir," replied Fall.

"Looks rather bad for you, doesn't it?" Frayne drawled in a perfectly social tone.

"Mighty bad," admitted the other.

Frayne smiled as if in agreement. Then he turned and casually spoke to the butler.

"Jervin."

"Sir?"

"Are you able to identify that dagger?"

"I am, sir," bowed the man. "It was purchased by Mrs. North several years ago, sir. I cannot definitely state the time. It was used as a book knife, sir. Until yesterday—or until yesterday or the day before, sir, it was always on one of the tables in the library. I remember missing it, but thought nothing of it at the time. I inferred, sir, that one of the guests had taken it to their room when they had perhaps chosen a volume with uncut leaves."

Frayne nodded, spinning about and glaring at Fall. His voice had his rasp in it:

"Any uncut or partially uncut books in your room? Been reading any uncut books?"

"There are a few books on my reading table. Angie always saw that her guests had the latest stuff. I haven't examined them, sir. Haven't done any reading this visit."

"Hmmm."

Frayne seemed to be pondering. He was looking at the floor. Looking at that dagger that was piercing the heart of Angie North.

Suddenly he whirled around:

"What do *you* know about the books in Mr. Fall's room, Jervin?" he grated out.

The perfect butler lost his perfection, for a fraction of a second. He reddened and stuttered, as if the question surprised him:

"I—nothing, sir, noth—I mean, sir, I believe—"

"Don't believe," cut in Frayne. "Nothing. Let it go at nothing, as you said."

Frayne got casual again. Got drawling. He played with his close-cropped mustache as he spoke to his subordinate:

"Noticed anything, Don?"

Don had noticed something. He had noticed the glance that Frayne had

given him. The glance that neither Fall or Jervin had see. The glance that told him precisely what sort of information his chief wanted him to come out with.

"Yes, sir," he said. "I noticed those two threads of blue silk caught on the slivered edge of the door jamb, about six inches from the floor. Only been there recently. Clean condition tells that. Pulled from some garment as a person passed."

"And women don't wear *any* garment that long any more," said Frayne, "and Mr. Fall's pyjamas are plain white."

"Good—good gracious, sir," said the butler, as if he couldn't help speaking from sheer admiration, "but it surely is true what the journals say about you gentlemen being observant, sir. Gracious, sir I—"

"Have *you* been sufficiently observant to observe the color of Mr. Perry Devens's pyjamas?" snapped Frayne.

Jervin was looking, not at Frayne, but at Tommy Fall. He was looking at him with vast relief, as if he had suddenly seen that person pulled back from inevitable doom.

He didn't speak, for a moment. He was so unBritish and so unbutlerish that he couldn't have landed a job from the most *nouveau riche* ménage imaginable.

Finally he got his voice—but he had to gulp before he could do it, as well as cast a final look of happiness at Tommy:

"I—yes, sir; yes, Inspector Frayne, I *did* notice. I laid out his things. His pyjamas were of blue silk, sir."

"Seem to think a lot of Mr. Fall, Jervin," was Inspector Frayne's comment.

"I—oh, indeed I do, sir," gasped the man. "I mean, sir—"

But Frayne had held up his hand. Not exactly held it up. Barely made the gesture, rather:

"Where is his room?"

"Shall I call him, sir?"

The man-hunter's voice sounded like ice. His eyes, suddenly, looked as cold as ice:

"You don't do enough observing. You should have observed that Mr. Haggerty warned his friend Mr. Fall to merely answer questions."

The son of the Tight Little Isle seemed to take this one right on the button. So much so that it looked as if he were going to imitate his countrymen who come to these American shores in search of the heavyweight title. He recovered himself before he went horizontal, though:

"It is four doors down this hall, sir. On the right, sir," he said submissively.

"Get him, Don."

"Yes, sir."

"Perry?" cried Tom Fall. "Good God, sir, it can't be Perry. There's some mistake. He—"

"Doesn't it occur to you that you'd better keep your sympathies for yourself, Mr. Fall?" Frayne drawled in caustic reprimand.

"Excuse me, sir."

But Frayne wasn't listening. Head slightly bent, hands clasped behind his back, he was slowly pacing back and forth along the length of the room. His eyes were on the floor—always on the floor—as if he expected to find there the answer to his problem.

V

PERRY DEVENS, if he were guilty of the murder of the woman he had loved—or professed to have loved—was also guilty of being an exceedingly passable actor.

He went through all the gamut of

natural emotions that one in his position, in the present situation, would be expected to. Surprise. Ghastly shock. Grief. Rage at the murderer.

He was much the same type as Tommy Fall. Dark where the other was fair, though. A nice type. A clean type. A typically American type. Young and athletic and fond of the outdoors.

Like Fall, he didn't seem to suspect his rival. He had walked over and put his hand on his shoulder, and he kept on repeating in a dull, dazed voice:

"Angie! My God, Tommy, we've got to do something! Angie—Angie dead! My God, Tommy, we've got to get him!"

"You mean you two have got to get out of it," said Frayne.

"We two," cried Devens. "What do you—"

"This is Inspector Frayne, Perry," explained Tommy.

"Oh," said Devens. And added: "Thank God you're here, sir!—But Tommy and myself? How do *we* come in, Inspector Frayne?"

"In the first place," Frayne was considerate enough to explain, "you were the two leading rivals for Mrs. North's hand. One of you—Mr. Fall—professes to have found her here in this room. He called Mr. Haggerty up from this room, on his own admission, and we found him here alone on our arrival. We found something else. We found those two pieces of silk thread on that slivered piece on the door jamb. I see, now, that they precisely match the shade of your pyjamas. I see, as well, that your pyjama leg is slightly drawn at the same height. The left one, Mr. Devens.

Devens looked jerkily down at his pyjama leg. It was, as Frayne had said, puckered about six inches from the bottom.

This second suspect, gazing at it, shook his head uncomprehendingly. Next he scrutinized the pieces of thread on the door jamb. This time he was more forcible:

"I'm damned," he said.

He was, however, a decidedly more truculent young man than Tommy Fall. He flushed angrily. He spoke angrily:

"But dammit, inspector, you don't mean to tell me you think Tommy or myself—"

"I am not here to 'tell' you, Mr. Devens—I am here to have you answer my questions," Frayne said.

Perry took one single look at those triangularly slitted eyes that looked like the blue of a cold winter sky:

"Excuse me, sir," he said.

Frayne nodded, absently. He was pacing the room again. Presently he stopped in front of the butler:

"Jervin," he said, in a tone that was almost chidingly kind, "you've been very helpful. Remembering those blue pyjamas. Remembering about when that book knife disappeared. But you're holding something back, Jervin. I'm sure of it.

"Holding something back, sir?" expostulated this perfect servant in a hurt voice. "Oh, Inspector Frayne, sir," he added, with just the flash of a furtive glance at Tommy Fall, "how could you ever think that, sir?"

But Frayne suddenly became Frayne. Frayne suddenly became the merciless man-hunter. Frayne suddenly became the police official that all crookdom said was the hardest man in the world to face.

His voice and eyes cut like a knife; cut so that you had to shiver even if they weren't aimed at you:

"Come on, you—come clean! Come clean, get me? How are you trying to cover Fall, huh?—Think I didn't see the looks you gave him? Think I didn't get how glad you were when it looked as if you'd pinned it on Devens? Come on, you—come clean! How are you trying to cover Fall?"

Jervin looked at Frayne, his face showing terror. Jervin looked at Fall, his face showing despair. Jervin seemed to be looking up at the ceiling as if he might find his God there and ask advice.

Then Jervin blubbered. Blubbered. This fifty-odd year old impeccable butler:

"Forgive me, sir—I mean, forgive me, Mr. Fall. I've always liked you, Mr. Fall, sir, if you'll pardon my so mentioning my feelings. I—but Eloise might have told of it, sir. Eloise found it, sir. In your room, you know. Under the bed. She thought it a real stone, and showed it to me. I recognized it, sir, as coming from that—that dagger. I didn't think it important at the time. I thought you'd just taken it to cut the leaves of a book, of course. I'd better tell the truth, sir. I—"

"So that was it, eh?" Frayne crashed in. "Green stone, wasn't it? Pattern of 'em on that knife handle is symmetrical. Empty space where one of the green ones were supposed to be!"

Frayne had paused. Frayne had leaped forward. Frayne had pointed a finger at the quaking butler:

"Come clean, now. Found it under his bed, eh?"

The butler shrank under the attack—seemed on the point of executing another possible flop—but suddenly he drew himself straight.

He composed his features into their usual professional calm, and though he spoke with dignified sorrow, there was also an unmistakable note of pride in his voice:

"Inspector Frayne, sir, come next Michaelmas I shall have been in the employ of the North family nineteen years. Inspector Frayne, sir, I am proud of my record of unsweving loyalty and honesty. Yes, Eloise found a green stone under Mr. Fall's bed. It came from the handle of that bookknife, I am forced to admit, sir!"

VI

FRAYNE had stilled what would doubtlessly have turned into an unintelligible hubbub. Frayne had raised his hand. Frayne had had to do no more than raise his hand, though.

Jervin was looking hurt to the death, yet slightly sanctimonious, as if he had done a horribly unpleasant yet dutiful deed. Tommy Fall was looking surprised and vaguely worried. Perry Devens was looking just surprised. As for Don, he was looking at his chief. Only his chief, too, could have told that there was puzzled questioning in his eyes.

Perhaps Frayne didn't see this. Frayne was looking intently at the floor.

Frayne did some more pacing. Dawn was coming. It slanted in through the space between the old gold window drapings. It looked cold. But it didn't look as cold as Frayne.

Suddenly Frayne came to a halt:

"One of you answer, please. What time did you go to bed? Break up, rather?"

"After two, sir," said Tommy Fall.

"Undress right off?"

"I know I did."

"And you, Mr. Devens?"

"Yes. Only smoked a cigarette first."

"Right," said Frayne, more to himself than for the information of any one else. "Don had your call before three thirty, didn't he? You both would be apt to be undressed. Saves time to know. Mrs. North hasn't been dead more than a couple of hours."

Frayne turned to the butler. This time he seemed to be asking the question merely as a matter of course:

"And you, Jervin?"

"I retired shortly after midnight, sir!"

Frayne yawned, stretched, adjusted the hang of his dinner jacket. He spoke lazily:

"Let me see the soles of your slippers, Mr. Fall."

"The—the *what?*" gasped Tommy.

"Soles of your slippers, please," was the almost impatient reply of the great man-hunter.

Tommy Fall complied. Raised the right one. Raised the left one. All in a daze.

Frayne nodded, flecked another bit of imaginary dust from his other sleeve, and turned to Perry:

"Mr. Devens."

Mr. Devens wasn't so truculent, by now. He obeyed, in fact, most beautifully. He had to say something, however:

"There you are, inspector."

Frayne barely glanced at that pair of soles. He had turned to the butler:

"Jervin, you do quite a bit of reading, presumably. You've spoken of the 'journals' and the 'illustrated journals' several times. So do I do quite a bit of reading. Newspaper reading, particularly. I have to. It's my business. Perhaps you can tell me whether or not I'm rusty on some reading I did around the time that Mr. Jared North died. I mean when his will was published."

The butler looked pathetically eager to give any sort of information whatsoever:

"I—yes, sir. Of course, sir. I shall be only too happy, Inspector Frayne. If only I might think that I could be of any assistance to the great and famous—"

"You can," snapped Frayne. "Didn't Mr. North have some such sort of bequest as the following one in the will he drew up about a year before he died?

"To all servants in his employ twenty-five years, twenty-five thousand dollars. With this codicil. If *both* Mrs. North and himself died before that period of employment had gone by, the servants who had been in his employ fifteen years or more would benefit just the same. Or, if Mrs. North survived him, all servants remaining in *her* employ and completing the twenty-five year term were to be retired on twenty-five thousand dollars!— Well?"

"I believe you are correct, sir," said the perfect butler. Weakly, though—oh, very weakly.

"So if Mrs. North lived you'd have had to wait six more years, wouldn't you—ah, come next Michaelmas?"

"It seems so," said Jervin, utterly forgetting the 'sir.'

"But you were damned sure she wouldn't live that long if *you* could help it, eh? You couldn't wait six more years, could you?— What was it, the ponies? All you English play 'em!"

Frayne had stopped abruptly. He had taken several rapid strides over toward the butler:

"Let me see the bottom of *your* soles, Jervin. Discarded patent leather pumps you've worn on duty and now use around your room, eh? Pieces of oval rubber at the balls of the foot and

in the heels, probably. I know that particular kind. Keeps you from slipping when serving. Added virtue of making your step more silent!"

Frayne paused. Frayne took one more step. His sinewy and beautifully kept fingers were reaching out as if to grip the man he was accusing of the murder of his employer:

"Raise 'em up. One at a time. Slowly!"

Like a man in a daze—he *was* in a daze—the perfect servant did as he was bidden.

His face was white as his left foot came up. It was like ugly putty when he lifted the right one.

He didn't know what it was all about. What all the foot inspection was about, at least.

But Frayne knew. Frayne was barking. There was an exultant note in his bark, as there always was when he ran down a killer:

"Took her two rival lovers and thought you'd frame 'em, eh? Planted that piece of green glass and saw that this Eloise found it. Plucked those threads from the blue pyjamas. Good work. Clever work. But there's lots of good work going on—lots of clever work. You can't win, though, you fool. There *is* no perfect crime!"

Inspector Frayne was snarling. Frayne always snarled when he was bawling out a cold money killer, as he called them:

"You? You looked bad when you first opened the door. Your dressing gown was too carefully put on, the belt too carefully tied. Your skin didn't look as if you'd been sleeping, but your hair looked as if a Kansas cyclone had hit it!"

Frayne stopped himself. He had stopped himself impatiently. He shook his head:

"But that wasn't it. The reason there *is* no perfect crime, you blundering fool, is because a criminal always leaves his visiting card. If he doesn't leave it he takes one away from the scene of the crime. Takes one away and sticks it right out where any sane man can see it!"

"You? When you broke that yellow and purple porcelain ash tray—probably when you used the knife—you didn't know you were putting yourself right in the chair. Hit the leg of the bedside table as it fell, didn't it? Yes, of course it did. Didn't break into too many pieces, fortunately. I got to looking at it. My business to. My business to look at everything. Like a jig-saw puzzle, sort of. I saw that a small piece was missing. Saw that the largest petal of the flower wasn't there. Well, where *could* it have gone to, then?"

Frayne paused. He had everyone looking at him goggle-eyed, including Don.

Frayne laughed. It wasn't much like a laugh. It grated so much that listeners had to clamp their teeth down:

"Then it had to be stepped on, didn't it? Only way it could be moved, wasn't it?— Yes, of course!— Well, look at the sole of your left pump if you want to see how that little piece of sharp and jagged porcelain was taken from the floor!"

Jervin couldn't look at the sole of his left pump. That is, he wasn't able to raise it. Perhaps he didn't have the strength. He slid his foot out of it, though, and turned his slipper over with his toes.

Firmly embedded in the center of that piece of corrugated oval rubber, placed there so that a man might not slip, was the sharp fragment of yellow and purple porcelain.

A Problem In Crime

Grotesquely masked men plunged into the dense smoke

Surprising Things Can Happen to a Burglar-Proof Vault When an Honest Man Turns Crook

By Joseph Harrington

A LITTLE murmur of admiration came from the little group when Theodore Lutz proudly opened the leather case and exhibited the great emerald, gleaming softly against a background of white satin.

"A half million wouldn't buy it," he said boastfully.

Annoyance flickered across the countenances of several in the group. That was the reason why the jeweler was not popular in the Quad Club. He talked too much about money. He valued everything intrinsically. A gem was beautiful to him only because it was costly.

Among the five men who lounged in the massive library in the soft glow from the open fireplace, there was only one who was not a millionaire. But, with the exception of Lutz, they were the sort who avoided making known the fact at every opportunity.

Magnificent jewels were no novelties to their eyes. But this scintillating green stone with the delicate bit of frothy platinum work at either end and the slender platinum chain was more than magnificent, more than superb. It was a jewel beyond comparison.

They all knew its history, or at least the high lights of it—the Indian potentate who had first owned it, the con-

cubine who knifed him one night and ran off with the stone and a lover, its reappearance years later on the slender neck of a beautiful and eccentric Russian queen, the many royal necks it had adorned since then, the American tin plate king who bought it from the Revolutionists to lavish on a cocotte, and his successful fight in the French courts to get it back after the girl left him.

"No, sir—a half million wouldn't buy it," Lutz repeated. "The publicity I'll get out of announcing that I bought it will be worth fifty thousand to me in itself."

Colby the banker took his eyes off the stone and looked at Lutz.

"Taking rather a chance—carrying it with you—aren't you, Lutz?"

"Not much. The sale was arranged and carried out with utmost secrecy. The only two men who know it's in my possession are lawyers, acting for that fool tin plate magnate, and they're both beyond question. Besides, tomorrow morning it will be safe in my vault."

The only man in the room who was not a millionaire sat a little apart from the others. He was utterly different from them. His inconspicuous blue serge was shiny and unpressed, his scuffed shoes unpolished and his tie knotted carelessly so that worn spots showed.

Even if Dr. Theodore Wick, F.R.S., D.Sc., had been groomed with the perfection of the other four he would have stood out as one worlds apart from these florid men. He lacked their aggressive personalities, their characteristics of wealth and easy living.

The wisps of white hair thinly covering his oddly shaped head—that famous head with the bulging forehead and enormous cranium—were in careless disarray. The faded blue eyes were mild and dreamy. His voice, which was seldom heard, was meek and unimpressive.

Plainly he was a man who lacked everything the others had—wealth, power and forcefulness. And yet, when he spoke, Colby the banker, Camden the copper king and Grayson the stock operator listened to him with a peculiar deference not unmixed with awe.

"Your sort, Lutz, is rather fortunate that criminals are men lacking in intelligence and that they represent the lower crust of mentality," he murmured. "If it was otherwise, if the brilliant minds of to-day were of a criminal bent, the wealth of the world would be in their hands."

There was a note of contempt in Lutz's laugh. He alone of the men in the room looked upon Dr. Wick with scorn. He had been on the point of objecting when it was proposed that the brilliant scientist be given an honorary life membership in the club, but he had refrained because all the others were in hearty accord with the suggestion.

The proceeding had annoyed Lutz. What if the little man with the faded blue eyes and queer head had written a book on interspacial mechanics? What if that volume had stirred the scientific world? It was admitted that only six men on earth besides the author understood it in full. They had lauded it as the greatest scientific work of all time.

Lutz had read a semihumorous, semiironic newspaper article which disclosed that the royalties from the monumental treatise—the book it had taken Dr. Wick seven years to prepare—amounted to seventy-two dollars and forty cents for the first year.

This article made more of an impression upon Lutz than all the plaudits he had read. The subject of the volume registered a blank in his brain. He didn't have the slightest idea what interspacial mechanics were. Furthermore, he told himself, if the man who knew the most about them could only make seventy-two dollars out of his knowledge, he didn't care to learn.

There was a half-suppressed sneer in the jeweler's voice as he answered:

"Wick, if it was possible to become wealthy through criminality and not get caught at it, the keenest minds would go in for it. The only way to gather wealth is to earn it. That's been proved."

Dr. Wick reflected before answering.

"Your viewpoint, Lutz, has been gained because only morons have gone in for crime. If a true genius, one of the dozen most brilliant minds in the world, went in for thievery, he could strip the earth of the greater part of its wealth—material wealth, I refer to. He could find a way to pick the finest gems from the museums of the world; he could loot banks; turn out counterfeit money that would be perfect beyond detection. He could, for a concrete example, gain possession of that stone you now hold by a few hours' work."

Lutz sniffed.

"I'd like to see the cracksman who could get into my vault. There isn't one in the world who could do it."

"Quite right. I agree with you entirely. There isn't such a cracksman on earth—but I venture to say that any one of several score of men could accomplish the feat in a day. You'll find these men in laboratories—fortunately for you—and not in the underworld."

Lutz laughed again, more contemptuously than ever.

"Perhaps you could do it, Wick," he suggested. "Your brain is reckoned among the ten greatest in the scientific world."

Dr. Wick, who included false modesty along with fine clothing in his classification of worthless things, made no attempt to pooh-pooh the compliment.

"If I was inclined to, I undoubtedly could," he said quietly. "The matter doesn't interest me at all. To do it would be a waste of energy which might be put to good use."

II

LUTZ was beginning to grow angry. "That," he snapped, "is an easy way of getting out of it."

Dr. Wick raised his brows.

"I'm not trying to get out of anything. I was merely citing a hypothetical—"

"Hypothetical bosh!" Lutz interrupted rudely.

Colby, Grayson and Camden, never overly friendly with Lutz, looked disgusted.

Dr. Wick was silent. Lutz snapped the case shut on the emerald and stowed it in a pocket.

"Hypothetical bosh!" he repeated, seeming to savor the flavor of the insulting words. "Not inclined in that direction, eh? Not interested. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Wick. I'll *make* it interesting to you."

He threw his rich, black cigar into the fireplace, although it was only half burned, and lit a fresh one.

"Yes, sir, I'll make it interesting. I'll bet fifty thousand dollars against your five thousand that you can't break into my vault and get this emerald. What d'you say? Money talks, you know."

Dr. Wick smiled faintly.

"The odds are most fair to me, and unfair to you. But I'm afraid I haven't got five thousand—or nearly that much. Besides, I don't gamble."

Lutz got up from his deep leather chair, a smirk on his heavy face.

"Too bad," he said. "I'm sorry I can't interest you, Wick. I'd like to see a demonstration of that brain power of yours. But, if you're beyond temptation by mere money, why—I guess it's off."

He turned to go. A crisp few words from Colby stopped him.

"Just a minute, Lutz. I'll finance Dr. Wick, providing, of course, that he's agreeable."

The banker turned to Dr. Wick.

"What say, doctor? I'll put up the five thousand. If you win, we split even—twenty-five thousand for you and the other half for me."

Lutz looked startled.

"Good Lord, Colby!" he exclaimed. "And you—you with the reputation of being the most conservative banker in town! Why, what was that they used to call you—Never-Took-a-Chance Colby?"

"Don't worry," Colby shot back gruffly. "I've earned my reputation as the most conservative banker in New York. Furthermore, I'm keeping it! Brains strike me as a sound investment."

The banker turned to Dr. Wick questioningly. The latter nodded assent.

"See here," said Lutz. "You're familiar with my place, Colby. But Wick isn't. And I don't want to take any unfair advantage."

The jeweler turned to Dr. Wick.

"Ever seen my establishment? No? Well, here, I'll give you a description of it. To begin with, it's located at Forty-Third Street and Broadway—a corner where crowds pass almost continually, where there are always several policemen within a stone's throw.

"That's the smallest part of it. My store, in itself, is a vault. The walls are stone and brick, lined with steel. The same applies to the floors. The windows are covered with bronze grillework, which is decorative in appearance, but actually intended to complete a burglar-proof arrangement. The doors are heavily grilled with the same metal. The ceiling is concrete, three feet thick.

"So, to begin with, you'll have the job of getting into that store—unless you attempt a daytime holdup!"

Dr. Wick shook his head.

"Holdups are crude," he murmured.

"They are," Lutz agreed, "and I wouldn't advise you to try one. But to continue—the vault itself is set in the middle of the floor inside the store."

"Remember, the store is always brightly lighted. The door of the vault faces the window on the Broadway side. Any one who goes near the safe will be in plain view of the passers-by. In addition to that there is a night watchman whose sole duty it is to stand outside and keep an eye on the interior of the store.

"The vault itself is burglar proof—or supposedly so. I'm not saying that it could not be blown apart"—he hesitated and grinned—"with a ton or two of explosives. But I defy any one to do it under the circumstances. Now, what do you think of it?"

Dr. Wick had stuffed his ancient pipe with tobacco as he listened and now it was drawing smoothly. He blew a cloud of hazy smoke upward and answered the question calmly.

"I should find it quite easy," he said.

Lutz stared at him blankly. He felt that this was sheer bluff. But for some

reason he could not sneer or laugh. What plan could be forming in that queerly shaped head? What plan that could pierce bronze, steel and concrete barriers while hundreds or even thousands of persons were within earshot?

Colby looked at his watch.

"Let's finish this," he said. "I'm in a hurry. Is there any time limit?"

Lutz began to grow cautious.

"It seems to me that a week would be sufficient time," he said. "But, Colby, I can't understand you backing this hare-brained—"

"Forget it," Colby interrupted. "A week? Will that be sufficient, doctor?"

Dr. Wick glanced at his one dollar watch which was so worn the brass showed through the thin coating of nickel.

"Eleven o'clock," he murmured. "Twenty-four hours should be plenty."

Lutz blinked.

"Very well," Colby went on. "By eleven o'clock to-morrow night we will have obtained possession of the emerald and be ready to turn it over to you, Lutz."

"Wait!" the jeweler hastened. "The agreement is that it must be taken from the vault. That is, it must not be touched or any attempt made to take it until I place it in my vault at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning."

"Right," Dr. Wick nodded.

Colby rose, bid a general good-night and left the room. Dr. Wick rose a moment later, murmuring that it was his bedtime, and followed Colby through the door.

Lutz looked after them, a puzzled expression on his face.

"Well, I'll be damned," he muttered.

Camden grinned.

"Not growing uneasy, are you?"

Lutz looked at him.

"Don't make me laugh," he said curtly, and left the library to go to his room.

Inside his room, he dropped into a chair and went into deep thought. He tried to assure himself that his vault—his double vault—was impregnable. For years it had stood unharmed, while the cleverest of gem thieves looked at it enviously through the grilled windows.

Until Colby offered to back Dr. Wick, Lutz had looked on the scientist as one who devoted himself entirely to useless arts. Now he was beginning to worry. Colby was no fool.

Ten minutes of pondering brought an idea. He got up, ruffled through his personal telephone book and then called the number of a famous detective agency. Over the wire he gave lengthy and exact instructions. He described Dr. Theodore Wick fully and made arrangements that, beginning at 8 o'clock to-morrow morning, two private sleuths would get on the trail of Dr. Wick and stick upon it until 11 o'clock at night. Every hour one of the shadowers was to report to Lutz by telephone.

III

ARRIVING at his establishment promptly at the dot of nine, Lutz immediately detected a weak point in his system. It was the custom to frequently open the vault to bring out additional stones for particular customers during the course of the day.

Lutz called his clerk and gave him minute instructions.

"Lay out a supply sufficient to last you all day. I want the vault closed immediately afterward and kept closed until we put the stones away for the night."

The clerk nodded, called a few subordinates and gave brisk orders. When

the necessary gems had been laid out, Lutz himself went into the vault and deposited the emerald case in a pigeonhole by itself. Then he personally swung the doors shut and locked them.

During the night Lutz had done some deep thinking. One of the most troubling thoughts was that fifty thousand dollars was a lot of money. He was sure he wouldn't lose, he told himself—but there was no sense to taking chances. He would observe every possible precaution.

Now he went to the telephone and called up the West 47th Street police station. The captain there was a friend of Lutz. After exchanging the customary compliments, Lutz got down to the purpose of the call.

"Captain, I have a tip—now don't ask me where it came from because it's strictly confidential. It's to the effect that some time to-day or to-night an attempt will be made to rob my place. Whether it will be in the form of a daylight hold-up or a burglary at night, I don't know. Is there any protection you can offer me?"

The captain boomed a hearty laugh over the wire.

"I'd like to see any one get away with anything from that fortress of yours, with all that burglar-proof junk you have installed. But anyway, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll send five plain-clothes men over there now, to stand outside and remain on duty until to-morrow morning. How's that?"

"Fine! Many thanks!"

Lutz felt more secure as he hung up. Captain Donohue was a careful man. If he said that there was little chance of a robber escaping from Lutz's store, that was the case.

Captain Donohue was familiar with the contraptions that Lutz had caused to be placed in his store and about which Lutz had wisely refrained from telling Dr. Wick and Colby.

Hidden in the grillework above the door was a siren, the roar of which could be heard for a mile. Inside, running beneath the counters, was a series of buttons, red and blue. A touch of a foot on one of them—the red—set the siren in operation, notified police headquarters and flashed a signal in a private detective agency. A touch on a blue button whirled shut the grilled doors and locked them by electricity. In addition to these contrivances, both the outer door and the vault door were equipped with time locks.

The most fanciful and clever attempts at robbery, in Lutz's opinion, were forestalled by these devices. Even if robbers did gain entrance, and hold the employees at bay, one of the clerks would surely be able to touch the concealed button which would virtually make the bandits prisoners in the place they had come to rob.

Promptly at 10 o'clock Lutz was called to the telephone.

"D-12 speaking," a gruff voice said. "Dr. Wick left the Quad Club at 9 o'clock. He had breakfast in a cafeteria at 992 Third Avenue. He ate grapefruit, wheat cakes and coffee. He entered the restaurant at nine fifteen, left at nine forty-five, walked over to Central Park and is now walking through it. F-11 is trailing him. We were unable to give you an hourly report at 9 o'clock because we hadn't seen him yet."

"Very well. Stick by him. Don't let a single act escape you, however innocent it may appear. If he writes or telephones, try to find out what it's all about."

"Yes, sir."

The receiver clicked.

At eleven o'clock D-12 called again.

Nothing startling to report, he announced. Dr. Wick was still walking through the park. He'd stopped once to feed pigeons with crumbs. Another time he scratched the woolly head of a complacent sheep. That was all.

At twelve o'clock D-12 sounded disgusted and winded.

"This guy's still walking," he said. "Hasn't done a darn thing but look at the sky and the flowers. Any sense to following him any more? He don't look like a crook to me—too dumb."

"Never mind your opinions," barked Lutz. "Just keep after him. That's your job."

"All right," grumbled the detective.

"By the way, do you think he knows you're following him?"

"Notta chance. He hasn't turned around once. Besides, we're well in back of him."

At one o'clock D-12's voice was excited.

"Say, he just went into a telegraph office. He's writing a letter. I sneaked in and looked at the form he's using. It's a messenger letter—that is, instead of going over the wire it's to be sent by messenger. F-11 is waiting outside the telegraph office and when the kid comes out with the letter we'll get it."

"You must!" Lutz told him. "It's very important. You'd better go right back and help your friend."

"Don't worry—F-11 knows how to take care of those kids. He'll just flash his badge, scare the kid half to death and take it away from him."

"Ring me up as soon as you get it."

"Righto—oh, say, Mr. Lutz—here's F-11 now and he's got the letter!"

"Read it to me."

Lutz heard the detective talking to his companion. He heard an exclamation in a puzzled tone. Then D-12 came back on the wire.

"I can't quite understand this, Mr. Lutz. This letter is addressed to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Read it anyway," said Lutz, disappointed.

The sound of tearing paper came over the wire. A long pause, and then D-12's voice, nervous and stammering.

"Er—ah—there's nothing important in this, Mr. Lutz. Nothing worth while. Forget it. I—"

"Read it, man! Don't waste time."

The detective, after another pause, started to read:

"DEAR LUTZ:

"Really I don't mind in the least being shadowed. But my heart has gone out in sympathy to your men. You see, I'm very fond of walking. One of them, it appears, is suffering from bunions or a kindred ailment. The other is exceedingly short-winded. Being of a sympathetic nature, I cannot bear to see their patent anguish.

"Won't you please tell them that now I am going to walk to my laboratory at 289 West Fifty-Sixth Street. By taxiing there they will save themselves a good deal of pain. Incidentally, should they lose track of me, I will immediately telephone the day clerk at the club and tell him where I may be found. Then your men need only to call him and they will get on my track immediately again.

"I assure you—and them—that I will make no effort to evade them until after dinner.

"T. WICK."

Lutz presently recovered his breath.

"You damn fool!" he said. "Who ever told you that you were a detective?"

"Ah—Mr. Lutz—I—"

"Get back and follow him. Another break like that and I'll—"

Lutz stopped because he couldn't think of a sufficiently dire threat to

fit the occasion. The detective took advantage of the jeweler's loss of words by discreetly hanging up.

Thereafter it was F-11 who reported to Lutz every hour. He had precious little to report. Dr. Wick had entered his laboratory at two o'clock and remained there until four o'clock.

"What did he do?"

"We don't know. It's on the top floor of a loft building. It's the highest building around there and there's no way for us to look through the window. He locked the door after him."

"Anybody with him?"

"Some young fellow. We learned from other tenants in the building that he is Dr. Wick's assistant."

At four o'clock Dr. Wick strolled to the library at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. At five o'clock, when Lutz received his last report, Dr. Wick was still in the library, reading a thick volume on chemistry.

IV

THROUGHOUT the afternoon Lutz had grown increasingly restless. Why didn't Wick do something? The man must have some plan, however foolhardy.

At five thirty the trays of precious stones went back into the vault. Lutz again personally locked the safe and tested the door. Then he stood back and surveyed the massive steel box. According to the makers, it was a virtual impossibility to open that vault until nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

Donning his hat and coat, Lutz walked out of the store. A few clerks were still within, checking up on the day's receipts. In a few minutes they, too, would be gone, closing the massive outer doors behind them.

Lutz stood on the sidewalk for a moment in the cool October evening. He noticed the five husky men loitering carelessly about the store, unnoticed by the steady stream of homegoers that drifted by. He knew one of them casually — Detective Sergeant Brody. The sergeant, however, gave no sign of recognition. He was following orders to appear as inconspicuous as possible, as were the four men under him.

Lutz went to a nearby restaurant and had an early dinner. When he finished he strolled back to the store, impelled by a natural curiosity. It was closed. The spacious interior was vacant. Kline, the night watchman, was on duty, chatting with Sergeant Brody, whom he had met before.

Satisfied, Lutz taxied to the Quad Club. There was nothing more he could do.

As he strolled into the library, Lutz stopped short. Dr. Wick was comfortably sunken in a deep leather chair, reading a thick technical volume. His brow was furrowed as he read, plainly enwrapped in the book.

He looked up and saw Lutz.

"Good evening," he greeted cordially.

"Hello, Wick."

Lutz had intended to be carelessly at ease, but he found himself blurting:

"Made much progress yet?"

Dr. Wick looked up again. He blinked the faded blue eyes as though trying to understand.

"Oh—the emerald!" he recalled. He looked at his watch. "No, not yet. But it's only seven thirty."

Then he dipped into the volume again. Lutz was baffled. He was also annoyed. The calm confidence of the scientist was rasping his nerves. There remained only three and one half hours for the little man to accomplish his feat. Yet here he was, reading a

book, as though he had all the time in the world.

One by one, Camden, Colby and Grayson strolled in. Colby showed no sign whatever of concern or worriment. The others raised their brows questioningly as they looked at Dr. Wick and Lutz. But neither mentioned the emerald.

The subject, in fact, was studiously avoided during the next half hour of conversation.

At eight o'clock, a white-jacketed attendant entered the library.

"Telephone, Mr. Lutz," he said.

He carried the instrument in his hand and plugged it into an outlet adjacent to the jeweler's chair.

Lutz lifted the receiver with the belief that F-11 was calling. He was mistaken. It was Kline, the night watchman.

"Mr. Lutz?" Kline was evidently laboring under a great strain. His voice was jerky and nervous. "You better come down right away, Mr. Lutz. The place is on fire—and the firemen can't get in."

V

"ON fire!" Lutz, in his excitement, fairly roared the words. "What are you talking about? There's nothing in there to burn!"

"It's on fire, though, Mr. Lutz," the distressed watchman assured him. "Listen—can you hear the fire engines coming?"

Faintly the sound of clanging bells and sirens came over the wire.

"Good God!" Lutz hung up the receiver.

"What's wrong, Lutz?" asked Colby.

"The watchman says the place is on fire," Lutz replied, a little dazed. "I can't understand."

But it was easy to see that, if he could not grasp the situation, he at least had suspicions. He turned suddenly to Dr. Wick.

"Did you cause this, Wick?"

The faded blue eyes blinked.

"What?"

"Did you set my place afire?"

Dr. Wick slowly shook his head.

"You may have my word, Lutz, that I did nothing of the sort."

Lutz stared at him. Gradually the disbelief faded out of his face as the faded eyes met his own steadily.

Lutz jerked himself together.

"I'm going down there," he said. "See you later."

"I'll go with you," Camden offered.

"Me, too," said Grayson.

"Same here—although we probably won't be much help," Colby added.

The men, with the exception of Dr. Wick, who remained quietly in his chair, left the room hurriedly. They stopped to pick up their hats as they passed through the outer door of the club.

Outside they hailed a taxi. A few seconds later, after Lutz gave terse directions, they were speeding downtown.

"Will the fire injure the jewels?" asked Colby.

Lutz shook his head.

"The vault is fireproof," he said.

Five minutes after leaving the club the taxi was on the outskirts of a great crowd, such as will congregate on Broadway for the slightest of fires.

Lutz leading, the four men threaded and pushed their way through the throng. Near the store police had established fire lines to hold back the mob.

A bluecoat roughly challenged the jeweler and his friends as they passed the line.

"Hey! Where the h—l do you think you're going? Get back there."

"I'm the owner," Lutz explained, "and these are my friends."

"That's different," said the officer, changing his tone. "Hurry up! The chief wants to see you. You'll find him over there."

He pointed to a little group of rubber-coated men who stood in the center of a semi-circle of roaring, trembling fire trucks.

It was dark now, but Lutz could see that the firemen had already smashed the windows and were ineffectually trying to spray water between the bronze bars. From these openings issued the densest, blackest smoke that Lutz had ever seen. It poured out in heavy streams, spreading an acrid pall of fog over the nearby area.

Water was streaming through the gutters. The sidewalks and the roadway were covered with spider-webs of leaky hose. Scores of firemen stood around idly, shuffling their feet impatiently and muttering among themselves.

"Where's the chief?" Lutz asked a fireman on the fringe of the little group.

The man pointed to a short, stocky individual in a battered white helmet. In the scanty light of the street lamps the chief's face was brick-red in color.

Lutz shouldered his way to the chief's side.

"I'm the owner of that place," he said. "I—"

The chief's restless gray eyes, roaming over the front of the building, jerked to Lutz's face.

"The owner? Good! Open those doors in a hurry. We've been waiting for you."

Lutz shook his head.

"I can't open those doors—and neither can any one else—until nine o'clock to-morrow morning. Timelock."

"Timelock? Hell!" snorted the chief. "To think that I've been wasting all this time so we wouldn't have to ruin your fancy work. Hell! Tim, call that rescue squad and tell 'em to get busy with the torches on that door."

One of the men jogged off.

"Those doors are burglar proof," Lutz informed the chief. "I don't think your men can do anything with them."

"No?" brusquely. "You've got another guess coming, mister. I haven't seen the door yet that we couldn't open."

Lutz remained silent for a minute, staring at his store. Inside the window he could see nothing but utter blackness, so heavy that it appeared almost solid.

"I can't understand this," he muttered. "That place is supposed to be fireproof."

The chief laughed shortly. "Yeah," he said with heavy sarcasm, "so did the owners of the Savoy Plaza think their place was fireproof. Listen, mister, there isn't a building in this town that won't burn once a fire gets started at it."

A squad of men, bearing short, compact tanks and other apparatus, appeared and marched to the door. The tanks were set down. The firemen worked quickly on adjustments. A minute later the dull, humming roar of a powerful acetylene torch was heard.

Lutz saw the tip of the torch set to a bronze bar. The metal glowed red almost instantly, then white. The torch moved to the next bar and the jeweler saw that the first was cut through.

"Special Lang and Crowther torches," the chief explained. "Made to our specifications and the only ones of their kind in the State and the best in the world. They cut through steel like a knife through cheese."

In less than five minutes Lutz saw eight of his supposedly impregnable bars burned away, leaving an opening wide enough for the largest man to enter.

"What a burglar couldn't do with those torches," Camden marveled aloud.

The words sent a sudden chill down Lutz's back. They reminded him of the wager which, in the excitement of the moment, he had forgotten. His brain moved into another track. Was it mere coincidence that this fire had started on this night of all nights? Was the blaze set as part of a conspiracy? Was Wick at the bottom of the entire affair?

"Impossible for a burglar to lay hands on one of those," said the chief. "They cost over five thousand dollars each to begin with. That's beyond reach of the ordinary second-story man. Then there is an agreement with the manufacturers that none but public agencies may purchase them."

A man moving about among the firemen caught sight of Lutz and ran to him. He was Kline, the watchman.

"Mr. Lutz," he cried, "did you—"

Lutz cut him short.

"Did anything unusual happen after I left? Did you see any one inside the place before the fire started?"

"No." Kline shook his head. "I kept looking in. So did the regular cops. We didn't see a thing that was unusual. The only peculiar part of it was that about a quarter to eight—just a few minutes before the fire started, I thought I heard a funny noise. Sort of a little boom. It sounded far away. A few minutes later I happened to glance up and saw smoke pouring out of the ventilator. I looked inside and the smoke was so thick that I couldn't see a thing. I turned in the alarm right away and then called you."

The chief was listening intently.

"Explosion, eh?" he said. "Looks like a case for the fire marshal."

Lutz was growing panicky. An explosion! Did that mean that the vault had been blown open?

"But how," he muttered to himself, "could an explosive have been put inside?"

He glanced up at the ventilators; a fine, strong screen in which the openings were less than a half inch wide.

Impossible, he thought, that the explosive could have been slipped into the safe. How could it? He had personally looked it over thoroughly before closing the door. He trusted his clerks implicitly.

"We'll be at the fire in a minute now," the chief said.

Lutz looked at the door. The last shreds of grillework had been burned away. Firemen, carefully shielding their faces from flying glass, shattered the windows that were now exposed.

Instantly they were emerged in a cloud of black smoke which swirled out of the opening. From this they presently emerged, coughing and blinded.

"What smoke!" the chief muttered. "I never saw the likes of it before."

A stream of water was aimed blindly through the smoke, towards where the open door should be. Apparently it had little effect.

"Tim," the chief ordered, "tell the rescue squad to use gas masks and go in there. I can't see a sign of open flame. Must be a smolderer."

A sudden thought struck Lutz. Suppose some one, the man who had set off the explosion, was still inside there. Suppose he had concealed himself before the store closed. Suppose he had reckoned on this use of torches as a means of escaping from the place with his loot—whatever it might be.

Might it be Dr. Wick? So upset was the jeweler that, for the moment, he forgot that he had left Dr. Wick sitting in the library of the Quad Club twenty minutes ago. He was so relieved upon recollecting this, that he almost laughed hysterically. He sobered instantly as a new danger appeared in his mind. Suppose Dr. Wick had an assistant — a professional cracksman. Lutz called himself a fool for not specifying that the scientist was to have no help in his undertaking.

"Chief!" Lutz caught the fireman's arm. "There may be a robber in there. I'm not sure—but I have a suspicion. Can you take any precautions to prevent his escape if he's there?"

The chief looked at him and grinned.

"If there's anybody in there now he's dead—or darn near dead. But we'll watch."

Grotesquely-masked men, the members of the rescue squad, the same who had previously used the torch, now appeared. They plunged into the dense smoke, heading toward the doorway, which could not be seen.

Lutz watched them disappear. He took note of the number—seven—half unconsciously.

The hoses had been turned off. The smoke continued to billow out in undiminished volume. It set Lutz, Colby and the others to coughing. A light breeze swirled the thick mist around them.

Five minutes passed. Then ten, fifteen. It seemed hours to Lutz before the husky figure of one of the rescue squad materialized from the mist.

The masked man strode up to the chief, removing his mask.

"Darned if I can find a sign of fire, chief! Damndest thing I ever ran across—smoke so black you can't see a foot in front of you."

"There must be a fire in there. Go back," the chief ordered.

The man hesitated, shrugged and then turned back.

Another ten minutes passed. Gradually the rescue squad emerged in ones and twos. The same man again approached the chief.

"I've gone over that place with a fine-toothed comb," he said. "And chief—here's the funny part I just noticed—not only couldn't I find any signs of fire, but it's *cool* in there!"

VI

THE chief stared at him.

"Cool? Hell!" A light seemed to break on him suddenly. "A fire without heat—or rather, smoke without fire! It's a smoke bomb, that's what it is. I've been thinking all along that there was a funny smell of chemicals in that smoke."

A light had also dawned upon Lutz. That was it! This was all a smoke-screen—the means which Wick had taken to hide himself from thousands of eyes as he calmly looted the safe less than fifty feet from him!

But one factor, particularly, remained to puzzle Lutz. He had counted the firemen as they came out. There were seven of them, all garbed in rubber coats and gas masks. Did that mean that Wick's assistant—if he had one—was still inside? Furthermore, successful as the scheme had been in breaking down the outer barrier, how did it affect the inner vault?

The chief was giving crisp orders.

"Smash the windows on both sides," he said. "Create a cross draft to clear that smoke out. Tell everybody to look out for anybody trying to leave the store. Got a tip there's a crook somewhere's in there."

Firemen hurried away to their tasks. A minute later the tinkling of shattered glass began. Smoke rushed out in greater billows than ever. But the draft had the desired effect. In five minutes the smoke showed perceptible signs of thinning. In ten minutes the interior of the store became dimly visible.

"I'm going in," said Lutz.

"I'm with you," the chief said.

The two men started for the door. On the way the chief stopped and borrowed two gas masks from rescue squad members. He handed one to Lutz and donned the other himself.

Inside, Lutz had no trouble discerning the safe. His heart gave a joyous leap as he saw that the door was still closed. He reached it and seized the handle. His heart dropped again. For the door swung open.

The chief stumbled, swore and looked down at the floor.

"What the hell is this?"

Lutz looked down. The cause of the chief's stumble was one of the rescue squad's torches.

The jeweler looked back at the safe again. For the first time he noticed that deep holes had been cut through at the spots where the massive steel bars fastened the heavy door to the framework.

Peering inside the safe, Lutz saw that all was orderly. The trays of gems were undisturbed. His eyes flitted to the pigeonhole in which he had placed the emerald. 'Quite as he expected, it was gone.

"I can't believe," the chief muttered, "that one of my men did this."

Lutz was grim. "Let's call those seven men from the rescue squad together and question 'em."

"Seven? There are only six in the rescue squad."

Lutz stared at him.

"But—but I saw seven men with gas masks and rubber coats come in here."

The chief stared back at him blankly.

"I didn't count them—but I know there are only six men in that squad."

A half hour later Colby, Lutz, Grayson and Camden walked into the library of the Quad Club.

Dr. Wick, his nose buried in that same volume of chemistry, lifted his head and smiled a welcome.

Lutz dropped into one of the chairs.

"Got a fountain pen, anybody?"

Colby handed him one.

Lutz took it, drew out a checkbook and filled out the form. Gravely he handed it to Colby.

"You'll arrange the division with Dr. Wick?" he asked.

"Surely," Colby nodded.

Dr. Wick reached into an inner coat pocket. He drew out a leather case and handed it to Lutz. The jeweler dropped it into his pocket without looking at it.

Lutz lit a black cigar. When it was drawing smoothly he spoke to Dr. Wick. There was a new note in his voice, the first time it had been present in speaking to the scientist. It was a note of respect.

"Doctor. I can figure out how you did most of the job. But tell me, how the deuce did you get that smoke bomb in that store of mine?"

"Very easily," said Dr. Wick gravely, without a hint of triumph in his

voice. "I gave my assistant a very thorough description of you after I made the bomb this afternoon. He put it in a box, bearing the name of a prominent department store, went to your establishment and waited until he saw you leave for the evening. Then he went in, delivered it to one of your clerks, said it was C. O. D., but, in view of the circumstances, he'd arrange that a bill be sent you."

Dr. Wick chuckled a bit.

"He told me how your clerk scowled and said, 'I should hope to tell you Mr. Lutz's credit is good. You'd better leave it unless you want to get into trouble.' My assistant stayed long enough to see the clerk put it behind the partition which closes off your private office."

"Did you build that bomb yourself?"

Dr. Wick nodded.

"Of course. You know, my formula is used by the Navy now for smoke screens."

"Was it your assistant who got in, disguised as a fireman?"

Dr. Wick shook his head in the negative. "No, me. It was amazingly simple to evade your detectives by going out of the back entrance of your club. My assistant was waiting for me in a cab with a gas mask, rubber boots and rubber coat.

"It was quite the easiest thing in the world to wait in the crowded street until, as I had planned, the Fire Department obligingly cut away the doors for me. Also as I had planned, they left the torches in the smoke. I picked one up when I joined the brave men as they plunged into the place with gas masks. My assistant had provided me with a floor sketch, drawn from memory, so I knew exactly where to locate the safe."

He paused.

"It was really very simple. The only part I was concerned about was that the smoke might prevent me from picking out the emerald. But, by opening the door of the vault quickly and stepping inside, then closing it after me, I permitted only a small amount of smoke to enter. I was able to pick out the emerald quite easily."

Lutz puffed reflectively.

"The way you say it, doctor, it sounds quite easy. But I know—"

Dr. Wick made an impatient gesture.

"It was easy, Lutz. Quite the simplest problem I ever tackled. It bears out what I've told you—that criminals are morons. If they were geniuses, the wealth of the world would be in their hands."

Lutz nodded.

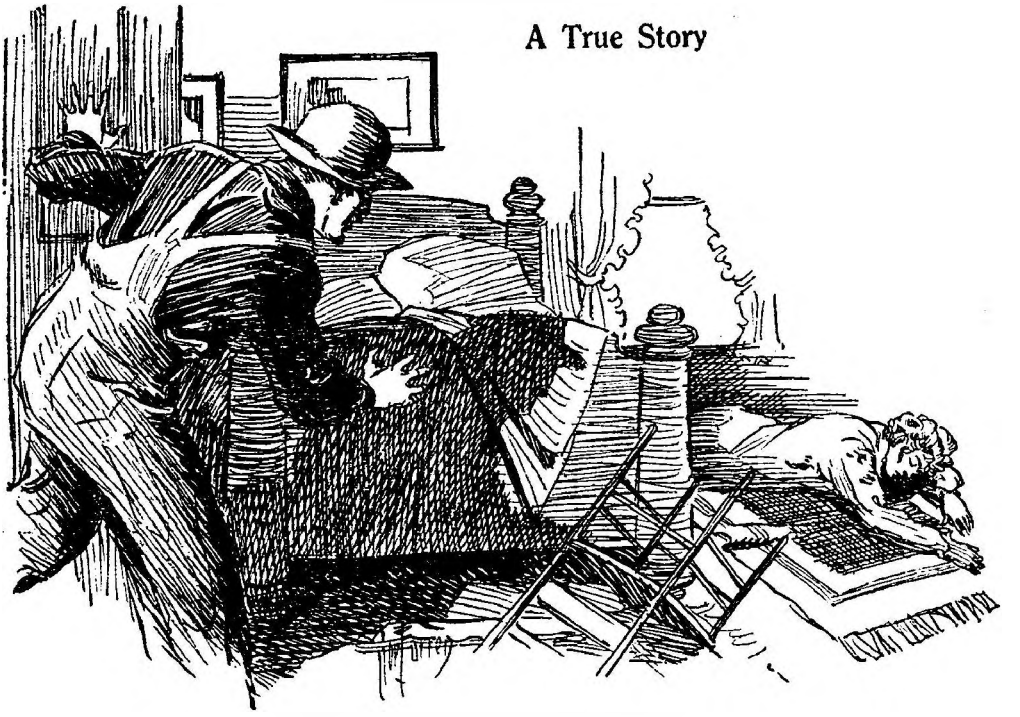
"Perhaps you're right, doctor. All I can say is—thank God the brilliant minds are too busy on interspacial mechanics and such to trouble with such small trifles as millions."

COMING NEXT WEEK!

The Griffin, super-criminal, diabolic master of evil, in the first of a great series of short stories by J. Allan Dunn. Don't miss "The Crime Master" next week.

Blood Does Tell

A True Story



The paperhanger gazed in astonishment

Red Stains Blot Out an Alibi and Solve the Rarest of All Crimes, a Matricide

By Marie Louise Eliott

IT is almost axiomatic to say that only when driven by an insane impulse derived from drugs or drink will a son crush out the life of a mother who gave him birth. There is no rarer crime decorating the calendar of any country than that of matricide, and it is without doubt the rarest on record to find that such a murder has been premeditated.

Yet that was what seemed to confront the police of a small but thriving city in the middle West back in 1889.

Jackson, in the days just before what Thomas Beer calls The Mauve Decade, was a flourishing manufacturing center in the southern part of the state of Michigan. Lying due west from Detroit, the rising commercial importance of Jackson made it a regular stop and a growing rail junction and center for several of the railroads from the east to Chicago. This has a pertinent bearing on the present story as will readily be seen as the facts develop.

Though in 1889 the city had a population of close to twenty-five thousand, nevertheless the place had retained

many of the pleasant features, the charm and the atmosphere of more gracious living than are apt to be associated with a rapidly growing manufacturing town.

Along a pleasant street in the best part of the town, in a detached house surrounded by ample grounds, lived a Mrs. Latimer. Her husband had been one of the important and successful business men of the town before his death a couple of years previous, and with her son, Irving Latimer, a chap in his early twenties, she was living in the house that had been home to her ever since she first came to Jackson, when the lad, an only child, was but a baby. Irving was unmarried and seemingly devoted to both his home and his widowed mother.

After the death of his father, Irving engaged in business in the town, but desired a wider field of action. Mrs. Latimer herself plainly enjoyed the placid, easy existence in the town where the money she had inherited from her husband sustained her in real comfort, but she grew to realize that her son fretted at the ties, the bonds and the limitations of the place. He made constant efforts to persuade and lure his mother from Jackson to Detroit, Chicago or even some of the eastern cities, but Mrs. Latimer was determined to remain where she had lived for more than twenty years.

On the morning of January 24, 1889, a paperhanger of the town, with whom Mrs. Latimer had arranged to have some work done, appeared bright and early at the house with pails and ladders and rolls of paper ready to execute the job.

He was astonished at that early hour and at that time of year to find the front door standing open and no sight nor sound of life within the house.

He rang the bell and, receiving no response, he called loudly and then entered.

Leaving the paraphernalia of his calling in the lower hall, the workman gingerly made his way to the second floor, there he found ample reason for his grim feeling of alarm. Mrs. Latimer lay dead on the floor of the largest of the bedrooms, and her death even to his untutored eye was not a natural one.

Rushing downstairs he fled down the garden path to the street and the nearest police station.

The authorities appeared and took charge. They noted at once the considerable evidences of struggle which ticketed this as a case of homicide. Inquiry as to the residents of the house brought out the fact that Mrs. Latimer had a son—where was he? A search revealed nothing, and within a short time one of Irving Latimer's business associates appeared at the house, for the news of the tragedy had swept swiftly through the town. This man had information of young Latimer—the latter was away from Jackson on business and he had that morning received a wire dispatched from Detroit the night before naming the Griswold House in that city as Irving's temporary address.

Questions from the police elicited the fact that this was by no means an unusual incident. Irving Latimer was in the habit of making frequent trips from home. In fact this friend rather reluctantly was forced into the admission that he believed that Irving welcomed the opportunities of getting away every so often from the home town and disporting himself in the bright lights of larger cities.

A wire was dispatched to Detroit, telling Latimer of the tragic affair that

had caused his mother's death and urging his immediate return to assist the authorities. He replied at once that he would wind up his business in Detroit and be on the train which would reach Jackson late the same afternoon.

Mrs. Latimer had evidently been shot while sleeping. The angles made by the bullets indicated that the murderer stood over the sleep unconscious woman and pulled the trigger while standing by the side of the bed. Neither of the shots, however, had been fatal ones and the wounded woman waked by the pain, struggling with her assassin had managed to get out of the bed and though bleeding profusely from wounds on the face and neck, had reached that side of her bedroom on which the windows were located with the evident intention of calling for help. Before she had been able to raise the alarm or summon aid, the murderer had reached her side and, using a heavy silk handkerchief, had finished his crime by strangling her.

The time was placed in the early morning hours, probably between 2 and 4 A.M.

The motive for such a brutal crime would seem on the surface to have been robbery, and such the police labeled it at once.

The examination of the house, however, sent their thoughts into other directions than mere theft, with murder to cover up the first crime. To begin with, the police reasoned, Mrs. Latimer had been shot while her head was still on the pillow and she was presumably still asleep. And the theory of robbery alone began to appear more untenable than ever when the clothes presses and desk and bureau drawers were found unransacked and in the orderly precision of the good housewife; while money and jewelry, safe and intact, were found in her unlocked cash box and much solid silverware in plain sight was found untouched downstairs. The deeper the search, the more involved the motive for the revolting crime seemed to become.

The room in which the deed had been done was a shambles—the bed spotted with blood, and the trail the badly wounded woman had made in her struggle to reach the windows was clearly traceable. No doubt existed that it was homicide, but the murderer had made an effort to have it look like suicide, for he had straightened the night dress of his victim and laid the revolver with its spent cartridges near to her hand. Here was another knot in the tangled web of motive: Why had the criminal tried to invite the implication that Mrs. Latimer took her own life?

One clew there was—the murderer had evidently removed his shoes in the lower hall and ascended the stairs in his stocking feet. In several places the police found bloodstains on floors and stairs from the prints of a socked but shoeless foot. Such a footprint, too blurred to be useful as definite evidence, was found in the bedroom of Irving Latimer where the murderer had gone evidently to remove traces on his person of his ghastly crime.

The manner, bearing and attitude of the bereaved son was a still greater puzzle than anything they had found previously in this curious case. Irving Latimer, carefully if somewhat flashily dressed, being somewhat of a dandy in his attire, descended from the indicated train cool, collected and apparently as emotionless as if he were coming on a most commonplace errand instead of the tragic one which had cut short his trip. On the way to his home, he had chatted in the carriage

with the police and his friend on general topics in a manner that seemed to betray no concern for the ordeal which lay ahead of him—the sight of his mother's cruelly tortured body.

This manner, however, showed a sudden and startling change. The moment that Irving Latimer reached the threshold of his home and found himself the center of groups of his own and his mother's friends, he commenced to sob without restraint. Tears poured down his cheeks, he buried his face in his hands and without warning became almost hysterical in his emotional outburst. Later when the police had led him to the inner room and drawn back the sheet from the twisted face of the woman who had mothered him and spoiled him always, he seemed even more deeply touched, and then with a theatric gesture, to the amazement of the police, he threw up his hand and swore an oath to: "Leave no stone unturned to bring her slayer to justice."

If the police had been puzzled by the case before, they were now completely mystified.

Naturally, they questioned Latimer though it would appear that his absence from town would bar much he could tell though they hoped to derive something that would clear if possible the maze of the motive. Asked if he could assist in assigning a motive, Irving Latimer committed himself at once to the theory of robbery. Could he furnish them, the police requested, with a list of all missing articles? Latimer looked astonished, then annoyed, but in great haste and with clumsy and half-hearted search of a few bureau and desk drawers, he announced that an impressive sum kept in a purse was missing and also some jewels. Pressed at once for the description of the jewels, Latimer was vague and disjointed, and his manner was steadily showing his great distaste for being interrogated. Finally as the police became more and more imperative in their demand that he assist them, Latimer angrily bade them do their own work and not to expect him to perform it for them. It was fairly clear to the detectives after their first interview with young Latimer that though he himself was in Detroit when the crime was committed, yet he appeared to know more than he told.

Upon reporting the matter back to headquarters, the detectives and the police came to the conclusion that there were strange matters below the surface of this crime and that as one of them phrased it, "Something was rotten, and it wasn't as far away as Denmark." The chief of police ordered a strict investigation of Latimer, of his associations both at home and abroad, and a checking up on the man's apparently sound alibi.

Facts that they unearthed close at hand in Jackson with clarity and ease, revealed something in the nature of a Jekyll and Hyde personality in the young man. Running parallel to the quiet home life with staid social and church affiliations was a double one of associations not so savory, though carefully hidden from his mother and her friends. Known in the small but growing sporty element of the thriving town, Latimer touched at least the rim of the circle that held the underworld of his day. While this was carefully concealed in Jackson, it was open and defined in Detroit and larger cities.

Not alone this, but in his home town the police discovered that all was not well in the young man's business affairs. His commercial venture was in-

volved and Latimer was deeply in debt. From the Latimer family lawyer it was easy also to learn that Irving was his mother's sole heir and that he himself was well aware of the provisions of her will.

Could it be possible that in desperate need of immediate funds and already in association with underworld characters, Latimer had plotted to have a robbery and murder take place in Jackson while he was safely in Detroit?

His sworn alibi to the police had been that he had gone to the larger city the day before, had registered at the Griswold House, and had spent the time there until notified by the police that he was wanted in Jackson. The Detroit police verified the alibi.

In fact, the police in Detroit found that Latimer's actions in their city had been clearly of the type which made his identification not only easily obtainable but also certain. Latimer, had he wished, could have done nothing more to make himself conspicuous. At the desk where he registered at the hotel, he had proved to be demanding and exacting in his requirements so that the room clerk had him firmly in his memory. After he had been assigned to a room, he had made voluble objections to its condition and both the maid and the housekeeper had been able to testify to his presence in the hotel.

After the evening meal which he had eaten in the dining room of the Griswold House and bantering with the waitress, so that she too could assure the detectives that Latimer had been in Detroit the previous evening, the time had been divided among several popular saloons, dancing halls and other gay resorts. In each of these Latimer stayed but a short time, but in the limited time allotted to each place, he had managed to make his presence noted, so that the trail he left was clear from the time he left the hotel dining-room until he returned to the desk and demanded his room key at about a quarter to nine that evening.

The elevator man, who took him upstairs, recalled him as the guest who had checked his watch with his, and the bell boy who was summoned with ice water had been able to recall this particular assignment because of the generous tip and the fact that the guest was already in night clothes, evidently about to hop into bed. The day maid was able to say that the bed had been in disorder the next morning, when she arrived to do the room. To all intents and purposes Irving Latimer would seem to have an air tight alibi, demonstrating his presence in a spot seventy-five miles from the scene of his mother's murder.

But it was an alibi which seemed almost too perfect in its clarity and completeness.

Back in Jackson the police had not been idle. The silken handkerchief which had been used as the garroting cloth and which had been found blood-stained on the floor, matched others, which the police located in the drawers of Latimer's bureau. This was not in itself a hanging matter. The thing that set the police minds to wondering was the storm of vehement denial and protest which the mere question as to the ownership of the silken square aroused in Latimer. He denied over and over that it was his, but finally broke down and admitted it. This scarcely seemed the action of an entirely innocent man.

On the other hand the police could find no trace of any strangers having been noted in the town on the day of the murder nor any one seen lurking about the premises during the evening.

Only one clew came to them—the station master told of a figure which had descended from one of the rear coaches of a through train in its momentary stop at Jackson, and of the speedy way in which this man had sought the shadows near the railroad station and disappeared. This through train was one that left Detroit late in the evening and arrived in Jackson in the early morning hours.

Could it be possible that the perfect alibi was a little bit too complete?

Irving Latimer had been last seen in the Griswold House at about 9 P.M. by the bellboy in his room. This would still give plenty of time for him to dress, to sneak out, perhaps by the rear stairs of the hotel, to take the night through rain and to arrive in Jackson in the early morning hours—the exact hour of the crime.

But Latimer had been in Detroit the next morning.

That too would seem possible for when the police consulted the railroad schedules, they discovered that there was a train leaving Jackson at a time which would take Latimer back to Detroit in ample time to establish his presence in that city in the morning.

More than this, when they interrogated the train crews with a picture of Latimer, one of the brakemen on this early morning train had been certain in his identification of the man in the photograph as one who had journeyed Detroitward on that very important morning. Not only that it was the man's evident desire to be unnoticed which had attracted the attention of the trainman, for he had sat huddled in a corner with his hat well down over his eyes and his coat collar well up to his chin and he did all he could to avoid recognition.

One of the hall maids at the Griswold House in Detroit told detectives that she had seen Latimer in the early morning coming along the hall fully dressed for the street and saw him *enter* his room at the hotel.

Not a single employee of the hotel could be found who had seen Irving Latimer *leave* the room that morning.

The publication of these two definite breaks in the invincibility of his alibi, brought a third break to the notice of the police. At a time almost immediately after the arrival of the morning train, upon which the police now claimed Latimer had rejourneyed to Detroit, a barber appeared and testified that such a man had visited his shop and had asked for a shave. He identified his early patron with the newspaper prints of Irving Latimer.

The barber claimed that he had noticed spots on the man's coat sleeve, and said that he had called his attention to them. At once the customer, identified as Latimer, had tried to rub them out, had visibly grown nervous, and had speedily left the barber shop.

Taken into custody by the Jackson police, Latimer openly scoffed at all efforts to break down his alibi. He claimed that he could prove he had spent the night in Detroit and that, as he had gone to bed early he had also risen early and had left the hotel for a stroll before enough of the staff were about to take notice of his goings and comings. He absolutely denied that the identification by the brakeman on the train was of any value whatever, and said that even had he visited a barber shop it was something that he might have naturally done under the most innocent of circumstances.

It was now clearly up to the police, they would have to impress the grand jury with their version of the Detroit alibi.

The only definite clews, which had been discovered in the house after the crime, had been the blurred but bloody footprints. None of them found on floors or stairs were clear enough to insure a decided pinning of the crime on any particular foot—so far Latimer was safe.

The prints, however, had demonstrated the fact that the slayer had walked through the blood in his stocking feet.

He had evidently removed his shoes in the lower hall—the footprints traced his return there in his stocking feet. If he had not known of the stained socks, might it not be possible that in the dark he had left a further indelible trace?

And in the linings of a pair of patent leather shoes—the pair which Irving Latimer had worn the day he returned from Detroit—they found the unmistakable marks of blood—the bloodstained answer to the insistent question of the police—"who?"

Reconstructed, it would appear that in the dark, Irving Latimer had made his way down the stairs and impatient to be away and on time to catch his only possible connection back to his alibi in Detroit, he had thrust his feet into the waiting shoes and left in them the proof positive of his personal presence at the scene of the crime.

His trial was speedy and fair, though the town seemed dazed with shocked horror of a deed so unnatural. He relied upon his so-called alibi, and the state brought testimony from all sides to break this down. The result was a quick verdict from the jury—guilty on all the counts and the sentence was the heaviest penalty which homicide draws under the laws of Michigan: life imprisonment.

Then the town was treated to a further sensation. It was recalled that Mr. Latimer had been a healthy, virile man in his prime, a man who prided himself upon his strength and his record for even health, day in and day out. Not long before his death he had taken out a large policy in an insurance company and had passed the health test with ease. Yet only a few months after this, he was suddenly taken ill with some slight, at first, digestive trouble and almost before he had been willing to treat the matter seriously, he was dead. The insurance policy like the rest of his estate was left so that the far larger portion was Mrs. Latimer's and a small sum went to Irving. The rumors crept about the town that the death of Mr. Latimer, a year or so before that of his wife, had also been planned by young Irving, his son.

Then the executors of Mrs. Latimer's will in examining her effects, discovered a yellowed document. This paper caused another town sensation. It revealed that the man they called Irving Latimer, was the natural son of neither Mr. or Mrs. Latimer but had been adopted by them when he was an infant.

The Latimers, it seems, had lost their own child, a son, and just before they moved to Jackson had found in an orphan asylum, a boy baby who reminded Mrs. Latimer of the one of her own she had lost.

The actual father of the so-called Irving Latimer was a man of criminal tendencies and record, with many offenses and several convictions charged against him.

So the old saying that, "to the son the mother is sacred," was not denied even by this curious case, and matricide remained and still remains, so rare as to be almost non-existent.

Apparently blood does tell.

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 in U. S. POSTAGE, or free with a $1.00 subscription for thirteen issues (in Canada $1.75 for subscription). Please fill out the special coupon.*

I shall ever be a success along that

(W. P. F., Hackensack, N. J.) You would have risen more in my estimation if I had seen anywhere in your handwriting the mark of real humility. I have looked in vain, and, as a result, must class you among those who are carried away with themselves. You are self-important. You strut before your fellow-men. You keep reminding them that you are not made of ordinary clay. You've an idea that *your* opinions and methods are the only things that count.

Before you are any older, I would remind you that a swelled heart, which, by the way, you have not got, may cost you money, but a swelled head, which you suffer from, will cost you ten times more. I have always noticed that the tall talk of self-important men and women, though it comes under the heading of "hot air," is darned poor stuff to warm admiration.

You would be well advised to stop indulging in mouthfuls of spoken wind. I'm sure nobody wants to hear them. The next time you sing your own praises, let the hymn be short meter and the tune in a minor key. There is no need for me to recount your virtues, you know them by heart.

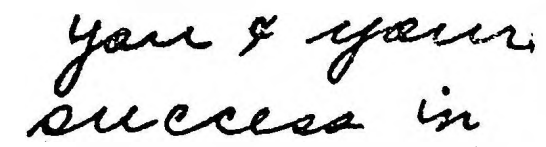
would like y
seven on my

(A. F., Baltimore, Md.) After looking at your penmanship I certainly see that you have qualities which bespeak the presence of a considerable amount of inherent ability. I also notice that you do not like to think. By thinking, I mean the complicated mental activity which goes on when there is an important decision to be made. In this connection your thoughts are as un-

stable as water. You cannot become absorbed in one consideration for any length of time, with the result your power of thought is weak and spasmodic.

In addition to this, you are given to procrastination. This is no tendency as far as you are concerned; I would call it a habit. Your "T" bars all point to this fact that you are dilatory and somewhat tardy when certain duties have to be done. I wouldn't be surprised if this same habit of putting off has lessened your bank account considerably. To be cautious is one thing, to be lazy is another.

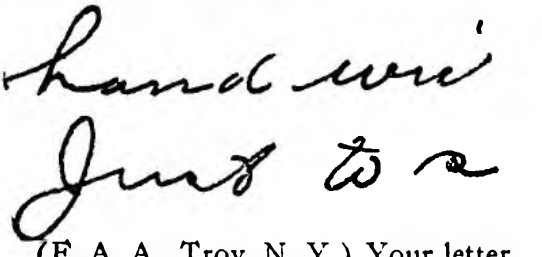
I must say your artistic and æsthetic tastes are highly developed, and are chiefly expressed in a certain neatness, in various ways. Your tastes are refined, and you enjoy the beautiful things of life.



(Miss R. F., Shreveport, La.) There is far too much pessimism in your nature for you to be either happy or successful in life. The first thing you ought to do when you read this is to get a little memorized sunlight into your being, and dispel, once and for all, the overhanging gloom which is haunting you day and night.

When I look closely at your penmanship I see you have no business to be living in Grumbling Street at all, where the air is bad. Thanksgiving Avenue is the place for you, and the sooner you move to it the better it will be for all concerned. You are still young, with the best part of your life before you, and why should you persist in sitting on the mourner's bench when there's so many overstuffed chairs of happiness in the parlor?

At your age, your life should be opening up like a beautiful rose, and not closing like an old cabbage. I am dwelling on this particular characteristic for a purpose, since you belong to the type of women who are always sorry for *themselves* when they can't find anything else to worry about. Standing before the mirror and looking for wrinkles is no pastime for any healthy-minded woman. As far as I can see, you have a wonderful chance to be a power for good in your community, but first of all get a pair of rose-colored spectacles.



(F. A. A., Troy, N. Y.) Your letter was interesting and formed a nice autobiography of your life. Busy as I was at the time of its arrival, I laid everything aside and read it with great gusto. When I came to myself I recalled the old philosopher's words, "Think much, speak little and write less."

Whether that advice is applicable in your case you can be the judge yourself. I'm to take no responsibility. This, however, I will say: you have a gift of the gab and consequently must be tiresome around the house.

Nature has given us all two ears, two eyes, and but one tongue—which simply implies that we should hear and see more than we speak. Do you get me? Very well, the next time you are tempted to sermonize remember the preacher who said that talk was cheap after he compared his long sermon with the short collection.

Looking at your nature from another

angle, you are a man with a big outlook on life. Your leadership qualities are responsible for this inherent desire to be on the band wagon all the time. You don't care to hang around, and not be called upon to speak. You want to be both seen and heard. That's all very well, Mr. A., but don't forget that all gas is not of the illuminating variety.

Would appreciate rom you as to

(H. A., New London, Conn.) I would say that you possess great inherent ability, and as a result I see no reason why you should not be successful in almost any line of endeavor you may select. You are one of those fortunate individuals endowed with a genius for success which is almost impossible to crush.

In the first place, you like to deal with actualities, and cannot be patient with theorists. Physically, you are active and energetic, with a predilection for bodily exercise. This bodily vigor goes hand in hand with a corresponding mental buoyancy, and your whole being fights valiantly against disappointment and discouragement.

Mentally, you are also very alert, and your brain is keen and ready to grasp the essential elements in a newly presented problem. Spiritually, you are very susceptible to sentiment, and you are likely to base a great many decisions on your feelings and impulses. When your sympathies are touched you can be very generous with your money, and with your assistance, and yet I see no trace of extravagance in your make-up. Altogether, you are a fine, clean-minded chap, and have every chance to make a big name for yourself in the near future. The best of luck to you.

Do you want Mr. Fraser's analysis of your character and a personal letter from him? Then send us the coupon and six lines of your handwriting, in ink, with ten cents in U. S. POSTAGE. Mr. Fraser will send you an analysis. Or, send us one dollar for a thirteen-weeks' subscription to DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY *(in Canada, one dollar and seventy-five cents), and Mr. Fraser will send you a FREE analysis!*

To John Fraser, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway, N. Y. City

Signature_____

Street_____ **City**_____

11-23

FLASHES FROM READERS

Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

HERE'S news!

The old *Railroad Man's Magazine* is back again—back in a bigger and better edition. You railroaders will remember it. And you others, attracted by the romance and thrills of a railroad man's life, will remember it too.

We, personally, are joyful to see this old favorite back in the ranks with the great group of Munsey magazines! It goes on sale November 30. Watch for it!

A RETORT FROM HOLLYWOOD

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been reading your superb magazine for the last three years and I want to compliment you on having the finest detective stories of any of them.

I always make it a point to read "Flashes From Readers," but when I read what Charles A. Millsfield of this city wrote, I was so "burned up" that I couldn't resist writing you.

This film colony is all raving over your magazine, and it is always a "best seller." I notice even Mr. Millsfield continues to buy your publication.

All of Robert H. Rohde's stories are excellent, although I miss his *Saxophone Smithers*. *Lester Leith* and *Calhoun* are fine characters, and if you would only cut out the serials and true stories, and keep about six short stories and two novelettes in each issue, your sales would nearly double.

I have never read a short story in your publication that was one half as uninteresting as those true stories.

If Mr. Millsfield knew those connected with the film colony as I do, he wouldn't write you as he did.

Very sincerely,
MALCOLM CLARK,
Hollywood, Calif.

A "CHEW" FOR US!

DEAR SIR:

I have just read the criticism of your magazine written by Chas. A. Millsfield, Hollywood, Cal., and I agree thoroughly with him. It is almost exactly the same as I would make myself. As he says, give us more true stories, as any one with intelligence would rather read a true story than fiction, and especially fiction of the utterly impossible kind. I also agree with him in cutting out the *Chanda-Lung* and *Lester Leith* trash. Also the handwriting "expert's" opinion, as that is too silly for words.

While I am writing this letter, I would like to ask a question which has for years irritated me when reading fiction, and it is this: Why do writers use the same language over and over and over again, until they fairly sicken a person? Such as: "He lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply;" "He struck a match on a highly polished thumb nail;" "She gripped the arms of the chair until the knuckles showed white;" "He bit his lips until the blood came." And when the hero asks the heroine if she loves him, "Yes," she *breathed*. Now what nonsense this is. She breathes.

You cannot say a thing by breathing it. This damned old stereotyped stuff is sickening. I would be ashamed to use it and I do not call myself a writer. Why, it is so awful ancient, I would not think it could get by for one minute. And the same writers use the same language exactly, in all their stories. That is the atrocious part of it. It looks as though their vocabulary is very much limited.

I also saw not long ago where a guy "took a chew of Union Leader." That is granulated smoking tobacco. He might as well have taken a chew of Prince Albert, or better yet chewed a cigarette. Of course, this poor man might have been very much in want of a "chew," but this writer said "Union Leader plug." If there is any such plug I never heard of it.

This is all for the present, and you can "chew" on it for awhile.

Yours truly,
JAMES X. BRANNIGAN,
South Bend, Ind.

FROM C. TO C.

DEAR EDITOR:

As a steady reader and an admirer of your magazine, I wish to have my say regarding a "brickbat" published October 5, and signed Chas. A. Millsfield.

According to Mr. Millsfield, he really doesn't like a thing in the whole magazine.

Well, why in — does he waste the ten cents?

Well, Mr. Editor, I like everything, and read from C. to C. and there's fifty million like me. Three cheers for the magazine, and as for Mr. Millsfield—go hire a hall!

Yours sincerely,
RUTH JENNINGS,
Detroit, Mich.

"ALMOST BURST A BLOOD VESSEL"

DEAR EDITOR:

While reading "Flashes From Readers," in October 5 issue, I almost burst a blood vessel when I read an article written by Chas. A. Millsfield, of Hollywood, Cal.

In the first place, I gave you credit for knowing better than giving so much space in your magazine to such a poor authority on fiction and true stories.

I have read your magazines since they were first put out, and look forward to every new issue almost with as much eagerness as I do pay day.

Lester Leith stories are wonderful. Let's have more of them. Such characters as *Riordan, Jack Calhoun, Ruggles* and *Bill Lawson* will never become tiresome to any one who has a bit of romance and imagination left in him.

I don't think you are overdoing the serials in the least. They are exciting, thrilling and entertaining.

Mr. Millsfield doesn't seem to know the difference between true stories and fiction, or he would not call characters such as *Leith* or *Ruggles* impossible.

Keep up the good work, including Character Revealing by Fraser and Cipher Secrets. If you follow the advice of that chap in Hollywood, Cal., you'll have nothing left but two covers and some advertisements. Here's hoping his future letters to you—if any—go in your waste paper basket.

I just burned up when I read Mr. Millsfield's opinion of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, and sat right down and wrote what I thought. Would welcome more true stories, more short stories and many more serials.

Yours truly,
IRVIN GORDON,
Baltimore, Md.

Get an artist's original illustration of a story in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. Fill out and send us coupons from ten different issues of the magazine.

"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* _____

11-28

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

LAST week we considered some of the most important characteristics of the letter Y. Here the letter W will similarly be subjected to cryptographic inspection, and some interesting points of comparison between these two letters discussed.

W and Y, of course, are alike in that they can be employed either as vowels or consonants. However, Y is used mostly as a vowel, while W is employed only about one-fourth of the time as a vowel, and is therefore for our purposes more conveniently classed as a consonant.

The relative frequencies and characteristic positions in words of these two letters also afford interesting food for study. Both W and Y are of average low frequency, each letter occurring only about 20 times in 1000 letters of ordinary text. Y, however, is used about two-thirds of the time as a final letter, while W is used about two thirds of the time as an initial.

W as an initial letter may be followed by any vowel or by H or R. And the determination of W will in this way often lead to the discovery of one or more of these letters. The initial digraphs WH, WI, and WA are the most frequently used of those beginning with W.

The determination of W through its use as an initial is not always so easy as that of Y as a final. Y is not often confused with other letters of high final frequency. But W is sometimes difficult to identify, since several other letters, notably C, M, F, P, and B, are also often employed mostly as initial letters.

Try for the W's in this week's crypts. Or perhaps you prefer the old reliable method of guessing words, prefixes, suffixes, *et cetera*, by comparison. If so, note that SDYC, SDYTM, and SDMGPXD in No. 1 will give you all but one letter of XMYES. In No. 2 the prefix WL- and the suffix -WLE, by the same token, should readily lead to the long word WLFWELTLRMA. "Ink Spot," a newcomer, sat up nights concocting No. 3.

No. 1—By "Nutmeg."

AEBC XMYES AYB DEZY DPAWRY HSEMSH TB RTLY; WPS SDMGPXD HSYENC VGMQ SDYC MYEUD SDYTM XGERH.

No. 2—By H. G. Oehley.

ETA OIA NSHRD LHN STRUSHR LHTC IMF ECWLFDRILH NSWMH RYCPHA UIUP DVYTNPD WLFWELTLRMA TOIYR UCTBGHF VYTCRHCD, YLTNTCH SWD ECTLTCA TOWFWLE GMTUH BTA GCIKH SWD MTDR TOIFH.

No. 3—By "Ink Spot."

INKNSPOTY, NY SVQTY, GWX YPBME, ZNOTAQ ZANQVWX ZAYMZNQT EBOMVOK JVWTAQ UWVJAY ZEAO ZVOMAQ ZVOTY ZPQQX MEAJ.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

1—Cross word, golf, or travel puzzles do not require or offer opportunity for close scrutiny and analysis of our English as do cryptograms.

2—Poor visibility during fogs together with hazardous, rocky shores greatly endangers shipping around Nova Scotia.

3—From succulent cacti, yclept "Prickly Pear," apt Mexican confectioners concoct delectable tidbit.

Keep your cryptograms and solutions coming, fans! And watch for the monthly Solvers' Lists. Answers to this week's puzzles will appear in the next issue.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

FROM the moment that Chee-Chee Lamar left Phil Walton's seaside cottage, grim tragedy began to stalk that lonely Atlantic beach.

Chee-Chee was a show girl and a gold digger. No, a gold digger first; a show girl afterward. She had roped Phil Walton, and it was a question of big money if Walton wanted to dodge blackmail. But Walton wasn't used to having ex-Follies girls make him dance. Walton was a Big Shot—racketeer, gambler, manipulator of high and shady finance. He told Chee-Chee Lamar what she could do. And Chee-Chee—

"I'll get you, big boy," she shrilled at him. "I'll get you one way or the other!"

She stamped out in a blaze of diamonds, holding her sable coat wrapped closely about her lithe body.

An hour later, a rowboat out of the fog that wrapped the Atlantic Ocean grounded in the sand in front of Walton's cottage. A man jumped out, hauled his small boat up. In his hand he carried two suitcases—worth seventy-two thousand dollars. They were packed with smuggled drugs—

The night closed around Phil Walton's seaside cottage, a night that did not reveal the stealthy figures that moved across that beach, nor give an inkling of the drama that was unfolding.

Beside those sinister figures walked Death!

In the raw, gray morning, a fisherman made a grisly discovery. Lapped by the frothy sea water, half in, half out, lay the body of a man—drowned! It was Phil Walton.

What was the mystery of his death? What strange drama of passion lay behind this violent end of a Broadway Big Shot?

Read this gripping novelette of smugglers and racketeers, show girls and gold diggers—a story of ruthless, savage men and a struggle for a fortune.

Found Drowned

A Novelette

By Maxwell Smith

Also, in next week's issue, the first of a series of short stories about a new master of crime, by J. ALLAN DUNN, creator of *Jimmy Dugan*. He is *The Griffin*, a cold-blooded killer, a sinister villain clothed in mystery and terror. Don't miss the first story: "The Crime Master!"

And exciting stories by EDWARD PARRISH WARE, T. T. FLYNN, HOWARD McLELLAN, GARNETT RADCLIFFE, JOHN WILSON MURRAY and others in

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—November 30

YOU CAN NOW Pay Your Bills

AND HAVE MONEY TO SPARE

with a steady Income for the rest of your life—

if you will take care of my business in your locality. No experience needed. Pleasant, easy work, can be handled in spare or full time.

No Investment Needed

I furnish all capital—I set you up in business, advertise you, and do everything to make you my successful and respected partner in your locality. I will make you my partner in my fast growing, established business—but I don't ask you to invest a single penny in merchandise. Everything is furnished to you FREE—just look after the business in your locality and we will split all the money 50-50! Partner may be either man or woman. All I ask is that you have ambition and can devote a few hours each day to distributing my famous products to friends and a list of established customers. High grade food products, teas, coffee, spices, extracts, things people must have to live.

Your Groceries at Wholesale

As my partner I furnish your groceries at wholesale—I do everything to see that my partners get all the advantages of Big Business. Big FREE supply contains over 32 full size packages of highest quality products. Choose all your groceries, at wholesale, from my big list of over 300 home necessities. Quality backed by $25,000.00 Bond.

I Show You An Easy Way to Make $15 a Day Steady Income

LOOK!

$36.47 in an Hour and a Half

Mrs. S. M. Jones, mother of four, made $36.47 first 1½ hours. Working only 2 half days a week made $2000 profit in few months.

$200 in Spare Time

C. C. Miner, Iowa, made $200 in spare time his first 15 days. His first 4 days brought him $71 profit.

"$15 a Day Easy"

Says W. Skiles, Pa., "I have made $15.23 in only 2 hours." In addition to a big steady income he says, "You have given me $1,437 worth of gifts, checks and prizes."

Burned Mortgage on Home

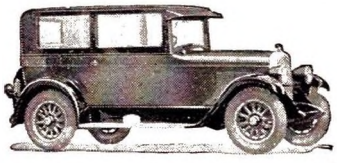
Rev. McMurphy, Alabama, tells how Van brought him from poverty to a mortgage-free home, new car and financial independence.

You, too, can be free from money worries for life—send the coupon.

I don't want you to take any chances. I give you a GUARANTEE that is the talk of the entire industry. This is the most amazing guarantee ever made for a steady, year 'round income. I can make this **guarantee** because I know you can do as well as my other partners whose letters are shown on this page.

Besides going 50-50 with my partners on profits, I WILL FURNISH YOUR HOME with hundreds of wonderful premiums, including pianos, living room sets, etc., that I give as premiums. Send coupon at once for my signed GUARANTEE which protects you against loss and assures you $100.00 a week for full time or $3.00 per hour for spare time work.

I Furnish You Chrysler Coach



I offer every one of my partners a new Chrysler Coach as soon as they come with me. I want my partners to be prosperous and look prosperous to gain respect from everyone in their localities. That's why I will offer you ABSOLUTELY FREE this brand new Chrysler Coach to use in your business. This is no contest! It is yours to keep just as soon as you show me you are in earnest. Send coupon today.

SEND COUPON AT ONCE for APPLICATION

FREE FOOD PRODUCTS COUPON

C. W. Van De Mark,
Health-O Quality Products Company,
Dept. 913-MM,
Health-O Bldg.,
Cincinnati, Ohio

Without obligation on my part, send, at once, application for territory and details of partnership offer free food products.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

Health-O Quality Products Co.

C. W. VAN DE MARK, Pres. and Gen. Mgr.

Dept. 913-MM Health-O Bldg.

CINCINNATI, OHIO

CASH IN NOW WITH THESE 2 BIG WINNERS!

LIFT-A-LITE ASH RECEIVER

and DE LUXE New Size Money WALLET SET

SENSATIONAL FREE OFFER
TO GET YOU STARTED IMMEDIATELY

We will send you these two sensational sellers—everything complete as illustrated here—for the price of only one—$3.45. With these samples in your hands we will prove to you that it is easy to earn as high as $2500.00 within the next 30 days or take back the items and refund you $4.00 in cash.

LIFT-A-LITE ASH RECEIVER—IT'S NEW
A Unique Combination of LIGHTER and ASH TRAY

Lift-a-Lite Ash Receiver is built for the modern smoker's convenience. By simply lifting the cap a fine flame instantly appears. Replace cap and you are ready to enjoy your smoke with tray at hand to receive ashes or rest cigar, cigarette or pipe. Made of durable BAKELITE in a variety of lustrous colors and beautiful mottled designs. The tray is especially deep and spacious—5 inches wide by 6 inches long—richly designed and beautifully decorated; ornamental and useful on every fine table and desk. The lighter burns ordinary lighter fluid. New flints are inserted in a second. Will last a lifetime. Ideal for living room, library or bridge table and every home, office and club. Sells for only $3.45. You make up to 200% profit. And here is our other winner selling big.

DE LUXE New Size Money WALLET SET

A New Combination Set of Wallet and Pocket Lighter.

This combination of new size money wallet and lighter to match is proving a whirlwind seller. Every man will want this De Luxe Set. The wallet is smartly designed of genuine leather with handsomely embossed rose pattern. It is made to meet every requirement of the present day for a handy, convenient wallet to carry both the new size money and old large bills in separate compartments. The lighter is of the sure fire type and covered with genuine leather embossed to match the wallet—a regular $5.00 value which you can now retail for only $3.45, and make up to 200% profit. Reap a harvest of the biggest profits you ever made in your life by getting behind these 2 big sellers now. Our proven successful selling plans will show you how.

ONE FREE

Samples of these 2 Sensational Sellers for the Price of only ONE—$3.45

ONE FREE

You can start taking orders immediately after receiving samples. Everybody a prospect—dealers, business houses, club rooms, givers of gifts, etc., offer you tremendous sales and profits.

MAKE $2500.00 IN 30 DAYS
Our Six Tested Proven Selling Plans Show You How

RETAILS FOR $3.45

We have originated an entirely new advertising imprint plan which brings you big commissions automatically in addition to the profits you make on the sale of this item. Lift-a-Lite Ash Receiver is designed to take advertising imprint. Most business firms regularly give away advertising gifts and premiums to their customers and friends. Over one hundred million dollars is spent annually in premium and specialty advertising. Get your share of the profits in this tremendous business. With our amazing new Advertising Imprint Plan you can cash in $2500.00 a month **WITHOUT ACTUALLY DOING THE SELLING.** Your neighborhood dealer does that for you. Complete details of this amazing plan will be sent you with your samples. Our other plans are—C. O. D. Plan—you take orders and collect your profit in advance. Initial and Emblem Plan which brings instant sales and sells every prospect. Salesboard Plan—an extra profit maker. We show you how to build a steady growing repeat business with dealers. Each and every one of these plans will lead you to big earnings. Full details of all sales plans including sales helps, order blanks, etc., will be sent you with your samples.

READ THIS EXTRAORDINARY GUARANTEE

You take no risk. Send for these samples now, and when they arrive, if you are not satisfied it is the biggest opportunity ever offered for big sales and quick profits, return the samples and we will refund you not $3.45 but $4.00 in cash—55c extra for your trouble. YOU ABSOLUTELY TAKE NO RISK.

FILL OUT COUPON BELOW, enclose $3.45 or $1.00 deposit and we will ship C. O. D. for balance. You will receive one Lift-a-Lite Ash Receiver and one new size money De Luxe Wallet and Lighter Set—everything complete as illustrated here—with full details of all our amazing selling plans. There isn't another opportunity that compares with this. Exclusive territory to producers. Act now!

CLIP AND MAIL COUPON TODAY

GORDON MFG. CO. (Dept. CJ-65), 110 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

Your two big winners and selling plans interest me. I accept your special offer. Send me one **Lift-A-Lite Ash Receiver** and one **De Luxe New Size Money Wallet Set.**

Enclosed find ( ) Full Remittance $3.45.
( ) $1.00 deposit. (Will pay balance on delivery.)

It is understood you will refund $4.00 if I return these samples. Please include full details of all your selling plans.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

GORDON MFG. CO., Dept. CJ-65, 110 E. 23rd St., New York, N. Y.