AUGUST 10, 1920 15 CENTS

# DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY TUESDAY

## BELLS OF GUILT

BY William Dudley Pelley

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# DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

**E V E R Y  T U E S D A Y**

**Vol. XXXIII  Contents for August 10, 1920  No. 6**

## TWO NOVELETTES



## TWO SERIALS



## FIVE SHORT STORIES



## ONE SPECIAL ARTICLE



## DEPARTMENTS



## MISCELLANEOUS



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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY TUESDAY

Vol. XXXIII August 10, 1929 No. 6

# Bells of Guilt

## by William Dudley Pelley

WHEN the two-forty train stopped at our Vermont town yesterday afternoon a soberly clad, ferret-eyed little man alighted from the last car and hurried up Depot Street toward the business section and the People's National Bank.

Fifteen minutes afterward Peter Whipple, cashier of the bank, dodged across Main Street and climbed the stairs in the Odd Fellows' block to the rooms of the Citizens' Club. Entering the phone booth used by club members only, he cautiously called Arthur Baxter, cashier of the First National. His conversation was brief and pointed.

"Our Mutual Friend is in town. Arrived on the two-forty. We're on the carpet now. You're due there first thing in the morning. If you've any raveled ends, you know what to do with them *to-night!*"

"Our Mutual Friend? I get you! Thanks."

"And pass the word along."

"Surest thing you know! Thanks for the tip."

The connection was severed. From his mahogany desk behind the glazed-glass partitions of the First National Bank Baxter arose and passed quietly among his employees.

"The Federal examiner is in town. Whipple just telephoned. He's going through the People's now. If there are any loose ends needed to put us in apple-pie order for the morning, add them before you leave for the day."

All this was in accord with a custom which has grown among our local bankers. They had nothing to conceal from the examiner, but even honest men feel more comfortable forewarned against the ordeal of that official's visit.

"Nothing to add that I know about," laughingly said "Big Bill" Baxter as he logged a pile of currency in the teller's cage.

From his desk against the south wall behind Baxter a young man by the name of Houghton straightened up and turned a pasty face toward the teller. Houghton's hands trembled violently. He spilled a dozen disfiguring ink drops on his ledger.

As the moment drew near for locking the bank for the day the young bookkeeper stepped into Baxter's cage. No one was near them. Hoarsely into the teller's ear he whispered:

"I want to see you up in my room, Bax, not later than six o'clock. You remember! If you know what's healthy, you be there!"

It was an order. Baxter shot a murderous look after the young man's retreating figure. The subsequent announcement from Tarring that some one wanted him on the telephone drove Baxter's hot resentment temporarily from his mind. But anger from a new cause possessed him when he learned the person at the other end of the wire.

It was Mrs. Helen Baxter, widow of his lately deceased brother. The woman exasperated Big Bill even as she had exasperated Henry Baxter through a dozen years of married life, principally because she was much that the heavy-jowled Baxter brothers in their private lives were not.

"This is Helen speaking, William," she announced. "I've called you because I'm in difficulty. Mr. Harper has just phoned in from Foxboro that he's going south to-morrow. He's asked if I'd be willing to clean up my final mortgage payment on the place, if he'll drive over especially to finish the business tonight."

"What of it?" demanded Baxter. "You've still got enough of Henry's insurance to make the payment."

"But it's almost three o'clock. I won't be able to get down and draw the currency out of your savings department before you close. I was wondering if you'd admit me and pay me twenty-four hundred if I tapped on the front door in about a half hour?"

Baxter consulted with Tarring.

"Yes," he replied a moment later. "Tarring says he'll save you twenty-four hundred out of the cash, and one of us will admit you when you rattle the front-door latch."

At ten minutes to five in the upper front bedroom of a white cottage on Elm Street Harry Houghton faced his fellow bank employee. There was no one besides themselves in the house. Houghton had gone to the trouble of making certain.

"Well," snappily queried Baxter as the door closed behind him, "going soft?"

The bookkeeper wet his lips.

"It's about time somebody went soft. This sort of thing can't go on forever; my nerves are completely scrambled. They're scrambled because 'murder will out;' so does embezzlement; so does concealed crime of any sort—eventually. You can't buck the moral law permanently and get away with it—and I'm wise enough to know it."

"Oh, the devil!"

"We won't have any cheap bravado. The Federal examiner's in town, and that means what it means!"

"Well, what of it? This isn't the first time he's been through our books. And it won't be the last."

Houghton swallowed perceptibly. He was a poor actor.

"It'll be the last with anything wrong with our books that I'm aware of! I'm done flirting with twenty years in Atlanta."

"Twenty years in Atlanta? Fiddlesticks!"

"Cut out that 'fiddlesticks' stuff! I mean business. You're going to find it out before morning, because I don't intend to spend the next two decades of my young life in the pen—especially

when I haven't done anything to deserve it!"

"No; not much. Only kept secret a shortage you've known to exist for the past seven months!"

"I kept quiet out of decency—out of regard for you. You said you'd have that shortage 'fixed up' in ten days. To be a good fellow, as well as save the bank from scandal, I gave you that chance. But you've broken faith. Now, because I was white, you sit there and insinuate I'm a crook along with yourself."

"Be careful what you say, jellyfish! Go too far and I'll mash in your face!"

"Mash away. I'd like to see you try."

Baxter shut his lips firmly. He drew a long breath. It came to him that bullying methods would work with young Harry no longer. He felt for a cigar and bit the end from it very deliberately.

"Get hold of yourself, Harry," he advised in quite a different tone. "We'll discuss this thing sanely and not like a couple of prize fighters. I didn't keep my promise to you because my investment hasn't yet materialized; I can't put that sixteen hundred back until it has. Harlan won't tumble to that fake note this time any more than he did before. Why on earth should he? Now I don't relish the strain of this thing any more than yourself. But, having gone so far, I've got to see it through. If you won't spill the beans by going soft, by pulling any of the cheap moral-law stuff, I'll get away with it. The money I took isn't lost. I was wise enough to buy the stocks outright, not on margin."

"How do I know the money isn't lost?"

"Are you calling me a liar?"

"A man who'll borrow money from a bank and cover the loan with a bogus note won't stop at lying. Yes, I'm calling you a liar."

"You miserable little——"

But again Baxter controlled himself. He was in young Houghton's hands, and he knew it. So did Houghton. The elder man took a different tack, one he had often used to excellent advantage before—throwing himself on the bookkeeper's sense of fair play.

"All right, granted I am lying. What can I do about this shortage right now? I can't turn my securities into cash between to-night and nine o'clock to-morrow. You can't get blood from a stone!"

"Borrow the money. Borrow it legitimately from some one here in town, to-night."

"I can't. If I knew any one I could borrow sixteen hundred from 'legitimately' I wouldn't have left that Sargent note in the bank as long as I have. And you know it!"

"I know nothing about it whatever."

"You know I can't get sixteen hundred on so short a call as this."

"All right; then it's your funeral. I've worried long enough. My duty to the bank, and to myself, is to tell Harlan and Tarring in the morning that the Sargent signature is a rank forgery executed by the First National's 'trusted teller!'"

"If you do," cried Bill Baxter, "I'll drag you down to Atlanta with me as sure as God made Adam and Eve!"

"Go ahead. Try it. If I'm judged guilty, I'll go. But I won't be judged guilty. I'll tell the truth. I'll deny all knowledge of the theft until I discovered it a short time ago!"

"You'll deny it? You'll look fine denying it! Think you'll be believed?"

"I'll take my chances."

"With that pasty face of yours, especially if I take solemn oath I split that sixteen hundred with you as the price of your silence?"

"I could kill you for that," declared the boy in a whisper.

"Go ahead. Death solves lots of problems. It might solve mine."

"Bax," begged the boy in sudden hysteria, "you've got to raise that money!"

"I tell you I can't raise that money. Would you force me to commit another crime just because Harlan's hit the place? And I'll have to commit another crime if it means scraping up sixteen hundred between now and nine a. m."

The boy wiped the dank sweat from his forehead. His lips were colorless. But he retorted:

"That's your funeral, I say again. Another time stop and think of consequences before you go crooked in the first place."

"You're saying that just because you know my sister-in-law drew twenty-four hundred from the bank an hour ago."

"You're a liar; I am not. What your sister-in-law drew out doesn't interest me in the least. All I'm interested in is the return of that money to the bank's cash before Harlan goes through our sheaves of securities. And that's final."

Baxter's jaw was ugly, but still he managed to preserve his self-control.

"All right, Harry," he declared stoically, "get this thing straight. If you drive me to secure this money before nine o'clock to-morrow in any old way, I'll have to rob Peter to pay Paul. And just as much responsibility for this second felony will be on your young head as on mine."

"I've got some self-respect——"

"You haven't got as much spine as an eel."

"I'm not trying to make myself out a tinhorn hero, but you'll find I've got spine enough for things that are on the level."

"I fail to see any evidence of it."

"I told you a moment ago that crime always comes out. It's been proven ages ago that you can't flaunt the moral law and get away with it permanently. This crime of yours is coming out some time. It might as well be now as ever. I've come to the place where I'm going to protect myself. You're going to pay up or wear stripes."

The boy turned and walked to the window. He stood looking grimly down into the maple-bordered street. Baxter glanced around furtively. But he abandoned any desperate scheme that might have come into his head for an attitude of complacent philosophy. There was still a chance of persuading Harry away from his disastrous course.

"That murder-will-out business," he declared disgustedly as he felt for a match to light the cigar, "is pabulum for women, you poor simp. Because murder has unexpectedly been unearthed in times passed, people like you hypnotize yourselves into believing it's always discovered. *And it isn't!* The surface of this old earth is riddled like a colander with the graves of murdered victims whose killing has never been discovered. For every felony that inadvertently comes to light there are fifty that remain a mystery. Go ask any officer of the law. And it's so with all crime. Beat the moral law? Of course you can beat the moral law—the same as any other kind of law. It's being done all over the planet every day in the year. All you need is a nerve and a front. Most felonies are unearthed because poor weaklings go flooie over that same moral-law stuff. Or they give themselves hopelessly away by their faces or deportment. What you need in a case like this, Harry, is simply a stiffening of the spine. Lean on my nerve if you've not enough of your own. Leave the whole business to me by saying nothing. Believe me, I've got spine enough for us two."

"And you—*you!*—are trusted behind the grill of a bank handling other people's money!" The boy turned and withered the other with the honest contempt and loathing in his wholesome face.

"Thank God I'm not always going to be there. I took the job because my uncle wanted me to take it. If I agreed I thought he might favor me with a goodly section of his wad. But the old fool is too tight to die. I don't like the banking business and never shall. Splitting pennies gets on my nerves. I like to make mine in a man's-sized way."

Houghton gave a scornful exclamation.

"Man's-sized way! Embezzlement! Great dope!" Then the muscles about his mouth became iron strong. "All right, then. You've accused me of lacking nerve, but, unless you have sixteen hundred of new money in the First National Bank by nine o'clock to-morrow morning you're going to start for Atlanta within the coming week, and I'm going to do the starting. I'm done. Nothing you say can dissuade me. I may go with you, but not because I'm in your class.

"Is that final?"

"It is!—absolutely final!"

"Very good, my young Sunday-school hound. Then the responsibility for what may follow rests solely on your own Puritanic shoulders!"

The house which Bill Baxter's brother bought on a mortgage two years prior to his death is located at the far eastern end of Allen Street. It is a two-story structure facing the north. An L connects the main building with a huge red barn. Four venerable maple trees grow in the front yard; the whole is inclosed by a white picket fence.

Behind the Baxter place is a spacious yard. Behind the yard, and separated by a piled stone wall, a meadow slopes away to the southward until it reaches an old byroad that runs into town paralled with Allen Street, but passing the Hunter brickyards near the south fork of the Green River.

About eleven o'clock last night, in the very bright light of a full moon, a man hurried along this deserted, weed-grown back road. He came from the direction of the brickyards on the edge of town where he had secreted a roadster automobile. He was of stocky build and disguised by the coarse clothing of a vagrant. His head was covered by an oversized cap. A thick blue sweater enveloped shoulders and torso. He wore a pair of faded blue overalls and oversized rubber boots. In his right hand he carried a suit case. The last was empty. He would later employ the suit case to hold his disguising clothing.

Reaching the southeastern corner of the far-flung mowing behind the Baxter place, this man paused and looked behind him. Convinced that he had not been followed, he stepped into the sumach and blackberry undergrowth. In the birches and alders that bordered the mossy stone wall he secreted the hand bag.

Keeping close to the wall that borders the eastern side of the meadow, he finally crawled over the intersecting north wall into the Baxter barnyard.

Every window in the house was dark save one. That lighted window was in an upper bedchamber over the kitchen. The prowler was acquainted with the interior of the house before him; he had lived ten years in the place before his brother's death made his removal to the Whitney House in the village and his residence there more conventional. He knew the illumination came from Helen Baxter's bedroom. It indicated that his brother's widow was retiring for the night.

This stimulated the man into quicker action. He had reasoned that with twenty-four hundred dollars in the house, the woman would keep them overnight close by her in her bedchamber. He particularly wanted to see where she secreted that money. She would give so extraordinary a sum her

first—and last—consideration before extinguishing her lamp. If the prowler knew exactly where she hid it, that much searching would be avoided with attendant chances of discovery. Old man Harper had not driven over from Foxboro that evening after his mortgage payment. The man by the corner of the barn had forestalled that trip by a bogus telephone message purporting to have come from Mrs. Baxter herself.

The man retraced his steps to the open regions under the big barn. He knew the location of a ladder long enough to give him access to that second-story window. He cared nothing for the telltale footprints he left in the soft loam of the barnyard. The oversized boots would later be destroyed along with the rest of the disguise.

In careful silence he lifted the long ladder from its pegs, carried it up the slight incline and across the back yard. Against the clapboards a few inches beneath that upper sill he laid its tips and without a sound mounted upward until his eyes were on a level with the space beneath the curtain.

He looked into an ordinary country bedroom about twelve feet square, whose walls were covered with extravagantly flowered paper, and whose floor was made of old-fashioned, hand-hewn, butternut boards, each board fourteen to sixteen inches wide, and the whole painted a worn gray.

Directly across from the window was a cheap yellow bureau, with a door beside it on the right. This door opened into the upper front passageway whose stairs ran down into the kitchen. Against the south wall and beside the window through which the man was peering was a wooden bedstead with low head, and a small table with a marble top stood between it and the edge of the window so near to the spy on the ladder that he could have reached an arm forward and touched it had not a square yard of fly screening been tacked permanently on the outside of the sash.

The three-inch space beneath the shade disclosed the lone woman preparing her hair in a single comfortable cable for bed. She had already disrobed. A kimono of cheap, dark material covered her night dress.

Eventually the man beheld what he had mounted the ladder to learn. The woman finished her hair and, after a moment's rumination, picked up a long, bulky white envelope. She toyed with it for a moment, plainly wondering why old Harper had failed to come after his money. Then she crossed the room and slipped the packet under her pillow. Returning to the bureau, from a small fancy drawer at the base of the mirror frame, she produced a shining, sinister weapon. The man on the ladder recognized that weapon. It was his dead brother's revolver. A moment later the woman laid the gun within handy reach on the marble-topped table between the head of the bed and the edge of the window casing.

Turning back the coverlet of the bed, she laid aside the kimono. Self-reproach cut rapierlike through the man as he saw the woman kneel for a time beside the edge of her homely bed.

Arising, the woman crossed to her bureau. She picked up a heavy nickel alarm clock, wound it, and set the alarm. Then she carried clock and oil hand lamp across to the small table and set them down beside the revolver.

Thereupon the spy hastily descended the ladder. He knew that her next move would be to extinguish the lamp and run up the shade. That would mean discovery.

Once again behind the barn, the prowler seated himself on an old berry crate and prepared to wait. He dared not attempt to get into that room until he had given sister-in-law sufficient time to fall asleep.

He had planned the whole maneuver with minute care and attention to detail. Convinced that young Houghton would expose his financial indiscretion in the morning if money did not take the place of the bogus Sargent note, he had decided to rob his brother's widow after the method of any wandering vagrant. When he had secured the twenty-four hundred in that bulky envelope he would shed his disguise, lose it, and return to town. He had keys to the bank. He would be there first in the morning and make the substitution the moment the time lock released the combination on the big safe doors. Robbing a widow who had two or three thousand dollars left was one thing; tampering with his bonding company and the Bankers' Protective Association was quite another. So he would get that bogus note out of the way and lose young Houghton from his trail. Then, with the remaining eight hundred dollars, during the coming week he would resign his job and drop out of sight. He had small fear of his sister-in-law recognizing him later, accusing him as the thief. Even if she did, she would find it difficult to prove her case after the precautions he had taken, and the destruction of evidence he was planning, in the hours before the coming dawn. As for the nerve to face that accusation, granted it was made, that was the last and smallest of his worries. All that was necessary to execute such a maneuver was "nerve and a front." He had both, knew he had both, and was willing to bet heavily on them.

The moments grew into quarter hours. Midnight was tolled across the sleeping countryside from the clock in the tower of the town hall, back in the village. The spring night was very quiet under the high-riding moon, excepting for the singing insects and the occasional blossom-scented breezes wafting through the mellow depths of the shadow and moon wash.

At length the man approached the house. Again he carefully climbed the ladder. With his ear close to the upper sill he listened intently. He hoped to hear the rhythmic breathing of the room's occupant, which would indicate that she was deep in slumber. But the steady, metallic clicking of the heavy alarm clock spoiled the perfect inner silence.

Taking plenty of time, the man produced his pocketknife and cut away the fly screening around the edge of the sash. He thrust the material so removed into one of his overall pockets. Slowly, only an inch or two at a time, taking eight or ten minutes in its accomplishment and keeping as close as possible to the weather-stained, paint-blistered sill, the made-to-order burglar took thief's chances and finally got himself into that chamber. Now he felt kindly disposed toward that brassy-ticking clock. Its metallic heartbeats broke the uncanny stillness and neutralized small noises that in an otherwise perfect silence might have awakened the room's occupant.

It was a mere detail to secure the revolver from the table top. He shoved it in the pocket along with the square of fly screening. Then he lowered himself to the floor and wormed his way close beside the sleeping woman's bed.

Her face was turned away. Stretched along the floor where she would not at once see him if she chanced to awaken suddenly, the man poised on his right arm, raised his left, and started working his hand under the woman's pillow.

He felt certain that if he worked slowly enough he could get his flattened hand completely beneath her head without arousing her, and could successfully withdraw the packet of currency. It was the neatest method, much more preferable than a messy struggle in which she might require binding and gagging. Success depended on his pa-

tience. A fraction of an inch at a time was sufficient. If he could thus procure the money without a scuffle in which his identity might be disclosed, he could afford to spend all the rest of the night at the simple, though fatiguing, task.

So he worked, moment after moment. Curbing his natural impatience, knowing that a single false or precipitous move would prove fatal, he thrust his fingers in deeper and deeper. Up to his knuckles, his wrist, six inches of his arm, he inserted his left hand, the muscles of his other arm aching badly with the unnatural posture by which he held himself upright along the floor Finally securing the packet, he began the equally torturous task of removing it safely.

One inch, two inches, three inches—and still the woman did not awaken. Four inches, five inches, six inches—he pulled it toward him. Once she stirred uneasily, and he stopped for what seemed a half hour while his right arm ached as though thrust in molten copper. She turned her head in his direction, then rolled it back again. But she did not sense the change in the shape of her pillow. She slumbered on.

With the packet out from beneath the pillow at last, the man paused a moment to enjoy the sensation of self-congratulation and exhilaration. Giving his aching right arm a rest, the packet gripped securely in the fingers of his left hand. William Baxter, burglar, at length started on hands and knees for the window. In so doing he committed his first bad blunder.

The revolver which he had thrust into the overall pocket slipped out on account of his bended posture and fell upon the bare boards with a sharp, resonant knock.

With an inarticulate cry the woman awoke. She reared upward on the bed and saw the silhouetted figure. She cried out again—a piercing, frightened scream. With lightning motion her hand went to the table top. She pawed around crazily for the gun which had been removed.

Baxter realized instantly that he must either flee precipitously or struggle with the woman and tie her up in order to make his get-away. He decided on flight and threw a leg over the sill. But the woman decided differently. Scantily clad though she was, she clutched at him, screaming the while at the top of her voice. The man was dragged backward into the room.

"Shut your head!" said the man between his teeth.

"Give me my money!" cried the woman.

For reply, in order to be certain of retaining his contemptibly procured loot, the man flipped the packet of money from him through the window and down into the yard. He could regain it later when he had dispensed with the woman—when he had secured her in such a manner that he would have a chance to make good on the bogus note at the bank before she was discovered.

With another wail, this time of despair as she saw the packet travel out into the white moonlight, the woman tore frantically at the man's face and chest.

Around and around the chamber man and woman struggled furiously. The bureau and bed were both shoved from their proper places. They smashed against the marble-topped stand, overturning it and breaking the top into several pieces. The unlighted oil lamp crashed to the floor, sprinkled the boards with dangerous glass, and splotched them with oil. The alarm clock spun against the wall where its glass face was likewise broken.

And all the time the woman alternately sobbed and screamed—screamed in a manner that should have been heard far over the village line, and brought a townful of helpers.

For several moments this struggle kept up, the man breathing laboriously with the unaccustomed effort, unable to subdue the other.

Then came the tragedy.

If any person who might have rendered assistance had been in the neighborhood he might have heard the single, sharp, ominous crack of a revolver.

Then came quiet in that upper chamber.

Big Bill Baxter's skein of mundane destiny had gone abruptly into an irreparable snarl.

A time later the man straightened from bending above a prostrate figure. The match in his fingers burned him badly, but he did not appear to notice.

He was suddenly ill all over. Waves of nausea arose from his stomach. His portly physique, unaccustomed to the exertion he had lately undergone, was exhausted to the point of collapse. But that did not keep from his rioting senses the great vivid presentiment with its awful import which made him whisper over and over again hysterically:

"I've killed her! I've killed Helen! Good Lord, I've killed her!"

The man's first emotion had been overwhelming terror when he realized what havoc the hastily clutched gun had wrought. Now came regret, terrible regret—the kind too often described erroneously as remorse.

"I didn't mean to do it, Helen!" he cried as though his victim could hear and forgive. "It was an accident. I swear it was an accident. What have I done? It isn't possible! It hasn't happened! It—couldn't!"

But it had happened. Bowed, weak, and sick, upon the bed's edge, the man tried to reason. What should he do? What did murderers usually do?

The hands of the clock crept around to one hour past midnight; then to half past one. And all was quiet in the Baxter homestead far at the end of Allen Street.

The first thing William Baxter had to face squarely was the fact that, unwittingly or no, he had committed a terrible crime, and if found out he would pay the supreme penalty. Self-preservation, the first law, swayed him and directed him at the moment above all else, even his dilemma over the bogus note in the First National Bank. Remorse and spiritual retribution would come later. The exigencies of the occasion permitted no time to be expended disastrously in self-pity.

But the program which the miserable man mapped out did not come to him all at once. It was evolved bit by bit as the initial horror at the frightful accident was superseded by a grim philosophy. The mischief had been done. Nothing could undo it. He must make the best of it and fight—fight to save himself from the gibbet or the electric chair. For the time nothing else mattered.

Into his chaotic mind came a fragment of something he had told the Houghton boy that afternoon: "The earth is riddled like a colander with the graves of victims whose murders have never been discovered." Was it? Would he bet his life on his contention?

After a terrible hour something akin to self-confidence began to return.

"I've got to use my poker face now with a vengeance," he muttered to himself. "And I've got to prove it wasn't cheap bravado when I talked about a nerve and a front. I've told myself when reading accounts of New England murder trials in the Boston papers that if I were forced to do it I could hide a body so that it never could be found. Now I've got to hide one or be electrocuted. Where and how is it going to be done?"

The fatal mistake of most murderers, so he told himself, was their overprecaution. They hid their victims in weird, out-of-the-way places where amateur sleuths would be certain to hunt because

they would do exactly the same if circumstances were reversed. The successful supercriminal would hide his victim as near the scene of his crime as possible and in a manner so utterly obvious that it would require a detective as clever as the supercriminal to expose that place. But small Vermont towns do not boast of such extraordinary detective ability. Where was such a spot on the Baxter premises?

His first thought was the cellar. But murderers always chose cellars. Digging up a cellar, too, was the first move the stupid "authorities" of a small town would be certain to make if their suspicion of foul play was aroused.

He thought of the attic. But garrets and closets would come in for the closest search, as would walls, yard, adjacent wells, outhouses, and woods.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes the man sat on the bed's edge, recovering his mental equilibrium, getting back his nerve, planning disposal of the Nightmare Thing and what he should do afterward. Thus by process of elimination his eyes were caught and held by the moonlight falling on the fourteen-inch boarding of the bedroom floor.

Several years before in his room in the main body of the house he had lost a silver dollar temporarily down the crack between the wide, butternut boards. Prying up one of the latter to recover the money he had discovered a space ten or twelve inches deep between the bedroom floor and the ceiling plaster of the room beneath. If the same amount of space prevailed between the floors here, his problem was solved. This bedchamber being happily over the kitchen, because it was the warmest sleeping room in the house in winter, meant that the thin matched board which served for a ceiling in the apartment below would bear the weight of the woman and retain any evidences of the crime that might otherwise discolor plaster. He had but to rip up a couple of the boards, secrete the body, clear away all traces of the struggle, and restore the flooring. Then he would recover the packet of money, return to town, fix up his indiscretion at the bank, and give it out that his sister-in-law had gone away to visit relatives. During the coming week he would use the eight hundred dollars remaining to flee the country, probably to South America. Murderers generally fled to South America.

The simplicity of the hiding place appealed more and more to him the longer he sat there. Finally he pulled himself together and got into action.

Familiarity with the house from long residence there enabled him to find his way downstairs in the dark. He secured another hand lamp. In his brother's former workshop behind the kitchen he selected what tools he required to pull up the floor boards. He also procured a broom, some rags and soap, a bucket of cold water. Then he retraced his steps to the fatal bedchamber.

With a variety of demented delight he subsequently found that the same space between the flooring prevailed. Then he steeled himself for the task of utilizing that space to its wonted advantage.

It was obvious when the most terrible part of the labor was over that the proper place to hide the room's débris was in the same aperture. All the broken glass of lamp chimney and clock face he therefore swept into the opening. He kicked in the battered clock and pieces of marble from the broken table. A few blows with the hammer smashed the base of the table into kindling. These wooden parts were dropped in likewise.

Everything portable in the room which in any way betrayed that a struggle had occurred went into the hiding place. He swept the room carefully. When he was absolutely certain that

he had nothiing else to secrete he replaced the wide boards. He took care to use the same nails in the same holes from which they had been drawn.

The boards back in place at last, he went into the main part of the house and secured fresh linen to spread up the rumpled bed. He made the chamber to appear exactly as his sister-in-law would have left it while on a visit.

He carefully washed away all traces of the accident and then, unsatisfied with the appearance of the freshly abluted flooring, he executed his finishing touch of artistry to the grim work by pulling up the straw matting which covered the spare-room floor in the northwest corner of the main house and carpeting the gray boards beneath which the terrific evidence of his night's supreme calamity would he secreted until he could put America behind him.

It was a long, difficult job, that last. But he knew it was going to he worth it. Who would ever pull up the straw matting of a bedroom and the floor boards beneath, if the house were ever searched? Nobody! The idea was preposterous. He had all night before him, and his life depended on the success of his endeavor. So he stopped to do a perfect job.

And it was a perfect job. Bill Baxter was one criminal out of a thousand who, by luck or no, covered the evidences of his felony with such perfection that the search of the premises for Helen Baxter proved fruitless.

With the tools of his night's labor restored accurately to their places and not a single bungling article dropped behind to negate his endeavor, Baxter quitted the place by the woodshed door, because it had a spring lock which fastened it behind him on the inside. He found his packet of money lying white on the ground in the waning moonlight. He removed the ladder from beneath the window and carried it back to its accustomed place.

Again arrived at the corner of the mowing by the abandoned road he found the suit case. He shed the ruffian clothes, packed them in the grip, and became once more the respectable bank teller. He had now to go back along the weed-grown road to the brickyards where he had secreted his automobile, and by a circuitous route drive into town from the east. Thus if any one saw him and recognized him, it would work in his favor as an alibi. The terrible thing upon his conscience he deliberately put aside—at least for the present. He had to concentrate now on "a nerve and a front."

Just before he reached the brickyards he paused long enough on the South Branch bridge to weight the suit case with stones and drop it into the deep, sluggish waters below. It sank immediately from sight.

It was ten minutes to four in the morning when he came into town from the east. He drove into the silent and deserted garage yard, ran his car close to the fence, and shut off his motor.

Into an alley behind the Whitney House he turned and disappeared through a rear door that would allow him access to the upper floors without being observed. He stole up the narrow stairway smelling of kitchen sewerage and lighted by a flickering gas jet. Then he tiptoed noiselessly toward his bachelor apartment at the front of the second floor. He intended to wait there until eight o'clock, then head for the bank and get that bogus note out of the way before the arrival of either young Houghton or Harlan, the examiner.

But when Bill Baxter placed his key in the lock on his apartment door, his heart turned over!

His door was already unlocked. A light was burning within. Some one was waiting for him!

"You!" cried the luckless man.

"Yes—me!"

Leaning against the footboard of Bexter's bed was young Houghton. His clothes were rumpled, his features haggard—even more so than on the previous afternoon.

"What are you doing in my rooms? Who let you in?"

"Chief Hogan told me to wait until you came."

"Chief Hogan!"

Baxter's cosmos turned to sand that sifted down into his shoes. With a terrific weakness he realized something had gone wrong.

"That's who I said—Chief Hogan!"

"What's Hogan giving any such order for? You young snake—have you told?"

"You mean about the note?"

"Yes!"

"No. The note is Harlan's business, not Hogan's."

"Then why is Hogan messing in my affairs?"

"Mean to say you don't know, Bax?"

There came a tightening in the man's throat and about his forehead. Where were his nerve and his front, anyhow? Was he going soft himself—so soon? Beneath his breath he swore, scarcely conscious that he did so.

"Of course I don't know. But I'm blooming well mad finding you here without my permission. How'd you get in, I say?"

"The chief had Pat Whitney unlock your door. You see, we came here to get you, and you didn't respond. It confirmed my suspicions, and so the chief ordered me to wait until he and the sheriff got back—or at least sent word."

"Got back from where?"

"Your sister's place, of course!"

"My—sister's—place! What have they gone out there for?"

"You mean to stand there in cold blood and pretend you don't know?"

Baxter saw red. He advanced on this young Nemesis. His jaw was thrust out. His head was lowered. His arms hung ominously, gorilla-fashion.

"I don't know what you mean. But if you're insinuating——"

He stopped. He gaped blankly at what young Harry held resolutely—pointed at Baxter's abdomen.

"Back up, Bax!" commanded the boy. "The chief left this with me in case you started cutting up—or trying to run away. You said yesterday afternoon I had no spine. But I'll show you how much I've got when it's for something on the level. And I'm thinking this is on the level, mightily so."

And into the bank-teller's paunch young Harry dug the sinister muzzle of a police forty-five.

"See here, Houghton!" Baxter's tone was husky, deadly. "You explain what all this is about or that gun is going to be used—right sudden."

"Where have you been spending this night?"

"Driving my sister-in-law in my car to Wells River."

"What for?" The question was cynical.

"So she could catch the half past two train for Boston."

"I suppose you can prove it?"

"I can."

"What?"

"Yes, I can prove it. But Heaven help you for sticking that thing into my stomach—when you drop it."

The first faint glint of uncertainty came in the boy's eyes. But his lips curled scornfully as he demanded:

"By whom can you prove it?"

"By half a dozen people I saw there; by a man in Marshfield where I stopped to get ga——"

"Do you mean to stand there and declare your sister has gone to Boston?"

"She has! And when she's had time to get there I'll prove it by her also. Now tell me what you mean by all this

ten-twenty-thirty stuff, and talk fast, or I'll——"

"Baxter, you stand off or I'm going to plug you. You know very well where you've been to-night and what you've done. And so do I! And I'm going to have the truth, and you're going to speak it in front of Hogan and Sheriff Crumpett."

"I suppose," said the man, as if he snarled the words, "you've followed me around this past night?"

"Not exactly. But when you left me this afternoon, threatening to commit burglary and put the blame on me, I just wanted to be sure what happened when you visited your sister to-night. You see, I'm engaged to Eva Hastings, the girl in the telephone office. Eva sort of keeps me straight. When she said that some one in the First National called up old man Harper in Foxboro over the long-distaince right after we had our little talk, I reasoned out it was you, and why."

Baxter wet his cracked lips. But it was going to be his will against Harry's, his acting against the bookkeeper's. And he did not propose to be taken without a fight.

"Be darned careful what you say, young fellow. You're charging me with robbing my sister, I take it."

"Which you did!"

"You lie!"

"When you say that—smile!"

"I'm not in a smiling mood. Did you see me rob my sister?"

"I didn't see you. But early last night I went out to the Baxter place and hung around. I wanted to observe exactly what happened during the night. I saw a man that might have been you climb a ladder and enter Mrs. Baxter's chamber window. A few minutes later I heard a woman scream. She screamed terribly, lots of times. Then came quiet. It was real eloquent, Baxter, that quiet. I'd have gone in to help her only for two reasons: I was unarmed, and —well, the cries stopped and instinctively, I'll confess, I didn't want to see why."

Baxter's face for a moment was apoplectic. Then the expression passed. On his features settled the stoical poker face on which he prided himself. And yet it occurred to him to gape—as though stunned.

"Lord, boy—what are you talking about?"

"You mean to say that prowler wasn't you?"

"Of course it wasn't me, you fool. I've been over to Wells River with Helen, I tell you. She got word to-night that her brother was deathly ill and to come at once. I'd gone out to see her about borrowing sixteen hundred from her, and she asked me to phone old Harper not to come over because she was going away and was too busy packing at the last minute to attend to it herself. I saw her aboard the two-thirty and drove back. Mind you, I saw people along the way who can corroborate this! And here I come to my rooms to get some sleep before Harlan's visit to-morrow, and you stick me up with a gat! Now for Heaven's sake tell me what's happened?"

Houghton stared. The only trouble with the lad was his sense of moral responsibility and justice—justice to a fault. Baxter's story sounded bogus, and yet—suppose it should be true! He wavered.

"What's happened? Well, that's what Chief Hogan and old man Crumpett have gone to find out. Meanwhile you're under orders to wait here with me."

"How long ago did you tell them the story of your experience out to Helen's place?"

"About—a half hour. I'll confess I've been wandering around almost all night, trying to decide what was right to do. I felt that in one way I'd forced you to rob your sister. If you had as-

saulted her—or worse—and I told the police, your motive would come out, and so would my own part in concealing your shortage. Finally I went to Eva's house. She got out of bed, dressed, and came down on to the front piazza. I told her the whole story. She advised me to tell the chief that I'd been out Allen Street way for a walk and heard something going on at the Baxter place which led me to believe the woman had been attacked by burglars. So I did."

"But if that's all you told him, he wouldn't leave you here with a gun to receive me when I got back. You'd be out there with him."

"I told him about your sister drawing twenty-four hundred dollars out of the bank yesterday, and we bank people being about the only ones to know about it—that we were aware of. While I was talking to him, in the basement of the town hall, Eva spoke up from behind me. She'd followed me downtown because she'd thought of something—your telephone message to Foxboro. It looked like a fake to keep that money on the Baxter premises overnight. We all came to these rooms to see what you knew about it, if you were here. But you wern't. And Chief Hogan was the one who declared he believed you were the burglar."

"I'll give the lie to all of you country blockheads!" cried Baxter, scarcely recognizing what he was saying. "At nine o'clock, when Harlan comes, there'll be no shortage at the First National Bank—but not because I've done anything crooked on Helen's premises; it's because Helen herself, voluntarily when I confessed the truth, agreed to lend me the currency, and took only eight hundred with her. Bear in mind I say I can prove all this by twelve o'clock this noon. But if you and these two old police fossils say or do anything to injure my reputation in this community, you're going to suffer like Judas Iscariot. Hogan and Crumpett have property. You haven't, but I'll get you for criminal slander."

Baxter did not miss the increased indecision expressed in the boy's bewildered eyes.

"I can prove——" faltered the lad.

"You can't prove a darned thing!"

"Then who was the woman in your sister's house that screamed? I certainly heard screams and sounds of a struggle."

"I don't know, unless the male thief you're prattling about got into the place and discovered a female thief there before him. Lots of people—and crooks—both male and female, might have learned about Helen's money being drawn out of the bank to-day. At any rate, Helen's house will tell the story."

"Yes, Mrs. Baxter's house will tell the story. And if you're really innocent you'll go out there with me immediately and face Hogan and Crumpett."

"Certainly I'll go out and face Hogan and Crumpett. Think I'm afraid of them? Come along! I'm as anxious to know what's happened out there since Helen and I left, as you or anybody else."

This was a poser for the boy. It wasn't possible that a guilty Baxter would volunteer to return to the scene of his crime with all the evidences, incriminating and otherwise, which would be lying about in that upper bedroom. He lowered the gun, sick at the thought of the injustice and personal responsibility if he had acted too much on impulse.

"Where's your automobile?" demanded the boy.

"Down in the garage yard. Come on! We'll get out there pronto and let circumstantial evidence speak for itself."

Out to the Baxter place on far Allen Street they sped in the roadster, every rod of the distance increasing the boy's timidity and indecision. Bill Baxter

couldn't be guilty and head so willingly toward the scene of his crime. But the man at the wheel ignored him. Would he do such a thing, the teller wondered, if he had really taken Helen to the junction? He convinced himself that he would, as they turned into the Baxter yard.

The main front door of the house stood open. Houghton leaped out. He did not see his companion slip a bulky white envelope from his pocket into the leather pocket on the right-hand automobile door. Then both ran up the walk and the steps.

"Hello!" cried Big Bill. "What's happened here, anyhow? Hogan! Crumpett! Where are you?"

Immediately footsteps sounded above-stairs. The red-faced, white-mustached chief of police, only his cap and badge denoting his authority, appeared at the head of the stairway carrying a lantern. Baxter mounted the stairs. Sheriff Crumpett appeared from an adjoining room and also carried a lantern.

"What's this burglary business Harry's talking about?" demanded Baxter with a fine bluster. "What have you found?"

The officers exchanged glances.

"Where's Helen Baxter?" asked the sheriff quietly, boring Big Bill with his hard gray eye.

"At this moment, en route for Boston." Baxter said, and—and exactly he related the same story he had told Houghton. He had an excellent memory, well stimulated by the danger. The story gathered conviction by repetition.

"Plausible," conceded Chief Hogan. But his voice lacked the smallest indication of sympathy. "Of course, as you say, your story can be proved by Mrs. Baxter on her arrival in Boston. But on the other hand, it also allows you considerable leeway in the matter of time for you to make a get-away—if you're the burglar that visited these premises last night and caused some woman to scream so Harry heard her."

"Be careful," roared Baxter. "Don't you go connecting me with this! You've got property, the both of you, but you won't have it long if you go smutting my local reputation with your stupid deductions from this boy's wild story." Then he softened his tone. Contemptuously he added: "Seems to me a lot of credulence is being placed merely on young Houghton's say-so. There's no real proof, I take it, that a burglar entered the premises at all."

"Oh, yes, there is," returned Hogan. "We've found where the fly screening was cut away from the outside of the bedroom window. We've followed foot-tracks that are all over the soft loam behind the barn and seen where they went from the ladder pegs to the back bedroom window. We've even found the dents in the soft earth made by the uprights of the ladder. All these confirm Harry's story. At least they give enough proof to satisfy me. Also I know Harry. He ain't given to aberrations of hearing women screaming in the middle of the night or hatching up no such cock-and-bull story to tell in the village merely for the sensation."

Baxter shrugged his shoulders.

"Is that all you've found—for evidence?"

"We're waiting for daylight. I admit we're sort of upset by coming out here after hearing Harry's grewsome story and finding everything all in apple-pie order. Wasn't quite what we expected. But something's happened here this night because of the cut screen and the footprints, to say nothing of Mrs. Baxter being missing, and we're inclined to believe that the intruder had time to tidy up and destroy his evidence while Harry was mopin' around town tryin' to get up the gumption to come and tell us what he'd heard. Daylight ought to tell. If you don't know noth-

ing about this, you'll stay around, of course, and help us in the search."

"Certainly! Didn't I tell you I've nothing to hide?"

It was Hogan's turn to shrug his shoulders. He winked at Crumpett—a wink that did not escape Baxter, and maddened him. Then the chief turned and started down the stairs.

"We'll go down cellar and prod around," he announced.

Crumpett managed to get young Houghton's attention. In the boy's ear he whispered:

"Don't let him out of your sight, Harry. He knows more than he's willing to tell; I've seen this injured-innocence stuff before. But we've got to get real evidence in order to hold him. You keep close to him, and if starts to run, you follow, firing off that revolver we gave you, in order to tell us what's up."

At the head of the cellar stairs Hogan was saying to Baxter:

"As soon as it gets daylight I'm going to ask you to step out into the yard and measure them footprints with your own shoes."

"So you're bent on fastening this crime on me?" demanded the bank teller angrily. "It's a wonder you don't search me for the missing money," he added sarcastically.

"A perfect waste of good energy," returned the chief, with equal sarcasm. "If it was you that took it away from Mrs. Baxter by force, you've had plenty time to hide it elsewhere since!"

Several times before the dawn that began breaking about five o'clock, Baxter was tempted to break and run. Only the grim realization that such a course would be conclusive proof of guilt restrained him. He realized that there would be no bulldozing of Hogan and Crumpett as he had intimidated young Harry. But he also appreciated that it was a legal fundamental that he could never be tried for murder until the body of his victim was produced, and no matter how much the officers might suspect him; so long as they found no conclusive corporal proof of his felony they were powerless to compromise him.

Gradually the situation acquired a most welcome redeeming feature. The longer the officers searched the premises, the more Baxter's self-confidence grew, for no more evidence came to sight beyond the missing window screen and the footprints outside. They searched the cellar, every inch of it. They poked and prodded around in closets, trunks, chests, and attic. Helen Baxter's bedroom was the most innocent appearing of any apartment in the entire house. The murderer himself was surprised to note how orderly and natural the chamber appeared by daylight.

Outside the summer morning was melodious with the cheeping of hundreds of awakening birds in trees and shrubbery. All the world was coming into renewed activity for the stratagems and spoils of another day. At quarter to six a fresh, clean, dew-moist sun bathed all the world with scarlet and gold from a focal point near the summit of Haystack Mountain over eastward.

As the moments grew it gradually dawned on Baxter with sober conviction that he was going to "get away" with this thing. He knew half a dozen women in Boston who would impersonate Helen and furnish her temporary alibi, if he could only manage to get word to them first. And he felt that he could if it became necessary, and he was free of the officers for a little time to establish a phone connection where no obnoxious person would listen in on the wire. When he went into the rear yard with the officers and his shoe prints failed to fit those made by the oversized rubber boots he had worn the night before, still more confidence came. The chief and the sheriff had nothing on him, and they knew it—not yet.

Downcellar went the representatives of the law when the footprints had failed to coincide. Baxter and a badly upset young bookkeeper were alone in an upper room.

"Bax," pleaded the boy, "what really did happen? Heaven knows I don't want to accuse you or any other man unjustly, but I did see a man climb into your sister's room, and I heard her scream during sounds of a scuffle. Something happened. What was it?"

"Even if I knew, which I don't, do you suppose I'd tell you? Haven't you proved you can't be trusted. Why did you run and blab to those old idots instead of coming to me with your suspicions like a man, as I'd have done with you if conditions had been reversed?"

"I was upset. I was sick. I'm sick now. Please don't hold it against me, Bax. Have you really got the money, legitimately, for taking care of the Sargent note before nine o'clock?"

"I have. Wait, and you'll see. But if any back-fire comes from all this, involving me, believe me, young fellow, you're going to pay—high, wide, and handsome."

"All right, all right!" exclaimed the boy, choking. "And you honestly took Helen Baxter to the train—honest?"

"Honest!"

"You solemnly swear?"

"I solemnly swear."

The boy sank down upon a chair and buried his pale features in his sweaty palms. On Baxter's countenance, however, was only loathing and disgust. Nerve and a front? Courage and dare? Bah! The boy had none!

Down in the cellar Crumpett scratched his white head and faced Hogan.

"Mike," he declared, "I'm still unconvinced. Something ain't right about this place. Bill Baxter's hiding a secret; you can tell it to watch him when he don't know you're looking at him. He'll raise a fierce rumpus if we pinch him—and we couldn't do that anyhow on no more evidence than we've got already. But I don't like the looks and acts of William Baxter. I never trusted the cuss. Do you remember me telling you about the drummer that come to the Whitney House last December and caught sight of Baxter? When Bill failed to recognize him he got peeved and swore Bill was the same chap who'd set in a whale of a poker game over in Portsmouth and been trimmed to the tune of an even sixteen hundred dollars? The drummer said over there Bill went under the name of Robbins, but no one knew anything about him. Well, I'm just telling you that Baxter knows more of what went on here this past night than he wants to tell, and I won't be convinced that Mrs. Baxter went to Boston until I've talked with the woman and heard her say so herself."

The chief made a gesture of helplessness. Crumpett reached forth a hand and gripped his arm.

"Michael, did you ever feel the presence of a dead body?"

"Feel it? No."

"It's born in some folks, and I'm one of 'em. And it's come in mighty handy many times in the sheriff business. Michael, from the first I've felt the presence of a dead body on these premises. Young Harry told too straight a story and was too much worked up to fake that woman-screaming. And as we've been going over the place, and especially since I've watched Baxter when he didn't know I was looking, stronger and stronger has come the presentiment of foul play."

"You mean——"

"I mean I think Baxter come out here to rob his sister for some reason or other, that she put up a fight for her money, and, accidentally or otherwise, he's killed her. The Wells River story is pure fake. It's a stall for time. He's hid the body somewhere on these

premises and, unfortunately for us, been given time to tidy up and destroy convicting evidence. Mrs. Helen Baxter ain't to Boston, I'm telling you. Mrs. Helen Baxter's dead, and I can feel the presence of her remains——"

"Lord, Amos, you gimme the creeps. We've been over this house with a fine-tooth comb. If Mrs. Baxter's been killed by Baxter or anybody, the murdered couldn't lug the remains far without leaving traces. Where are they?"

"There I'll admit you got me—or, rather, the murderer's got me. But it's in some queer place. We ain't looked everywhere, because if we had the remains would have come to light. Man, I know Helen Baxter's been killed because in this house there ain't even the slightest traces of a struggle, and under the circumstances I'm telling you that's the clearest kind of evidence that something out of the way's took place. To me it proves ab-so-lute-ly conclusively that the criminal did something that needed covering up. And what could that be but the worst crime—homicide?"

"But the law don't recognize murder without the body is produced. All the circumstantial evidence we might gather in a thousand years won't reach the cuss unless we have the body or some part of it as proof that homicide's been done. Bill may not know it, but so long as the body stays hidden he ain't got to prove any alibi for his sister, about her going to Boston."

"I know it. But for Heaven's sake don't tell him. Give him enough rope, and he may hang himself. Now then, suppose we go all over these premises again."

Six o'clock found the two officers rummaging again in the attic. They went through closets, looked under beds, in clothes baskets, trunks, chests—anything large enough to contain a human torso.

Six-fifteen came; six-twenty; six-twenty-five. The excuses the officers finally began giving Baxter for his continued detention were trivial and absurd. They knew it, and so did he. The bank teller became abusive. An innocent man would have a perfect right to become abusive.

Finally they all turned into Helen Baxter's bedroom for a last look about the place. Baxter knew the officers were balked. The worst was over. So long as that body stayed hidden, he was safe. More and more self-confidence came back. His care now was to restrain his exhilaration.

The sheriff felt himself strangely "warm" when he stood in that orderly bedchamber—as small children cry out "warm" and "cold" in a game of hide and seek. There was a body on the Baxter premises. The sheriff felt it. He had trusted his intuition too many times to disregard it now.

Yet where had the condemning evidence been secreted? Oh, for some little clew! Oh, for something, however infinitesimal, that would indicate to him the secret hiding place! If the walls could only speak! If the furniture could only relate what it had witnessed during the past few hours of darkness!

However, the sheriff had to give it up. What was the use?

"I'm sorry, Baxter," he apologized. "Maybe I have been guided too much by my feelings."

With a glance of victory at young Houghton, graciously Baxter accepted the confession of failure and his own absolution. Yet as the sheriff confessed that failure he was standing with the soles of his feet just two inches above the evidence that would have sent Baxter to the electric chair before October.

"That's all right, sheriff. I know how you feel," returned the bank teller. "I'm as perplexed as you are, but so long as I know Helen's all right and has her money with her—and the premises here don't show much damage

beyond the cutting of a ten-cent window screen, there really isn't much to get excited about." He pulled out his watch. "I've got to get back to the village, now. The Federal examiner is looking over our books this morning, and I've got to be there early."

The sheriff was reluctant to give up. But again, what was the use? If he had a hundred years—unless he tore down the house board by board—he could never examine the premises any more carefully than he had done since four o'clock.

"We'll go," he agreed with an inward curse at his failure. And he started with the others for the door.

But as he started, directly under the sheriff's feet, under the matting and the boards of the flooring, supplying exactly the "tip" which the officers had prayed for—came the sudden, angry, rebuking, intermittent banging of heavy nickel bells.

It was six-thirty, the hour at which Mrs. Helen Baxter had set her alarm clock to awaken her.

Bill Baxter, a mental wreck, is in the local jail to-night awaiting indictment by the grand jury.

## ELABORATE RUSE USED TO STEAL DIAMOND

JUST for a few minutes did the vigilance of a clerk in a jewelry store in St. Paul, Minnesota, relax, but those few minutes were enough to enable a clever crook to steal a four-thousand-dollar diamond from the firm. Young and well dressed, the crook got the diamond by guile and patience. He called at the jewelry store one morning and, confiding to the clerk who waited upon him, that he had made a big commission in a real-estate deal, asked to be shown some high-grade diamonds. When he had decided upon the four-thousand-dollar gem as his choice for a present to his wife, who had been ill, he said he would bring his fair lady to the shop to inspect the diamond herself before purchasing it.

Shortly after twelve o'clock the crook reappeared at the jewelry store with a woman. The clerk who had served him in the morning was at lunch, as the would-be purchaser knew, so the man and woman agreed to return again at four o'clock. When the hour arrived the man entered the store a third time, but without his wife, who, he said, had suffered a relapse. He asked that the clerk take the gem and go home with him to exhibit it to the invalid.

This request was granted, and together the two men started forth in the patron's touring car. Just before they arrived at a pretentious-looking house the enthusiastic customer asked once more to look at the diamond. He was given it and still had it when the car drew up at the curb; the clerk and the "husband" went up the path to the house.

The front door was not open.

"Go around to that side door, and I'll go to the rear door, get in, and let you into the sitting room," the "resident" suggested to the clerk.

Impressed by the seeming wealth of the "real-estate man" the clerk acted upon the suggestion. No one opened the door for him, and after a prolonged wait he returned to the front of the house. Then he discovered that the handsome touring car had vanished and with it the rich customer and the store's diamond.

# While He Slept

## by Bryan Irvine

*Author of "Mr. Bad Man," etc.*

THERE were a dozen or more reasons why Stanley Albers wanted his uncle Dodson Briggs to die.

Stanley Albers was fifteen thousand dollars in debt; his allowance of two hundred dollars a month was entirely too small for a person possessing his epicurean tastes; his debtors were crowding him; he wanted to purchase a new eight-cylinder racing car and an airplane; it was his earnest desire to marry a certain young and beautiful heiress, but her father would not consent to the union until Albers could show a balance in the bank of at least five hundred thousand dollars. Albers hated his uncle and he was sure his uncle reciprocated in kind. His uncle, an old bachelor and very wealthy, had long since made his will in Albers' favor merely because Albers was the only child of his sister. Briggs, however, though seventy years old, was enjoying robust health and fully intended to live twenty years more. A very discouraging prospect for the good-looking and popular young Stanley Albers.

His uncle's frequent and bitter remarks concerning Albers' mode of living and the young man's fast friends jarred on him most of all. Briggs had hinted strongly several times that he would bequeath his entire fortune to certain charitable and educational institutions if Albers did not mend his ways.

All the above-mentioned facts were weighing heavily on the mind of Stanley Albers. If uncle Dodson would only die everything would be all right. Hence Albers began methodically to devise ways and means of ridding the earth of his undesirable uncle.

Murder? Well, yes—technically. Not cold-blooded; a sort of indirect murder. It must be a clean job and not the slightest clew must be left for the police or detectives to follow. Shooting was out of the question. Poison would never do. Hired assassin? No; a hired killer always talks sooner or later. An auto accident? No; uncle refused absolutely to ride in the same machine with his nephew. Well, how then?

Would it be possible to discover a way to extinguish life without leaving the slightest infinitesimal clew as to who committed the deed? The greatest detectives in the land agree that such a thing is impossible; that there is always a loose end somewhere that can be picked up and traced to the guilty person or persons.

Albers wisely considered all these things. He studied the case from every angle, planning coolly and deliberately, eliminating method after method with an almost uncanny patience. He felt sure that there must be one safe way of murdering his uncle.

But there was no great hurry, the young man assured himself. He must not be too hasty; better be slow and safe than to be sorry. He would study closely the histories of famous un-

solved crimes; he would calmly weigh the details of the proposed job from the viewpoint of a detective instead of from the viewpoint of the murderer. He could, he was sure, find a safe way of murdering a man—an entirely unique way. Meantime he would forsake his favorite cafés and expensive pleasures, thus eliminating to a certain extent the likelihood of his uncle making a new will.

Matters stood thus for several weeks. Then something unpleasant happened. Albers' creditors called in a body upon Dodson Briggs, presenting their bills and threatening suit if the accounts were not settled immediately. It was Briggs' first inkling of the enormity of his nephew's indebtedness.

Briggs settled all the accounts, and in a sullen rage he awaited the homecoming of his nephew.

During the winter months Dodson Briggs lived with his nephew in an elaborately furnished five-room suite on the eighth floor of an exclusive downtown apartment house which was only ten minutes' walk from his offices. It was in the library of this suite that he greeted his nephew, glowering upon the dark-eyed young man as the latter entered the room.

"Sit down, sir," Briggs commanded sharply.

Albers leisurely obeyed, seating himself across the room from the irate old man and calmly lighting a cigarette. He had long since grown accustomed to unpleasant scenes with his uncle.

"You seem to be entirely unaware, young man," Briggs began, his voice tense with suppressed anger, "that less than an hour ago I paid off some of your long-standing debts, amounting to something over fifteen thousand dollars."

Albers started slightly and checked an exclamation. He had not expected this; he was sure he had been successfully "stringing" his creditors until he could get his uncle out of the way. He shrugged his shoulders and made no reply. He had no defense. Which latter fact only seemed to increase Briggs' anger.

"Sir," he cried, shaking a finger at Albers, "you have driven me to the limit of my patience and endurance! You have shown no inclination whatever to become anything but a worthless spendshrift and a gambler. You are an ungrateful whelp! I have tried, tried hard, to make something of you because you are the son of my dead sister. Even she, if she were yet living, would no longer expect me to leave a fortune, which I have made honestly and after forty years of ceaseless work and worry, to a worthless scamp such as you have proven yourself to be. Now listen to this, sir." The old man had risen and crossed the room to tower in a fine fury over the apparently unmoved yound man. "Henceforth your allowance will be only one hundred dollars per month. My home will be your home until the day of my death. I am doing this merely for the memory of your mother. Take it or leave it, as you wish. But on the day I die you will be a penniless and homeless tramp, unless in the meantime you have earned a home and money of your own by the sweat of your brow. Not one red cent of mine will go to you when my work on this earth is done. That's final, irrevocable."

With that the old gentleman strode into an adjoining room, slamming the door with a bang.

Albers had paled slightly under the ordeal, and, in the chaos of his mingled emotions and thoughts, one fact stood out glaringly: his uncle would lose no time in drawing up a new will, a will of which every word would pronounce a life sentence of work and privation for the fastidious and one-time carefree Stanley Albers. This terrible realization struck the young man like a blow

in the face. Penniless! A common laborer! A slave to the whistle of mill or factory! One of a vast army of wage earners who must bow submissively to the commands of a superior! A nobody!

As if the want, strife, and struggle of future years were being pictured before him, Albers leaned forward, his hands gripping the arms of the chair until the knuckles stood out white and bloodless. He gazed wide-eyed at the door to the room which his uncle had just entered. Should he smother his pride and plead with his uncle? No, he would not plead; only whimpering cowards begged for mercy. Should he calmly reason with the old man and promise to live a different life henceforth? No, he could not do that; besides, his uncle was determined. No amount of arguing, pleading, or reasoning would cause him to relent.

Suddenly Albers' eyes narrowed evilly. Should he kill—kill? It was his only hope for his uncle's fortune. Should he take the one big chance? It was now or never. He arose and crossed toward the closed door. Somehow his very gait suggested a panther or some other beast of prey. Yes, he must kill his uncle—now. His hand closed over the doorknob. Then he paused and listened intently. His uncle was talking. A deep furrow of perplexity creased Albers' brow. To whom was his uncle talking? Was there another in the room with Briggs? Ah, that was it! Briggs was talking over the 'phone. Albers stooped cautiously and pressed his ear to the keyhole.

"And you say that Mr. Blanchard is not in the city?" Briggs was saying. Malcolm Blanchard was Briggs' attorney and intimate friend. "Will be away ten days?" A pause, then: "Well, yes, it is very important, but not necessarily urgent. It concerns my will." Another pause. "No, Mr. Daly, I would rather wait until Mr. Blanchard returns. Thank you, nevertheless. Kindly tell Mr. Blanchard to call at my offices at his earliest convenience when he returns to the city. Yes, that's all. Good-by."

Albers heard the receiver click on the hook and he hastily sprang away. He could hear his uncle approaching the door. The eavesdropper seized a book from a near-by shelf, and a moment later as Briggs walked stiffly through the room to leave the building he saw his nephew sitting where he had left him, ostensibly very much engrossed in the book. The old man halted in the open door and turned to gape intently at Albers.

Albers' mind was in a whirl. The printed words on the page before him seemed to be dancing about like so many tiny automatons. In spite of the apparently animated letters, however, he was reading, though his brain was not registering what he read. He read one sentence; he read it again and yet again. Would Briggs never stop staring at him? He heard his uncle pass out and close the door. Then the significance of the words captured his mind. Again he read the sentence:

As irrefutable as are the laws of gravitation are the laws of psychic phenomena.

Albers read on:

The one big question to-day before students of psychology is whether or not the power of suggestion—the greatest, though most woefully undeveloped, power of every man—will be a boon or a curse to mankind. For him who realizes the wonderful benefits derived from the intelligent application of autosuggestion, great things are in store. To him who practices autosuggestion indiscriminately and without a practical knowledge of its subtle power for good or evil, may come sorrow and despair; a chaotic condition of the mind bordering on insanity; a deplorable mental state brought about by constant, unintelligent, inconsistent mental suggestion which ultimately undermines the delicate accord of the conscious and subconscious minds.

Psychologists are looking forward with no little apprehension to the increasing practice of unspoken suggestions being exerted ignorantly or unscrupulously upon unsuspecting persons by the friends or enemies of those persons.

As a sponge absorbs moisture, so does the subconscious mind of man absorb suggestions, both good and bad, emanating from the minds of others. Perhaps your enemies are this moment directing unclean, criminal, or injurious suggestions at your mind. Naturally pure and moral minds will be polluted by the malignant and dark suggestions of others. Even now criminals are leading their victims to ruin or destruction by mental suggestion. We gasp at the wonderful, terrible possibilities of the great latent power in the minds of men. Where——

Albers was intensely interested. He ceased reading only long enough to look at the title on the cover of the book, "Suggestion—Its Use and Misuse."

The afternoon wore away. Briggs returned from his offices and soon thereafter left the rooms to go for his evening meal. Albers read on. Briggs again entered the library an hour later, but again departed to go to his club. Albers read on. For an hour or more he did not shift his position in the chair. Deep lines of concentration were on his face as he read. Some of the more salient paragraphs he read over and over, stamping indelibly upon his mind the minute instructions of the author of the book.

At last he closed the book and arose. His eyes looked tired, and his face showed traces of the five hours of mental exertion. On his lips was a hard, cruel smile. He had eaten nothing since noon, but he was not hungry. He decided to retire to his room and read several more chapters of the book.

Midnight found the young man pacing back and forth across his room. In his hand was the book. Now and then he paused near the light to read. Never before had he delved into the mysteries of man's mind; never before had he encumbered his brain with thoughts of psychological phenomena. But now—well, his plans were already laid. His uncle must die. Briggs would not draft a new will until Attorney Blanchard returned to the city. Blanchard would not return for ten days.

Albers consulted the calendar on the wall. Ten days, and to-day was the fifth of January. The tenth day after the fifth would fall on a Sunday, January fifteenth. Albers determined to make Friday, January thirteenth, the last day on earth for Dodson Briggs. That would allow Albers eight days in which to drive Briggs to self-destruciton. Oh, yes, it was a unique method of murdering a man; murder, of course, but to even the greatest detectives it would be an open-and-shut case of suicide. Dodson Briggs would be dead two days before Attorney Blanchard returned to the city. Briggs' will would be probated as it now stood; his entire fortune would go to Stanley Albers.

Albers crossed the room to the window. Raising it cautiously, he looked out. Eight stories below him was the street, at this late hour almost deserted. A policeman leisurely walked his beat half a block away, the shield on his blue coat glittering in the light of the electric street lamps. A taxi sped down the street and disappeared around a corner several blocks away. The night was cold; fine snow was falling.

Ten feet from Albers' window was the open window of Briggs' room. The old millionaire always slept, winter and summer, with at least one window in his room wide open. Albers looked at the open window, then down at the snow-covered pavement eight stories below. He shuddered involuntarily as he stepped back into the room and prepared to go to bed. To-morrow the game would begin.

It was seven o'clock on the following morning when Albers awakened. Almost instantly his eyes rested on the opposite wall. Beyond that wall slept

Dodson Briggs. For a half hour the young man stared fixedly at the wall. The intensity of his thoughts showed in his face. He was concentrating; every iota of his will power was centered on his uncle. He must, he would, convey to the subconscious mind of the sleeping old man the subtle suggestion of suicide. First, the time and place must be planted in the brain of his victim.

"Friday night, January thirteenth, at three minutes to twelve! Friday night, January thirteenth, at three minutes to twelve!"

Again and again Albers concentrated on the suggestion, his face tense, his dark eyes, wide, staring, unwavering, never leaing the opposite wall. He imagined himself bending over the sleeping Briggs and whispering in his ear: "Friday night, January thirteenth, at three minutes to twelve o'clock."

The scheming man's greatest weapon was his absolute, unfaltering belief in the efficacy of the suggestive method of driving his uncle to suicide. He felt sure that the mind of Dodson Briggs could not withstand eight days of ceaseless suggestion. He *would* dominate the old man's mind; he *would* drive him to suicide.

And about that one remaining clew, that one loose end of which the great detectives spoke—bah! How could it be anything but suicide? Briggs always locked his door on the inside before retiring. He never failed to leave the key in the lock. There was no transom over the heavy oaken door. And, too, the old man was a crank on burglar alarms; they were everywhere about the apartments. There would be no struggle or evidence of a struggle. There was no fire escape outside his bedroom window; the only fire escape led downward past the library window. Briggs would merely clamber out of his bed at three minutes to twelve o'clock on the night of Friday, the thirteenth day of January, and, with conscious mind at rest in natural slumber, his every movement being actuated by the suggestions of Stanley Albers—through the old man's subconscious mind, he would walk deliberately to the open window. Several seconds later his lifeless body would be lying on the pavement eight stories below the window. Clews? Rats! It would be suicide, pure and simple. The police would find Albers apparently sleeping soundly in his own room. The door to Briggs' room would be locked on the inside, and the police would be compelled to force an entrance.

During the forenoon Albers continued with the suggestion: "Friday night, January thirteenth, at three minutes to twelve o'clock." Then in the afternoon he added a bit more: "Friday night, January thirteenth, at three minutes to twelve o'clock. The window, the open window in your room. You will arise from your bed promptly at three minutes to twelve o'clock on the night of Friday, January thirteenth. You will go to the window."

Hour after hour Stanley Albers' mind was concentrated. Coolly, deliberately, heartlessly, he continued. He left the rooms only long enough to eat his meals in a near-by café. And even while he ate, his mind was intent, his heart was intent, his very soul was intent on the task of driving Dodson Briggs to the death leap from the window. He realied that he must not waver, must not doubt, must exert every iota of his will power on the great mental task, ceasing only when he slept. Now and then for a few brief moments he consulted the book, "Suggestion—Its Use and Misuse."

Dodson Briggs continued in his regular routine during the succeeding days. He said little to his nephew, though Albers noted several times that the old man's actions were becoming somewhat peculiar. He paced the floor in his

room, something he had never done before. Several times he had entered the library to stand silently and gaze at Albers in a peculiar manner. Were Albers' "suicide" suggestions taking root in the old man's mind? Had the slightest hint of his impending fate slipped from his subconscious to his conscious mind?

On the sixth day Albers looked at a reflection of himself in the large mirror in his room. Yes, the great mental strain was leaving its mark. He was thinner, his face haggard, and his dark eyes were tired looking. He smiled, however, a devilish smile. He was sure he was winning. He had added bit by bit to the suggestions until now they were as he wished them.

Time after time, again and again he concentrated his mind on the mental task. "Friday night, January thirteenth, at three minutes to twelve o'clock, you will rise and go to the open window in your room. Unhesitatingly, unafraid, you will climb through the window and drop to the pavement below."

Albers wondered how many times he had directed that mental arrow at the mind of his uncle. He was sure he had aimed it a thousand times or more. Wat mind could withstand that?

Then came the night of Friday, January thirteenth. It was nine o'clock when Albers, in his room, heard his uncle enter the adjoining room. He could hear the old man making his usual preparations for the night. The door was locked, the window raised. Cautiously opening his own window, Albers thrust his head out to see that all was ready for the final mental effort. No light shone from Briggs' window; the old man slept.

Calmly Albers disrobed and donned his pajamas. Before turning off the light he looked again at the book on the table near the head of the bed. The book was always there when he slept. Several times during the past eight days he had awakened in the night, but after reading several paragraphs in the book he had little difficulty in drifting back into slumber. What an inspiration that book had been to him! "Why," he told himself, "if I had not accidentally seized that book from the score or more on the shelf that day, I would probably be a tramp after uncle Dodson died!"

Now to the last several hours of intense concentration.

Albers switched off the light and a moment later was lying in the bed, his eyes fixed on the opposite wall. "To-night—this is the night," his thoughts ran. "At three minutes to twelve. The open window—you will rise and go to the open window and, unafraid, you will climb through the window and drop to the pavement below."

After an hour of ceaseless concentration Albers became aware that he was drowsy. It was as if his whole mind and body were crying out for rest from the great mental strain he had been under.

"Oh, well," he argued to himself, "even if I do drop off to sleep, he will make the leap, anyhow. The suggestion is firmly planted in his mind now, and it is just as well that I be asleep when the police come."

Then, rousing himself, he went on again: "This is the night. To-night at three minutes to twelve. You will rise at three minutes to twelve o'clock. You will go to the window—the open window near the foot of your bed. You will—will—curse this drowsiness!—you will rise at three minutes to twelve." Albers was experiencing great difficulty in fighting off the desire to sleep. "You will——"

Then came slumber.

It was fifteen minutes after twelve that a group of men stood about a

huddled heap on the snow-covered pavement in the street. The physician kneeling by the side of the body arose and shook his head. "Death was instantaneous," he announced professionally.

"You saw him leap from the window ledge, Casey?" the house detective queried of the policeman on the beat.

"Sure I did," the uniformed man answered. "I had jist taken me watch out uv me pocket to see phwat time it was. I was comin' around the corner a block down the street, and I looked up and seen 'im jump from the window ledge."

"And what time was it, Casey?"

"It was exactly three minutes to twelve when he took the jump."

"Strange, very strange," the house detective commented. "He fell asleep the other day in one of the chairs in the lobby and I passed near and heard him talking in his sleep. 'At three minutes to twelve, on Friday night, January thirteenth,' I heard him say. Then: 'The window, the open window,' and a lot of other stuff like that. He's been acting queer; a number of guests have noted it and commented on it."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" came the quavering voice of Dodson Briggs. "I might have guessed that he was contemplating suicide. I, too, heard him talking in his sleep, saying something about 'The window, the open window. Friday night at three minutes to twelve.' Oh, dear! Oh, dear."

Lying in the snow near the body of Stanley Albers was a book. A bystander picked it up and passed it to the policeman. Casey brushed the snow from the cover of the book and read the title aloud:

"'Suggistion—Its Use and Misuse,' —whatever the divil that manes."

## INADEQUATE PROVISION FOR CHILD OFFENDERS

IN reply to inquiries recently made by the United States children's bureau, at least one court in every State admitted that children in its jurisdiction were detained in jails to await trial, and thirty-seven courts in eighteen States stated that no effort was made to separate juvenile offenders from adults held on charges of breaking the law.

About 175,000 children's cases were brought before the courts of the country within a year. Of these, 50,000 were heard by courts which have no adequate facilities for handling cases of juvenile offenders. The children before trial associate with adult criminals, and their cases are heard under the usual processes of the courtroom; no special study is made of their needs.

In fact, of the 2,034 courts answering the queries addressed to them, only 145 declared that they provided for examinations of the mentality of the child culprits. Thirteen courts, all situated in cities having a population of more than 100,000, were equipped with mental clinics for the treatment of juvenile offenders of defective mentality. Children in rural districts who transgress the laws have little or no provision made for handling them except as adult criminals.

# Strictly Business

## by Ronald Oliphant

***Author of "Marmaduke Assists," etc.***

THE soft-footed, blank-faced Chinese servant opened the door to Tom Lanigan and silently ushered him into Kid Logan's den or study—the place where he transacted most of his affairs.

Lanigan was surprised. The apartment might have been the abode of a bank teller or any other moderately successful business man. As a rule one expects to visit a prominent underworld character by way of a back alley leading to the rear room of a dive or saloon in a section of the city infested by thugs, gunmen, wharf rats, and others of that ilk.

A casual observer would not have taken Kid Logan for an enemy of law and order, a practitioner of a particularly hazardous and desperate branch of the criminal profession. As he rose to his feet and smiled a cordial greeting to his visitor, he resembled a prosperous young broker or merchant more than anything else. His smooth, well-massaged cheeks glowed with the pink brought into them by the fingers of a skilled barber. His gray suit was faultless in cut and fit. His slender hands—almost the hands of a surgeon or a pianist, one would have guessed from their appearance—were beautifully manicured. His face was pleasant and kindly; it had nothing of the malign expression that an underworld king's visage is supposed to wear. He had neither a cauliflower ear nor a broken nose, nor did he talk out of the side of his mouth. His speech was clear-cut and precise; his voice cultured and refined as he addressed his guest.

"How do you do, Mr. Lanigan? Have a seat; try one of these cigars." He held out a box containing an expensive brand of perfecto. "When you're quite settled, tell me what I can do for you."

Lanigan was a little taken aback. The manner of his host was so cordial, he was placed so entirely at his ease, that he felt almost uncomfortable. His mind found difficulty in grasping the fact that this was the notorious Kid Logan, leader of a band of thugs, who would—for a price—do almost any desperate piece of strong-arm work that might be assigned to them by their leader. Kid Logan was a terror in the underworld, according to those who had told Lanigan about him. To fall a victim to his gang was a thing to shudder at; it was the worst fate that could come to any one.

Shaking off his uncomfortable feeling, Lanigan accepted the proffered cigar, bit off the end, and sank into the chair indicated by his host. He was a sallow-faced, unwholesome-looking creature, this Lanigan; a crook of the kind despised even by his fellows. His graft was petty, and his victims only too frequently were poor women whom he managed by various specious wiles and artifices to separate from funds which, in many cases, were their financial mainstay.

When he had the cigar drawing, Lanigan explained his mission.

"Big Jake sent me," he said. "He told me you were the right man for the work I have to do."

Kid Logan smiled agreeably. His pleasant blue eyes twinkled like waves in the summer sunshine.

"My specialty, as you know, is strong-arm work. Want some one beaten up?"

A knowing grin spread over Lanigan's features. His face bore a vague resemblance to a withered potato pressed into a grotesque facsimile of the human countenance.

"Who's to be the victim?" Kid Logan inquired.

"Larry Meehan."

"I don't know him," said Logan after a moment's thought and a brief consultation of a card catalogue on the desk at his side. Like all modern master criminals, he was thoroughly methodical and businesslike in his methods. He had the efficiency bug badly.

"Tell me about him," he added.

Lanigan drew his chair closer, laid his cigar on the near-by ash tray, and lowered his voice to a whine.

"It's this way, Mr. Logan," he explained, spreading out his hands. "I got a girl. She's a mighty nice girl, and everything'd be all velvet if it wasn't for this fellow Meehan. He's cuttin' me out, and I want it stopped. The best way I can think of to punish him is to hand him a good beatin'—the kind you're famous for—and make it plain to him if he don't lay off, after one beatin', he'll get 'em regular until he does."

Logan looked thoughtful. "How do I know this is on the level?" he asked.

"You can call up Big Jake; he'll vouch for me," Lanigan assured him.

"Taking that for granted," Logan continued, "are you ready to pay my price? I'm not cheap, you know."

"Anything within reason, I'll be glad to meet," said Lanigan.

"You understand that I'm the one that does the work and takes the risk. Sometimes my men get arrested and have to be bailed out or defended. They're very thorough. The job's worth a good bit."

Lanigan's eyes showed a flicker of apprehension. "I'm willing to pay anything within reason. Name your price, and I'll tell you if I can do business with you."

"For a good beat-up with trimmings—a real hospital case—it'll cost you a thousand bucks."

Kid Logan made the announcement as calmly as though he were quoting the price of an article of merchandise that was offered for purchase.

Lanigan squirmed, and his little eyes shifted about the room. "It's a bit more than I figured on," he mumbled; "but if you'll do him up good, I suppose it's worth it."

Logan leaned back in his chair with a complacent expression on his face. "You know my reputation," he remarked.

After another half-minute of deliberation, Lanigan made up his mind. "All right; it's a go," he declared. "How do I settle?"

"We'll take care of that after the job's done," the kid announced. "I like everything to be perfectly satisfactory before I collect from my clients. They generally settle within a few days of completing my services."

Lanigan nodded to indicate his approval; then: "If you wouldn't mind," he said, "I'd like to see the job done; not that I doubt your work, y' understand, but just for the satisfaction I'll get out of it."

"As long as you don't butt in and spoil the game, there's no objection. When I have all the plans laid, I'll let you know where to post yourself. Now tell me all about this bird we're to do up—where he hangs out, the best place to catch him, and so on."

## II.

One night, about two weeks later, Tom Lanigan crouched in the basement of an apartment house, whence he could

command a view of the street on which Kid Logan's gang of thugs was to stage the beating up of Larry Meehan.

Tom Lanigan was not the type of man who would fight his own battles if he could get some one else to fight them for him. Once he had come into personal conflict with Meehan in the coat room of a hall where a political ball was being held. He had retired precipitately, nursing a very sore nose as a result of the encounter. It was enough for him. He did not care to pursue the matter further. Although the physical wound had long since healed, the outraged feelings were still turbulent. He ached for revenge, and this was his way of taking it.

After a wait of about half an hour the victim came in sight. Suddenly, as if from nowhere, four figures sprang up and surrounded him. There was a brief scrimmage. Then a large motor car came up and the assailants, bearing the still struggling figure of their quarry, piled in.

Another half minute and the street was again quiet and deserted. As the car passed his hiding place, Lanigan could hear groans issuing from it and the sound of heavy, thudding blows.

It was music to his ears. It brought gladness to his heart. This was his hour of victory. His rival was being punished. The affront—both physical and spiritual, to his pride as well as to his tender proboscis—was wiped out.

Tom Lanigan emerged from his place of concealment, feeling well pleased with himself, and went home to bed.

III.

The next time Mr. Tom Lanigan, sharper, con man, and all-round trickster, called at the humble apartment where Miss Milly Post dwelt with her mother, he was disappointed at learning that the lady he sought was not at home. It was particularly annoying in view of the fact that he had previously announced his intention of visiting her at this hour.

He turned away with a woebegone expression on his unwholesome face and made his way downstairs and out to the street. As he turned the corner he came upon a strange and utterly appalling sight.

About halfway down the block, leaning on the arm of a very attractive girl, a limping figure bandaged in an imposing array of surgical dressings was making its way into a house. The man's right arm was in a sling, his head and the right side of his face were swathed in the white regalia of the hospital patient, and he limped badly. Even at that distance, Lanigan recognized his rival, Larry Meehan, but the gloating in his soul was stilled, and the peal of triumphant laughter that should have rung out from his throat was hushed, for the girl who was helping the injured man with such tender, almost affectionate care was none other than Milly.

Lanigan watched the couple until they disappeared inside the house. About ten minutes later he strolled by, glancing furtively in at the ground-floor window of the apartment occupied by Larry Meehan. He gritted his teeth until they almost broke, and fury filled his heart; for Larry, was comfortably propped up in an easy-chair near the window. Larry's mother sat opposite him, and Milly was serving him with something from a cup. So solicitous was she lest his hand be too weak to handle it without upsetting the contents that she held it to his lips herself.

The spectacle was too much for Tom Lanigan. In a blind whirl of rage, he rushed down the street and at the next corner boarded a trolley which would take him to the neighborhood of Kid Logan's abode.

IV.

The Kid looked up, surprise showing in his smooth face, as Lanigan brushed his way past the chink—despite that gentleman's violent pidgin-English protests—and entered the room in which the underworld magnate transacted most of his business.

"Look here," Lanigan burst out. "This won't do!"

"What won't do?"

"Why," Lanigan spluttered, "this—this——"

Logan smiled tolerantly and indicated a chair. "Sit down," he advised. "Draw a few good breaths and then tell me all about it."

Lanigan obeyed. His muddy complexion had turned to an ugly purple, and beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. His hands trembled with nervous rage—the rage of the coward baffled in a dastardly attempt on a brave rival.

"Now," said Kid Logan when his visitor had calmed down. "Shoot!"

Lanigan cleared his throat and stammered a moment longer; then he poured forth his indignant outburst: "Look here; this beating-up treatment won't do at all. That fellow's trimming has only put him in softer than ever with the girl."

The Kid smiled broadly. "My dear man," he protested, "surely you can't expect me to control such an elusive thing as a woman's fancies and whims. I delivered what you ordered, and, if you've seen Meehan, I think you'll admit that my men did a good job."

"I'm not kicking about that," said Lanigan. "I see where I made my mistake. The beatin' the mutt got has only roused her sympathies. The thing now is—I want Meehan croaked! See?"

The bitter venom in Lanigan's evil soul vibrated in his words. Kid Logan almost recoiled as he saw the dark, sinister face contorted with vile passions and heard the croaking voice asking him to put this man's rival out of the way. Accustomed as he was to dealing with crooks, gangsters, and various other types of criminals, there was something particularly repulsive about this loathsome, raging creature, too cowardly to fight his own battles, too dishonorable to play a fair game.

Kid Logan reflected for a moment; then he answered calmly: "That'll come pretty high. You know murder's a serious offense. There's a big risk. The thing'll have to be carefully planned and made to look like an accident. How much are you prepared to put up?"

Lanigan deliberated a few seconds; then: "Would two thousand do it?" he asked cautiously.

The kid laughed. "Nonsense, man!" he exclaimed. "That wouldn't anything like cover the risk. You ought to know better. Five thousand—not a cent less! That's my price. Take it or leave it!"

Again Lanigan's face puckered into a fretwork of evil lines. His eyes gleamed with hatred. His fists clenched. Then he snapped his jaw and brought his right hand down on the table beside him.

"All right," he answered huskily. "I agree. I'll pay you, in cash for the job and the beating, as soon as you assure me you've carried out my orders."

"Very well," said the Kid. "In a few days I'll send you an invitation to the wake; and then your path to happiness will be clear. The girl will be yours. It'll look like accidental death. We'll fix things so she'll never suspect you of having a hand in it."

V.

There was joy in the heart of Tom Lanigan as he made his way along the street on which Larry Meehan's residence was situated. In his inside coat

pocket he held a document that he prized even more highly than the wallet beside which it snuggled. It was a brief note informing him that the wake of Larry Meehan would be held in the Meehan apartment that evening.

He found both the door of the house and that of the apartment open, and made his way into the front parlor. There, surrounded by candles and funereal draperies, stood the casket wherein lay the mortal remains of his rival. He advanced into the room and stood for a moment beside the coffin. In the dimly, flickering candlelight, a peaceful smile seemed to rest on the pallid, waxlike features of Larry Meehan.

Along one side of the face, concealed as much as possible by the undertaker's powder, Lanigan could discern the mark of an ugly abrasion. He shuddered and turned away.

In a corner of the room, her handkerchief held to her eyes, sat Milly. Lanigan went over and took a seat beside her. He held out his hand, but the girl recoiled from him and gave a pitiable sob.

"Oh, no, Mr. Lanigan; I'm too upset. Poor Larry! It's terrible, isn't it? The very first day he got back to work a steel girder fell on him. And he was such a good fellow!"

"Yes, indeed, a fine lad. I'm mighty sorry," said Lanigan in his softest and kindest tone. "A great blow it must be for you; but cheer up. You've lots of other friends. You must let them make up to you for losin' Larry Meehan."

The girl broke into a fresh outburst of weeping. She buried her face in her handkerchief, and her slender shoulders quivered with the intensity of her emotion.

"You're very good, Tom," she said as soon as she had recovered herself a little, "very good, indeed." She laid a hand lightly on his arm. "Please don't think that I'm not appreciative, but I must ask you to leave me now. I'm all unstrung. I hardly know what I'm doing. Po-or Larry!"

Tom Lanigan took up his hat and left the apartment. Satisfaction thrilled in every molecule of his body. He had triumphed. He felt that his manner with the girl had been perfect. He had displayed fine tact and feeling in playing the part of the sympathetic friend. He had said precisely the right words and in just the right way. A little more such tactful following up, and her heart, seeking solace in its grief, would turn to him.

"A nice girl," Mr. Tom Lanigan told himself as he strolled down the street. "A nice girl, and as soon as she manages to can the weeps over that Meehan guy, she'll be just the right little girl for yours truly!"

## VI.

The slumbers of Mr. Thomas Lanigan that night began auspiciously. He dropped off into a profound, peaceful snooze that later developed into a deep sleep, with a stertorous obbligato of snores that is supposed to indicate a serene mind and a clear conscience.

At two a. m. something happened.

Mr. Lanigan found himself wide awake, staring at the black emptiness before him, every nerve taut, every faculty alert. A dull pain gnawed at the base of his brain. He saw nothing, was conscious of no alien presence—yet he had been wakened by something.

It was the something that creates the murderer's own hell for him, the inner law that drives and urges and makes a hunted creature of the criminal who has shed blood, the pale-hearted fear that tortures and goads and harries its victim until he faces the inevitable dilemma—insanity, with its usual concomitant, suicide, or confession. The voice that centuries before had cried: "Sleep no more! Macbeth does mur-

der sleep?" had whispered in the ear of Tom Lanigan that night.

He stormed and tossed and writhed. He twisted the sheets and the coverlet about his feverish limbs. He turned now on his right side, now on his left; then he rolled over flat on his back and finally tried lying face downward. It was all of no avail. The morning found him haggard-eyed, dry of mouth, in the grip of the grim relentless fury called remorse.

The day went by slowly. He bathed, breakfasted, hung around some of his usual haunts, took in a moving picture, strolled in the park, dawdled away the time in futile efforts to eradicate the dominant thought from his brain.

That night he did not sleep at all.

VII.

Midnight of the fifth day following Larry Meehan's wake found Tom Lanigan wandering aimlessly along the streets, his mind in a seething turmoil. Insanity stared him in the face—insanity and suicide on the one hand, confession on the other.

As he turned into another block a flash of something caught his eye and gave him inspiration for the solution of his problem. It was the green light that indicates the presence of a police station. Yes, he must confess. He could not keep his guilty secret any longer. He would not implicate Kid Logan and his gang. He would say that he had done it himself. Low as he was, he would not play the rôle of stool pigeon.

A minute later he was in the station house, standing before the desk, pouring out a rambling, incoherent, babbling narrative of his crime to the impassive official presiding there.

"What did you say was the name of the man you croaked?" the lieutenant inquired.

"Meehan—Larry Meehan."

"And his address?"

Lanigan told the street and number.

The lieutenant looked over his blotter. When he raised his head there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"Gwan with yeh. Get out of here and quit tryin' to kid me, or I'll put yeh in the cooler. Gwan!" The voice was stern, but there was an undertone of mirth in its rich, slightly brogued utterance.

Lanigan gasped his astonishment. "Why—I—I—I've killed a man. I couldn't stand the remorse any longer. I've confessed. Why don't you arrest me?"

The lieutenant's manner was slightly impatient as he replied: "If you don't get out quick, instanter, p. d. q., I'll have you put in the cell with that same Larry Meehan and let you find out for yourself whether he's alive or not. I've got both him and Kid Logan inside."

Lanigan was too astounded for speech. He just opened his mouth in a fishlike gape and made a weird, gurgling noise in his throat. The lieutenant, interpreting this as a request for further enlightenment, condescended to explain:

"We pinched the two birds in a pool parlor where they was raisin' a divil of a scrap about dividin' some six thousand plunks they'd trimmed out of some poor fish on one of Logan's fake beat-ups and croakings. Logan's supposed to be a prize thug, but I don't believe he's ever swatted as much as a fly in his life. He just takes whatever price he can get, frames a deal with the intended victim, dresses him up in hospital bandages, lets him parade around for a while and nobody's feelin's hurt. This last stunt of his was a beaut, though. He had a waxwork piece all fixed up in a coffin to look like Larry Meehan. There was a wake an' everything—and they trimmed the hick that wanted Meehan out of the way to the tune of five thousand iron men. Only they got in a row about

divvying up, they'd have had no trouble. As it is, all we've got agin them is disorderly conduct. Logan's a business man, all right. By the way, what's your name?"

Lanigan told him in a hushed, awe-stricken voice.

The official laughed boisterously. "Why, you musta been the boob Logan trimmed this time. Well, if that ain't rich!"

"I guess I musta," agreed Lanigan sadly. "Good night, officer!" And he walked out of the station house.

## AMATEUR CAPTURES "SAM SCRATCH"

CLEVER detective work by an amateur netted a big fish recently, when "Sam Scratch," a pickpocket, known throughout the country, was arrested. William H. Wood, a printer and the amateur, was also the victim, for his pocket was picked of one hundred and forty-seven dollars.

He was riding on an elevated train in Brooklyn, New York, when he felt a hand in his trousers pocket. With a quick movement Wood clutched that pocket, but his grip was not secure enough to hold the man's hand, which was deftly withdrawn.

The victim's suspicions, however, were directed toward and centered upon a fellow passenger standing near him, so he kept close to the suspect until the latter left the train; then he followed. Sam Scratch, the suspect, boarded a trolley car and rode for a few blocks, then returned to the elevated as a means of travel. Wood stayed on the trail for about an hour, keeping out of his quarry's sight but watching him closely. At one time, the printer declared, he saw Sam throw away something that looked like a pocketbook, but he could not stop to procure it as evidence without losing his man.

Becoming convinced that his suspect was a pickpocket, Wood had him arrested. The police soon identified the notorious lifter of purses.

## NOTORIOUS JAIL BREAKER AT LARGE

USING a crude key which he had fashioned to fit his cell lock in the city prison at Los Angeles, California, Roy Dickerson, held for complicity in a bank robbery at Girard, Kansas, opened the cell door, climbed up a ventilator shaft, and made what his wife says is his one hundred and eightieth escape from a penal institution. At one time Dickerson was a vaudeville performer, his "act" consisting of freeing himself after being handcuffed, tied, or locked in a confined space.

That the man is a wonder at breaking out of prisons and jails is attested not only by his wife, who is under arrest, but also by detectives and by the man who was his cellmate at the time of his latest escape. This man declared he knew nothing of the crush out until he was awakened by a guard in the morning; Dickerson did not make sufficient noise in opening the cell door to rouse him. Detectives claim that the alleged bank robber had previously escaped from the Fulton County penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, and from similar institutions in Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

# The Brown Arm

## by Bayard Blackford

### CHAPTER I.

THE JEWELED DAGGER.

THE muscular hand of Aston Lothbury closed over the invitation card, crushing it. For a moment he sat staring at his handiwork. When he raised his eyes again there was that in them which might almost have been an expression of fear. Smoothing out the crumpled bit of paper, he reread it carefully.

Mr. John Mathieson requests the pleasure of your company at the marriage of his adopted niece, Mary Missenden, to Mr. James Tilehurst on——

"To-day week," he muttered.

His eye roved strangely round his office, as if it were appraising each item of furniture. He looked lovingly at the various articles which made up one of the most handsomely furnished offices in the city. Indeed the office was too sumptuous, and he knew it in his heart. He had furnished it originally as an investment. It had been necessary for him to create the impression of wealth. And in later years, when the impression had become a reality, he had not bothered to tone it down.

He glanced at his watch. Four o'clock. He drew the roll top of his mahogany desk. He took up his silk hat and passed through the two outer offices, where a dozen quietly competent clerks were busily recording the details of the day's transactions.

A dozen clerks, and all of them busy! His mind went back over the thirty years of his city career to the day when he had started as a young attorney with a single office boy. There had been times when he had wondered where the office boy's salary was coming from. That was when he had expected to derive an income from the law. It had taken him five years to realize that the legal profession was of most use to him as an avenue to finance.

As a financier, as a manipulator of money belonging to others, he had been an unqualified success. Unqualified? Well, up to the present there was no one who could qualify his success, save himself.

Mr. John Mathieson requests the pleasure——

Aston Lothbury drew in his lips firmly and passed out of the building. The managing clerk of an important firm, hurrying by, took off his hat. It was worth while being Aston Lothbury—it was worth a lot to go on being Aston Lothbury.

At the corner he stopped a taxi and gave an address.

Some twenty minutes later the car pulled up outside a world-famous curiosity shop.

"I want something suitable for a wedding present, something a little out of the ordinary," he was saying a moment later to a salesman.

Lothbury passed some five minutes in examining curios which did not interest him in the least. He hesitated over a Japanese suit of armor as if he were about to purchase it, yet he had not the slightest intention of doing so.

"I think perhaps if you could show me something Indian. I was in India myself a short time some years ago."

He was shown elephant goads elaborately inlaid, at which he looked with just the right air of dissatisfaction.

"I think I have something here that will just suit you, sir," said the salesman as if with a sudden inspiration.

He handed Aston Lothbury an Indian dagger the hilt of which was heavily incrusted with rubies.

"That's a great deal more like it," said Lothbury approvingly. "What is the price of this?"

"Two thousand dollars, sir," replied the salesman. "You are probably a judge of rubies, sir; in which case you will see that the stones are worth that alone."

Aston Lothbury smiled attentively. He knew that in this establishment one did not argue over prices.

"Very well," he answered, "I will take this. Send it to my office to-morrow morning. My clerk will pay your man in cash."

As he spoke Lothbury produced his card case.

"Thank you, sir," said the salesman. "Of course, if you would prefer to take it with you——"

"No, thanks," was the reply, "I would rather have it sent."

Lothbury reëntered the waiting taxi.

"I mustn't forget to answer that invitation," he said, as he was driven to his apartment.

James Tilehurst hurried up the garden path of Mr. John Mathieson's house. He rang the bell with all a true lover's impatience.

James Tilehurst had every reason to be pleased with all that life offered him. At the comparatively early age of thirty he had built up a practice in his profession of consulting engineer, which justified his marrying the woman of his heart. True, he would not be able to support her on a scale similar to that in which she now lived as the adopted niece of a person of wealth. That might come later on. He was an ambitious man, devoted to his profession, and he knew that Mary Missenden would never grudge him the necessary long hours he devoted to his work.

He gave a friendly nod to the butler as the door was opened, and passed unannounced to the conservatory, where he knew Mary would be waiting for him.

He entered softly. She was reading and did not hear him. With the fondness of a virile man completely in love, Tilehurst stood in silence, his eyes upon her.

A crown of russet hair that turned to burnished gold when the sun kissed it. Eyes of liquid brown beneath long, curling lashes. A firm though delicately chiseled profile that would have delighted a sculptor. A slender, supple figure that spoke of healthy womanhood, unusually girlish still, for her twenty-four years! She looked up and their eyes met.

"Only five days more, sweetheart," he whispered. "All the invitations were received yesterday. Have you had any replies?"

"Every one has replied," she answered like an eager child. "Lots of presents have arrived. Come into the morning room and I will show you."

James Tilehurst suffered himself to be led by the hand into the adjoining room. He did his man's best to express appreciation of the presents.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "Here's a weird-looking thing. What is it?"

He held in his hand an Indian dagger of which the hilt was thickly incrusted with rubies.

"It is a funny sort of thing to send for a wedding present," admitted Mary, "but it's very beautiful. It will look nice on the drawing-room mantelpiece. Perhaps it might do as a paper cutter."

"Hm! Rather a savage-looking paper cutter," commented James, as his thumb

felt the steel blade of the dagger. Who sent it?"

"A Mr. Aston Lothbury," answered Mary. "He scarcely knows me, but he was an old friend of my poor father's."

James Tilehurst replaced the dagger in its case.

"I suppose it's interesting enough as a curio," he said without enthusiasm. "Let's go back to the conservatory, Mary."

For a time they sat together, busy chatter about tremendous trifles alternating with short, ecstatic silences.

"Five days, James!" she repeated.

"Yes; isn't it amazing?" he replied. "It's also a little alarming, you know, dearest. I'm taking you away from a rich home, and, although I hope you will have every reasonable comfort will have every comfort——"

"Silly boy," she interrupted him. "As if that sort of thing counted!"

At that moment John Mathieson entered. He was a kindly, well-preserved man in the late fifties, and he beamed on the young people with genuine enjoyment of their happiness.

"Hullo, James," he said with easy friendliness. "You'll stay to dinner, of course?"

"I'm afraid not, sir, thank you," was the reply. "I simply must go back and work. I'm taking a whole two weeks' vacation next week, you know," he added.

"Quite right, my boy, quite right," replied Mathieson approvingly. "Though it's a pity, because an old friend of mine will be here shortly, whom I should have liked you to meet —Mr. Aston Lothbury."

"Perahps I shall have an opportunity of doing so later," replied James Tilehurst.

"No doubt," answered Mathieson. "He will be at your wedding."

Mary thought Aston Lothbury quite a nice old gentleman. There was certainly something a little odd about him, but she attributed this to the fact that he had quite obviously spent very little of his time in the society of women. She thought him the most complete old bachelor she had ever met.

"How do you do, my dear young lady?" he greeted her solemnly. "I don't suppose for a moment you remember our last meeting, but I do. And although I am far too much of a crusted old bachelor to thrust my society upon you, I think of you very frequently indeed.

"Gervase Missenden—I should say your poor father—was one of my best friends. I was with him in India, you know, for a short time, but you don't remember that, naturally. For you were brought to America, if I remember rightly, when you were about two years old."

Over dinner Mary was struck by an underlying resemblance between Aston Lothbury and her adopted uncle. The resemblance was not a physical one. Aston Lothbury was tall, thin, and keen-faced, with a quiet purposefulness of manner that suggested intense mental activity.

John Mathieson, on the other hand, only just escaped being corpulent. But there was a strange, scarcely definable quality which the two men had in common, the air of men who had suffered and won their way to prosperity and contentment at a great cost. Mathieson, a stranger would have said, had won worldly success through his geniality. Lothbury could only have attained it by the exercise of his restless intelligence and indomitable will.

"I had hoped to have the pleasure of meeting your fiancé, my dear," said Lothbury over dinner.

"James Tilehurst is a very hard-working young man, Aston," put in Mathieson, "but no doubt you will meet later."

Mary noticed that the two men called each other by their first names. She

was therefore the more surprised when, on rising at the conclusion of the meal, to leave them alone to chat together, Aston Lothbury politely objected.

"You aren't going to leave us, I hope, my dear?" he said with the utmost cordiality.

"Aren't you going to have a cigar, Aston?" asked Mathieson.

"No, thanks," was the reply. "I don't smoke nowadays, John. I had to give it up. I am getting old, you know."

"Very well, then," said Mathieson. "We'll all go into the drawing-room."

At ten o'clock Mary tactfully announced her intention of going to bed. Surely the two men who had been cronies in the past would welcome an opportunity of talking over old times.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Aston Lothbury. "Can it be ten o'clock? I must go at once, John. The doctor insists on my being in bed by eleven."

Mary did not believe in the doctor.

"I wonder why he was so anxious to avoid being alone with uncle John?" she asked herself as she went up to bed.

## CHAPTER II.

### A SCREAM OF TERROR.

HER cheeks faintly flushed, her eyes bright with suppressed excitement, Mary Missenden surveyed herself in the full-length mirror as the last hook was adjusted on her wedding dress.

"I don't think there's anything to complain of, Emily," she said to the maid, who had originally been her nurse. "How much time have we?"

"Just time for me to arrange your veil, Miss Mary, and not a minute to spare," was the eager, bustling answer.

The task was carefully completed before there came a knock on the door, and in answer to Mary's summons John Mathieson appeared.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mathieson, gazing with unaffected admiration at the lovely picture of his adopted niece in her bridal array.

Mary smiled acknowledgment of the unspoken compliment.

"I came to tell you, my dear, that the car is waiting," said Mathieson. "If you are ready, we had better go. I don't want to make a lifelong enemy of James Tilehurst."

"Oh, what about Emily?" asked Mary anxiously. "I want her to see me married, uncle John."

"I know, and so do I," replied Mathieson, beaming. "I've ordered a taxi, and we'll give you three minutes to put on your hat, Emily."

Emily Marston hurried off to make herself ready. Mary and her adopted uncle had scarcely reached the hall before she reappeared.

"Just a minute, Miss Mary," said Emily. "I want to make sure your dress isn't soiled."

As she spoke, Emily darted forward along the short garden path to the waiting car, opened the door and entered. It was a magnificent car, with an interior so spacious as to suggest a small drawing-room. It was beautifully upholstered in gray tapestry. To the outward eye it was spotlessly clean, but Emily had a deep-rooted mistrust of chauffeurs.

"This tapestry doesn't show the dust, but it's there right enough," she muttered to herself, as she produced a small white dust sheet and laid it on the right-hand side of the upholstered seat, which she knew Mary would occupy.

Then she glanced approvingly round the car, her eye returning to the dust sheet.

"It does spoil the look of things a bit," she admitted to herself. "But it's what she looks like in the church that matters."

She stepped out of the car in time to help Mary enter.

"Mind how you sit down, Miss Mary.

I've put the sheet there to keep your dress from the cushion."

Emily fussed about her beautiful charge until Mr. Mathieson protested. Then she turned to the taxi that was waiting for her.

"I don't suppose you can keep up with that car," she said patronizingly to the driver.

"Oh, can't I?" said the man. "You jump in and see."

This was just what Emily wanted. The details of the ceremony were to her events of immense importance. She did not wish to miss one of them. She wanted to be on the curbstone when the bride alighted.

As the big car glided majestically forward, the taxi shot after it. The car gathered speed, and the taxi equaled it. Emily, looking through the glass front of the taxi, could see that she was within a few yards of the car, and felt contented.

The journey, she knew, would not occupy more than five minutes. Into the main road, along it for a mile, to the left, then again to the right, and they would be at the church.

Emily Marston in her devoted heart was a great deal more excited than the bride herself. To her personally there was a note of tragedy about the day, for it marked the end of twenty-four years of usefulness. Her own feelings were wholly submerged in consideration of Mary's happiness. And her first anxiety was that every detail of the ceremony should go without a hitch.

They were approaching the church. The car slowed down, the taxi followed suit. Emily flung the door of the taxi open and almost stumbled as she alighted. She steadied herself for a moment, and was about to rush forward, when suddenly the power of movement was taken from her by the violence of her shock.

The door of the car was flung violently open. There came a wild, piercing scream. Mary Missenden staggered out of the car, her bridal robes tearing in the doorway, her eyes wide with terror.

That scream of terror penetrated into the church. James Tilehurst, waiting at the chancel, heard it. He stiffened, and his sense gave him an instinctive warning that it was Mary who had uttered the cry.

The next instant, rushing from the church, he dashed through the knot of loungers to Mary.

"What is the matter, dear?" he cried.

"Uncle John," she whispered, trembling violently.

Many guests had followed James from the church, including Fishlock, his best man.

"It's Mr. Mathieson," he explained. "I expect he has had a seizure."

As he spoke, James thrust his way into the car.

John Mathieson was lying inert on the cushions.

"He must have air," called James. "Help me lift him out."

With the aid of three of his guests James lifted the old man's form. As he did so, he happened to glance downward and perceived a crimson stain on the tapestried cushions of the car.

They carried John Mathieson into the vestibule of the church. They were about to lay him down when Fishlock cried:

"Look! He has been stabbed. By Heaven; look at his back!"

The four men stared in horror at the hilt of a dagger which was protruding from between John Mathieson's shoulder blades.

"My God!" muttered James Tilehurst. "See that dagger!"

The hilt of the dagger was thickly incrusted with rubies. James Tilehurst recognized it as the wedding present of Aston Lothbury.

"I'm going for the doctor, sir," shouted the chauffeur, but no attention

was paid to him as he drove the car away.

"He's alive."

"He was a moment ago, but he's not now. We can't do anything until the doctor comes."

"Fishlock, I'm going to look after Mary," cried James Tilehurst.

"Right you are," said Fishlock. "We can't go on with the ceremony now, of course. I'm terribly sorry for you, old man."

James hurried back to Mary's side. The girl seemed dazed, her faculties momentarily numbed by the horror of the scene she had witnessed.

"Mary, I'm going to take you home," he said gently.

"Yes, James," she answered tonelessly.

He was in a momentary dilemma. There was no vehicle in sight, and he was just wondering what to do when the car returned. A man sprang out, who was obviously a doctor.

James Tilehurst pointed in the direction where a group of men stood over John Mathieson. Then he partially lifted Mary into the car. He was about to follow her when he caught sight of Emily Marston.

"You had better come, too," he said, and helping her into the car, followed, and closed the door. They were at once driven off.

"Oh, dearie me!" Emily was crying. "The poor lamb, and on her wedding day, too! What can have happened to the poor gentleman?"

"Be quiet, please," said James sternly, for he feared lest the woman's wailing would disturb Mary. He knew that Mary's condition was critical, that she might easily be precipitated into hysteria.

Emily was weeping audibly. James began to question his own wisdom in bringing her.

"But how did it happen, Mr. Tilehurst, sir?" wailed Emily. "What I can't understand——"

"It's no use talking about it now," interrupted James. "The time for questions will come later on."

His own words, hastily uttered, which had silenced the woman, started an unpleasant train of thought. Of course there would be an inquiry. Mary would be subjected to innumerable ordeals and questionings. How, as a matter of fact, had it happened? Mary had entered the car alone with John Mathieson, to the best of his belief. On arrival at the church Mathieson had been found stabbed.

Had any one else entered the car? If not, how was it possible——

The car stopped at his destination, which interrupted further reasoning.

He helped Mary from the car and was about to help Emily.

"What's the matter, Emily? What are you looking for?" he asked the latter.

"My dust sheet, sir," she answered. "I put it down so that her dress——"

"Well, never mind that now; we'll look for it later," said James Tilehurst gently, for he believed that the woman was becoming light-headed from the shock.

He took Mary into the little morning room and Emily followed.

Ignoring the presence of the maid, he turned to Mary to try to console her.

"Dearest one——" he began, making as if to take her in his arms.

"Don't touch me!"

The words cut him like a lash. Every muscle in his body had stiffened. James Tilehurst stared at the woman he loved in blank amazement.

"Mary—what is the matter?" he gasped.

The girl drew her hand across her brow. She closed her eyes and opened them again.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said with an air of utter weariness. "I can't think

properly. I know I am awake, but I feel just as if I was in the middle of an awful nightmare. Nothing seems real. I remember getting into the car with uncle John. We were talking about nothing in particular. I was not paying much attention. I was thinking of you. Just before we stopped the car bumped, and he lurched against me. I turned and looked at him, and saw ——" The girl broke off, caught her voice in a sob and, with a glance at Emily, continued—"saw that something had happened. Then I was terrified. Yes, I remember everything, but it all seems unreal."

Again he took a pace toward her and once more she retreated.

Her sudden strange shrinking from him produced only one impression on his mind. The shock, he thought, had momentarily unbalanced her.

"Don't think about it now, dear," he begged her gently. "If you do, you will be ill. You have had a fearful shock, and I think you are calm enough to know that you must take care of yourself. I want you to go and lie down for the present. Emily will take you to your room."

He opened the door. He was anxious to get Mary upstairs as soon as possible, for he foresaw that in a very short time the police would come to the house with the object of making inquiries. In her present state she was not fit to undergo that ordeal.

Listlessly Mary suffered herself to be led away. James Tilehurst looked after her as she went slowly up the stairs with Emily. The irony of her wedding garment bit into his very soul.

His one thought now was to protect her to the limit of his power. He began by sending the butler to fetch the nearest doctor.

To the doctor, when he arrived, he gave a brief account of the facts as he knew them.

"If you find—as I am morally certain you will—that Miss Missenden is in no fit condition to face questioning by the police, I want you to give me a certificate to that effect," he said.

"Yes, of course," said the doctor. "There will be no difficulty about that."

Some ten minutes later the doctor reappeared.

"There's no need whatever for alarm as to Miss Missenden's condition," he announced. "Her mental balance is in no way affected. She is simply suffering from severe shock. Her nervous system has been jarred, and she must have immediate rest and quietness. In a day or so I have every reason to believe that she will be none the worse. I will, however, write the certificate, for it would be very unwise to worry her today, at any rate."

The doctor paused in the act of writing the certificate.

"She seems to have a temporary aversion to yourself," he said. "Don't let that worry you. It will have disappeared by to-morrow. But in the meantime I would humor it by keeping out of the way."

"Very well," replied James, forcing his voice to betray none of the emotion he was feeling.

The doctor had scarcely taken his departure before the police inspector—inevitable in the circumstances, James Tilehurst well knew—was announced by the butler.

"You wish to see me?" asked James as the inspector entered the morning room.

"No, sir," was the reply. "I wish to see Miss Missenden."

"I am afraid you cannot do that," replied James. "Miss Missenden is not physically fit to see any one." As he spoke, he produced the doctor's certificate. The inspector read it with obvious disapproval.

"Of course I know I cannot prevent you from seeing her if you insist," said James. "She's upstairs in her room, in

bed, I think. But I can assure you that she can tell you at present absolutely nothing that I cannot tell you myself."

"What can you tell me?" demanded the inspector.

"Practically nothing," replied James. "Miss Missenden can tell you no more. She left this house with Mr. Mathieson. The two of them entered the car alone. Just as the car stopped opposite the church, Miss Missenden felt him lurch against her, and looked at him and perceived that something had happened. She screamed with fright and rushed out of the car. She does not at this moment know what was the cause of his death; she asked me whether it had been a seizure. In her present state of shock it would be nothing less than rank inhumanity to tell her that he has been stabbed."

The inspector smiled cynically.

"Come, Mr. Tilehurst," he said. "A woman is sitting beside a man in a car. There is no one else in the car. The man is stabbed to death with a dagger. And you are telling me that the woman doesn't even know that he has been stabbed. We'll leave out the question as to who stabbed him."

James Tilehurst felt the blood mounting to his head, and calmed himself with an effort.

"Of course there has been some diabolical trickery somewhere," he said. "You, inspector, are implying that Miss Missenden must have lied to me. Now if she lied—if she really did know that he was stabbed—there must have been some one else in the car, and we know that there was not."

"There might have been. I only say there might have been," said the inspector.

"Well, if there was no one else in the car, and if Miss Missenden was lying to me, she must have stabbed him herself. She had been living with him practically all her life. At the moment the car draws up outside the church in which she is about to be married, she decides to stab him. It's nothing more or less than farcical, inspector."

The police inspector glanced at the other's immaculate frock coat and remembered that he was the bridegroom.

"I am not saying anything against the lady, Mr. Tilehurst," he pointed out. "I am simply here to get as many facts as I can. It is not my business to draw conclusions."

"I quite understand that," said James. "And, of course, I realize that, knowing my relationship to Miss Missenden, you must necessarily think that everything I say about the case is biased. But I would ask you to remember this. I may be hopelessly blinded as to the nature of the particular woman I happen to love. That doesn't seem to me to matter. You can assume, for argument's sake, that Miss Missenden is the wickedest woman in the world. But before you can think of her as having any guilty knowledge of Mr. Mathieson's death, you must also assume that she is an utter imbecile."

"Quite so, quite so," said the superintendent in a conciliatory tone. "Can you tell me anything that bears on the case of your own knowledge, not what you have heard from others, Mr. Tilehurst?" he asked.

"You had better see Miss Missenden's maid," said James. As he spoke he rang the bell. "Stay," he added. "There is one thing I can tell you. I happened to notice the dagger."

"Yes?"

"I am practically certain that that dagger is one of our wedding presents."

The inspector noted the information.

"Can you make sure on this point?" he asked. "You have your presents in this house, haven't you?"

"Yes," replied James. "They're in the next room. If you'll come with me, we will see at once."

A brief search sufficed to show that the dagger was missing.

"That's an important point," said the inspector. "It will be fully investigated later on."

"Here is the maid," said James when Emily appeared.

Under the police inspector's questioning, Emily related all that had occurred from the moment when she had stepped into the taxi to the moment when she had heard her young mistress scream.

"Then you say you are absolutely certhat the car did not stop after it had started, until it arrived at the church?" asked the inspector.

"Yes, sir," answered Emily. "I know perfectly well it didn't, because I was behind it all the time. If it had stopped I should be bound to have seen it, wouldn't I?"

The inspector intimated that he had finished, and Emily withdrew. For several minutes he busied himself writing notes. Then he asked:

"Who gave you that dagger as a wedding present?"

"A Mr. Lothbury," replied James. "I do not know him personally, but I understand that he's an old friend of Mr. Mathieson's. I don't know his address. If you want it I can let you have it later."

"Thank you, Mr. Tilehurst," said the inspector. "I think there's no more I wish to ask you for the present. I wish to see the chauffeur next, and later on the other servants."

James Tilehurst returned alone to the morning room in order to think out a plan of immediate action. He could not remain at the house. Mary must clearly have some one of standing to look after her. He at once thought of Mrs. Bickersteth, his aunt, who had been one of the guests and had now doubtless returned to her home. He wrote a note, asking her to come at once, explaining the need for her presence, and ordered it to be sent by special messenger.

He had just dispatched the note when the butler informed him that Mr. Aston Lothbury had called and particularly wished to see him.

"Show him in here," said James.

James Tilehurst received his visitor with an odd mixture of feelings. It was wholly unreasonable to associate Aston Lothbury with the disaster because it had been caused by his wedding gift. Nevertheless, James felt conscious of an instinctive aversion which his sense of fairness prompted him to suppress.

"I feel you will pardon my intrusion at this time, Mr. Tilehurst," said Aston Lothbury, "because I believe you know that poor John and I were lifelong friends."

James made a conventional reply. The other began to come to the point of his visit.

"May I ask whether you know anything as to how it happened?" he questioned.

James related the facts as he knew them, to which the other listened in apparently thoughtful silence.

"It's a most extraordinary case," said Aston Lothbury. "It's bad enough for you to have been cheated of your bride at the very door of the church, but——"

"Hardly that," protested James. "Unless her feelings toward me have changed—permanently—we shall of course get married after a decent interval."

"Yes, of course. I am sure I hope you will," said Aston Lothbury.

"I was going on to say that that, I fear, is not the limit of your joint misfortune. I am afraid we must take it that the whole matter will be thoroughly investigated by the police."

"It is already being investigated," said James. "I don't see how that adds to our misfortune, except, of course, that Mary will have to go on the witness stand."

"Yes," said Aston Lothbury thoughtfully. "The witness stand——"

"What do you mean, Mr. Lothbury?" demanded James.

"My dear sir," said Aston Lothbury, "I don't want to add to your anxieties. But as a man of the world you must know that there is what the lawyers call a prima-facie case against Miss Mary."

"I don't care what the lawyers call it," said James irritably. "But I do know that any man who imagines that she stabbed Mr. Mathieson must be out of his senses. What possible motive could she have for doing so?"

"That is just what I have come to see you about," was the unexpected reply.

James Tilehurst stared at the other in bewilderment. Lothbury kept silence.

"As we were saying just now," he resumed presently, "there is no object in shunning the fact that Miss Mary is bound to be suspected. As you yourself know the facts, they do not indicate any kind of danger. There is, first of all, the glaring improbability, the certainty of discovery, and—as *you* know the facts—the total absence of motive."

While he was speaking, Aston Lothbury was sorting papers he had taken from the pocket of his frock coat. He selected one, which he handed to James Tilehurst.

It was a sheet of ordinary note paper on which were scrawled half a dozen lines of handwriting.

I, John Mathieson, leave all my property to James Tilehurst, the affianced husband of my adopted niece, Mary Missenden.

(Signed) JOHN MATHIESON.

Witnesses: EMILY MARTON.
GEORGE THOMPSON.

Aston Lothbury watched the young man's face closely. Then he reclaimed the paper.

"We have still, of course, the glaring improbability," said Aston Lothbury slowly. "But against that improbability, we have now what is commonly regarded by a jury as one of the most impelling of all human motives. There are also the extraordinary circumstances of the case, the actual manner in which poor Mathieson met his death. You and I, who kow something of the sweet and gentle nature of Miss Mary, realize the absurdity of it all. But it's those twelve jurymen, picked at random, that I am worrying about."

"My God!" exclaimed James. "If that will is produced they will think that Mary killed him in order that I might step into a fortune. Surely, if the existence of that will proves anything, it proves that I had an interest in killing him myself."

"Remember you were then about to become her husband," Lothbury reminded him. "You know, do you not, that John made the will in your favor instead of Mary's at her request?"

"Yes, yes," said James impatiently. "Mr. Mathieson told me that he intended to do so some weeks ago. I did not attach much importance to it at the time. I thought of it as something belonging to the remote future."

"Exactly," said Lothbury. "The arrangement was understood by all concerned as being merely a convenient way of leaving the money to Mary. The jury will not lose sight of that fact."

James Tilehurst was thinking hard. Aston Lothbury waited. He knew well what was coming, and assuredly it came.

"Look here, Mr. Lothbury," said James in an excited undertone. "Why can we not destroy that now and place her out of danger?"

"My dear sir!" said Aston Lothbury, with the appearance of being mildly shocked. "It would be a criminal offense."

"I am prepared to commit a criminal offense," protested James. "And as to the future, of what use will it be to either of us if she is driven out of her

mind by the horrors that will may bring her?"

"Your sentiments do you the utmost credit, Mr. Tilehurst, and I respect them from the bottom of my heart," said Aston Lothbury. "But I think you must see that it is hardly reasonable to expect an old man like myself to risk being ruined and perhaps going to prison."

As he spoke, Aston Lothbury replaced the sheet of paper in his pocket. Out of the corner of his eye he watched the play of emotions on the young man's face.

"Of course," said Lothbury, choosing an opportune moment carefully, "it sounds absurd, but really, the most fortunate thing that could happen would be that my office safe should be burgled to-night. But burglars, I fear, are rarely as obliging as all that. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Furtively watching the young man's eyes, he perceived that the germ of his idea had taken root.

"I often wonder that burglars have not been to my office," continued the financier. "It would be an easy matter for them, though they would gain practically nothing. I only keep documents in the safe. For this reason the safe is really rather a farce. For instance, I always keep a duplicate key in the drawer of my desk. The drawer of my desk is here"—indicating a position. "The safe is over here. A burglar who knew that could force the right-hand drawer and get the key. But I imagine that such a burglar would find nothing in the safe worth taking away. I should only know that there had been a burglary by seeing the drawer of my desk forced open."

There was no mistaking the financier's hint. James Tilehurst knew perfectly well that he was being invited to make an attempt at burglary that night, so that the financier would not be involved in any consequences. James wondered how he could have ever felt an aversion to the other, and held out his hand.

"Mr. Lothbury," he said, "it is a very great consolation to me at the present time to know that Mary has at least one stanch friend in the world besides myself."

The financier laughed deprecatingly, and after gripping the other's hand took his departure.

Aston Lothbury returned to his office. He was about to place the will in the safe when he checked himself.

"No," he soliloquized. "The plant might go wrong, and I don't want to take unnecessary risks."

Lothbury replaced the will in his breast pocket.

He chuckled as he left his office.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE WHIP HAND.

MIDNIGHT.

Aston Lothbury, sitting in the office of a young attorney for whom he had performed many favors, had a clear view of his own offices opposite. He was watching those offices as a cat watches a mousehole. He himself was sitting in darkness. The faint glow of a street light caught his eyes so that they glinted in the darkness like those of an animal.

In a few minutes he saw a figure steal out of the shadows and make for the entrance of his own offices.

Aston Lothbury smiled a diabolical satisfaction. He picked up the receiver of the telephone.

"Put me through to the nearest police station quickly," he told the operator. "Hullo! This is Mr. Aston Lothbury speaking," he said into the receiver, and gave his address. "A burglary is being committed at this moment in my offices. There's one man, and I don't know whether he's armed or unarmed. Will you send help at

once? No, I am outside in the street. I will meet your men as they come along. Three minutes? Right."

Without turning on the light he groped his way out of the office and passed noiselessly down the stairs through the outer door. He crept along the street. He had not reached the corner before a sergeant and two patrolmen appeared. He made himself known, and led the way to his offices.

The outer door of the building had been opened with a skeleton key. The intruder had not even bothered to shut the door of Lothbury's own offices. The police entered first, the financier following.

There came a sudden exclamation from the sergeant.

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

"Now, then, you'd better come along quietly," he heard the sergeant call. He pressed forward, and then stopped short in the doorway of his own office.

He had expected to find James Tilehurst. Instead he stared in speechless amazement into the brown, bewildered eyes of Mary Missenden.

Aston Lothbury was not of the type of man whose faculties are benumbed by surprise. Living a life of secret risk, he had long ago steeled himself to face the unexpected. For several seconds he remained staring at Mary Missenden, white and frightened, the sergeant of the police already gripping her arm. Mary Missenden caught in his office at this hour! He appeared to be dumfounded by the shock of thus meeting her, but in reality his brain was working quickly.

By some accident, which he would investigate later, she had come instead of James Tilehurst to get possession of the will of the murdered man. He had invited Tilehurst to fake a robbery of the safe, had laid the trap for him, and caught Mary Missenden herself. For a moment he considered the idea of proceeding with his original plan of giving Mary in charge for attempted robbery instead of Tilehurst. This would be too dangerous. He could never be sure how much the girl knew.

"Miss Missenden!" he exclaimed. "Dear me! How very extraordinary!"

Mary for her part was recovering from the shock of discovery. She was, as she believed, in a desperate position, but as she turned to Lothbury it was not fear that showed in the depths of her deep, brown eyes.

"You are surprised to see me here at such a time, Mr. Lothbury," she began, "but——"

"Surprised, but delighted," interrupted Lothbury hastily. "We'll have a chat later. In the meantime I owe these gentleman an explanation. I thought the safe was being burgled and rang for the police."

He was speaking rapidly, hoping that she would take from him the hint he was trying to convey.

"You will see that there has been a ridiculous mistake," he said to the police sergeant. "This lady is a friend of mine. It's a great pity that I have put you to the trouble of answering my call. I trust no damage has been done."

The sergeant regarded him stiffly and with obvious disappointment.

"You say the lady is a friend of yours, sir," he snapped. "Am I to understand from that that you withdraw all charges against her?"

"Of course I withdraw all charges against her," said Lothbury with a laugh. "Miss Missenden robbing me! Why, this lady, sergeant, is a great deal better off than I am."

As he spoke, Aston Lothbury withdrew his bill fold.

"You've had to turn out for nothing through my carelessness, sergeant," he said, "and it is only fair that you should —er—fine me in favor of one of the many police charities."

The sergeant accepted the bill which

was offered him for an unspecified charity.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "Mistakes are bound to happen sometimes, no matter how——"

"Right, sergeant. Good night," said Aston Lothbury.

The sergeant withdrew with his men. Aston Lothbury waited until he heard their footsteps die away on the pavement outside, and then turned to Mary. Aston Lothbury had the whip hand and knew it. But as he looked at Mary, standing erect in a fur coat covering a plain morning dress, he became aware that she was invested with a dignity beyond her years. In spite of her youth and manifest inexperience in dealing with men of his stamp, he could see that with those steady brown eyes, that firmly chiseled chin, it would be useless to attempt to bully her.

"Won't you sit down and tell me all about it?" he said with quiet courtesy.

He perceived at once that his manner had disarmed her. He knew that she had been prepared to defy him, but as yet he was ignorant of what her secret weapon might be. But now she could only apologize.

"Mr. Lothbury, I—I don't know what to say to you," she began.

"Don't distress yourself, my dear," he said reassuringly. "You must have come here for some very good reason."

She hesitated, and Aston Lothbury prepared to sympathize.

"Don't tell me, if you would rather not," he said, though he had not the slightest intention of allowing her to depart until he had learned all he could.

Mary would have liked to leave it at that, but she had a strong feeling that it would not be playing fair to do so.

"I hope the police have not upset you by their ridiculous mistake," continued Aston Lothbury.

"The police made no mistake," said Mary with slow deliberation. "I came here to-night with the intention of robbing you, Mr. Lothbury."

Aston Lothbury permitted himself to look exceedingly surprised. He calculated that that was what she would expect of him. He was still in the dark, and must lead her on.

"Oh, I know it sounds absurd!" continued Mary. "But it is true."

"But forgive me for saying, my dear, that I find it extremely difficult to believe," said Aston Lothbury with a fatherliness that was highly convincing. "I think you will admit," he added suavely, "that under the circumstances I am entitled to a little explanation of that extraordinary statement."

"I can't explain!" said Mary wretchedly. "I ask you to accept my solemn assurance, Mr. Lothbury, that, though it is true to say that I came to rob you, it is truer still to say that I came only to rob myself."

Her answer gave Aston Lothbury the first point he wanted. She had come for the will. That at least was obvious. She had come instead of Tilehurst. Why? That he must promptly discover if he could.

To gain time he took a cigarette from his case and slowly lighted it.

"You modern young women are too quick-witted for me, you know," he said ponderously. "You came to rob me, but you came to rob yourself. I wonder what exactly that can mean?"

"Oh, Mr. Lothbury, I beg you to leave it at that!"

"Can it be," continued Lothbury, "that you came in the hope of finding poor John Mathieson's will?"

The girl started at what seemed to her the inexplicable accuracy of his guess.

"You know!" she exclaimed.

"I don't know anything," protested Aston Lothbury. "But I can make a very shrewd guess as to who advised you to come here and make the attempt.

Why did Mr. Tilehurst make you do the dirty work?"

"Mr. Tilehurst!" she echoed. "How could he know anything about it?"

Aston Lothbury's surprise was genuine this time. If James Tilehurst had not sent her, or at best allowed her to go, who had? Unless her voice and manner were a calculated lie—which was absurd—all his preconceived notions regarding her presence here at that time would be upset.

"You were not put up to this by Mr. James Tilehurst?" he said judicially. "Let us consider the position, then. There is a will which, for your own reasons, you wish to have in your possession. You calculate that that will is probably in my office. Do you ask me to believe, my dear young lady, that you thereupon decided to try your hand at burglary, knowing that you were utterly ignorant of the difficult science of forcing safes, knowing that, even if the safe should chance to be unlocked—one chance in a million—you would probably be unable to find that which you sought? Do you ask me to believe that a sensible, modern young woman like yourself could set out on such a childish adventure?"

Mary hesitated.

"You have caught me in the middle of the adventure, Mr. Lothbury," she said evasively.

"True," he replied. "But that doesn't answer my objections, that you would never have set out on such a wild-goose chase unless some one had told you just how to set about it. I simply suggested that that some one was probably Mr. James Tilehurst, your affianced husband."

He thought that she shuddered at the last phrase.

"It was not Mr. Tilehurst," she repeated. "He knows nothing about my coming here. I would rather anything should happen than that he should know I have been here."



"Strange," thought Aston Lothbury, "very strange!

"You admit, then, that some one did suggest this rather desperate measure to you?" he said. "Don't you think that I am entitled to know his name?"

For a moment Mary did not answer, and then:

"Yes, honestly I think you are," she answered. "But I am very sorry that I cannot give it you. I promised that I would not do so."

Aston Lothbury made the mistake of thinking that he was about to solve the mystery which baffled him and caused him not a little uneasiness.

"Come, come," he protested. "I don't think you are treating me quite fairly. Of course, I don't want to claim any credit on the score of my having refused to allow the police——"

"Then why mention it?" flashed Mary.

He was taken aback by the sudden violence from one so gentle.

"Sooner than break my promise in return for your forgoing your right to prosecute me," she continued, "I will call the police back myself and confess to them that I am really a burglar, after all." She crossed the room and laid her hand on the telephone receiver. "I will do that now," she added, "or you will let me depart without further questioning. Which is it to be, Mr. Lothbury?"

Aston Lothbury laid his hand over hers.

"I don't think you ought to talk to me like that, my dear," he said reprovingly. His acting was so perfect, his intonation so exactly right, that Mary felt like a child who had behaved foolishly.

"I am sorry, Mr. Lothbury," she said penitently. "I did not wish to offend you."

"But you thought I wanted to bully you," he put in. "You didn't trust me

quite enough to believe that I have only been questioning you in the hope that I might be able to help you."

He patted her shoulder gently and looked down into her brown, troubled eyes. While he looked, there came a sudden change of feeling that menaced his sang-froid. The instinct which all his life he had suppressed, lest it interfere with money making, woke to sudden strength within him. He became suddenly conscious that Mary Missenden was an extremely beautiful woman.

With the consciousness was born an idea. He was nearly fifty, but older men married every day. Why not? James Tilehurst could already be counted out, and the girl would be stranded. So much the better. The idea grew with lightning rapidity.

"Come," he said, "I will see you home now without asking you any more questions. You shall confide in me later on or not, just as you think fit."

She suffered him to lead her from the office. She waited while he locked the door. Then as they gained the street, she held out her hand.

"You have been very kind, Mr. Lothbury, and I assure you I am genuinely grateful." she said. "Now I will say good night, because I am not going to trouble you to see me home at this time of night."

"But, my dear, it would be absurd." protested Aston Lothbury. "You can't wander about the city alone at this hour."

"I shan't wonder about." Mary assured him hastily and not a little anxiously. "I shall manage quite all right. You know perfectly well," she added, "that your doctor said you had to be in bed by eleven."

He could see that she did not wish him to accompany her, and for that reason was the more determined to do so.

"My doctor said that sleep was important," he replied. "But I shall not sleep a wink until I know that you are safely in your own house."

"Oh, very well," she answered, and he detected a note of resignation in her voice. "If you insist, you can see me home and the car can take you back afterward."

"The car!" he echoed in surprise.

"Yes, here it is," she answered as they came into a side street.

The car was waiting by the curb. The chauffeur had dismounted and was standing on the pavement. The minute he came face to face with Aston Lothbury, the latter turned to talk to Mary. The chauffeur shrank back in fear as the lights of the car fell on Aston Lothbury's face, revealing a look of the most intense malevolence.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN SELF-DEFENSE.

AT the time when Aston Lothbury was seated in the offices opposite his own, telephoning the police with the object of trapping James Tilehurst, his intended victim was sitting fully dressed in his own apartment.

The door of his sitting room silently opened.

"No sleep, sahib?"

"No sleep to-night, Singh," replied James Tilehurst. "Wait a minute, Singh, I'm going to tell you something."

He looked thoughtfully at his Gurkha servant, and came to the conclusion that Singh might safely be trusted. But he knew that it would be impossible for the native's mind to grasp the fact that his master was about to commit burglary which was really not burglary at all, since it would be committed by the consent of the owner of the premises. Instead, he gave his own version.

"Listen, Singh," he began. "A bad man came here and stole something of mine, some papers—like this. Savvy? The policeman is the bad man's friend.

I'm going to the bad man's house to steal back my paper. Savvy?"

"Me savvy, sahib. Me come, too," was the ready reply.

"Yes, you can come, too," said James Tilehurst, with a smile. "We're going to start now, Singh. It's a good twenty minutes' walk."

James Tilehurst had no hesitation in letting Singh accompany him, for he believed that there would be no kind of danger in the enterprise. If by any chance an officious policeman should discover them, he felt he could rely upon Aston Lothbury to give an explanation that would secure his immediate release.

He arrived at Lothbury's office, did he but know it, but a few minutes after the latter had left with Mary. The two outer doors yielded to his skeleton key, and, accompanied by Singh, he passed into Lothbury's inner office. Having made sure, with the aid of an electric torch, that the blinds were drawn, he switched on the lights.

"You stand by and tell me if you hear any one coming, Singh," he ordered, as he went to the desk and, with a screwdriver which he had brought for the purpose, forced the drawer.

It had been a part of Aston Lothbury's original plan that the safe should be opened, for which reason the key of the safe had been placed in the drawer of the writing table that he had described to Tilehurst.

James Tilehurst immediately found the key and opened the safe. For several minutes he searched but failed to find the will. At first he was merely annoyed; but as the minutes lengthened, annoyance gave place to apprehension. He hated rummaging in another man's effects, but there was nothing for it.

He had examined all the main drawers to no purpose, when his eye fell on a small drawer which he had not previously noticed. It was the last hope, and he pulled it open.

There were no documents in the drawer, but a strange-looking object caught his eye. He picked it up and held it in his hand. It was a tiny bronze image about four inches high, and the eyes of the image were of rubies.

To James Tilehurst it seemed nothing more than a trifling curio, some souvenir, doubtless, of Lothbury's sojourn in India. It occurred to him that it might amuse his servant.

"Here's something in your line, Singh," he said indifferently.

The Gurkha, who was standing by the door, looked toward his master. The next instant, his eyes blazing, the Gurkha crouched, and sprang across the room like an angry cat. James Tilehurst was scarcely conscious of the motion before the Gurkha had snatched the bronze image from his hand.

"Singh!" he cried in angry amazement, but for the first time in his life the Gurkha ignored the voice of his master.

James Tilehurst watched him place the image of bronze on the table, and then, falling upon his knees, make obeisance before it.

"Some symbol or other, I suppose." James Tilehurst told himself.

The Indian finished his obeisance. Then, with the utmost reverence, he clasped the brazen image and placed it under his coat, next to his skin. Then, his eyes gleaming with all the submerged savagery of his race, he turned to his master.

"Sahib Aston Lothbury," he said.

"How the devil did you know that?" demanded James Tilehurst, startled beyond belief. He had never mentioned Lothbury's name in the Gurkha's hearing. He knew that the Gurkha could not read English. In some way the man had deduced that he was in Aston Lothbury's office by means of the tiny brazen image. But there was another consideration, which he must not ignore.

"What do you know about Mr. Aston Lothbury?" he repeated, and as the In-

dian did not answer, he added: "Give me back that image, Singh. It belongs to Mr. Aston Lothbury, not to me or you."

Even as he spoke, he saw in the Gurkha's eyes that his command would not be obeyed. He was painfully alarmed, for he knew that an Indian who accepts service with a white man will do almost anything rather than disobey.

The Gurkha made a low salaam.

"Sahib, my religion," he said simply.

James Tilehurst knew that it would be futile to argue. He knew that the only way to get that image back would be to kill the Gurkha. Well, he would tell Aston Lothbury about it the following day, and offer to pay the value of the curio.

It would be futile to look for the will any longer. Aston Lothbury evidently had made a mistake. The will was not in the safe. He locked the door and returned the key to its place.

"Come along, Singh," he said. "We have finished."

The Indian following him, he left the building. Angry at the failure of his mission, and vaguely disturbed by his servant's behavior, he walked in gloomy silence.

On arrival at his flat the Gurkha again made a salaam. James Tilehurst knew that that meant further trouble, for in everyday life in England the salaam was prohibited.

"Well, Singh?"

"Sahib, me go back to India."

James Tilehurst bit his lip with vexation.

"What is the matter, Singh?" he demanded. "I have not insulted your religion."

"The sahib has not insulted my religion," replied the Gurkha. "My religion say me go back to India."

James Tilehurst shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well, Singh," he said. "You have been a good servant, and to-morrow I will give you baksheesh."

The Gurkha again salaamed, and the interview was at an end.

The chauffeur stepped aside as Aston Lothbury approached with Mary on his arm. He flinched as he did so, as if he had expected a blow. And yet in point of physique he could have felled the other man with the utmost ease.

As he entered the car behind Mary, Aston Lothbury smiled to himself. Mary herself had said that the car should drive him home. He would not have to wait long before he discovered all that he bad failed to learn from Mary. In the meantime he could safely indulge in the luxury of thinking of other things.

Mary lay back on the tapestried upholstery of the car and closed her eyes as a sign that she did not wish to talk. Aston Lothbury was quite content. As the car sped on its way, again and again the street lamps illumined her countenance, adding fuel to the growing fires of his middle-aged passion.

Arrived at her house he handed her out of the car. She took a latchkey from her vanity bag.

"I want you to drive Mr. Lothbury home, please, Carvick," she said to the chauffeur.

"Very good, madam," replied the chauffeur, and Lothbury smiled to himself at the quiet respectfulness of the tone.

Aston Lothbury waited until the front door had closed behind Mary. Then he turned to the chauffeur.

"I think you are familiar with my address, my dear Carvick?" he said gloatingly. "Drive carefully, please, for I would not like any accident to interfere with the little chat we are going to have when we arrive."

Some ten minutes later the car drew up outside the apartment house in which Aston Lothbury lived.

"You can leave the car. I will be responsible for any damage which may be done to it. You can come in with me."

The chauffeur did not answer, but descended immediately from the car and followed Aston Lothbury into his extravagantly furnished apartment.

In spite of his uniform Carvick did not look like a chauffeur as he entered the study with Aston Lothbury. He had a grace of bearing which, with his pure speech, suggested that he had seen better days, as indeed was the case. His face, too, betrayed that weakness of character which might have brought him, a broken man at the age of thirty, to consider himself fortunate that society allowed him to be a chauffeur.

"Sit down, Carvick," said Aston Lothbury. "We have one or two things to discuss. To begin with, how long have you been in love with your mistress?"

Carvick stiffened. It was as if he had determined to make an attempt at resistance to a nature which he knew to be stronger than his own.

"I am not in love with her, in the sense in which you use it," he flashed. "Ruffian as I am, I have enough decency to avoid that."

"You are in love with her enough to risk offending me for her sake," flashed Aston Lothbury.

"Yes, and I love her enough to put a bullet in you for her sake, if only I could see that it would do her any good," replied Carvick.

"You're a damned fool to talk to me like that," said Aston Lothbury. "Don't you see that after to-day's work I've got you?"

"Yes, I see it right enough," replied Carvick, nerving himself to defiance. "I see that you've got me, and you got me by a trick. You made me do your dirty work by threatening to expose the forgery I committed over a year ago. But you told me—you gave me your word, and I was fool enough to take it—that no kind of harm should come to her. But, God! I'd have let you send me to prison if I'd known that you contemplated murder."

Aston Lothbury chuckled.

"You weren't over reluctant at the time," he said. "When I offered you twenty-five hundred in addition to your safety, I think, if I remember rightly, my dear Carvick, that you positively jumped at it. Well, you have done your work well. Here is the forgery." He touched a check upon the table. "And here is the twenty-five hundred." A wad of bills followed the check.

Carvick picked up the check, examined it, and choked back a sob for all it had cost him as he tore it. Then he touched the bills.

"I will take this," he said, pocketing them, "because it may be the means of helping me to get back on you. Darn you for the murdering thief that you are. You may think I am afraid of you—perhaps I am—but there are limits to my fear. I know you have made me a murderer by your confounded trickery."

"Listen to me," broke in Aston Lothbury in a tone that silenced the other. "The only time that an out-and-out fellow like you can be dangerous is when he thinks that he's morally in the right. You seem to be under that delusion, and I'm going to dispel it right now. And I'll do it by reminding you of the facts. Just go back to the beginning. I showed you a car that was apparently an exact duplicate of the one you were driving for John Mathieson; it was a duplicate in nearly every particular. I offered you a bribe to turn up with that car instead of the proper one. I ordered you to drive them to the church in that car, and at the first possible opportunity to drive off to a neighboring side street, where the original car was to be left by you in charge of my other man. You were then to resume possession of Mathieson's car, handing the duplicate over to my man.

"True, I did not tell you the rest of the program. Perhaps you've enough intellectual honesty to admit that you could not possibly have imagined that I wanted to go through such elaborate deception as a sort of practical joke."

A shudder shook the younger man's frame.

"I had no idea it was going to be murder," he moaned. "It did not seem possible. Even now I can't understand why——"

"The only thing you need understand," broke in Aston Lothbury, "is that, once that changing of cars and your share in it becomes known, the law grabs you as an accessory in the murder, which means that you will be hanged, Carvick. I can prove that you did your bit.

"So you see, my friend, it will pay you to mind your manners when you are talking to me. And you are going to talk to me now. You are going to tell me how and why you came to put Miss Missenden up to robbing my safe."

Carvick was silent.

"Come along, Carvick," urged Aston Lothbury. "You've got a certain amount of brains, if you've nothing else. You've intelligence enough to see, surely, that I can make you tell me. Better do it sooner than later."

The younger man's hands opened and shut as an indication of despair.

"I was listening to your conversation this afternoon with James Tilehurst," he blurted out.

Aston Lothbury considered the answer critically.

"If you love her so much, Carvick," he said sneeringly, "why didn't you attempt the robbery yourself without distressing her?"

"I intended to do so," he answered. "But she was in great trouble, and she confided in me. She told me about the will. She begged me to suggest some way out of the difficulty. So I told her."

"Hm!" said Aston Lothbury. "Why didn't you both leave it to Tilehurst? How did you prevent his making the attempt?"

"I did not prevent his making the attempt," said Carvick. "I simply wanted to get there first."

"Oh!" exclaimed Aston Lothbury, for he had not thought of the possibility that Tilehurst himself might come later. "But half a minute," he went on. "Having overheard my conversation with Tilehurst, why did you not both leave it to Tilehurst himself to get the will?"

"I suggested that," said Carvick, "but she would not agree."

"Why not?"

Carvick hesitated.

"Out with it, man," commanded Aston Lothbury.

"She did not think that Tilehurst would destroy the will. She thought he would keep it until it was safe to produce it."

Aston Lothbury's eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

"Carvick, you are being positively useful," he said approvingly. "She thinks that Tilehurst has had a hand in the thing, then?"

"She does," replied Carvick, "though I cannot see what possible grounds she has for this suspicion."

"I can," said Aston Lothbury, half to himself, and chuckled again.

"That's good enough, Carvick," he said. "You have given me all I want for the present. Just remember for the future that it's a good deal quicker to do what I tell you at once, without arguing about it. When that twenty-five hundred has been blown I shall pay you from time to time when I make use of your services. You can go now."

Carvick arose. For a moment he stood looking at Aston Lothbury in concentrated hatred. Then, realizing his own impotence, he left the flat.

Aston Lothbury, well pleased with

himself, decided it was time to go to bed. Before doing so, he followed his invariable custom of going to every room in the apartment except that occupied by his servant, and testing the electric burglar alarm.

In defiance of tradition, Aston Lothbury was wholly untroubled with a guilty conscience. He undressed at his leisure, going over the events of the day as might a business man who has made a series of profitable transactions.

Ever and again his meditations were crossed by the haunting vision of the girl upon whom he had now set his heart.

It would be so jolly economical, he told himself, to marry her. Killing two birds with one stone! Ha! Ha!

Aston Lothbury started to full wakefulness as the loud burr of the burglar alarm filled the apartment. His hand slid under his pillow and closed on the automatic pistol which never left him. The other hand found the electric switch, in the nick of time.

Aston Lothbury owed his life to the fact that his brain worked quickly and never bothered itself with nonessentials.

At that moment the one great essential was a dark, grim figure, crouching by the window. Before his hand had left the switch, the figure crouched and sprang, a murderous Gurkha knife gleaming in one hand.

Aston Lothbury fired point-blank. The Gurkha stopped and staggered. Aston Lothbury fired again and again. The Gurkha fell to the floor.

Aston Lothbury leaned over the prostrate figure, ready to fire again at the faintest sign of movement. But the figure lay motionless.

"I wonder——" he muttered and clambered out of bed.

He stooped over the dead Gurkha.

"It is the very man himself," he exclaimed. "By Heaven! This is a piece of luck."

There came a violent knocking on his door; it was his valet.

Aston Lothbury threw open the door.

"Fetch the police at once," he ordered. "An Indian burglar tried to murder me with his knife, but I've shot him, and he's dead. Look there, Walters. You can see the knife in his hand."

"Yes, sir," said the man, quaking.

"Right. Remember that you noticed the knife. Get the police as quickly as you can."

**To be concluded in the next issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out on Tuesday, August 17th. Do not forget that, as the magazine is published every week, you will not have to wait long for the next installment of this serial.**

## FIRST WOMAN JUDGE IN SOUTH

MEMPHIS, Tennessee, is the first city south of the Mason and Dixon's line to have a woman judge. She is Mrs. T. F. Kelley, and is serving in the Shelby County juvenile court. Having children of her own, she possesses the sympathy and understanding of children's problems which are necessary to the proper upbringing of the young.

Judge Kelley hears cases concerning delinquent children, and those who are neglected by their parents or others responsible for their welfare. She has jurisdiction also over the administering of mothers' pensions in the county.

# Three Alike

## by Ernest M. Poate

*Author of "Changed Caliber," etc.*

HENRY LODGE KENNEDY, JR., ceased for a moment to curse the hardness of waiting-room benches and the unreasonable strictness of those government specifications which had necessitated his hurried trip to Washington, and looked about curiously.

From the tail of his eye he had caught a glimpse of a dark-brown traveling bag. Now the high-arched waiting room of the Pennslyviania Terminal, in New York, held several hundred people; that is as usual at midnight as at eleven in the morning; and most of them had bags and suit cases of one sort or another.

This was a very special kind of bag, and young Kennedy, always fastidious about his personal belongings, looked at it with envy. It was an alligator-skin kit bag, not aggressively new, but in perfect condition; the flat bosses of its covering shone with a glossy, rich brown glint which seemed to announce at once the wealth and perfect taste of its fortunate possessor.

"If I had a bag like that," thought Kennedy, "bell boys and porters would fight for the honor of carrying it—even in Washington. It might even get me a decent room!"

He thought disdainfully of his own modest cowhide suit case as his eyes moved curiously upward from the bag to its bearer, and lingered there, entranced.

For she was a wonderfully pretty girl. Slight, almost petite, she wore an expensively plain trotteur suit which enhanced the grace of her slender figure. A saucy little forward-tilting hat, perched upon a great mass of red-gold hair, matched and deepened the color of her big violet eyes. Despite her air of quiet poise, there was about her a hint of that almost pathetic appeal for help and protection which such little, big-eyed girls make, all unconsciously. Watching, young Kennedy caught himself longing for some peril from which to save her—some muddy puddle over which he might throw a velvet cloak to protect her tiny patent-leathered feet from defilement. She was that sort of girl.

She walked slowly, her blue eyes searching the huge place as for some familiar face. She was to meet some one here, Kennedy decided—some man, no doubt. He felt a twinge of wholly unreasonable jealousy at the thought. Her face looked tired; her soft mouth was drawn into a pathetic little droop; her right shoulder sagged a trifle as though the alligator bag were too heavy.

Kennedy repressed an impulse to offer his aid. It wasn't right, he thought resentfully, that she should have to lug that great, clumsy bag about. What were her people—what was that confounded selfish chap she'd come here to meet thinking about to let her do it? But it couldn't be helped. If he offered to carry it for her the girl would only snub him; and right enough. It was none of his business.

So he shifted once more, trying to find a soft place on the wooden bench, and fell into morose thought at the lack of consideration of Federal inspectors, the impracticality of architects, the

perversity of workmen, and all the other difficulties with which Kennedy & Son, building contractors, were contending in the erection of the three small-city post-office buildings which now occupied the firm's workmen.

But he did not quite lose track of the girl with the alligator-skin bag. From an eye corner he followed her slow progress about the waiting room; saw her pause here and there to set down her heavy burden and search the crowd with weary eyes. At last, her circuit completed, she stopped directly in front of Kennedy's bench.

Dropping the bag with a sigh of relief, she glanced demurely at the young man from beneath long curving lashes, caught his ardent eyes and looked away immediately. Beneath her clear, translucent skin the color rose faintly; yet she did not seem wholly displeased. Harry Kennedy was a personable youth.

The girl sank down upon a bench opposite him, arranging her skirts about her with the deft, graceful hands of the young woman who knows herself watched. From behind an unread newspaper, Kennedy's admiring eyes followed her every movement.

She seemed uneasy, almost worried; plainly the person for whom she waited was late for his appointment. Her big dark-fringed eyes kept turning toward the entrance; two or three times she half started up, then dropped back in disappointment. It seemed to Kennedy that her manner was almost apprehensive. This must have been a most important engagement, he thought—and wondered again, with that absurd tinge of jealousy, whether it was with husband or friend.

At last, with a final glance at her tiny wrist watch, the girl of the alligator-skin bag rose and stood hesitant for an instant, pinching a rose-red lip between slender fingers. Then she walked straight toward Harry Kennedy.

That young man was on his feet, hat in hand, bending deferentially forward, before she had crossed half the space between them. For a breath he feared she would pass him without speaking, and turned brick-red with shame at his precipitancy. But she stopped after all.

"I beg your pardon," she murmured, eyes downcast so that he saw only her thick, black, curling lashes, "but are you going to be here for a few minutes?"

Kennedy glanced at the nearest station clock. Being one of those who detest hurrying, he had come to the station in ample time; it still wanted twenty minutes to train time.

"Why, yes," he replied enthusiastically. "I'll be right here for half an hour. If there's anything I can do——"

"Why, if you'd just watch my bag for a minute, while I go out into the concourse—I was to meet some one here; I'm afraid I must have missed him."

Repressing a wild desire to tell her what he thought of any man who would make *her* wait, Kennedy managed to promise that he would take especial care of her property; and in proof of his solicitude he carried the brown bag across the aisle and set it beside his own suit case.

With a grateful look and a murmur of thanks the girl turned away and hurried toward the door. Was it imagination, or did she glance furtively over her shoulder, as for some watcher?

However that was, she had scarcely disappeared in the drifting crowds of the concourse when Kennedy felt a brisk tap on his shoulder. Scowling, he looked up from his newspaper; he resented that rough touch.

"What's the idea?" he said. "Keep your hands off me!"

"You're under arrest!' answered the intruder, just as crustily. "Pick up that pretty alligator bag and come along with me."

The speaker was a burly, thick-set man of middle age. Every angle of his broad, red face and solid figure was as square as though he had been marked off with a straight-edge and sawed out of some tough, knotty block of wood. Thick, black eyebrows, meeting above his nose, might have been drawn across his face with an ink-brush and a ruler. His mouth, beneath a blunt, square-ended nose, was a wide horizontal line, exactly parallel with a chin like the edge of a balk of timber. His shoulders were flat as the top of a box; his thick body was square; even his shoes were rectangular as a pair of Harlem River coal barges—flat, square-toed, and uncompromising.

"It's a pinch!" repeated this individual, and his thin lips cut the words off squarely, like the snip of a pair of shears.

Kennedy kept his seat, and—with some difficulty—his temper.

"It's not quite as simple as that," he answered coolly; but there was stubbornness in the set of his own well-shaped chin. "We'll have to settle a few things first, like what's the charge, and what's your authority to make an arrest, and who the blazes you are, anyhow, to be disturbing law-abiding citizens this way?" he finished, as his irritation overcame his self-repression.

Unperturbed, the other flipped back a coat lapel to show a small gold badge. "U. S. Customs," he vouchsafed. "Charge—receiving contraband, and possessing unlawful quantity of narcotic drugs. Now pick up that 'gator bag and come on!"

His tone was as crusty as ever, but Kennedy began to perceive that there was no animus in it. The man bit off his words habitually; they were snapped out of him as though by the explosions of an internal engine. It was a manner quite in keeping with his extraordinarily rectangular person.

Kennedy gaped at him, struck by a sudden, unbelieving horror. That girl! She had seemed anxious and uneasy; she had disappeared hurriedly just before this officer came up.

"You—you mean," he stuttered, "that there's—that you think there's dope in that bag?" He pointed to the innocent-looking alligator bag with a finger that was not quite steady.

"You know it, bo," snapped the customs man in the same brusque, staccato manner. "You know it. Now pick up your bag and come on, quiet, before folks gets watching—unless you'd *like* trouble?"

The square shoulders seemed to grow even squarer; a hopeful gleam came into the pale eyes below that inch-wide band of black eyebrow. Evidently this customs inspector was by no means averse to a bit of trouble, if it came in the way of business.

"But—but," protested poor Kennedy, "it's not *my* bag!"

The other produced a sound like the exhaust of an unmuffled automobile engine. It was expressive of complete disbelief. "What you doing with it, then?" he inquired pertinently.

"Why, a—a lady asked me to watch it for her."

"Hunh!" The same derisive snort. "What sort of a lady?"

But at that Kennedy boggled. Whatever this unknown girl might be, he could not believe her a criminal, and especially one of that most despicable type which traffics in habit-forming drugs. Undoubtedly there was some mistake; perhaps one which she could explain in a moment; but he could not be the one to turn her over to the clutch of a rigid and unimaginative law. Instinctively he felt that it must be a very satisfactory explanation indeed which would placate this rectilinear policeman—and hoped that the girl would not come back just now.

"Why," he hesitated, "why, she—

why, a kind of a large, tall woman, she was, with a—a long nose. And she had blond—er, no, gray hair, and wore some sort of a black or a plaid dress, or something. An old woman—maybe fifty or so, and awful sour looking," he went on, growing more assured as his imagination pictured a wholly fictitious person.

"Hunh!" scoffed the inspector. "A tall, short woman, wearing clothes. Very exact!" He smacked his lips upon the word as though it were a favorite with him. "And now, if you're *all* ready," he cut through Kennedy's despairing protests with the ruthlessly impersonal force of a steam shovel, "let's be going."

The man was as impervious as a steel casting. Giving up all hope of making an impression upon him, Kennedy picked up his suit case and the fateful bag. The latter was surprisingly heavy.

"Say, chief," he ventured, "how about a porter and a taxi?"

The other nodded rather disdainfully. "You can afford it," he conceded, "in your business."

Inwardly boiling with rage at the implication, Kennedy thanked him meekly enough, and beckoned to a red-cap. Now that the inwardness of the affair was apparent, he was chiefly desirous of getting away before the unknown girl should return and be arrested with him. His heart loyally proclaimed her innocent; but his mind told him that she was much safer outside of this policeman's range of vision.

A short taxi ride with a silent companion who chewed gum with the perfect rhythm of a machine, and they disembarked before a high office building. Kennedy was careful not to brush against the customs officer; he felt that the impact would be like striking a steel bar, that he would bruise himself upon some sharp corner.

Up in an elevator, through a long corridor they went; past a black-lettered, ground-glass door into a room where sat a male stenographer and two or three silent, soberly clad men with very sharp eyes. To these Kennedy's captor vouchsafed a jerky nod, as mechanical as though produced by the movement of some internal lever.

But he did not stop. Rapping upon an inner door, he opened it without waiting for a reply, and propelled Kennedy before him into a smaller office, from whose wide window one could see the busy North River with its fussy tugs and indifferent, ducklike ferryboats.

Seated at a wide, flat-topped desk, which he dwarfed, in a swivel chair which he overflowed, was a fat man—a very fat man. For all its bigness, his coat showed deep transverse wrinkles at each button; his voluminous chins lapped over his collar. He had small babyish features, crowded close together in the center of a vast expanse of face; wide eyes of infantile blue looked out from under hairless brows in mild, perpetual surprise at a dishonest world.

This man mountain turned his benevolent gaze upon his visitors, smiling a fat-lipped smile which seemed to assure them that he knew both for thoroughly good fellows, that he was mildly delighted to see them, and that he knew their errand was both friendly and interesting. He should have been a dispenser of charity, thought Kennedy, half amused; that patriarchally innocent gaze would have sent even an empty man away comforted and encouraged.

"Well, boys?" he rumbled cheerily, in a voice whose tremendous volume accorded as well with his bulk as it contrasted with his cherubic and infantile features. "Well, boys, what's the good word?"

"Got him, chief," replied the officer, in his habitual staccato, rather as though the words were steel bolts, punched out automatically and ejected from the orifice of an ingenious ma-

chine. "Got one of the birds in that U. F. deal, carrying a bag full of dope."

"Yes, yes, yes!" enunciated the fat man in a sort of basso profondo chirp, nodding his head like a mandarin toy, so that all his chins quivered. "Yes, yes, MacRae. Good work; very good!"

His expression was as cheerfully benevolent as ever; but his wide blue eyes, as they fastened themselves on Kennedy's, revealed an unexpected keenness. . The younger man shivered unconsciously. If he had really been guilty, he thought, he would not have cared to be examined by this man, despite his appearance of comfortable benignity.

"Sure you're right, MacRae?" rumbled the Federal officer. "This boy don't look like a dope peddler."

Kennedy felt a surge of gratitude; but the square-chinned MacRae nodded once more, implacable as a steam hammer.

"Yes," he answered flatly. "That's the very bag, see?"

The chief's puffy lids drooped; his eyes saddened, as at the unexpected entrance of evil into a perfect world. "Dear, dear!" He sighed, and the vibrations of his regret seemed almost to rattle the windows. "Dear, dear! Well, open her up, Mac—let's have a look."

Businesslike as ever, the other produced a huge bunch of keys and attacked the lock of the alligator-skin bag. But now Kennedy had caught his breath. He began to realize the full seriousness of this affair. At first he had felt nothing more than a half-amused annoyance at the officer's mistake and the prospect of missing his train; now the fat man's very air of charitable sadness, the matter-of-fact manner of both officers, forced upon him the realization that he was, so to say, in the same block with a Federal prison.

"Before you have that opened, chief," he began, "let me explain. I don't know what's in it—never saw it until half an hour ago. I am Henry Lodge Kennedy, Jr.—Kennedy & Son, contractors." He produced a card. "I started for Washington this morning, to see about some of the specifications for the Federal building at Lakeport; we're building it, you know." Again he fumbled in a pocket, and produced a sheaf of papers. "Look these over; phone our office, if you like. It's easy enough to identify me.

"Well, I sat in the 'Pennsy' waiting room, and a—a woman came along and asked me to watch her bag a minute while she looked for a friend. And then Mr. MacRae here came and arrested me, and that's all I know about it."

He stopped, appalled. MacRae had opened the brown bag, and now laid it on the desk before his chief. Kennedy stared into it, gaping; the fat man leaned forward, his absurd little mouth drawn into a grieved droop; even the iron MacRae showed a certain grim triumph—his mechanism seemed to have speeded up a bit, his jaws champed faster on their cud of chewing gum.

For within the bag's open mouth, nested carefully in cotton, lay a neat row of red-wrapped bottles, each bearing a skull and crossbones in white. The fat chief picked one up at random.

"Morphinæ sulphas," he read, "one ounce, avoirdupois! Dear, dear!" He plunged a vast, pudgy, fat-dimpled hand into the bag again, and deposited the red-wrapped bottles eight inches high upon the desk before him.

"One, two, three—five—eight!" he counted. "There's some eight hundred and fifty dollars' worth of morphine, at the market, and probably four thousand dollars' worth at smugglers' prices. Dear, dear! Half a pound of morphine; enough to kill two thousand men. Ever think, my son"—turning an eye of mild reproach upon the horror-stricken Kennedy—"how many good boys and girls that stuff might have sent

to hell if we hadn't caught it? And here's more!"

Fumbling in the cotton at the bottom of the valise, he brought out bottle after bottle; flat, plainly labeled bottles, each containing a thousand tablets. When finaly empty, the bag had yielded up eight ounces of morphine, four thousand quarter-grain tablets of morphine, and ten thousand sixth-grain tablets of heroin.

"They had their nerve," reflected the chief mildly. "Didn't even take off the labels. The man who packed that bag has lost at least six thousand dollars; and that won't be all, if we catch him!"

For an instant the mild, rubicund countenance was set and stern; the baby-blue eyes showed a hard glint. Then the fat features softened once more, and the childish mouth curved in a smile as he turned to Kennedy.

"Well, son," came that amiable bellow, as of a humorous bull, "you pretty near got yourself into a mess." He glanced over the young man's credentials swiftly but with care, then handed them back. "Next time a pretty girl asks you to mind her baggage, you better not."

"It—it wasn't a girl," protested Kennedy, looking down; even now he was not ready to condemn the violet-eyed lady. "It was a—a kind of an oldish woman wearing a plaid skirt and——"

A Garantuan chuckle cut him short; the chief was holding up one huge fat hand.

"Don't try to kid the old man, son," he reproved, with unexpected perspicacity. "When a young man lies about a thing like this—and you're not a good liar at all, Kennedy—it isn't to shield 'a kind of an oldish woman with a black-plaid skirt.'"

Kennedy flushed painfully, but the other relieved his perturbation. "Needn't try to describe her," he went on. "You're not a trained observer, anyhow. Rung along, now. Sorry you missed your train. Just forget all about this. We have our own ways of tracing such folks." He extended a vast pulpy paw. "Good-by—and don't get mixed up with the customs."

The mechanical MacRae jerked him a curt nod, neither friendly nor suspicious. It was merely that his mental mill had ground this suspect through; now the machinery stood idle, ready for another grist.

And so Mr. Henry Lodge Kennedy, Jr., resumed his interrupted journey to Washington, and went about his business there, wondering a little what would come to the girl of the alligator-skin bag.

Upon another Tuesday, as it happened, just two weeks later, he was again called to Washington, again packed his suit case, and set out for the Pennsylvania Terminal.

Following his porter through the concourse, he exclaimed aloud, so that that Ethiopian rolled inquiring eyes upon him. Kennedy was not looking; he stared uncomprehendingly at a brown alligator-skin bag—the identical bag, he would have sworn, that had caused his arrest two weeks ago.

Yes; the same girl was carrying it! Kennedy stopped dead, so that a hurrying dry-goods drummer ran into him and caromed off, cursing.

What should he do? Have her arrested? Warn her that the customs officers were on her trail? Or go on and mind his business, as that fat inspector had advised? And how under Heaven had the girl regained possession of that bag, which he had seen confiscated by government officials?

For a moment he stood in a quandary, to his porter's mingled amusement and irritation. Then the girl turned her head and settled his uncertainty at once.

She walked right up to him, trying hard to look stern. "*What* did you do

with my bag?" she demanded severely. "I ought to have you arrested!"

Kennedy merely goggled at her, open-mouthed. The porter's round eyes grew rounder; one sooty paw covered a delighted grin.

The young man turned first to him. He felt that this talk should be private.

"Here, George—take my bag into the waiting room and set it down. Take the young lady's too."

"Thank you!" interposed that young person. "I think it will be safer if I take it myself."

Kennedy grew very red. "Here—get out!" He thrust a coin upon the giggling negro, snatched his suit case, and took the girl's arm. "You come along," said he firmly. "Come in here and sit down; this has got to be explained."

Ignoring her protests, he led her to a quiet corner of the waiting room. "Now, then! Do you know what was in that bag?"

Petite, becomingly flushed, she faced him in pretty indignation, her big eyes dark with excitement.

"What do you mean?' she demanded. "How dared you open it? What have you done with my uncle's bag? I believe I'll call a policeman right away!" Then, yielding to a deliciously feminine curiosity: "What *was* there in it so terrible?"

Kennedy laughed in pure relief. It was perfectly obvious that she had no idea of the bag's sinister contents. Then he sobered once more. Innocent or not, she had been the unconscious accomplice of this despicable uncle. She was in danger of arrest! Instinctively he looked about for detectives and moved to shield her from observation.

"I've been arrested once because of that bag," he told her. "But how did you get it back?"

"Oh," she answered, flushing, "my uncle got it. He advertised, I suppose. He was awfully upset about it; he scolded me terribly! I do think you might have waited a minute."

"I couldn't." And forthwith he told her the whole story, abating nothing, for his temper was hot against this uncle who would expose such a girl to danger.

She stood quite still, wide violet eyes steady upon his face, her rounded cheeks growing whiter and whiter until he feared she might faint. At last she sighed and exclaimed:

"Oh! Oh! To think of it! My own mother's brother! I knew uncle Joe was kind of loose about some things, but I never thought he'd do anything like *that!* Oh, Mr. Kennedy"—he had told her his name—"do you suppose that bag's full of drugs *again?*" She dropped it forthwith, eying it as though it had been some poisonous reptile. It fell to the floor with a muffled clink.

Kennedy shook his head. "I'm afraid there's dope in it," he confessed; then started violently.

A clipped, metallic, unemotional voice repeated his words. "I'm afraid there's dope in it!"

Engrossed in their talk, the two young people had failed to keep any watch of their surroundings. Now Kennedy whirled, startled; at his shoulder, more angular and uncompromising than ever, straight black brows drawn down over pale steel-gray eyes, stood Inspector MacRae of the customs department.

"Another 'gator bag," announced this worthy. His teeth clicked audibly; the words dropped from his mouth like red-hot rivets, new-punched. "Same man. This the 'tall, short young woman of fifty, wearing a black skirt of red and green plaid?' Hunh! Come along, now, the pair of you!"

In spite of his words the man's manner was amiable enough. He seemed mildly pleased, as at the vindication of a long-held suspicion; but his smile was grim as the gaping jaws of a dredger's clam-shell bucket.

"We want to come," Kennedy assured him. "We were just starting over to see your chief. We've got news for him."

MacRae received this statement in silence, shepherding them toward an entrance where Kennedy signaled a cab.

In fifteen minutes they were ushered into the office of the young man's former ordeal. The same official, benevolently huge, sat in the same chair, which creaked beneath his weight; he turned upon the two young people the same mild stare of amiable, babyish surprise.

"Well, folks?" he began in that startlingly profound rumble. "What's the good word? Another bag, MacRae?"

Both Kennedy and the girl exclaimed aloud; for a brown alligator-skin bag stood on a chair beside the desk—a bag so exactly like the one she still carried that the girl looked from one to the other in amazement.

"I thought you said your uncle got it back?" said Kennedy.

"I—I thought he did," she faltered. "I—there must be some mistake. I don't understand!"

"Sit down, little lady," thundered the chief, but his voice was very kind. "Don't be scared; we've got this nearly straightened out now. All we want is to ask you two or three questions. You see, there were two bags; maybe three, Morrison told you he got the other back, did he?"

The girl stared at him wonderingly. "So you know who I am?" she asked.

Voluminous chins quivered to the chief's amiable nodding.

"Miss Annabelle Forrester; you live with your uncle, Joseph Morrison, the wholesale druggist. Once we got a line on that alligator bag it was easy. Let's open it now."

Again MacRae experimented with his bunch of keys, and soon the second bag stood open on the desk. The chief's puffy, dimpled hand plunged into it and brought forth a round bottle, its flat cork wax-sealed. It was full of little half-inch cubes of flaky white.

"Yes, yes, yes!" rumbled the fat man. "They did wash the labels off this time. Queer, how careless folks get, if they're not caught first off!"

Half a dozen bottles of the white cubes and sixteen bottles of tiny hypodermic tablets were presently ranged upon the desk. "The cubes are morphine, of course," explained the chief. "Tablets probably morphine and heroin; yes—see, half of them are marked with a cross in the wax. Half morphine, half heroin, I suppose. This bunch don't seem to deal in coke." He turned to the girl. "Now, Miss Annabelle, suppose you tell us your story?"

White-lipped, twisting her slender fingers together, she faced him bravely enough; her eyes, dark with excitement and horror, were yet steady and clear.

"Two weeks ago," she began, "uncle came back from the docks all excited. He generally goes down to the U. F. dock when the *Alhambra* comes in from Valparaiso—the purser's a friend of his. Well, he had this alligator bag—I never knew there was more than one—and he said he'd got to go right out on important business, and I was to take it to the Pennsylvania Station and meet him there. He was all upset; I thought he acted almost like he was scared about something."

The chief nodded again. "Wilkins was trailing him," said he.

"Well, I waited and waited, and finally went out to look in the concourse. I asked Mr. Kennedy to watch the bag, and when I got back it was gone!"

She glanced at the young man in mute apology.

"That was MacRae," supplied the chief.

Her uncle, it seemed, had been very angry; no doubt he was badly frightened. For days he had scarcely left

the house, and had started at every step. But things went on as usual, and he gradually regained his poise. This morning he had started for the docks, as usual—the U. F. steamer *Alhambra* had arrived from South America the night before—to visit his friend, the purser. He had carried the alligator bag. "I was surprised at that," explained the girl, "but he said he'd advertised and got it back. I thought he might have told me before, instead of letting me feel so bad because it was lost, but he was always queer that way. Now I think of it, he always carried that bag when he went to visit Mr. Green."

Returning with the bag at ten o'clock, Morrison had told her to take it to the Pennsylvania Station, check it at the parcels room and mail the check in an envelope which he gave her. He also gave her another check and directed her to redeem the bag which it called for and bring it home.

"I thought it was all awful funny, then," she finished, "but uncle just told me it was none of my business, and to do as I was told or I'd be sorry. He's so mean when he's angry that I didn't ask any more questions."

She opened a dainty hand bag, and gave the fat man a parcels check and an empty envelope, addressed to "G. J. Lockwood, 505A Dearborn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois."

"Mac," rumbled the chief briskly, "go get it!" He handed over the parcels check, and the cast-iron inspector marched out. Kennedy's fancy heard a clink, as of moving machinery, in his stiff progress.

The fat man leaned back, eyes closed, and seemed to forget his guests. The two young people sat in a corner, heads together in low-voiced talk, and started in surprise when MacRae returned; it had seemed but a moment!

He carried an alligator-skin bag—in every way an exact replica of the other two.

"Yes, yes, yes," rumbled the chief placidly, "I thought they'd have a third —for emergencies. Open it, Mac."

The third bag proved to be empty, save for a small package tucked into a fold of the lining. This MacRae unwrapped, revealing a thin packet of bills. Kennedy caught a glimpse of the topmost one. "$1000" was printed in a corner.

The chief thumbed over this money indifferently. "Yes, yes," he murmured. "About what I guessed. Fifty-five hundred dollars. That would be pay for the last cargo—the one before the lot you pinched, Mac." He stopped as the desk telephone rang.

"Yes, yes, yes? What? . . . Oh, Wilkins. Yes, yes. . . . Got him all right? Good!"

He hung up the receiver and turned about, grunting. "So that's that," he rumbled placidly. "Wilkins has got Morrison; Bergstrom nailed Green, the *Alhambra's* purser, first thing this morning. MacRae, go get you a parcels check, put it into that envelope and mail it to G. J. Lockwood. Then all you got to do is hang round the Pennsy parcels room until G. J. comes for his bag full of dope—and nail him, too. We can hold the others incomunicado, I guess, until that's done; he'll come right away, I expect. And that'll clean up the whole mess," he finished, beaming cherubically at his little audience.

Kennedy felt a thrill of admiration for this baby-faced, unromantic, adipose official; the neatness with which he was rounding up these sordid criminals was worthy of some tribute.

"You're a *regular* detective, chief," he said approvingly.

The fat man smiled upon them all impartially; his infantile eyes twinkled. "Once we got that tip about the alligator bag, it was easy enough," he said. "Green bought the stuff in South America. When Morrison dropped in to see him, on the boat, he'd bring this bag

along, with some excuse about taking a trip into Jersey to his factory. He'd stay a little while and then go—our dock man could see from way across the pier that he was carrying the same bag; one couldn't mistake it. Then he went to the Pennsy and got his parcels check. He'd walk straight to the other window and get the bag Lockwood had left there. Unless you watched every minute, you'd think he had the same one. Then he'd take a train for Ridgewood, where his little drug factory was. Out there he'd open the empty bag and get his coin, I suppose. Then he'd mail the check for the bag of dope to Lockwood, and that one would run into New York carrying an alligator bag just like the other. He'd go to the parcels room, check it and redeem the other—and again, unless you happened to see the whole thing, you'd think, of course, he took the same bag home again. It was pretty neat, and it worked as long as it did just because it was so simple. You wouldn't think of an exchange, seeing such an unusual-looking bag.

"But once we got the tip, their strongest point became the weakest, of course. It wasn't much of a trick to watch for a brown alligator-skin bag and pinch whoever carried it. So that's that.

"And now, young folks, we needn't keep you any longer."

Kennedy turned to the girl. "Come—Annabelle," said he.

She flushed, then paled. "Good-by," she whispered, and would have slipped out, but the young man caught her arm.

"Where are you going?"

"I—I don't know. Away!"

"Why?"

"Oh—oh!" She sobbed. "You'll never want to see me again. My uncle's been arrested. I'm the niece of a criminal! Oh, the disgrace of it! Let me go."

"Is *that* all?" Kennedy was vastly relieved. "Why, I had a cousin who was sent to jail. I don't know"—hopefully—"I'm not sure but he was hanged! I'll look it up. Come along, Annabelle."

"I—I haven't any home," she objected weakly; but she did not struggle against his possessive hand.

"I've got a married sister," he offered. "And if her husband isn't in jail, he ought to be. She'll take care of you. Come along."

She looked at him long and earnestly from dewy violet eyes, then yielded with a tiny sigh. Without a word, without a glance at the others, the two turned and left the office, very close together, the little blue hat almost touching a sturdy brown cheviot shoulder.

"Well, well, Mac," said the fat official in that odd, thundering chirp, as though a sea lion were imitating a sparrow; "well, Mac, that clears up the last detail of our case, don't it?"

And MacRae, chopping off a grim smile in exactly measured length, nodded with the emphasis of a benignant trip hammer.

## DAUGHTERS SUE FOR WAGES

LISTING their services for over thirty-six years in the household of their father, Amanda E. Brown and Mary Catherine Brown, of Moberly, Missouri, are suing their father's estate for $11,737.00 as wages due them. The sisters state that they milked cows, fed chickens, cooked, and washed clothes for the family, and did all these things upon special request of their parent. For the first nine years they value their services at $200.00 a year, the next ten at $300.00 a year, and the following seventeen years at $400.00 a year.

A brother of the women is contesting their claims against the estate.

# All Except Higgins

## by Walter Pierson

*Author of the "Bully Kane" Stories, etc.*

### CHAPTER I.

THE BULLY.

THE thundering of approaching hoofs as they beat against the hard surface of the highway caused the members of the picnic party to scatter quickly out of the road, their innocent pleasure suddenly disturbed and a feeling of fear upon them. The Sunday-school superintendent cried a strident warning, and the three women teachers rushed frantically here and there to be sure that all the children were out of danger.

They could not see the coming menace, for there was a sharp curve in the highway and dense woods on either side of it. For a moment they waited, listening to the thunder of hoofs, and then around the curve swept a magnificent animal ridden at a high rate of speed.

The horse was a splendid Arabian, once the favorite mount of a dignified sheik. He had given it in gratitude to a man who had saved his life. That man had shipped the horse to his home in the United States, and had died suddenly in poor financial circumstances a short time afterward. At the auction that followed, the Arabian steed had been sold for a big sum to Matthew Crandor, "Emperor Matt."

Matthew Crandor saw nothing in the animal except a good horse, and as he was careless in his treatment of human beings, it was not to be expected that he would treat a mere horse with any sort of kindness or mercy. His brutality was a byword throughout the land. The old sheik never had expected his beloved mount to be owned and ridden by such a man.

Seeing the scattered picnic party, Matthew Crandor drew rein abruptly and pulled the horse back on its haunches. The animal's flanks were bleeding, his sides dripping, and he breathed heavily, as though in pain. But he held his head proudly erect, and there was something in his manner that seemed to be an abject apology for the man he carried on his back.

"What's all this?" Matthew Crandor shouted, glaring at the children at either side of the road.

His heavy-jowled face was red, almost purple; his heavy brows were contracted, his forehead wrinkled angrily, and his mouth had a brutal expression around it. His manner of speech was anything but courteous, yet the Sunday-school superintendent, a mild-mannered little man, stepped to the edge of the road respectfully and removed his hat as he looked up at Emperor Matt.

"Just the children from the church in the village, out for their annual picnic, Mr. Crandor," he replied. "We always

take a hike along the highway and then have lunch in the grove beside the brook."

Matthew Crandor snorted his disgust. "There's a lot of sense in that!" he exclaimed, sneering. "They'd be better off if they were learning how to work and make their livings. Some of you people are always playing around."

"Just a little pleasure, sir," said the superintendent, trying to smile.

"Innocent, huh! And you, an able-bodied man, running around the woods with children! Picking wild flowers, I suppose. Think you'll ever amount to much doing things like that? Cattle!"

Crandor touched spurs to his horse's sore flanks and galloped on along the road. Some of the children had been frightened by his words and manner, and were crying. The teachers were trying to quiet them, pointing out the wild flowers, the birds, the chipmunks that scampered over the rocks and logs. The superintendent walked close to one of the teachers.

"There's a man for you!" he said, in a low voice. "Emperor Matt, as they call him in the city and in the newspapers—Emperor Matt with his millions! What genuine pleasure does he get out of life, a man like that? I never could think much of a man, regardless of his worldly standing, who could frighten children purposely."

"He is a beast!" the teacher declared; and they hurried on after the children.

Matthew Crandor rode on along the highway and presently turned into a road that ran across his country estate. There was a wealth of natural beauty on every side, but Crandor did not see it. It was not in his nature to see beauty of any sort. He had married a beautiful woman years before, but he did not see the beauty in her; he saw only that the alliance would help him greatly in his financial schemes.

There was no doubt of Crandor's financial success; the nickname that men gave him showed that. For he tried to ape an emperor, if man ever did. He had a small army of retainers on his country estate, and in the city he was almost unapproachable. He was a feudal baron living hundreds of years after his proper time. His fortune had brought him the hatred of men, and there were persons who declared that Emperor Matt gloried in that hatred.

Now he galloped around a bend in the road and came upon his head gardener and four assistants working beside the highway. Crandor reined in his horse and looked down at them. There was disgust in his face as they glanced up and saluted him.

"Jallen, come here!" he commanded.

The head gardener removed his battered hat and stepped up close to the horse.

"Sir?" he asked.

"What are you men trying to do?"

"The creek overflowed the highway here last spring, sir, and we are straightening the bed of the stream and building a small retaining wall," Jallen replied.

"You're an utter fool!" Matthew Crandor declared. "Haven't you common sense? You'll spoil the thing by straightening it, like a common canal. Dig away all that dirt you've packed in, Jallen, and do it quickly! Curve the road, you fool, and don't straighten the stream!"

"But, sir——"

"Silence, dolt! Don't you dare try to argue with me! Understand? Some of you fellows have been getting high and mighty lately!"

There came a chorus of low growls from the other four workmen, and Crandor glanced at them quickly.

"Cursing me under your breaths, are you?" he said threateningly. "For a cent I'd get down off this horse and thrash the lot of you! I can do it, too—never doubt that! Only I'd probably use my riding crop; I don't care to soil

my hands on fellows like you. Get to work, you dogs! Let me hear another growl or see another black look and I'll beat the lot of you!"

"I ain't a dog!" Jallen said sullenly.

"Trying to talk back to me again, are you?" Matthew Crandor cried at him.

"You ain't got any right——" the head gardener began.

Matthew Crandor sprang down from his horse. He raised the riding crop and charged upon the head gardener. Jallen darted quickly to one side, trying to evade the blow. The crop struck him on the shoulder.

The next instant Matthew Crandor had grasped him by an arm and had started beating him. The four other men rushed in. Crandor whirled upon them, throwing the riding crop away. He acted as though he welcomed this battle, as though he had in his system a certain amount of rage that had to be worked out.

Right and left he showered his blows, and the men retreated before him. Crandor, a man of fifty, was a giant and still retained a giant's strength. He always had sneered at physical weaklings, always had been ready to say that nobody but a strong man could amount to anything in any line.

Jallen was stretched almost unconscious on the ground. One of his assistants was knocked out completely. One ran away. The other two retreated in time to the side of the creek.

"There, you curs!" Crandor cried. "Don't try to raise your hands against your betters again. I'm a better man than any five of you, and don't you forget it! Now get to your work!"

He sprang into the saddle, looked down at them sneeringly, and dashed on along the highway.

Jallen got up, and the others stepped close to him. The unconscious man on the ground was moaning, and one of the others went to the creek for water and dashed it into his face.

"I'll have Emperor Matt arrested for this," one of the workmen threatened.

"A lot of good it would do you," Jallen replied. "He owns the justice of the peace down in the village. Like as not you'd be fined for assaultin' him."

"He's a brute!"

"You're right, he is! I've finished!" Jallen declared. "No more work do I do on this estate, if I starve. I don't work for any man who calls me a dog."

"Me neither!" another said.

"He'll pay for that blow with his riding crop!" Jallen went on, his anger gathering like a storm, his face white with hate. "I'm a human bein', I am, not a dog! I'll get him, some way. He's a beast, that Emperor Matt—a beast!

"It was a black day when I took service here. He brought me from the old country, he did, and I thought it would be fine workin' on the estate of a millionaire. Fine, is it? I'm quitting. Undo all our hard work, just to please him? If we'd done it the other way he'd have made us do it this way now. That's him! Workin' off his spleen, he is! He won't do it on me any more. We'll leave the tools here, and we'll go into the village and get some lawyer to collect our wages for us. Get your coats!"

They hurried down to the bank of the creek for their things, and Jallen looked down the highway and shook his fist in the direction Matthew Crandor had ridden.

"A brute—a beast!" he cried. "Beatin' better men than he ever will be! Emperor Matt, eh? Did you see the condition of that horse? That's a crime, that is! That horse has more brains than Emperor Matt ever had or ever will have! Treatin' a fine horse like that! The beast!"

"I'd like to fire the house!" one of the men said.

"He'd only build a bigger one and brag about it," Jallen told him. "That'd

be no way to get at the brute. There's better ways than that!"

Matthew Crandor seemed to be out for the purpose of making enemies that day. He forgot Jallen and the garden crew almost as soon as he was out of sight. He had disposed of the matter, he thought, and effectually. Fellows like those had to be disciplined now and then, he told himself.

As he rode, he caught sight of flashes of white in a small grove across a field. He stopped the horse and watched. A group of people was there, he discovered, on a corner of his estate. Matthew Crandor cursed. Every summer, it seemed, more people came to this section of the State. It was becoming a summer colony, and Crandor did not want that. He wanted to be lord and master here. He could be so far as the villagers were concerned, since most of them got their livings from him, but a summer colony might mean persons with brains and self-confidence who would dispute his czarship.

Crandor cursed again, put spurs to his horse, and galloped across the field. He entered the fringe of woods and slowed the horse to a walk. Thirty or forty persons, well dressed and evidently in comfortable circumstances, were there. Cloths had been spread on the ground and a feast was in progress.

The first rapid glance told Crandor that these persons were not men or women of importance as he looked at the meaning of the word. They were people who lived in the summer cottages down the road, he supposed. Here they were on his land, making an effort to enjoy themselves.

Crandor stopped his horse at the edge of a small clearing and looked down at the party in a surly fashion. It was his purpose to cause embarrassment, and he did so.

"What's all this?" he asked after a time.

One of the men stepped forward.

"Isn't this Mr. Crandor?" he asked.

"I'm Crandor, yes!"

"Oh, Mr. Crandor! Thank you for coming to my party!" It was a voice on the other side of him, and Crandor, scowling, turned and looked down. Below him was a radiant vision of womanhood, possibly twenty-five years of age. She was dressed simply and wore no hat. Her hair was jet black, her eyes were black and flashing.

"I told Mrs. Crandor to ask you, but she said that she felt sure you would not come," the vision went on. "Mrs. Crandor was coming, but she hasn't arrived. I am sorry she was detained. We're just going to have refreshments. Won't you dismount?"

Crandor grunted and curled his lip. "I do my eating at home," he snarled, "and I choose my own company."

"Oh!"

"I suppose Mrs. Crandor gave you permission to have this affair here?"

"Why, of course!" the vision said. "Possibly you do not know me. I am Carlotta Plumitas."

Crandor knew her. Carlotta Plumitas, the famous Spanish actress, the woman who had come to New York and learned English in a year well enough to act in it and cause a sensation. Everybody knew Carlotta Plumitas. She was a beauty with brains, which was enough in itself to make her a celebrity. But Matthew Crandor never admitted the existence of any celebrity save himself. He always tried to belittle a man or woman in the public eye.

"Plumitas?" he repeated, frowning. "Live about here?"

Carlotta laughed lightly. "Only for a month this summer, while I am studying a new part," she said.

"New part?" Crandor asked, acting as though mystified.

"Can it be possible that you never have heard of me?" she asked, laughing again.

"It is highly probable," Crandor said. "I have not heard of all the big-eyed girls who go running about the country. Since Mrs. Crandor has given you permission, go ahead with your picnic by all means."

Carlotta Plumitas' face grew somber as she stepped closer to the horse.

"Señor," she said, "is it that you are trying to be ungentlemanly, or is this some jest? Do you mean to say that you would not have given the permission yourself had I asked you?"

"I don't care to have every Tom and Dick and Sally running wild over my estate," Crandor said.

On the other side of the horse a man stepped forward quickly.

"I say, Emperor Matt, you're going a bit too far," he said.

"Who are you?"

"I'm a man who's not afraid of you, Emperor Matt. John Wantell, criminal investigator, private detective, well-known and justly famous solver of deep and dark mysteries. Don't try to bluff me that you don't know me, Emperor Matt. I handled that bond-theft affair for you last winter, and held half a dozen conferences with you."

"Rather insolent, aren't you?" Crandor asked.

"Not half so insolent as you are, Emperor Matt."

"Stop calling me that."

"You like it, and you know you like it!" Wantell told him. "But I'll call you Crandor, if you like. Now that you've had your fun, apologize to Señorita Carlotta and step down and have a sandwich. Señorita Carlotta is a famous actress and a splendid woman, beloved on two continents."

"I don't doubt it," Crandor sneered.

"I don't like the way you said that," John Wantell said. "Drop that tone when you are speaking of my friends —and Señorita Plumitas is my friend."

"Why, confound you——" Crandor began.

"Might as well come off your high horse, Crandor, figuratively and literally. I'm one of the few men you can't scare. I've friends in town who are as powerful as you are. You can't thrash me as you have so many men, because I'm a better man than you are physically. If you doubt it, we'll go to your gymnasium one of these days and decide the issue. Get down and mingle with us, and be human for once. The señorita will treat you pleasantly, if you admit that you know of her and her work."

It was Crandor's chance. He glanced at Carlotta Plumitas again, and she was smiling at him as though he had been a bad boy. But Crandor was not in a sociable mood.

"I'm rather particular with whom I associate," he said. "Seems to me I have heard of Señorita Carlotta." He hesitated, his lip curled, and in his eyes there was something slighting.

An angry flush spread over Carlotta's face at the insult, but she did not speak.

"Crandor, take back those words!" Wantell cried, stepping forward.

"Stand away from my horse, Mr. Boy Detective, or I'll knock you down with my riding crop."

"You egotistical boor!" Wantell exclaimed. "You'll pay for this!"

"Have it your own way," retorted Crandor. "Since you take this attitude, suppose you all get off my land, and be quick about it! Quick—or I'll call my grooms to throw you off!"

Carlotta listened to this harangue, clasping and unclasping her hands as if to control her emotion, her dark eyes snapping.

An older woman brushed past her.

"Señor, I am the mother of Carlotta," she said. "You will apologize to my daughter immediately, or you shall learn how a Plumitas can punish! That we should come to this—to be insulted by an upstart, a nobody!"

"Nobody, eh?" Crandor replied, his

thin lips curling. Señora Plumitas had touched him in a tender spot. He knew that he was ignorant and a nobody outside the financial world, and the knowledge hurt. "Off my land!" he ordered. "You, too, Wantell, or I'll have you attended to!"

Crandor urged his mount forward, and they were forced to fall back.

"Señor!" Carlotta cried, thoroughly enraged.

Emperor Matt spurred his horse again, rode straight across the luncheon spread on the grass, and went on toward the road that led to the big house on the hill. Insulting a few persons like that was but a minor incident of the day with Matthew Crandor.

He was still angry, though, when he reached the stables, and cursed at the boy who came out to take his horse. Then, swinging his crop angrily, he strode toward the house, went heavily up the steps, and entered the big living room.

His wife was sitting in one corner of the room, and Crandor went straight toward her. She got up as he approached, some question on her lips. But Crandor did not wait to hear it.

"I ran across a bunch of people having a picnic in the grove," he said.

"Yes, Matthew. I gave them permission. Señorita Plumitas, the famous actress, has a little cottage for the summer on the other side of the hill. She is quite a charming young woman."

"She's a characterless nothing! After this don't give out such permissions. I was forced to order them off."

"Matthew! And she has been so nice to me. It is seldom I meet anybody worth while."

"Really worth while!" Crandor cried. "Don't tell me people of that sort are worth while!"

"Matthew, you are hurting me!" He had gripped her cruelly by the shoulder.

"Grant no more such permissions, understand," he ordered. "Am I master in my own house?"

"Matthew!"

"Defying me, are you?" Matthew Crandor grasped his wife's shoulder again, brutally, then thrust her from him. She collapsed against a chair, and Crandor strode from the room. He did not hear the little cry of outraged love and self-respect.

Down the wide hall he went, and into the big library. Just inside the door, he stopped abruptly. A man got out of a chair beside the reading table.

"Good afternoon, Matthew?"

"What are you doing here?" Crandor demanded.

The man he faced was Doctor Lane, a famous specialist who always was called in when a medical man was needed in the Crandor family. Crandor's own son, George, was a physician, and a good one, but Crandor would have none of him professionally. He did not fancy his son being a physician; he wanted to make a money grubber out of him.

"I just thought I'd run down and take a look at that heart of yours," Doctor Lane said.

"Heart's all right!"

"Save that tone for your slaves, Crandor. I am your physician. I could have killed you half a dozen times, Crandor, and nobody would have suspected it, either. I say your heart's in bad shape, and one of these days it's going on strike. And that sort of strike is never settled by compromise, Crandor."

"I'm all right, doc!" Crandor held some respect for Doctor Lane because the physician bullied him to an extent.

"You're not all right!" Lane informed him. "You may boss a gang of men and make them jump when you snap your fingers, Crandor, but I'm the one man who can boss you and make you jump. When I give orders, you obey —or get another physician."

"I'm all right!"

"You've been going around making enemies again; I know the symptoms. That shows that you're wrong somewhere, Crandor. Any man who does that is wrong somewhere. It shows that your heart and liver and kidneys are not up to snuff—especially the heart."

"Don't be an——"

"Sit down, Crandor! You've got to learn to control that temper of yours. The way you are now, a fit of temper is enough to carry you off."

"You're trying to scare me."

"I'm telling you the truth," said the doctor. "Why should I try to scare you? I want you to live. I'm going to give you a tonic; I'll have it sent up from the village. I'll be out in a week to see you again. I'll remain until tomorrow morning, whether I get your invitation or not."

"Oh, stick around, cuss it!"

"Thanks," said the doctor. "You've been riding?"

"Yes. Marvelous deductions you have, since I am in riding breeches and am holding a crop in my hand."

"Very good. Take a warm bath, and then relax and rest until time for dinner. I'll see what you eat, too."

Doctor Lane smiled and went from the room, and Crandor sank into the easy-chair beside the reading table. On one end of the table was a big incense burner of great value. From it rose fumes pleasing to the nostrils.

Incense was Matthew Crandor's one hobby. He had given out interviews on the relation of a liking for incense to superiority. It was the breath of genius, he declared; and he intimated that he was a genius—in making money. Matthew Crandor and his incense burner were well known to the public that read the Sunday illustrated supplements.

He drew the incense burner toward him and inhaled deeply.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SPECTER OF DEATH.

DOCTOR GEORGE CRANDOR did not resemble his father in disposition, but he had the giant frame of his father and the strength. Early in her marriage his mother had ascertained that the mating was not one of love. Mathhew Crandor had no time for love and devotion, save devotion to money getting. But he wanted a son to carry on the line and double the fortune he intended to leave, and he was greatly pleased when he found himself the father of a boy.

Disillusioned, Mrs. Crandor devoted herself to her son, rarely appearing in society—where her husband was not welcomed save by those who wished a financial alliance. The son became more like the mother than like the father.

"Fit to smash his way through the world, and he wants to go puttering around mending broken bones!" Crandor said, when his son started to study medicine and surgery. "He'd ought to be breaking bones instead of mending them."

Being unable to dissuade his son from a professional life, Matthew Crandor took to sneering at him, telling him that medicine was not a man's game, but was only for those with small frames who could not fight their way through the world. It was useless for his son to attempt to argue.

Now, Doctor George Crandor was stationed at a mill town fifty miles from his father's country estate, living simply and endearing himself to the workers there. It was a fertile field for experience. It was experience that George Crandor wanted; he did not need money, for his father gave him a generous allowance despite the fact that he did not approve of his son's course.

On this day, shortly after his father had gone to the library, Doctor George Crandor drove up to the house in his

little roadster, sprang out, and walked into the living room. He found his mother stretched on a couch, sobbing.

"Mother!" he cried.

She tried to sit up and hide her tears, but it was too late.

"What is the trouble, mother?" he asked.

"It's—it's nothing, George."

"Please tell me."

She hesitated a moment, and then she began sobbing again in her son's arms.

"I—I cannot endure it!" she said. "He grows more terrible every day. Even I am not safe from him now."

"What do you mean?"

She showed him the bruises on her shoulder.

"My father—did that?" George Crandor asked, his face white.

"He isn't himself." His mother sobbed. "He is growing worse continually. His temper is terrible, George. I cannot endure it."

"Tell me!"

"I gave Señorita Plumitas permission to have a picnic—and Matthew found the party in the grove. I don't know what he did—something terrible, I am sure. He was still angry when he reached the house, and he upbraided me for giving her permission. He acted like a maniac, George."

"This must stop!" George Crandor said.

There was a terrifying quality in his voice, and his mother looked up quickly.

"George! There must be no trouble!"

"I must speak to him!" her son said. "He must be made to realize what he is doing. Other people are bad enough, but when he is brutal to his own family —to you——"

"You'll only anger him. You must not do that. Doctor Lane is here from the city and——"

"I'll have a talk with Lane, too," George said. "He must do something. He is one of the few men to whom father will listen. I'll find father now."

"Wait, George. You're angry now."

"I am—and I'm proud of it! He can't make a mark on my mother without answering to me. He'll apologize or——"

"That's ridiculous, George. He—he was just angry."

"And he took some of his anger out on you, did he? Well, it'll have to stop. He's scarcely human lately. And I came over here to ask him a favor."

"A favor, George?"

"I want to build a hospital in the mill town. I want him to endow it—put his name over the door, if that would please him. But this other thing comes first."

"Wait until after dinner, George."

"I'll see him now, mother. Don't you worry. I'll get Doctor Lane to scare him—tell him he must stop these fits of temper or suffer the consequences."

George Crandor left his mother and hurried through the hall to the library. He had not displayed the anger he felt. Now that he was away from her, it surged within him. He thrust open the library door, entered, and let it slam behind him.

Matthew Crandor turned in surprise from the incense burner.

"Is this any way to enter my library?" he began.

George Crandor, his face white, walked to within three feet of his father and stood looking down at him.

"I have just seen mother," he said.

"Well, is there anything unusual in that?" Crandor sneered.

"I found her stretched on a lounge, sobbing."

"Did, eh?"

George Crandor bent forward, his eyes burning into those of his father.

"And I saw bruises on her shoulder. You were responsible for that!"

"Suppose you sit down like a good little boy and talk sense!"

"And just suppose you listen to me for a moment?" George Crandor cried. "This sort of thing must stop. You can't mistreat my mother! I'll not allow it!"

"*You'll* not allow it? Who are you?" Crandor retorted.

"I'm your son. I've your same terrible temper, but I've fought to control it. I've dammed that temper back. Be careful, father, that you don't cause me to loosen it!"

"You confounded young puppy!"

"We are speaking of my mother and your treatment of her," his son cut in, ignoring his father's remarks. "It must stop! Understand? I, your son, stand here before you and tell you that it must stop!"

"Threatening me, are you?"

"I'm qualifying my threats, sir. I say only that you must not mistreat my mother again."

"Do you think I'll allow my son to dictate to me?" Matthew Crandor cried; his voice becoming louder.

"In this instance, you will."

"I'll throw you out of the house!"

"That is your privilege. I'm speaking of my mother—your treatment of her. I don't want to find her sobbing that way again. Don't want to find any more marks on her put there by your fingers!"

Matthew Crandor's face flamed with rage, and he sprang from his chair to confront his son.

"I'll teach you to use more respect when you speak to me!"

"Keep quiet, father. I don't want any trouble with you if it can be avoided. I merely want your word to treat mother right."

"I thrashed you when you were a boy, and I can do it just as easily now."

"I doubt it!" said Doctor George Crandor. "And I'd hate to have you attempt it. I do not want to raise my hand against my father, but if you mistreat my mother again——"

Emperor Matt's rage seemed to well up within him, and then burst forth. He raised his great fists, brandished them, crying out:

"Out of the house! I'll disinherit you! You are no son of mine? Go roll your pills and mix your powders. You're not fit to be a Crandor!"

"It isn't any particular honor to be a Crandor," George replied. "I don't need your money, either. I can earn my own living. You can't frighten me, father, with all your threats. Just remember the subject of this conversation and let all other things drop."

"Are you going to get out?" Emperor Matt shouted. "Shall I call the servants and have you thrown out? Shall I knock you down and throw you out myself?"

"Father!" George warned him.

But Matthew Crandor struck out without another word, and his fist reached the side of his son's head. A ring he wore cut through the skin and drew blood. George Crandor, slightly dazed and without raising a hand to defend himself, darted quickly aside to avoid the second blow.

"Too cowardly to fight, are you?" his father said. "For a cent I'd take a whip to you!"

"Father!" George's voice told that he was fighting to hold back his rage. There was a note of warning in it, too, but Emperor Matt did not hear it. He launched himself forward again, and George Crandor threw wide his arms, caught his father in them, braced himself and pinned his father's arms to his sides, and then bent him backward over the easy-chair.

Crandor kicked and tried to twist free, but could not. His son held him there, and their eyes blazed at each other less than a foot apart. Doctor Lane rushed into the room from the hall.

"Stop it!" he cried. "George, what are you doing?"

"I'm subduing a maniac," George

Crandor replied. "Were he not my father, I'd use harsher means."

"Let him up! You're choking him!"

George released his father and stepped back quickly, still on guard, half expecting a swift attack. But Emperor Matt merely slumped down in the chair, breathing heavily. Then he raised his head and regarded his son.

"Out!" he gasped. "Never darken the doors of this house again as long as I live! You're no son of mine!"

"Crandor——" Doctor Lane began.

"Keep out of this, Lane. You are my physician, and a good one, but you have no hand in this."

"You've got to calm yourself, Crandor!" Lane warned him. "Remember that heart of yours."

"Just a minute," Crandor begged. "Get out!" he cried at George again. "I'll issue orders to all the servants to run you off the place if you dare come here again."

"I'm not inclined to take such talk even from my father," George said hotly.

Doctor Lane, very professional in manner, stepped to his side and spoke in a low tone.

"Go at once, George!" he said. "He cannot stand many scenes like this, you know. Go, and I'll communicate with you later."

"I'll not let him mistreat my mother."

"Clear out—quickly!" Doctor Lane commanded, his voice suddenly that of a physician in charge.

George Crandor straightened his shoulders, picked up his hat, and strode to the door. His father hurled a last imprecation after him, and George would have replied to it but Doctor Lane urged him on into the corridor and closed the door of the library after him.

George found that his mother was in the hall, and he took her in his arms.

"Don't you worry, mother," he said. "He's just having one of his spells."

"George, you're angry. You're angry at your father, really angry, for the first time in your life. Oh, George, control your temper!"

"I'll try, mother."

"Just stay away from him for a time."

"He's not going to mistreat you again, I can tell you that. If he tries it I shall forget that he is my father. You'd better go to your room, mother, and call one of the maids. I'm going back to the mill town."

She obeyed him silently.

George Crandor sprang into his roadster and drove it furiously over the hills and toward the little town where he had his office and did his work.

In the library Doctor Lane worked with Emperor Matt for some time, until his anger had abated.

"You've got to stop this nonsense, Matthew, or there is no use in me trying to do anything," the doctor said.

"What nonsense! You want me to lie down and let everybody walk over me, is that it?" Matthew Crandor asked. "When I can't manage my own affairs it'll be time to quit. I'm surrounded by incompetents and fools. My gardeners, that silly Spanish woman and her mother, that fool of a detective, and even my son—they bother the life out of me."

"You'd better try to rest until dinner," the doctor said.

Emperor Matt did rest, and he appeared at dinner as though nothing at all had happened. His wife tried to be brave and smiling before the servants. Emperor Matt did not shout more than usual during the meal.

Afterward he went to the library and began reading. Doctor Lane sought Mrs. Crandor in the living room.

"He has become quiet, Mrs. Crandor," the doctor reported. "I think the worst is over for the time being. He's subject to these spells of temper, you know."

"Doctor, I'm afraid," she replied.

"He is antagonizing so many persons. And my boy has the same temper; he really was enraged this afternoon. It would be terrible if they clashed."

"George took a blow this afternoon and did not return it," the physician said. "He merely subdued his father. I think Mr. Crandor really is proud of the fact that his son could do it. I'll remain the night, Mrs. Crandor, and watch him. But I think that he'll be all right for a time."

He saw Matthew Crandor later in the library, and Emperor Matt seemed to be much quieter. He talked in ordinary tones regarding an article he had been reading. Now and then he pulled the incense burner toward him and inhaled deeply.

Those in the house retired at the usual hour. In the morning they arose to find a fine summer day. Breakfast over, Emperor Matt retired to the library, and for an hour was busy with his secretary and the morning mail.

Then he turned to the reading table and lighted the incense burner. He sat down in the easy-chair and drew the burner toward him. He felt a bit ashamed of what had happened the day before, especially in regard to his son, and was wondering how he could straighten things out without seeming to show weakness.

Doctor Lane was with Mrs. Crandor on the veranda. He was to return to the city that morning, and he was telling her to send a message over the telephone in case Emperor Matt should be unruly again.

"I'll go in and tell him good-by, Mrs. Crandor," the doctor said. "I'll warn him again about his heart."

"You really think that there is danger, doctor?"

"There always is danger in the case of a heart like his," the doctor replied. "But he'd live a long time if there were no heavy scenes. These bursts of anger, however, are very bad. One of them may be enough to carry him off. I'll warn him again; I believe he really listens to me."

Doctor Lane walked slowly down the hall and to the library door. He knocked, but no one answered. After a few moments' waiting he turned the knob and pushed the door open.

An instant later the physician gave a cry and darted quickly into the room.

Matthew Crandor was sprawled full length on the rug beside the long reading table. The incense burner was on the floor beside him, broken, no smoke issuing from it. Emperor Matt's face was twisted as though with pain, one of his hands was clutched at his breast, and his eyes were rolled back and glazed.

The first glance told Doctor Lane the truth—Matthew Crandor was dead.

## CHAPTER III.

### WANTELL AT WORK.

JOHN WANTELL, criminal investigator, was stretched on the grass beside the road in front of the little cottage he had rented for a month's vacation. He had a pipe between his teeth, and was puffing smoke lazily at the sky. Wantell was resting, and enjoying the process, far from crimes and criminals and busy offices.

A roadster roared along the highway, sending clouds of dust toward the bushes on either side, and Wantell, muttering an imprecation on the inventor of automobiles, prepared to roll over and get away from the approaching clouds of dust.

But the roadster stopped before the cottage with a sudden grinding of brakes, and a man sprang out and started toward the building. He wore the uniform of a chauffeur.

Turning his head, he saw Wantell and hurried across to him.

"I am looking for Mr. John Wantell, sir," he said. "Is this his cottage?"

"It is one he has rented for the month.

Want to sublet it? Nothing doing, my man, until the month is up. The roof leaks and the floor squeaks, and the chimney is almost stopped up, but 'twill serve. I am Wantell."

"I am one of the Crandor chauffeurs, sir. I was sent for you."

"Sent for me?" Wantell said. "Does Emperor Matt wish my advice on some gigantic financial swindle? My consultation hours are from two to three in the afternoon, confound it! Drive back to Emperor Matt, like a good boy, and tell him that I said for him to go to the devil."

"He didn't send me. Doctor Lane, his personal physician, sent me, sir. I don't know what it is, but something strange has happened at the house. Doctor Lane told me to fetch you as swiftly as possible, and speak to nobody about it. He said to tell you, on his word of honor, that the matter was very urgent and important."

Wantell took the pipe from his mouth and stood up. The chauffeur's words were like a call to battle. Doctor Lane was a gentleman, and he did not send such messages without good and sufficient reason.

"We'll go there at once," Wantell said, following the chauffeur toward the waiting car.

As they dashed along the highway, the horn sounding almost continually because of the many curves, Wantell wondered what it was all about. Doctor Lane knew, of course, that he was vacationing in the vicinity. Had there been a robbery at the Crandor place? If so, they could call in some other detective. Wantell did not care to work for Emperor Matt after what had happened the day before. But, in case of a robbery, Lane would not have been the one to send for him, he told himself.

The roadster swung into the driveway, and as it stopped Doctor Lane himself appeared in the door. Wantell went forward to meet him, a question in his glance.

"Please come with me, Mr. Wantell," the physician said.

Wantell followed him through the hall and to a little room, a sort of den, not far from the library. It was very quiet in the house, but it seemed to Wantell that he could hear, as though coming from a great distance, the soft sobs of a woman.

The physician indicated a chair, and as Wantell sat down, Lane stepped back and closed the door.

"Mr. Wantell," he said, facing the detective again, "I have called upon you professionally. We are facing a tragedy here, I believe."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Mr. Crandor is dead."

"Dead!" Wantell gasped. "He seemed to be all right yesterday."

"He was, except for a weak heart. But the heart was not the cause of his end, Mr. Wantell. Matthew Crandor has been murdered."

Wantell sat forward in his chair suddenly at this startling information.

"I sent for you the first thing," the physician went on. "The country constables will have to be called in soon, of course, and the coroner. But I wanted you to get here before I notified them, so that they would not spoil things for you."

"Thank you for that."

"I found him," the doctor continued. "I have kept the death a secret except from Mrs. Crandor and her personal maid. I didn't want to make a move until I consulted with you. Thank Heaven that you were in the neighborhood! Matthew Crandor, despite his faults, was a big man, and his death will have a far-reaching effect."

"Let's get down to business," Wantell said.

"Certainly, Mr. Wantell. I'll tell you, first, all I know. Crandor has been sub-

ject to bursts of temper. Yesterday was a bad day with him."

"I witnessed one of his outbreaks," said Wantell.

"He assaulted some of his gardeners, insulted Señorita Plumitas, treated his wife roughly, and quarreled with his son within the space of two hours. I managed to quiet him, and at dinner he seemed to have calmed down. Last night he sat late in the library, and afterward retired. This morning he arose at his usual hour and went to the library after walking for a time on the terrace and having breakfast. He read his mail and dictated letters for an hour, and then he remained alone to read.

"I prepared to return to the city, and went to the library to warn him to keep quiet. I found him stretched on the floor, dead. As soon as I was certain, I made a superficial investigation. Then I informed Mrs. Crandor and left her with her maid, and sent the chauffeur for you."

"Cause of death?" Wantell asked, in his professional manner.

"Poison."

"Um! In his food?"

"No. You perhaps know, Mr. Wantell, that Mr. Crandor loved incense. Alone in his library this morning after his secretary had gone, Matthew Crandor lighted his incense burner and began inhaling the fumes that came from it."

"And those fumes——"

"Caused instant death!" the physician added. "The drug is deadly and not hard to obtain. Gardeners use it. A small portion, slipped into the incense burner some time during the night, was enough. Mr. Crandor lighted the burner, inhaled the fumes, and crashed to the floor. I have touched nothing, Mr. Wantell."

"We'll go into the library, please," Wantell said.

He followed the physician, who unlocked the door. Crandor's body was as it had been found, except that the physician had turned it over for the purpose of examination.

"I'll explain to you later about the nature of the drug, and how I was able to tell what had caused death," the physician said. "See the incense burner? He drew it off the able as he fell. It has stopped smoking now, but some of the poison remains in it. That is all that I can tell you, Mr. Wantell, except that it is your task to run down the murderer."

"Might as well notify the coroner, sir, and let the news get out," John Wantell said. "No sense in holding it back now. It'll not bother me in the slightest."

"Very well." Doctor Lane left the room and closed the door behind him. Wantell stepped swiftly to the body, knelt beside it, and made an examination of his own. Then he stood up and glanced around the room.

Nothing seemed to be disturbed except the table cover and incense burner, which had been pulled to the floor by Matthew Crandor as he collapsed. French windows opened upon a veranda, and Wantell hurried across the room, opened one of them, and walked out. At the end of the veranda was the soft turf. The French windows would have presented no great difficulty to a person trying to enter the library. What had happened seemed to be plain to John Wantell. Some one had evidently slipped into the room during the night and had put the poison in the incense burner—some one who hated Matthew Crandor enough to wish his death. And the person? It was John Wantell's task to find that person.

He started back toward the open French window. In a corner of the veranda railing he found something that interested him. A muddy footprint was there, such as might have been made by a person who had walked across the soft lawn after a shower, for there had been a shower the evening before.

Near the footprint was a handkerchief rolled into a ball. It was a tiny square of fine linen edged with lace, the property of a delicate woman. And the footprint was that of a woman's shoe.

John Wantell had seen a similar handkerchief the day before—in the hand of Señorita Carlotta Plumitas. He remembered the señorita's hot blood, and the look that had been in her face as she had glared at Matthew Crandor at the time of his insult.

He thrust the handkerchief into a pocket and stepped back into the library, locking the window after him. Sounds from the interior of the house told him that news of the tragedy had reached the servants. The hall door opened and Doctor Lane came in.

"I have notified the authorities, and the coroner and constable will be here immediately," the physician reported. "I have sent a telegram to Mr. Crandor's chief attorney. Mrs. Crandor is stricken with grief and unable to leave her room for the present."

"And the son?" Wantell asked.

"I telephoned the mill town. Doctor Crandor was not in his office, but I left word for him to come here at once, that his father had met with an accident."

"Very good, doctor."

"You have discovered nothing?"

"Several things," Wantell said. "May I speak to the butler?"

"In here?" the physician asked.

"Yes. Cover the body, please. We must leave it where it is until the coroner arrives."

The physician went out and presently returned with the butler. He was an elderly man who flinched as he looked at the covered body of his master. He bowed before John Wantell and stood awaiting the question, his manner nervous.

"Do you lock up the house for the night?" Wantell asked.

"I always make the rounds the last thing before I retire, sir."

"You did so last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what time?"

"About half past eleven, sir."

"Look into the library?"

"No, sir. Mr. Crandor was still in there, sir, and it was a rule never to disturb him late at night if he was in his library."

"Alone in here?"

"So far as I know, sir," the butler said. "I heard no voices."

"Then you do not know whether the French windows were all locked last night when Mr. Crandor retired?"

"I couldn't say, sir. He always attended to the library windows himself when he was in there late."

"I understand," said Wantell. "Did you notice any strangers around the place late last night or early this morning?"

"I did not, sir; but the watchman spoke to me this morning of an incident."

"What was that?"

"He said that he was down by the stables, sir, and starting toward the house to make his way around it, he saw something white dodging across the lawn, and fancied that it was a woman. He hurried toward the veranda, sir."

"Did he find the woman?"

"No, sir. It wasn't a woman. It was just one of the men who had on a light shirt, and his coat was open and the moon showed the white, sir."

"What man?"

"Jallen, the head gardener, sir. The watchman asked what he was doing there, and Jallen said that he didn't feel like going to bed, and was walking around the lawn. Jallen is a peculiar chap, sir; a sort of foreigner. He is always prowling around looking at the trees and the turf."

Wantell did not betray in his face that this information was important. He suspected that Matthew Crandor had had trouble with Jallen the day before

—Doctor Lane had mentioned a fight with some gardeners. He questioned the butler about minor matters and then allowed him to retire.

The coroner and constable arrived, and for a time there was considerable bustle. Then the body of Matthew Crandor was removed to another room, and the library put to rights. An undertaker was summoned from the village, and the constable assigned the task of commanding the chauffeurs and menservants outside the house to keep away the morbidly curious. The coroner and constable seemed very willing to have Wantell handle the case for the time being; they felt flattered to be working with him.

Wantell sent one of the chauffeurs for Jallen. Word came back that the man had quit his job the afternoon before after the trouble with Crandor, and had gone into the village. Wantell sent the constable after him. In less than half an hour the constable was back with his man.

Jallen was suspicious and angry, to all appearances, and resented the fact that an officer of the law had commanded his presence at the house.

"I've nothin' to do hereabouts," he told Wantell. "I quit yesterday. I'll work for no man as calls me a dog."

"What were you doing near the house last night, then?" Wantell demanded.

"I—I was just walkin' around," Jallen said.

"The watchman saw you, didn't he?"

"We talked a bit," said Jallen, "and then he went on his rounds."

"But where did you go? That is the point."

"I went to my cottage on the other side of the creek," said Jallen. "I had some things there. I slept for a time, and at dawn I got my things and went into the village."

"You've been using poison recently to kill insects, haven't you?"

"Beetles," said Jallen. "They're bad this year. I've been sprayin' some of the trees and bushes, too."

"Careless with poison?"

"No, sir. I'm a good gardener, sir."

"Where do you keep the stuff?"

"In a little closet at the cottage, all locked up, sir."

"Any of it been stolen recently?"

"I reckon not, sir," Jallen replied. "I've got a fine lock on the closet door. I've left the keys on the table for the new gardener, whoever he may be."

"You were angry yesterday after your trouble with Mr. Crandor, weren't you?"

"He called me a dog, and hit me with his ridin' crop, he did. It's enough to make any man mad."

"You felt like killing him, didn't you?" Wantell asked, stepping closer to the man.

"I'm not sayin' just how I felt."

"And last night you came prowling around the house. It was after midnight, wasn't it?"

Jallen began to show some alarm now. His eyes flashed, and he glanced around quickly as though looking for a way of escape. Then he became sullen again.

"I ain't goin' to say a single word more, sir," he declared. "You ain't got the right to make me talk. I ain't got anything more to say about anything."

"Very well, Jallen," Wantell told him. "Then I'm going to have the constable take you to the village and lock you in the jail."

"Are you arrestin' me for the murder?" Jallen cried.

"I'm merely having you held in safekeeping for the present. I may want you later, and I want to be sure where I can find you. I can't have you running away."

Jallen said nothing more. He hung his head, and a slow flush of anger came into his face and remained there. The constable stepped forward and got out his old-fashioned handcuffs with a

flourish. It was a great day in the life of the constable—taking in a man suspected of having murdered a millionaire, and such a millionaire as Emperor Matt.

Jallen submitted to the handcuffs without protest. A stolid look came into his face. John Wantell had been watching him carefully all the time, trying to study the man. He did not know whether Jallen was expressing mulish stubbornness or lost hope.

The constable took Jallen away, and Wantell walked out on the veranda with Doctor Lane. Down the highway an automobile was approaching in a cloud of dust.

"Here comes Doctor George Crandor," Lane said.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MORE SUSPECTS.

THE butler came out of the house and stepped to John Wantell's side.

"If there is anything I can do for you, sir——" he began.

"What's your name?"

"Higgins, sir."

"There is nothing just now, Higgins. Remain inside! I'll call if I need you."

"Yes, sir. Did—is the gardener arrested, sir?"

"I sent him to jail for safe-keeping," Wantell said, watching the approach of the automobile.

"I've always been a bit suspicious of Jallen, sir."

"How is that?" Wantell demanded, turning and looking at the butler sharply.

"He was a queer fellow, sir, if I do say it. Some of the servants were frightened of him. He went around mumbling to himself, and he didn't seem to know his place at times. I think, sir, Jallen is one of those fellows always railing at their betters, sir. He was always growling about some folks having all the money and others having to work so hard. When he first came here, sir, he made such a pest of himself that I was forced to forbid him the house except when it was absolutely necessary for him to speak to the master on business."

"All right, Higgins; thanks," Wantell said. "Perahps I'll want to speak to you later about it."

Higgins bowed respectfully and went back into the house. The automobile was on the driveway now, and presently stopped before the steps, and Doctor George Crandor sprang out.

He darted up the steps and faced Lane.

"What—what is it I have heard? They are saying that my father——" His voice seemed to break, his eyes implored explanation.

Lane put out his hand, and George clasped it.

"My boy," Lane said, "you are a physician, and you are going to be a great physician, perhaps, before you are done. Death should not seem to you as to the ordinary layman."

"Then—then my father——"

Lane nodded his head. There was a look of pain in George Crandor's face for an instant.

"My mother——" he asked.

"In her room with her maid. I have quieted her. George," Lane replied. "Stay away from her for another hour or so, please. The coroner has attended to his part, and the undertaker from the village is here. I have wired your father's chief attorney. I didn't want to wait until you arrived."

"That—that's all right, Lane, and thanks," George replied. "You've been —kind."

"And this is Mr. Wantell, a prominent criminal investigator. He was vacationing on the other side of the hill. I sent for him at once."

"But why?"

"He has work to do."

"What sort of work?" George asked. "It—it was my father's heart, wasn't it?"

"Your father was killed, George."

"What?" George Crandor asked in astonishment.

Wantell watched him closely, wondering whether he was acting a part.

"Poison put into his incense burner," Doctor Lane continued. "I found him on the floor of the library when I went to tell him good-by. I intended returning to the city this morning."

"Poison? Incense burner?" George gasped. "Who—who could have done such a thing?"

"That is what Mr. Wantell will endeavor to find out. Your father had many enemies, George. Mr. Wantell already has sent Jallen, the head gardener, to the village jail. Your father had some trouble with Jallen yesterday, and the man was prowling around the grounds last night about midnight. Jallen had that kind of poison, too."

"Jallen! The——"

"We are not certain, doctor," Wantell interrupted. "If you'll come into the library with me, Doctor Crandor, I'd like to ask you a few questions."

"Very well."

Doctor Lane led the way and unlocked the library door. They entered, and as Wantell watched George Crandor, Doctor Lane explained how the body had been found, and showed the broken incense burner, with some of the poison still in it.

George Crandor sat down beside the table in his father's chair, and for a moment held his head in his hands. Then he looked up, straight at Wantell.

"When did you see your father last?" Wantell asked.

"Yesterday afternoon. We—we had words," George admitted. "He had been on a sort of rampage, and he had mistreated my mother. I saw him in this room, and told him that such things had to stop. It may seem terrible to you, sir—but my father and I had not been very friendly for some years. He objected to my profession and my mode of living. He had the impression that I was more like my mother than like him. He resented that, I imagine."

"I understand. What happened?"

"He was very angry with me," said George. "He ordered me out of the house and threatened to disinherit me. I saw my mother again, and then went back to the mill town. He had had several such outbursts, as Doctor Lane can tell you. I supposed the storm would blow over in time, if I remained away from him."

"Did you stay in the mill town?" Wantell asked.

"I—I was there when Doctor Lane's message reached me. I was away from the office, but a boy found me."

"Which does not answer my question!" Wantell interrupted. "Did you remain in the mill town from yesterday afternoon until you left it a short time ago?"

George Crandor hesitated a moment, glancing toward the nearest window.

"As—as a matter of fact, I did not," he said presently.

"Were you back here during that time?"

"I—yes!"

"Um! When? And why?" Wantell persisted.

"I returned last night," George Crandor said. "I left my car down the road a bit, and came on to the house. But I did not enter it."

"Weren't your actions rather peculiar?"

"My father had ordered me out—and I have a certain amount of pride," George said. "I—I just wanted to see how things were going."

"Well?"

"It was a little before eleven o'clock at night," George said. "I approached the veranda and saw my father sitting beside this table, reading. I knew from

his manner that he was over his tantrum. So I went back to the car and returned to the mill town."

Wantell regarded him closely. Doctor Lane's face was flushed.

"Of course," said Wantell, "you could have entered this room later and put the poison in the incense burner, couldn't you?"

"Do you dare——" George began.

"Steady! You could have done it, eh? And having the poison in your possession—being a doctor——"

"Do you mean to insinuate that I would kill my own father?" George Crandor cried.

"He had mistreated your mother and had threatened to disinherit you."

"He threatened that on an average of once a month, but it made no difference to me."

"But mistreating your mother was a different thing, eh?"

"I warned him not to do it again. I think he didn't."

Wantell got up and paced the floor for a time, turning now and then and glancing at George Crandor sharply.

"I wish you'd remain here until I see you again," he said finally. "You'll want to see your mother after a time, of course, and I'd like to take that roadster of yours for half an hour or so. I have a little investigation to make."

"Take the roadster, sir," George said. "I'll stay here. You have my word for that."

Without another word Wantell strode to the hall door and threw it open. Higgins, the butler, was less than six feet from it, and Wantell felt sure that he had been listening. But he said nothing to the man. He hurried out to the roadster, sprang in, started the car, and drove it swiftly along the highway toward the cluster of summer cottages on the other side of the hill.

Wantell stopped the car at the end of a shady lane, got out, and started walking toward a distant cottage more pretentious than the others. Presently he came in sight of the veranda, with its railing covered with vines and flowers. Señorita Carlotta Plumitas was sitting there, reading.

She looked up quickly and smiled as she saw John Wantell standing before her.

"Good morning, señor," she said.

"Good morning, señorita! Studying, as usual?"

"*Si, señor!* There are persons who think an actress need study nothing but her lines, but that is untrue if one would be a great actress. Here I am, studying poisons and their effects."

"Poisons?" Wantell gasped.

"In my next play, señor, I die of poison. The dramatist wrote it so, and so it must be. To die properly and to please the critics, I must study all about poisons and how they act."

Wantell regarded her carefully. He knew that Señorita Plumitas was a clever woman. The hot blood that flowed in her veins would urge the avenging of an insult such as Matthew Crandor had given her, and she would think little of her act afterward.

Wantell took from his pocket the handkerchief he had found, and handed it to her.

"Oh! A handkerchief of mine? I always am losing them," she said. "Where did you find this one, señor?"

"On the veranda at the Crandor residence, señorita, close to one of the French windows," he replied, watching her closely. "There also was a tiny footprint. The lawn was damp last night and soft, señorita."

"But——" She hesitated, biting at her lower lip.

"And this morning Matthew Crandor died of poison, señorita. Somebody entered his library during the night and put poison in his incense burner. This morning he evidently inhaled the fumes and died very soon after."

"And you—you——" she stammered.

"I am investigating the affair, señorita; it is my business, you know."

"But—the handkerchief——"

"Perhaps you can tell me how it came there," Wantell said. "The footprint, too, I am sure, was made by you. There was a shower last evening; the footprint must have been made at a late hour, let us say in the neighborhood of midnight."

Señorita Carlotta Plumitas looked down the shady lane and for a time had nothing to say. Then she replied:

"I dropped the handkerchief there, señor!"

"Anything you may say——"

"May be used against me, I know," she went on. "It were better for me to tell you the story, señor. You perhaps guessed how I felt toward Mr. Crandor after the scene of yesterday. That was a terrible thing, señor—for an uncouth man of millions to insult a Plumitas! I burned to take vengeance, naturally. I thought about it all evening. Late last night I slipped from the cottage and made my way along the road to the Crandor house. It is not more than a mile, señor, as you know."

"I know," Wantell muttered.

"I came to the house and crept across the lawn, señor. I don't know what I'd have done had I found Señor Crandor in his library. I went up on to the veranda and approached one of the windows. But the library was dark, señor. I suppose he had gone to bed. So I slipped away again. That is all."

"You must know, of course, that it looks bad," Wantell said. "I have only your word for it that you slipped away again. It would have been an easy matter for you to have entered the library and put poison in the incense burner. It might have occurred to you. The whole world knows what a fool he was about incense. It would have been a clever way to slay him. You have been studying poisons—experimenting with them, perhaps."

"Of a certainty, señor. That is one reason I came here for the summer months."

"It looks very bad," Wantell said.

The door behind him was thrown open, and the señorita's mother rushed out. Her eyes were bulging, her face was pale, and she was breathing rapidly.

"Señor!" she cried. "My Carlotta speaks the truth! She had nothing to do with this terrible thing. What she might have done had she found him there in the library is another matter. I saw her leave the cottage, señor, and I was afraid and followed her. It was as she has told you. She went to the place, even up on the veranda. She went to the window—and stopped. But I—I did not stop, señor. I went on."

"Mother!" the señorita exclaimed, startled by this sudden admission.

"What are you saying?" Wantell asked.

"Do not blame my girl, señor. Blame me, if the honor of the Plumitas has been avenged. Do I not know all about poison, too—and about the incense burner? Did he not insult me, too, when he insulted my daughter?"

"Mother, hush!" the girl cried. She had her arms around her mother now and was forcing her into a chair. "You do not know what you are saying, mother. You did nothing of the sort. You are but trying to shield me. Señor, you must not believe her. She may have followed, but she did not go up on the veranda. She was home as soon as I. You must believe me, señor, for I have told you the truth about it all."

Wantell regarded the two women for a time in silence. Señora Plumitas was weeping softly, and the señorita was standing beside her, one arm thrown protectingly across her shoulders.

"I'd like to use your telephone," Wantell said.

"It is just inside the door, señor."

Wantell called the village and ordered

that Jallen, the gardener, be returned immediately to the Crandor house. Then he went out on the veranda again.

"I am going to ask you two ladies to go to the Crandor house with me," he said. "We must settle this thing immediately."

The señorita helped her mother to her feet, and they entered the house to prepare for the journey. John Wantell, as soon as they had disappeared, darted quickly to the end of the little porch. He was just in time to see a man disappearing into a mass of shrubbery at the side of the cottage. Wantell recognized him.

"Um!" he grunted. "Wonder what he is doing here? He seems much interested."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SOLUTION.

THEY crowded the roadster, yet Wantell made them as comfortable as possible and drove at an ordinary rate of speed down the dusty highway toward the Crandor estate. He evidently had nothing to say to them, and the women remained silent. Señora Plumitas had a look of dignity in her face; the señorita's countenance was a puzzle to Wantell.

He guided the powerful roadster along the curving driveway and brought it to a stop before the veranda steps. Doctor Lane came out as he stopped, and Wantell managed the introductions and led the way to the library. Doctor George Crandor was there, and Wantell introduced him also. Then they waited for Jallen to be brought in.

It was several minutes before the constable made his appearance with the prisoner. Jallen was still sullen, and appeared to be surprised when he saw the others in the library. Wantell watched all of them in turn, while they remained silent, waiting. Wantell was a great believer in psychology, and he had ideas of his own concerning the actions and feelings of a murderer at the scene of his crime.

Presently he rang, and Higgins, the butler, responded.

"Higgins, I want you to remain in here for the time being, please," Wantell said. "I may want you to do an errand, or something of that sort."

"Yes, sir."

Higgins stood against the wall, his arms at his sides, like an automaton. Detective Wantell cleared his throat and glanced over the persons in the room. Then he spoke.

"All here are acquainted with the crime," he said. "It is very simple. Somebody placed poison in Mr. Crandor's incense burner; he lighted the burner and inhaled the fumes and died. We'll try to get at this matter in as few words as possible. The innocent should not be long detained.

"Mr. Crandor made many enemies. Yesterday afternoon he made several. He was a man who did not care whether he made enemies or not. Doctor Lane tells me that he was a sick man—but, of course, everybody did not know that. Some of his words and actions were terrible, but he was really not responsible for most of them.

"Yesterday afternoon he was out riding. He was in a fury over some business affairs. He met his gardeners, had an argument with them, and finally dismounted from his horse and fought them. He struck Jallen, here, with a riding crop, and afterward beat him. The gardeners decided to leave his employ. Jallen had been called a dog, and he is the sort of man who resents a thing like that. Jallen had poisons in his cottage; he has been using them as sprays to kill insect pests.

"Last night Jallen was prowling around the house about midnight. The watchman saw him and spoke to him. He gives no good reason for acting in that manner. It would have been easy for Jallen to have entered this room

through one of the French windows and put the poison in the incense burner. He had the motive and he had the opportunity. So much is certain."

Wantell stopped speaking and looked at Jallen a moment, and then glanced toward Señorita Plumitas.

"Señorita Plumitas," he said, "was giving a picnic party yesterday in the grove. I was one of her guests, so I know what happened there. Mr. Crandor appeared, and insulted the señorita grievously. She would have been more than human not to have resented such a thing. The señorita comes of a race quick to avenge an insult.

"Last night the señorita approached this house about midnight. She came up on to the veranda and to one of the windows. I found one of her handkerchiefs where she had dropped it on the veranda, and also a footprint she made. The señorita, preparing for her new play, has been making a study of poisons and their action, and has been experimenting with them on animals. She could very easily have entered this room and put poison in the incense burner. She had the opportunity, and she had the motive."

"My daughter——" Señor Plumitas began.

"Please!" Wantell commanded, stopping her with a gesture. "The señorita declares that she came here with some idea of vengeance, that she found the residence in darkness and returned to her cottage. Her mother has admitted that she followed the señorita. Señora Plumitas is a proud woman, and the affront Matthew Crandor gave was to her also. She, too, had access to poison, and could easily have entered here and put some into the incense burner.

"Doctor George Crandor was here yesterday afternoon and had trouble with his father. Pardon me, doctor, but this thing must be spoken. Mr. Crandor had mistreated his wife, and his son took him to task, declaring that such a thing never should happen again. Mr. Crandor ordered his son out of the house and said that he would disinherit him.

"Doctor Crandor left, after speaking to his mother again. But last night he drove back here from the mill town. He has told me that himself—and has said that he did not enter the house. He saw his father sitting in this room reading, and took it for granted that his burst of temper was over. He declares that he then returned to the mill town.

"It is possible, of course, that Doctor Crandor waited until later and then entered the library and put the poison into the incense burner. He is a physician, and had the poison on hand. He had the opportunity, of course. And he had a motive. His father had mistreated his mother, and the doctor loves his mother. His father also had said that he would disinherit——"

"That's enough!" George Crandor cried.

"Sit down, sir!" Wantell ordered. "I am conducting this examination. Your actions are not in your favor, sir. Many officers would have had you in jail before this."

"Wantell——" Doctor Lane began in alarm.

"Silence!" Wantell cried. "Doctor George Crandor, I am not entirely satisfied with your statements. You had a double motive—a stronger one than any of the others. You have been out of sympathy with your father for some years. It is my belief——"

Higgins, the old butler, staggered forward.

"Wait, sir!" he begged. "Mister George never did it, sir—of that I feel sure."

"A lot of weight your opinions will have!" Wantell said, eying him keenly. "Perhaps you did it yourself, Higgins. You seem to be much interested in the case. When I went over to the Plumitas cottage you followed on a horse. You were sneaking around the end of the

porch while I was talking to Señorita Plumitas and her mother. I saw you dodging into the shrubbery. Suppose you give me an explanation of that, Higgins! Did you slay your master because of some insult he had offered you, or are you merely trying to shield his son?"

"No—nothing like that, sir," Higgins cried.

"I think I'll send you to jail along with Doctor Crandor."

"You must not do that, sir. I do not care what you do to me, but Mister George must not be bothered about it. It would kill his mother, sir."

Wantell stepped swiftly forward and grasped the old butler by the arm.

"You talk!" he commanded. "You've got the secret, and I know it! Talk!"

Higgins gulped in fear. Then he put his hand into one of his pockets and pulled out a small sheet of paper.

"There, sir," he said. "Mr. Crandor wrote that, sir—just before he died."

"Ah! I thought as much!" Wantell cried. "So he committed suicide, did he? And you——"

"I came into the library and found him, sir, just before Doctor Lane entered. I found that little note, also, on the table."

"And why did you take it away? Why did you try to hide it, and why did you let several persons be under suspicion of such a crime?" Wantell demanded.

"Because I—I hated Jallen!" Higgins said. "I knew he had had trouble with Mr. Crandor—knew he had been prowling around the house last night. I thought that, if I kept the note, Jallen would be arrested for the crime."

"And why do you hate Jallen so that you would try to send him to the electric chair?"

"I knew him many years ago, in the old country," Higgins said. "There was a girl, sir, and she threw me over for Jallen. Later she died, and Jallen came here. He used to taunt me about it, sir. And I knew that he had not treated her kindly. I always have hated him—and this seemed my chance to——"

Higgins retreated to the wall and stood there with bowed head. Jallen's eyes were blazing.

"It was my belief from the first," said Wantell, "that none of these persons committed murder. I have been watching all of you since you have been in this room. You all had the motive, but not one of you, in my estimation, had the peculiar courage and frenzy that a murderer must have to commit such a crime after the first burst of passion has passed. Señorita Plumitas, her mother, Jallen, even Doctor Crandor, might have done such a thing on the spur of the moment, in the face of an insult, but not afterward. Doctor Crandor, will you kindly look at this note and tell me whether your father wrote it?"

George took the little slip of paper and glanced at it, then handed it back.

"It is my father's writing, sir," he said in a low voice and struggling to control his feelings.

Wantell read the note aloud, slowly:

"Life has become unendurable. Yesterday I mistreated my wife and raised my hand against my son. My old heart is failing, and I cannot live long anyway. It is best to take this way out before I do something that will make my memory a thing of hatred.

"MATTHEW CRANDOR."

Señorita Plumitas and her mother were weeping softly. Doctor George Crandor hid his face in his hands. John Wantell stepped back and opened the door.

"All except Higgins, please," he said. "This is the house of grief, and now we have no business here. Higgins, I'll speak to you outside. It rests with Doctor George and Jallen whether you shall be punished for what you tried to do."

# Notorious Criminals

## BELLE STAR -- Her Crimes

### by Charles Kingston

WHEN the American Civil War came to an end it set free from discipline thousands of rough, lawless men, many of whom subsequently adopted crime as a profession. Among them was the father of Belle Star. He was a tall, powerfully built man, with rugged features and gorillalike arms, a crack shot, and a fearless horseman.

During the four years Star had fought on behalf of the Southern against the Northern States, he had reveled in the bloodshed. Peace had no charms for him, and when the rival parties settled their differences he decided to make war on both. In other words, he took to the bush with half a dozen tried and trusted comrades, and for several years the gang, which steadily grew in numbers, terrorized the countryside.

Belle, his only child, was born near a battlefield and within sound of the booming of the guns. The mother did not long survive her birth, and, although nearly always on the march, Belle was well looked after. She was a pretty, fairylike child, with blue eyes and an engaging manner. She was the pet of the camp, the Southern soldiers calling her their mascot; before she was five she could handle a pistol, and by the time she was ten was expert in the use of the lasso, carbine, bowie knife, and revolver.

When Star turned highwayman, Belle was only twelve, but she was already well qualified to be a prominent member of his gang. Apart from her father she was the crack shot, and as for horsemanship, she was without a rival. Wild and apparently untamable steeds that Star himself dare not mount became docile as soon as Belle took them in hand. Animals loved her; men feared and respected her.

She grew to be a beauty; slim and fragile-looking, yet in reality very strong, intelligent, audacious, and clever. When she was only fifteen she was left in charge of the headquarters of the outlaws for a whole day while they rode to a certain town and robbed the bank. During their absence a tramp attempted to loot the camp, but although he took Belle by surprise she soon had him on the defensive, and instead of killing her she killed him with her small white hands, slowly forcing the thief backward with her fingers around his throat, then down on his knees, and, finally, left him dead at her feet. On the return of the outlaws she told her father what had happened, and he there and then named Belle as his successor in the leadership of the gang; every man present swore to obey her when her turn came to reign over them.

Reared amid bloodshed, taught every day to regard human life as anything

but sacred, and educated to believe that it was no sin to rob, it is not astonishing that at the age of eighteen Belle, for all her beauty, was a thorough-paced criminal. She had already shot down at least half a dozen men; like her father, she feared nothing, and, flying along on a swift horse, she was capable of hitting any human target within sight.

More than once her marksmanship had saved the gang from being surrounded and overpowered, and during the last two years of her father's life it was really her brain that guided the band of outlaws.

The inevitable day came when Star was slain in a running fight, and Belle succeeded to the vacant leadership.

Only those who knew what she really was could have taken her seriously in her new capacity. She was eighteen, with refined, delicate features, lovely blue eyes, a pair of rosy lips, and a slim figure. By now the gang consisted of twenty men, all veterans in crime, big, brawny, evil, and coarse. Not one of them would have hesitated to cut a man's throat, yet Belle, during her reign, held them in the hollow of her hand.

They never dared to disobey her. There was never any talk of mutiny, as there had been in her father's lifetime, and, animated by this perfect loyalty, the gang went on from success to success, and Belle Star, one of the greatest of all female outlaws, kept in subjection scores of villages and towns.

One of the first acts of the bloodthirsty spitfire was to "avenge," as she called it, the death of her father. Star had sent to their last account at least forty men and women, but Belle would have it that his death had been undeserved, and that, because he had never robbed the very poor, the sheriff had no right to shoot him for trying to evade arrest. So she marked down the sheriff for execution and with six of her followers set out for the lonely farm belonging to the county official.

Despite the fact that she knew that the sheriff was keeping a sharp watch for her, Belle did not hesitate to wreak vengeance on him. It was in the early hours of a June morning that she and her six followers rode out of the camp, and for five hours they traveled, only stopping when within half a mile of the sheriff's residence. Then they dismounted, carefully tethered their horses in a wood, and did the remainder of the journey on foot, Belle leading the way, revolver in hand.

It was a beautiful day, and as the sheriff inspected his farm workers, a score of sturdy men devoted to his interests, he could hardly have suspected danger. He was fully protected and well armed in case of attack, and, feeling secure, he wandered aimlessly toward the most remote corners of his property. He was idly sauntering in the direction of a tool shed when two men sprang at him and, before he could utter a sound, had him on his back, gagged and bound.

Half an hour later the sheriff was led before Belle Star, who was standing under an old tree waiting for him. There was very little beauty in her face now. Her eyes shone like a tigress', and her small white hands were clenched.

Belle was gloating in the coming murder of the man who had executed justice upon her father.

The outlaw chieftainess called it a "trial," but the sheriff was doomed from the first. As they were out of earshot she allowed the gag to be removed from his mouth, and then he was mockingly asked if he could suggest any reason why he should not be suspended from the tree under which they had assembled.

The sheriff was a brave man, and he knew that his fate was sealed. He did not, therefore, make any plea for

mercy, but in the curtest tones told Belle that he was merely one more victim of hers, but that in time his murder would be avenged. He was proceeding to taunt her with her disgraceful life when she flushed angrily and ordered him strung up.

Her commands were obeyed, and Belle's last act was to scribble on a piece of paper, "Executed by Belle Star," and pin it to his coat, before she rode away with her six ruffians.

The murder of the sheriff aroused the country, and it seemed that Belle's career must be a short one. Rewards were offered for her death or capture, amounting to more than twenty-five thousand dollars.

All classes organized to hunt down the notorious female criminal. Respectable citizens enrolled themselves as patrols to guard their home, and for miles around there was not a town or village without its special defense. But Belle had her own system of obtaining information, and she learned early all about the preparations that were being made to capture her, laughing and derisively boasting that she would outwit all her foes.

It was her fearlessness and audacity allied to success that held the gang in subjection, as much as anything else. Belle could do no wrong. When any of them attempted a job on their own account they invariably failed. Thus when Belle injured her arm and had to travel two hundred miles disguised in order to see a doctor, four of her followers thought they would rob a jewelry establishment and keep the "swag" for themselves. They found courage in drink and proceeded to attack the shop, but everything went wrong from the start. They were surprised by a patrol, and a fight ensued, in the course of which two of them were shot dead. The others escaped and reached the camp in an exhausted condition, and when Belle returned she punished them by making them do all the menial work of the camp for a month, and fining the discomfited scoundrels by refusing to allow them to participate in the results of the next expedition.

That a young girl could dominate a gang of bloodthirsty ruffians in this manner would be incredible if the story of Bellle Star's llife was not fully authenticated.

With her usual cunning Belle waited until the enthusiasm of the numerous posses was cooled by inaction before resuming hostilities. For several weeks nothing was seen of her gang, and rumors began to circulate that she had fled with her followers to a less highly organized district, having realized that the good people of Texas were too clever for her.

Disguised as a man, Belle would visit various towns, and in the market places and hotels listen to legends about herself. She would laugh the loudest when the leading citizens eloquently depicted her fate if they got her into their hands. She had a sense of humor, and she could stroll into a local court and watch petty thieves being sentenced, and applaud moral sentiments uttered by the presiding judge, who could not but see that the notorious criminal was sitting a few feet away from him!

But her greatest exploit, apart from her many crimes, was the winning of two races on the same day in full view of thousands of spectators. It happened that a town which had often suffered from her depredations decided to hold a carnival, and among several prizes offered for various athletic events, two large sums of money were put up for the winning of two particular horse races, one being for male and the other for female jockeys.

Belle determined to enter both events, and, since the one for men was held an hour before that for the ladies,

she assumed male attire and as a handsome young man rode on to the race course. After giving a false name she was permitted to take her place at the post, and as her horse was the fleetest, and she was the most skillful jockey, victory followed as a matter of course.

She received the stakes from the mayor of the town, made a speech of thanks, and then retired. When she reappeared she was dressed as a country girl, and this time she was leading another horse.

So simple and sweet did she look that the stewards were only too delighted to accept her entry for the race for female jockeys, and loud was the applause when the young beauty came in an easy first. Once more Belle attended before the élite of the town to receive a considerable sum of money, and she was cheered loudly by the huge crowd, among whom there were hundreds of men who had sworn to capture Belle Star alive or dead.

The funds proved very useful to the gang, but better than that, the men were so surprised and delighted by her double exploit that they became more slavish in their devotion to her. Belle was supreme. She knew now that if she led them into the very jaws of death each day of their lives they would not draw back or complain.

Owing to her father's depredations having created a reign of terror among the country banks, a rule had been made requiring all cashiers to keep a fully loaded revolver on their desks, while, if any suspicious stranger entered the premises, one of the other clerks was to cover him unostentatiously with a revolver and shoot at the first sign of danger. This innovation having reduced considerably the number of bank holdups, it created a belief that it had succeeded in frightening away Belle Star's gang, but Belle proved that that was a great mistake.

Adopting her usual disguise of a young farmer, Belle went alone to Galveston to pick up gossip, and she was fortunate enough to overhear at one of the principal hotels a conversation between two merchants which revealed the interesting fact that a week later a local bank was due to receive a consignment in gold amounting to approximately one hundred thousand dollars.

That was the sort of thing which fired Belle's imagination, and although she knew that the bank was well guarded, and that the president and cashier transacted business fully armed, she resolved to capture that consignment of gold.

She returned to her headquarters to give final instructions to her followers, and then she went back to Galveston, but this time she had assumed the character of a little old woman with a thin voice and a hesitating manner. She "fluttered" in the approved fashion of nervous old ladies, and more than one polite citizen of Galveston hastened to help her across a street when they saw her shrinking from lumbering cart horses.

It was exactly ten minutes before closing time when Belle timidly entered the bank and presented a check which she asked the cashier to cash for her. She looked so pathetic in her black clothes, and so apologetic and yet so friendly, that the cashier felt sorry when he had to tell her that he could not oblige her, for the simple reason that the check was drawn on the bank's branch at Austin. Perhaps some of his politeness was inspired by a glance at the signature on the check, which was that of a well-known United States government official.

The poor old lady looked greatly distressed, and when at last she fully understood that she was not to have the money, she showed signs of collapsing. The cashier and one of the clerks hastened to come to her assistance, and they assisted her into the president's office,

where she sank on to a chair and huskily whispered that she would be all right in a few moments.

President, cashier, and clerk were glancing at one another when they were startled to hear the command, "Hands up!" The next moment the "little old lady" was covering them with her revolver, while six of the outlaws under her command entered the building, closed the door of the bank, and made all the officials prisoners. Then they visited the vaults and the strong room, and, having waited until darkness had fallen, took the gold out and packed it in the van brought for the purpose, eventually riding leisurely away.

It was not until the early hours of the following morning that the trussed-up and gagged bank staff were discovered and released. By then Belle Star was far away, and for the next two days the gang were busy changing their quarters, in case they had been tracked to their camp.

This single exploit made them all rich, but, of course, there was no limit to their greed, and no sooner was it accomplished than Belle began to plan others equally daring.

But she had a woman's vanity, and she brooded over insults and taunts which a man would have ignored. She would risk her own safety and that of her followers to avenge a petty slight.

She once was in a populous town near Austin, when she heard the local judge declare that he knew Belle Star by sight, and that he would shortly arrest her and have her publicly whipped. The girl brigand and the judge were actually seated next to each other at the table-d'hôte dinner at the hotel when he said this.

Belle smiled at his delusion, but when he proceeded to speak of her in opprobrious terms and charged her with more crimes than murder and robbery, her anger nearly led her into revealing her identity. But she maintained control of herself and after a little reflection decided to wait until the following morning before punishing the boastful judge.

Next morning after breakfast—she had registered as a man, and, of course wore male clothes—she mounted her horse in front of the hotel and then sent a servant to tell the judge that a stranger wished to speak to him.

At this time of the day everybody was at work, and the hotel staff were busy indoors and about the building. When the judge appeared he and Belle were practically alone, as she knew, and without hesitating she blandly informed him that she was Belle Star and then raised her whip and lashed him in the face.

The judge was so astounded that he was unable to escape her until she had lacerated him considerably, and, half blind and smarting from pain, he shrieked for help, but was unanswered until Belle had reached a place of safety.

It is a well-known fact that when a woman deliberately embraces crime as a profession she is generally more brutal and merciless than her male colleagues. It was so with Belle Star. The fair-haired girl with the sunny smile and the lovely lips could sentence to death in cold blood a young man whose only offense was that he had tried to defend his property and his life.

Belle, too, was in the habit of accepting her own suspicions as full proof. Once a well-laid scheme came to nothing because at the last moment the owner of the shop that had been marked for attack awoke to a realization of his danger, and secured reinforcements. The outlaws were driven off, and Belle, savagely discontented and disappointed, came to the conclusion that her plans had been betrayed by a young farm hand who had been in her pay as a spy.

She, therefore, sent two of her followers to arrest him, but the suspect gave them no trouble, for he came willingly. Then Belle coldly told him of his offense. He swore he was innocent, but she cut him short by drawing her revolver and putting a bullet in his brain.

The gang buried the suspected traitor with as much nonchalance as they would have interred a dog.

It is impossible to relate all her exploits. She personally led onslaughts on banks, stores, private houses, and public buildings by the score.

She had a solution for every problem and a way out of every difficulty. When one of her men was arrested and was in imminent danger of death, Belle, finding that the judge could not be kidnaped, proceeded to make a prisoner of his wife, and the judge subsequently found a note pinned to his pillow informing him that unless the captured outlaw was allowed to go free the lady would be murdered. He was given only twenty-four hours to save her, but as the town was in a ferment over the excesses of the gang, the judge, guessing that he dare not acquit the prisoner, had to connive at his escape in order to prevent the murder of his wife.

He had a bad time of it when his fellow citizens heard how they had been cheated of their prey, and he was compelled to resign, but as his wife was returned safe and unharmed he was not sorry that he had placated the outlaw.

Belle had, of course, plenty of friends who worked secretly for her. They did not take any part in the raids, but they were very useful in supplying information and warnings.

More than once the gang escaped, thanks to the timely advice of these spies. Thus, when Belle was heading an expedition to rob a bank, she looked for and found a certain mark on the bark of a particular tree within a couple of miles of the town. That told her that the bank had obtained the protection of the authorities, and would be more than a match for the outlaws. She proceeded no farther, and she afterward learned that the proprietors of the bank had planned to capture the gang. Their disappointment when she and her followers never turned up at all was a source of amusement to her, and compensated for the collapse of her plans.

For a long time, however, the government would not take action against the marauders, maintaining that the local authorities ought to be able to deal with them. But when within the space of a month five banks and six shops were burgled and nine innocent lives were lost, the government realized that this was no local problem, but a national affair, after all. Belle Star was terrorizing the country in no unmistakable manner. Her word was law, and the State was ignored.

Hundreds of small farmers paid her weekly tributes to save themselves from being robbed of their all, and things came to such a pass that some persons actually proposed that each town should pay money to Belle if she would only promise to keep away!

When State troops took the field against her, Belle's days were numbered, although she refused to admit this, and she issued proclamations inviting the soldiers to come on. Certainly the initial encounters ended favorably for Belle.

She added to her recruits, provided them with plenty of ammunition and, setting an example of fearlessness, led them against the soldiers and drove them off.

By now she had her headquarters in the midst of a forest, and it was possible for travelers to pass within a few yards of the huts without knowing that they were there. Beyond the huts was a miniature fortress which commanded the approach to the forest, and, as it

could be attacked from one side only, it was easy for half a dozen desperate men, all expert marksmen, to hold hundreds at bay.

Despite the fact that a regiment of soldiers was searching for her and her gang, Belle refused to lie low. Her raids continued, and when a spy of hers appealed for help she promptly responded, although it involved risks. This spy, a woman employed as a cook in a hotel, had a husband who had been arrested for a trivial offense, but as he had a bad record it was certain that if the judge discovered it he would give the fellow a long sentence.

As the prisoner had come from New York, the police of the latter city were asked for particulars of his career, and they responded by sending a list of his previous convictions to Galveston.

But the damaging papers arrived on a Friday night, and before they could be seen Belle personally entered the post office, held up the staff, examined the correspondence and, having found the bulging packet from the New York police took it away and destroyed it. The result was that the spy's husband was treated as a first offender and let off with a nominal fine.

The day after this exploit, Belle was riding alone near her camp, when she was attacked by two soldiers, who suspected her identity. She instantly rode away from them without attempting to defend herself. They followed, thinking that they could capture the famous brigand easily. But Belle's object was to separate them, and when the man on the swifter horse outdistanced his comrade, Belle turned in her saddle and, despite the pace at which she was going, killed him with her first shot. His body had scarcely struck the ground when a second bullet ended the career of the other soldier.

These exploits gained for her a great deal of public feeling. The Texans were essentially a sporting people, and they argued that if a regiment of soldiers could not overcome a slip of a girl and a score of brigands, then they deserved to be beaten.

In view of the fact that Belle had robbed and pillaged all alike, this was extraordinary. The very poor she had spared for the reason that they were not worth robbing, but it was accounted a virtue unto her, and numerous acts of benevolence enchanced her reputation.

The fact was that Belle was as cunning as she was unscrupulous. She distributed money and provisions among the poor and worthless, not because she had any pity for them, but because it was the cheapest way of obtaining the support at critical moments of a large portion of the population. Every jailbird looked up to Belle as a subject does to a sovereign, and they respected her all the more when they knew that she admitted to membership in her gang only the very best experts.

At least four pitched battles were fought between the outlaws and the soldiers before the final encounter.

Belle seemed to bear a charmed life. She always headed her colleagues and took the greatest risks, and when she emerged without a scratch from the fiercest encounters her ignorant and superstitious followers began to believe that she was not mortal. They had often seen her ride at a troop of armed soldiers and coolly pick off the officers, while all the time a perfect hail of bullets had sung around her fair head without touching her.

Whenever the battle was going against the outlaws it was Belle who revived their drooping courage, and she twice turned defeat into victory by her marvelous shooting. The outwitted and beaten commanders were compelled to send for reinforcements, and, so variable is human nature, when a hundred weary and dust-stained troopers entered Austin, the town they had come to save,

they were jeered at by the ungrateful inhabitants, who had learned that in a pitched battle with Belle Star's outlaws the soldiers had been worsted.

Belle's end was fittingly dramatic. She was celebrating a run of success against banks and shops with a feast when news came that two hundred and fifty soldiers under the command of a major were advancing to storm the fort. Instantly she sprang to her feet and ordered every man to his place.

She was sobered in a moment by the news, which was as unexpected as it was unpleasant, but there were several of her followers who had drunk too much to be of use. In vain did Belle shake and curse them and even implore them to wake up. They could only stagger forward a few paces and collapse. One man, in a fit of drunken hilarity and bravado, began to fire indiscriminately, thereby revealing the hiding place of the outlaws, and Belle was so enraged that she brained him with her carbine. There was no time to remove the body, for the soldiers could be heard approaching now, and Belle, realizing that this time it was going to be a fight to a finish, put herself at the head of her garrison and prepared to conquer or die.

The outlaws were well intrenched, and had a plentiful supply of ammunition, but they were up against equally desperate men now. At last, seeing that if they remained in the fort, those who were not killed outright would be captured, Belle personally led a sortie against the enemy, hoping to escape in the confusion. The men followed her gladly, remembering their previous victories, but most of them were still fuddled by drink and in the circumstances could not be expected to show to advantage.

Belle was the only one to fight at her best. She displayed amazing courage, time after time heading attacks on the troopers, who were so flustered as to show signs of panic. But the commander rallied them, and as by now the troopers regarded Belle Star as a demon and not a human being, they pressed forward to destroy her without being affected by her sex or age. When things were going against her she collected a few of her followers and made one last desperate attempt to break through the ring of soldiers, but her luck failed her, and she fell, riddled with bullets.

It was the death she desired and sought.

## NO PROBATION IN FEDERAL COURTS

ALTHOUGH every State has laws which permit the placing of both juvenile and adult offenders on probation, the courts which hear cases of crimes against the Federal government have no power to grant probation to one convicted of such an offense. If a man is found guilty by a Federal court the judge can impose a fine or a sentence to a Federal penitentiary. These are the only alternatives before the convicted prisoner; he cannot be given another chance, placed on probation, and set at liberty; he must pay the fine or must go to prison, according to the decree of the judge and the law. Stealing from the mails and theft from freight cars engaged in interstate commerce, even if the amount of the theft is small, call for a fine or prison sentence in the courts of the United States government.

# Without Soiling His Hands

by John Baer

*Author of "The Sure Thing," etc.*

ON several occasions Freddie Normand had been described to the police as a "tall man with brown hair and blue eyes." Which is rather a vague description, considering there are thousands of tall men with brown hair and blue eyes in New York City. But there was something else about Freddie which was quite distinct—his work. The police credited him with every crime he committed and never blamed him for a job done by some one else. By two standards they were able to recognize his achievements: If a job was different from any ever committed before, different from anything Freddie himself had done before, and if, in addition to this quality of being distinct, the job also possessed the quality of imagination, then the police added it to his list.

Freddie called himself an artist; with good cause, too, for his work had the true attributes of art, being inspired and spontaneous.

With his hands he was absolutely helpless. He couldn't drive a nail without hitting his thumb. About explosives, locks, and electrical appliances he knew nothing. But his understanding of human nature was marvelous. Add to this knowledge a dash of imagination and you have a complete list of Freddie's assets.

One late-September evening Freddie sat by his open window, trying to think of a quick way to induce sleep. He had tried several novels, but he had found them so entertaining that he had to put them aside. At length he thought of the society column of his newspaper. He plowed through the column twice before it took effect. Then it worked so suddenly that he fell asleep in the chair.

An early bird caroling on his window sill woke him the next morning just after sunrise. He took a cold bath, got into an attractive gray suit and straw hat, and set out on his regular morning walk.

He had covered half a mile or so when suddenly he found himself repeating an item he had read in the society column the night before. "Mr. and Mrs. Walter Britt, of Park Avenue, New York, are spending the last week of their vacation hunting in the Maine woods."

Then he made another curious discovery. Unconsciously he had headed in the direction of Park Avenue. Freddie was displeased. He never mixed business with pleasure, and he especially hated to have anything interfere with his morning constitutional. And yet—he was already within two blocks of the Britt home—well, there could be no harm in just passing it.

But Freddie did more than just pass the Britt home. Even as he approached it he began making mental notes.

"Judging Mr. Britt by his residence," reflected Freddie, "I should say he's not a millionaire, but more than half a one."

Freddie further noticed that from the front the house could be entered by two doors. One of these doors led into the basement, the other was at the head of a brownstone stoop. Both these doors were boarded up, as were the basement windows.

For a moment Freddie paused before the house, to light a cigarette. As he paused he noted a small, blue sign with white letters, which was nailed to the basement door. This sign told him that the Britt home was protected by the Forbell Detective Agency.

Freddie strolled on. He felt that undoubtedly it would be a very hot day, and he hated to work in the heat. But as he walked, that Britt home, with its boarded doors, kept crowding into his thoughts till, at length, he yielded to the inevitable. The idea had developed naturally, and an idea which develops naturally is an inspiration—an inspiration not to be ignored.

He would rob the Britt home. He would do it without exerting himself physically in any way whatsoever; without so much as soiling his hands.

All there was between him and the Britt valuables was one oaken board, one latest model lock, one safe, and one detective agency.

"Cinch," muttered Freddie and hurried back to his own rooms.

Now, in considering and planning the details of a job he was about to attempt, Freddie had developed the habit of talking to himself. To break himself of this habit he determined in the future always to write down his ideas instead of speaking them aloud.

Arrived in his room, Freddie dropped into the chair beside the open window and began jotting down on a small pad the following comments:

One oaken board—carpenter.
One door lock—locksmith.
One detective agency—diplomat.
One safe combination—safe expert.

I can play the rôle of diplomat myself. I shall have to hire the carpenter, the locksmith, and the safe expert, and charge my expenses up to Mr. Britt.

Freddie grinned at his notes a moment and then added:

Since I haven't the slightest idea what Mr. Britt looks like I cannot make use of a disguise. To try to pass oneself off as being a man about whose appearance, character, and habits one knows nothing at all is dangerous, but that is just what is going to make this job interesting. The carpenter, the locksmith, and the safe expert will no more know what Mr. Britt looks like than I do. With them I could back up my bluff with the aid of a visiting card with Mr. Britt's name printed on it. But then, any plumber can fool another plumber with the aid of a visiting card. As an artist I shall use only my nerve and my imagination. The sergeant who works in Mr. Britt's neighborhood, and the employees of the Forbell Detective Agency undoubtedly know Mr. Britt by sight. As for the sergeant—only luck can save me. Detectives are only human beings, and as such they are just as credulous as the rest of us. Here goes!

Freddie tore up his notes and went out to eat a hearty breakfast. At eight-thirty he started his day's work.

He dropped into a small carpenter shop in a side street near the Britt home. Here he told the boss carpenter that he was Mr. Britt, and gave Mr. Britt's address. Then he explained that his vacation had been cut short unexpectedly by important business matters, and that he had just returned to the city on an early train. Before going away he had had his doors and windows boarded, naturally. The man who had done the job unfortunately was ill. It was necessary for him to get into his house at once. Could the carpenter send around a man to take down the boards?

The carpenter noted Freddie's immaculate clothes and prosperous appearance. He had done work of this

kind for people on Park Avenue before, and they had always paid well.

All right. To oblige Mr. Britt he'd have the job done right away. Freddie thanked the man and left the shop.

Ten minutes later one of the carpenter's helpers was busy taking down the boards from Mr. Britt's two front doors and basement windows. Several neighbors who passed saw him, and remarked to each other that they were glad the Britts were returning from the country. The Britts always entertained lavishly and were charming guests as well as charming hosts. The cop on the beat also passed.

"Mr. Britt coming home again, eh?" he asked.

"Guess so," replied the carpenter. "He was just around to me boss and engaged us to remove those boards."

The cop passed on.

Freddie arrived just as the carpenter had finished. The boards were already piled inside the basement gate.

"What do the damages amount to?" asked Freddie.

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Britt," said the carpenter. "The boss'll send a bill the first of the month."

Freddie smiled. He took a bill from his purse and gave it to the carpenter. "This is for you," he said, "for making so quick and clean a job of it."

The carpenter thanked him profusely, doffed his hat, and walked off.

At about ten o'clock Freddie dropped into a near-by locksmith's. He told the locksmith the same story, with this difference: To the locksmith he explained that, upon reaching the city, he discovered he had left his keys behind. Perhaps he had carelessly put them into the trunk, which was following him, or perhaps he had lost them. At any rate, he had to get into his house at once. Would the locksmith kindly take a wax impression of the lock and make him a key to the main door?

The locksmith had heard that story before. In fact, not a small part of his business consisted in replacing lost keys. He told the pseudo Mr. Britt that he would take an impression of the lock at once. The key would be ready at noon.

There was no reason at all why the locksmith should become suspicious of his customer, but just to make sure Freddie added carelessly: "Make half a dozen keys while you're at it. Then I'll be sure always to have one of them on me."

Freddie returned at noon for the keys. They were handed to him by one of the locksmith's assistants.

"What's the charge?" Freddie wanted to know.

"The boss didn't say, and he's out to lunch just now. But that's all right, Mr. Britt; we'll send you a bill the first of the month."

"Thank you!"

Freddie smiled and left the shop.

The locksmith had, of course, been seen by several passers-by as he worked on the Britt stoop. But taking a wax impression of a lock is a matter of a few minutes to an expert, and besides, the locksmith had worked in broad daylight and in the manner of a man engaged in an entirely legitimate business. There was nothing about his movements to excite suspicion, so no one had paid any attention to him.

After Freddie had the keys he stopped off to eat a bite. Then he walked directly to Mr. Britt's home. The carpenter and locksmith had done their work; now the diplomat was to play his part.

Freddie guessed that by opening Mr. Britt's front door he would very probably set off some sort of signal in the office of the Forbell Detective Agency. In that case the agency would send around a man to investigate, and that had to be prevented. He could never

hope to pass himself off as Mr. Britt to one of Forbell's men.

Now, Freddie knew that Forbell had thousands of clients. And he reasoned that, while it was likely that Forbell's employees knew those clients by sight, it was most unlikely that they should know their clients by voice, especially if the voice came over the phone. Unless, by some odd chance, there was something decidedly different about Mr. Britt's voice—if he stammered, for instance, or spoke in some strong, foreign accent—Freddie was sure he could get away with the deception.

Freddie decided he'd have to risk it.

He decided, also, that the very best way to keep Forbell from dropping into the Britt home was to invite him to do so.

When Freddie reached Mr. Britt's house he walked calmly up the front stoop, unlocked the door, and stepped in. He passed quickly through several rooms till he came to the library. After taking the precaution to put on a pair of gloves, he searched the desk.

In one of the drawers he found a receipt for dues from the Westley Club and a check book. There were no blank checks—just stubs; but the book, naturally, bore the name of Mr. Britt's bank.

On the top of the desk was a phone. Freddie called up the Forbell Detective Agency. He insisted on speaking to Mr. Forbell himself. The agency phone operator stalled. She wasn't sure Mr. Forbell was in. Wouldn't some one else do?

"Mr. Britt speaking," said Freddie suavely; "I want Forbell and——"

"Oh, this is Mr. Britt. Just a minute."

After a moment Freddie heard: "Forbell on the wire. What's up?"

"Nothing at all," said Freddie. "Where'd you get the idea?"

"We got the signal from your home only a minute ago. I'm just starting a man to find out what's the trouble."

"Save him the trip, Forbell. I'm speaking from the library in my home."

"I see. Set the signal off yourself, eh? Cut your vacation short?"

"Had to. Got a gunshot wound, and I want it treated by a specialist here in the city."

There was a pause. Then Forbell, "Well, if you're sure everything's all right——"

"Of course I am. However, if you insist on sending a man—— Wait. Why not call yourself? And that reminds me. I want to have a talk with you. I'm buying a new place, and I want it wired according to a plan I drew up all by myself. I'd like to show you the plan and discuss it with you personally. Come around immediaely."

Forbell hesitated. "Sorry, Mr. Britt, but I'll be busy till two. If you can see me then——"

"At two I'm dining with a friend at the Westley Club. From there I'll have to hurry to the First National to see my bankers. Does two to-morrow suit you?"

"Fine." Then, after another pause: "I suppose it'll be all right for us to work according to our regular schedule again? That is, we disregard all signals coming from your home except between the hours of midnight and eight in the morning, unless, of course, we are otherwise instructed."

"That's it, Forbell."

"Well, thanks, Mr. Britt, for saving us a trip. See you to-morrow. Good-by."

"Good-by."

Now, while Mr. Forbell was not in the least suspicious of the call he had received, he went to his files and drew out Mr. Britt's card. He did this as a simple matter of duty. From the card Forbell learned, among other things, that Mr. Britt was a member of the Westley Club, that he banked at

the First National, and that he had spent his vacation hunting in Maine.

The man who had just phoned had mentioned the Westley Club, the First National, and a gunshot wound. Also, he had expressed a desire to see Forbell himself.

Forbell replaced the card in the file. He was satisfied.

As for Freddie, he had good reason to chuckle as he hung up the receiver. The trick had worked. Freddie was wise enough to know that a man who is the head of a detective agency has his time pretty well taken up, and cannot call on his clients on short notice except for reasons of great importance. Which is why he had felt perfectly safe in inviting Mr. Forbell to come around immediately. He was sure Forbell couldn't accept the invitation; sure, also, that the invitation would keep Forbell from becoming unduly inquisitive in regard to the signal.

After phoning Freddie made a leisurely inspection of the Britt home. He found the safe in the rear of the hall on the first floor. He paused only long enough to look at the name of the company which had built the safe.

Thereupon he returned to the library and called up the Stanton Safe Company. He gave them the same yarn he had given the carpenter and the locksmith, explaining that while away on his vacation he had lost the memorandum book which contained his notes showing the combinations to his office and private safes. Would they please send a man around to his home at once to open the fool thing there.

The safe expert arrived at one-thirty. After half an hour's work, during which Freddie stood near by smoking a cigarette and watching with honest admiration, the job was completed. The man had solved the combination and opened the safe. When Freddie offered to pay the expert he said he was not authorized to collect. His boss would send a bill the first of the month.

As soon as the man had left Freddie put on his gloves again—he had taken them off, naturally, before the safe worker had arrived—and then he dropped to his knees before the safe. There were no stocks, bonds, securities, or loose papers of any kind. Three jewel cases was all that Freddie found.

He took them out of the safe and carried them into the library. The cases were not locked; all Freddie had to do to open them was to lift off the covers.

After he had raised the covers of all three of them Freddie fell gracfully into a chair, which, fortunately, happened to be directly behind him.

The cases contained absolutely nothing.

Nothing! That was the result of his hard day's work! Freddie became highly indignant. What the devil did Mr. Britt mean by boarding up his house, connecting it with a detective agency, and then depositing his securities and jewels with some safety-vault company?

Peeved, Freddie rose and made a thorough search of the entire house. He found no other safe or any hidden valuables.

And yet Freddie did not remain angry very long. He was in the library and meditating as to his next move, when he woke to the fact that he was standing on a most beautiful Tabriz rug. And then he also noticed that between the library and the next room there hung a gorgeous piece of Spanish tapestry.

Now, this was the one field in which Freddie was a specialist. He could guess the value of rugs, portières, paintings, and antiques almost as accurately as any one in the art business. He figured that Mr. Britt's rug and tapestry would be worth close to six thousand dollars apiece to an art dealer.

H'm. Freddie paced the room a few

moments. A novel idea. An inspiration, in fact. He would sell Mr. Britt's rug and tapestry. The Clarkson galleries on Forty-second Street would be glad to buy the articles.

There was an odd chance, of course, that Mr. Britt was known at Clarkson's. But Freddie had already taken that same chance with the carpenter, the locksmith, and the safe expert. He saw no reason why he shouldn't take the chance again.

He got the Clarkson galleries on the phone and began feeling them out.

He asked for Mr. Clarkson himself.

"Mr. Britt speaking," he said.

"Mr. Britt? Yes?"

That was enough for Freddie. Mr. Britt was not known at Clarkson's. Had Clarkson known Mr. Britt he would certainly have extended some sort of greeting.

Freddie gave Mr. Britt's address, and proceeded to pour forth to his listener the details of a harrowing hard-luck story. He had failed in several business deals, his stocks had slumped, his creditors were pressing him, and so on. He had to have several thousand dollars, and he had to have them at once. It was breaking his heart to sacrifice his Tabriz rug and Spanish tapestry, but he saw no other way to raise the much-needed cash.

"But don't send around a piker who'll try to take advantage of me," said Freddie. "I'm not offering to sell you the original Venus of Milo, but I am offering two articles of real merit, and I expect a fair price."

"I'll come up myself," volunteered Mr. Clarkson.

Freddie prepared for him by doffing his coat and putting on Mr. Britt's silk smoking jacket, which be found in a closet.

Clarkson arrived at two-thirty o'clock. He looked at the rug and the portières, and estimated their values. Five years ago, he figured, they were worth about three thousand dollars apiece. Now their value had more than doubled. He offered Freddie ten thousand dollars for both articles.

Freddie fumed. He tore his hair and swore—to no avail; Clarkson stuck to his price. For more than half an hour Freddie carried on an argument he knew to be useless.

Then, at ten minutes past three—ten minutes after the hour at which banks close their doors—Freddie accepted Mr. Clarkson's bid. A bill of sale was drawn up, and Freddie signed.

"My man will call for the articles tomorrow morning at ten," said Clarkson. "I'll write you a check for five thousand now, and another for five thousand after——"

"Couldn't you pay cash?"

Mr. Clarkson was highly surprised. "Cash? But, my dear Mr. Britt, you don't suppose I'd be carrying five——"

"Of course not. But here's the idea: A check for five thousand is no use to me now. The banks have closed for the day. There are several debts of a few hundred or so that I'd like to pay off at once. If I offer one of these small fry a check from an art gallery, they'll immediately jump to the conclusion that I'm very near the brink of bankruptcy—and that's an impression I'd like to avoid making."

Mr. Clarkson thought it over. He could think of no reason for not doing Mr. Britt a favor. He suggested that Freddie accompany him to his galleries.

"I may possibly have that much in cash at my place of business," he said.

They left the house together, Freddie pausing on the stoop to lock the door.

At four o'clock Freddie was once more sitting on a chair beside an open window in his own room. On his table lay a stack of bills amounting to five thousand dollars.

Five thousand was not a fortune, he reflected. Other jobs had brought him

more. But then—he had put in a pleasant day, he had met several delightful people—and he hadn't so much as soiled his hands.

Mr. Britt was a sport. When he returned at the end of the week he found the boards taken down from his doors and windows, he was a bit surprised. When he found his safe open and his jewel cases on the library table, he smiled. When Detective Forbell explained the phone message, Britt laughed. When Clarkson called—for the fourth time, he said—for the rug and portières and offered Mr. Britt the five thousand still due, Mr. Britt roared. He had paid only four thousand for them himself, having bought them several years ago at a forced sale. And he had always wanted to get rid of the things, preferring to decorate his home with hunting trophies rather than with fineries.

He considered the whole affair in the light of a huge joke.

But it must be recorded that when, on the second of the following month, Mr. Britt received three bills, one for five dollars from a carpenter, one for three dollars and sixty cents from a locksmith, and one for eight dollars from the Stanton Safe Company, he thumped a fat fist upon the table and exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be damned!"

## BANDITS TIE VICTIM TO RAILROAD TRACK

HARROWING in the extreme was the recent experience of George M. Underwood, who, after being robbed, was tied to a railroad track and left to die a horrible death. According to Mr. Underwood, he was on his way, shortly after dark one evening, to catch a train for his home in Carrollton, Missouri, when, as he neared the railroad station of the little Missouri town he was leaving, he was set upon by two men in a touring car. They forced him into the automobile and took seventy dollars and his watch from him. Then, fearing recognition and later arrest, they decided to kill him.

After having driven south along the railroad track for some distance they stopped at a pile of barbed wire and took several long strands of it. With this wire they bound Mr. Underwood to the railroad track and gagged him. Then they left him to his fate.

Minutes passed and Underwood heard the rumble of an approaching train.

"I tried to scream," he said when rescued, "but rags in my mouth throttled my voice. As the engine came within a few rods of me I threw all my strength into another attempt to escape. My right hand was free at last, and I tore the gag from my mouth, screaming. Then I loosened my right leg and swung partly free from the track, but my left foot and hand were too tightly bound to be released."

Mr. Underwood's left arm and leg were cut off by the train.

## OVERCROWDING IN ARIZONA JAIL

IN the county jail at Phoenix, Arizona, according to a report recently made public, fifty-four prisoners were confined in sixteen cells there. Naturally such crowded conditions were condemned as unsanitary and the jail declared to be too small. A cell for juvenile offenders held two small boys. It was dark and there were no conveniences for sleeping in it. The boys took what slumber they could get on the cement floor of the cell.

# The Second Mrs. Rawton

by

## Roy Vickers

*Author of "The Long Arm," etc.*

### SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

A FAMOUS surgeon, Andrew Grayling, is serving a term of imprisonment for a crime of which he is innocent, having withheld the facts in the case to shield a woman. During his incarceration, Mary Rawton, daughter of James Rawton, a millionaire, is stricken with a disease, the only cure for which is an operation which Grayling alone can perform. Rawton effects the surgeon's escape from prison; the operation is successfully carried out. The millionaire's nephew operates upon Grayling's face, completely changing his identity. As Andrew Corran, the ex-convict meets the second Mrs. Rawton, and recognizes in her the woman who wrecked his life.

A strong attachment is formed between Grayling and Mary Rawton, and he announces to her father his intention of making her his wife. He meets with strong opposition, and shortly afterward takes his departure.

Mrs. Rawton presses Ruth Temberman, a distant neighbor, for a gambling debt, and, upon learning that she is unable to pay, tells her she must pawn her pearl necklace to obtain the necessary funds. She gives her an address in the city, and advises her to send Grayling, gardener pro tem on the Temberman estate, there upon the errand. Delia Rawton then writes Graun, the pawnbroker, who is a noted criminal, explaining Andrew's identity, and claiming for this information half the value of the necklace. Graun, however, who has plans of his own, and whose influence is widespread, instead of handing Grayling over to the police, secures him a position as a salesman of chemicals. Later, financed by Graun, he becomes a broker.

Leonard Dempster, Grayling's lawyer, discovers a second witness to the tragedy in which Grayling is involved, in Leslie van Winkle, a young ne'er-do-well, who promises to meet him in his office at an appointed time. Grayling, arriving for the interview, as directed by Dempster, finds the lawyer lying upon the floor, murdered. Discovered in this incriminating position by a clerk, to save himself, Grayling gives the man a blow upon the jaw and escapes. Van Winkle, Dempster's murderer, commits suicide to avoid being arrested for the crime.

Grayling, who is now married to Mary Rawton, runs for police commissioner in opposition to James Rawton. The millionaire, upon being informed by Ralph Lipscom that Delia, his wife, is the notorious woman who gave false evidence against Grayling, withdraws his candidacy, and Grayling is elected.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### "SULKY SAM" HAS A SURPRISE.

A CHILL wind, sleet-bearing, swept over the country. It groaned and whistled around the grim pile of masonry that was the prison, faintly discernible in the dim light of a winter's dawn.

Within the prison the bell was clanging harshly. There was something symbolically cruel in the clanging of that bell as it broke the sleep of the inmates and aroused them to full consciousness of their servitude.

There followed an interval of quiet, broken by the heavy-shod boots of the keepers as they took up their positions. Then the bell clanged again, as the keepers sped to the work of unlocking the cells.

"One-forty-three."

"Present, sir."

"One-forty-five."

"Present, sir."

"One-forty-seven."

"Present, sir."

"Yes, but you're not the real one-forty-seven," said the keeper under his breath.

It was Jacob Bawden who made the inaudible observation. He had made the same remark to himself every day he had been on cell duty since he had

lost Andrew Grayling, his prisoner, now rather more than five years ago.

The escape of Andrew Grayling had caused keeper Jacob Bawden to lose seniority and had become an obsession at the time. It had remained an obsession to him during the years that followed. He had become more and more taciturn. He had no friends among his associates. The convicts had even better justification for their nickname of "Sulky Sam."

After morning chapel Bawden came off duty. Before going back to his room he went to the keeper's library to look at the papers. He always looked at the papers. He had little or no interest in the events of the day, but he hoped to find news of Andrew Grayling's arrest, and the daily disappointment for five years had done nothing to quench that hope.

On this particular morning he turned the pages of the paper with the same sullen expectancy. But a surprise awaited him.

In the middle of the news page was a photograph of Andrew Corran, police commissioner, the man who, the keeper was convinced, was none other than Andrew Grayling. He clung tenaciously to this belief in spite of the, to him, inexplicable difference in the physical appearance of Corran and Grayling. It came easier to the brain of Jacob Bawden to believe in an apparent impossibility than to believe that he had been wrong when, at his brother's cottage in the country, he had come to the conclusion that Corran was Grayling. And so, like many another, he arrived at the truth by a false method of reasoning.

Two columns were devoted to Andrew Corran, consisting mainly of eulogies of his official career. Jacob Bawden read every word. He had not known that Corran was a police commissioner.

In due course he came to the personal section of the article, and here a paragraph caught his eye. He read:

> It is interesting to note that Mr. Corran's new secretary will be Mr. Silas Harwood. Mr. Harwood has himself had an interesting career. He was educated with the intention of becoming a doctor. He was more than halfway through his courses when he left them to serve his country as assistant in the medical corps. He was attached to that remarkable department of the service, which obtained such brilliant results in the restoration of men whose faces had been shattered, and Mr. Harwood showed such aptitude in this practical branch of surgery as to earn special praise from the general in command. Mr. Harwood abandoned medicine for politics. He is a nephew of Mr. James Rawton, the multimillionaire, whose daughter is Mrs. Andrew Corran.

Jacob Bawden laid down the paper. His brain worked slowly. He came to no immediate conclusion, but in some way, which as yet he did not wholly understand, he felt that he had stumbled upon something.

Several days passed before the keeper was able to crystallize his own thoughts. On duty and off duty, waking and even sleeping, his brain was slowly putting two and two together. Painfully and laboriously he evolved a chain of reasoning.

James Rawton, the millionaire, was Grayling's father-in-law. James Rawton's nephew had been used to patching up shattered faces. A man who could patch up a shattered face could quite possibly patch up a face which had not been shattered. He could alter the appearance of that face. Andrew Grayling had had the appearance of his face altered.

Again, James Rawton was Andrew Grayling's father-in-law. Rawton had helped Grayling by financing his escape from prison, and persuading his nephew to perform an operation, because he knew that Grayling was in love with his daughter, and he wanted him for a son-in-law. Again the keeper was getting the right conclusion

by wrong reasoning. An instinct that plays a larger part in primitive minds than reason told him that it *was* the right conclusion.

The next step was even more difficult. He knew that he himself could do nothing. The easiest way would be to lay the matter before the warden. He remembered that day long ago when the man Corran had called at the prison with his daring bluff.

He had been severely reprimanded then. Remembering this, he thought it would be almost better to put the matter from his mind, and he tried to do so. But an obsession is not so easily disposed of. At the end of three days' ineffectual struggling he presented himself at the warden's office.

"Well, Bawden, what is it?" demanded Warden Shrader as irritably as ever.

"Excuse me, sir," said Jacob Bawden uncomfortably, "but I want to know if you'll allow me to speak about a matter you gave me a severe reprimand for."

"A severe reprimand!" echoed the warden. "I have no recollection of your being reprimanded, Bawden. What are you talking about?"

"Maybe it's slipped your memory, sir," said the keeper. "It's just about five years ago, sir."

"Good heavens, man!" exclaimed the warden. "What on earth do you want to talk about it now for?"

"I'd like to remind you, sir, that the reprimand was entered against my name for saying that a man—a gentleman, sir—who called here, by the name of Corran, was Andrew Grayling, One-forty-seven, sir, who escaped from my working party."

"Yes, yes," said the warden. "I remember now. Well, what about it? Have you come to tell me that you recognize the reprimand was justified, now that Mr. Corran has become a commissioner of police?"

"No, sir," replied Bawden. "I haven't come to tell you that, meaning no disrespect, sir."

"Well, what have you come for?" demanded the warden impatiently.

For answer Bawden produced a copy of the paper from his pocket.

"I've come to ask you to read this, sir," he said, handing his superior the paper with the paragraph marked in pencil.

The warden took the paper with a gesture of annoyance and read the marked paragraph, which referred to Silas Harwood.

"I don't see what this has to do with your reprimand, Bawden," he said.

"No, sir," replied Bawden meekly. "I am not worrying about the reprimand. I am just thinking that it's a funny thing that a man who I think is Andrew Grayling, but you think isn't because his face is different, has a man who's been used to altering faces for his sekerterry."

Warden Shrader looked at the keeper oddly. He was thinking. It was against his self-assertive nature to admit that a subordinate could have an idea worth listening to. But Bawden's suggestion had produced a certain effect on him.

"Excuse me asking, sir; but did you ever take that man's finger prints?"

The warden hesitated. He foresaw possible complications, which he was anxious to avoid. He was also anxious to secure for himself any credit that might result if the keeper's suspicions should prove, after all, correct.

"That is no concern of yours," he rapped out. "Have you anything else to say?"

"No, sir."

"Very well, Bawden. I don't blame you for coming here. Every one of my staff has a right to come here and make any suggestions he likes, or lay anything before me in connection with his work. I will bear in mind what you

have said, though I tell you frankly it appears to me ridiculous. If I were you, Bawden, I should pay a little more attention to the men you have under you at present, and a little less to escapes of the past. Dismiss!"

The keeper saluted and withdrew, and as he went the warden pretended to be occupied with papers on his desk. As the keeper left the room, however, Henry Shrader ceased fumbling with his papers and stared before him, thinking hard. He was piecing together all that was known of the escape of Andrew Grayling. The one fact that could be deduced with any degree of certainty was that Grayling had been backed by some rich man. Accepting the keeper's theory for a moment, here, in James Rawton, was the rich man; and here, in Silas Harwood, was the man who had performed an operation on the face of the escaped convict.

"But the police commissioner!" he said to himself. "They would laugh in my face at headquarters. I shall have to set to work carefully, diplomatically. But I ought to be able to settle the matter finally one way or the other within a few weeks."

Before resuming his duties he wrote a note to a well-known private detective, asking him to come to the prison at once.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN UNWELCOME CALLER.

IN the drawing-room of her fine old rambling country house, Mary Grayling, known to the world as Mrs. Corran, was sitting.

The quiet, artistic sumptuousness of the furniture was sufficient indication that Grayling had been successful in business as well as in politics. His company had been going well since the day of its formation; Grayling had now sold his interest and was free to devote himself entirely to his political career for the future.

Mary Grayling was scarcely recognizable as the physically frail girl who had been married five years ago. In possession now of radiant health, she had come to the full beauty of ripe womanhood. Losing nothing of her gentle charm, she had gained the air of an experienced hostess. In her face at least was no hint of the shadow which ever overhung their lives.

"Is daddy coming home soon?" said a shrill voice at her knee.

She stroked the curly locks of her four-year-old son, James, named after his grandfather.

"Yes, dear. He will be with us very soon."

Even as she spoke the door opened and Grayling entered. The years had left him wholly unchanged to the outward eye. He had the same nervous agility of manner, the same suggestion of quiet, indomitable resolution, intensified perhaps by the success that had come to him.

"Well, sweetheart," he said, advancing to Mary, "what have you been doing all day? Phew! I'm glad things are going as they are, but I do wish we could have a little more time together. What has the ruffian been up to?"

For answer James Grayling, oblivious of his father's dignity, gave him a most disrespectful punch in the region of his waistcoat, and there followed a thrilling combat on the carpet.

Mary, listening to the shrill cries of delight of her child, watched her husband romping with him like a glad schoolboy, and knew that he was thoroughly happy. She heaved a little sigh of blissful contentment, and laughed to herself when Andrew Grayling picked himself up from the floor somewhat shamefacedly.

There followed a blissful half hour, in which Grayling forgot everything save the joy of being with his loved ones. Then the butler appeared in the doorway.

Grayling frowned, for it had been arranged that, during the brief moments he could snatch from his work, to spend with his family, he should be left as free as possible.

"What is it, Peters?" he demanded with a touch of irritation.

The butler advanced, a salver in his hand, on which was a visiting card.

Grayling took the card and stared at it. As he stared there came into his eyes a look which warned Mary that something was amiss. He allowed her to take the card from his fingers.

"Mr. D. L. Graun."

"The name sounds familiar," said Mary, "but I can't quite place it. Who is Mr. Graun?"

"You met him on our wedding day," replied Grayling grimly. "He came into the vestry afterward."

"Oh, yes, I remember," said Mary with a quick intake of her breath. "You will see him, won't you, Andrew? It is of course a social call. You can't very well ask him into the library."

Grayling signified agreement and gave his orders to the butler.

A moment later Graun entered the room. He looked old, but no whit older than he had five years ago. There was the same suggestion of an immense reserve of physical and mental strength.

Mary welcomed him as an ordinary caller and gave him her hand. He took the hand and bowed over it with an Old-World gallantry, and turned to Grayling. Grayling bowed stiffly.

"It is many years since I had the privilege of seeing you, Mrs. Corran," said Graun, "but I believe my wishes, expressed on your wedding day, have been very amply fulfilled."

There was a meaning in his words which Grayling did not miss. They were a reminder that his prosperity, his house, his position, had all been brought about by Graun. He was under no delusion as to the reason for Graun's visit. Graun was not the man to pay an idle social call. He had come to demand value for the value he had given.

Graun was a man of finished grace and manner. He was chatting easily and lightly to Mary, now and then a courtly compliment coming naturally and unobtrusively into the small talk. Grayling was beginning to find the situation unbearable. It seemed to him monstrous that such a man as Graun should sit in Mary's drawing-room and talk to her like an ordinary guest. And yet——

Had not the very drawing-room itself come indirectly from Graun? Grayling was bound to ask himself where he would have been at that moment had it not been for Graun's assistance. That assistance had been unsought, but it had been accepted.

He caught Mary's eye and gave her a fleeting glance which, with the perfect understanding which existed between them, was sufficient to tell her that he wished to be alone with Graun. A few minutes later she left the room, taking the child with her.

As the door closed behind her Grayling rose and, striding to the hearth, faced his visitor. In his eyes gleamed a steely look which showed that he was not to be trifled with or intimidated.

"Well, Mr. Graun," he said, "hadn't we better get right down to the real object of your visit?"

"I have come, my dear Grayling," Graun answered at his leisure, "to ask you to keep your part of the bargain we made five years ago."

"I hope you remember our bargain as clearly as I do," said Grayling.

"Probably not," replied Graun. "I am getting old, my dear Grayling. At my time of life one's memory is apt to play tricks. Looking back over five years, I have the mental picture of a young man, down and out, hiding from the police, and wholly unable to make

a living. Then I seem to see this young man planted firmly on his feet and on the road to prosperity—wealthy. I see him marrying, becoming a man prominent in public life. More, I find his way smoothed so that his natural talents have full play. He has had what the newspapers call a meteoric career. And now tell me, my dear Grayling, are these merely the illusions of senile decay, or are they solid facts?"

The last words were uttered with sudden sternness, but Grayling did not flinch.

"If you will focus your mental picture a little more clearly and definitely," he said, "you may recall that I frequently protested against what you were doing for me, but you compelled my acceptance. I admit that you compelled me with the utmost courtesy. At the same time, you made it quite clear by your manner that you would not allow me to refuse. You had the whip hand, knowing my identity, and you did not let me forget that fact. In spite of it I made the position quite clear. You said that you would one day require repayment, or its equivalent. I replied that much would depend upon the nature of the services you would require of me. Would you please state them?"

"A trifling favor!" replied Graun. "And one that——"

"You have no need to ask a trifling favor, Mr. Graun," cut in Grayling. "You helped me when I was down. By your influence I have become a rich man. You are entitled to demand of me the most sweeping sacrifice. I am morally bound to make it, and will do so with a glad heart. But, as I warned you before, if you ask of me the most trivial favor, if it conflicts with my conscience to grant it, I shall not hesitate to refuse."

Grayling watched the effect of his words. Graun seemed wholly unperturbed.

"A most excellent sentiment!" said Graun. "Most praiseworthy! I am thoroughly glad I made you a police commissioner, my dear Grayling, and that I made sure you'd be reëlected for a second four-year term. We want more men like you. But I have no doubt that, in addition to being a politician, you are also something of a philosopher like myself."

"Pardon me," said Grayling; "the position to which you have raised me—as you prefer to put it—entails duties which occupy a very great deal of my time. Will you be good enough to tell me what you require of me?"

"Certainly," said Graun. "To-morrow a summons will be issued against a certain excellent lady who calls herself Madame Zaroia during business hours. Her name-plate describes her as a clairvoyant and psychist. But between ourselves I can assure you she is much too intelligently occupied with the affairs of this world than to concern herself with those of the next."

"What has all this to do with me?" demanded Grayling.

"You are police commissioner," replied Graun. "The trifling favor I ask is that you forbid the summons to be issued. That is all."

"And that is too much," answered Grayling without hesitation.

There came that low, grating sound that was the old man's chuckle. It carried Grayling back to the day when he had stood in Graun's office.

"I remarked, my dear Grayling, that you were probably a bit of a philosopher like myself," said Graun airily. "You are now face to face with a very fascinating little problem. You have to ask yourself whether it will go against your conscience the more to permit an exceedingly trifling departmental irregularity, or untold suffering upon an innocent woman and child. I refer to Mrs. Grayling and your son."

Grayling felt every muscle of his

body grow taut. At that moment he could have flung himself upon the feeble old man before him.

"I don't suppose there would be much in the nature of physical privation," continued Graun. "Your father-in-law could be counted on to step into the breach. It is the moral suffering I am thinking of. Mrs. Grayling, I should guess, is a woman of imagination. Do you think a woman of such sensitive nature could live through the unceasing horror of knowing her husband to be in prison? We will leave the child out of account. The fact that his career would be ruined——"

"You have chosen to drag the name of my wife into this discussion," said Grayling with an icy restraint. "You have made a grievous miscalculation, Mr. Graun. My wife would sooner think of me in physical servitude than in the moral servitude to which I should sink if I were to abuse my office by protecting your charlatan."

Again came the grating chuckle.

"There is no need to be precipitate, my dear Grayling," said Graun. "Take a minute or two to think it over."

"I have thought it over for five years," replied Grayling. "You can leave this house, Mr. Graun, at your very earliest convenience. And you can go out of here to the nearest police station and tell your tale——"

"You must take me for a very crude blackmailer," interrupted Graun, at the same time rising to go. "I assure you——"

He broke off as the door opened and James Rawton, millionaire, appeared.

Grayling was momentarily embarrassed. He knew that Rawton did not know Graun. He did not know that Rawton, since the moment when Delia had made her confession, had been thinking of little else than the prospect of meeting one day the man who, he believed, had led his fondly cherished wife astray.

Rawton glanced at Graun and, concluding he was an ordinary caller, greeted Grayling.

"Well, Andrew, I just dropped in on the chance of finding you with a minute or two to spare."

"Mr. Rawton," said Grayling in conventional tones, "may I introduce Mr. Graun?"

The effect of his words, uttered in the most commonplace tone, was electric. A change came over the face of the millionaire. The polished air he had acquired in later years seemed to slip from him and reveal the primitive man, iron-willed and revengeful. For a moment Rawton did not speak, and then:

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Graun," he said through clenched teeth. "More pleased than I can possibly tell you. For five rotten, bitter years I have been longing for this moment."

Grayling looked at Graun. Into the eyes of the master schemer there had come a look which might almost have been a look of fear.

"Mr. Rawton, you honor me, sir," he said, with that graceful, ironical air of which he was master. "You have been longing to meet me for five years. Had I but guessed as much, I should have asked friend Grayling here to effect an earlier introduction."

At the use of Grayling's real name Rawton's jaw closed with a snap, and he turned to his son-in-law.

"I perceive that he knows the facts Andrew," he said quietly. "Why did you not confide in me, my boy? We could have gone for him together."

"I didn't know you knew him," said Grayling. "Besides, I have been indebted to Mr. Graun, and never until this moment have I had definite cause to regret it."

"You were indebted to him, were you?" said Rawton. "That's a common trick in men of his stamp. He

has come now to blackmail you, I suppose?"

Again Graun chuckled hoarsely, as if in enjoyment of a great joke.

"He threatens me with exposure unless I use my authority to protect some woman he is interested in, who has fallen foul of the police," said Grayling.

"Blackmail, pure and simple!" ejaculated Rawton.

"True, Mr. Rawton, true," echoed Graun. "I am glad we understand each other so excellently. It will save a great deal of time. It is quite true that I have hinted that the tremendous favor you did Grayling in procuring his release from prison——"

"So you know that, too!" interrupted Rawton.

"Would be rendered useless in certain eventualities," continued Graun. "Why should I trouble to pretend otherwise?"

There was a moment's silence, in which neither Grayling nor Rawton attempted to answer Graun's challenge. Graun made toward the door.

"Think it over, gentlemen; think it over," he said.

"Stop!" cried Rawton, suddenly placing his massive form between Graun and the doorway. "Look here, Andrew," continued Rawton in intense excitement, "he has got you and he has got me, or thinks he has. I know this kind of brute. I've met it and fought it before now. Life isn't going to be worth living for you and me until we have downed this blackmailer. What do you say to our giving him up and chancing it?"

Graun alone of the three was completely cool. As Rawton asked his question Graun turned to Grayling.

"Yes, it is a very interesting question," he said with an ironic grin. "What do you say to giving me up, my dear Grayling and—chancing it? Or perhaps we had better ask: what do you think Mrs. Grayling would say to giving me up and chancing it?"

"Even money that they would laugh at him when he told his tale," broke in Rawton to Grayling. "Even if he made them believe it, it's on the cards that your career would pull you through. They'd give you a pardon or something and they couldn't go for me without going for you."

"That's clever," put in Graun patronizingly. "It is quite pleasant to cross swords with you, Mr. Rawton, though your riposte is a trifle heavy, if I may say so."

Rawton ignored Graun. He was concentrating his attention on his son-in-law.

"Two of us could give evidence against him for blackmail," pressed Rawton. "That's enough to rid this country of a rotten criminal that may be one of its worst. What about it, Andrew?"

Grayling was staring thoughtfully before him.

"You hear what Mr. Rawton proposes," said Grayling to Graun. "I am greatly tempted to do as he suggests. I am only deterred by the knowledge that you helped me when I was greatly in need. With the aid of your capital I was able to make a modest fortune. Your influence put me in office. For these reasons alone I hesitate. If I refrain from prosecuting you, will you undertake to make no illicit requests of me, to ask only those services which one man can honorably render to another?"

"Splendid, my dear Grayling, splendid!" exclaimed Graun with biting sarcasm. "You are speaking like the good man in the melodrama. I confess I should have expected you to show a little more worldly wisdom. You will perform for me the kind of services which I demand."

"You see," said Rawton, "he has helped you to a high position in order

that you may be better worth blackmailing. If you do what he wants this time he will have fresh orders to issue three months hence."

Unconsciously Grayling glanced round the room, at the quiet luxury of it, and thought of his prison cell. But a police commissioner in the hands of a blackmailer! There was more than himself to be considered, more at stake than the happiness of one woman and one child, even though they were his own most beloved.

"Very well," he said to Rawton, a faint tremor in his voice as he made his great decision. "I'm with you. We will give him in charge for attempting to blackmail me in the discharge of my duties. And I," he added, "will go back to prison."

"But only for a very short time," put in Graun.

The two others looked questioningly. Rawton was frankly puzzled.

"I am not a vengeful man, Grayling," continued Graun. "I admire your principles, though they are a great nuisance to me. You are far too good for prison, but I am afraid you can no longer be a police commissioner, since you have proved recalcitrant. I have really no desire to hurt you, save in the ordinary way of business. Your father-in-law is another matter. He is plainly actuated by malice. I don't like malice. I shall therefore give myself the satisfaction of striking back."

"I can look after myself," said Rawton.

"I do not doubt it," cried Graun. "You can look after yourself, but you cannot look after your wife."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, when I have been tried for blackmail, or whatever it is, Mrs. Rawton—née Swayne—will be tried for having given false evidence at the trial of Andrew Grayling. His pardon will not be long delayed, after my exposure of Mrs. Rawton. Are you still going to prosecute me, Mr. Rawton?"

"Good Lord!" cried Rawton. "If you do that, I'll come into the courtroom and shoot you as you stand in the dock."

"Melodrama again, my dear friend!" exclaimed Graun. "You know perfectly well that you will not shoot me, because I shall not be standing in the dock."

"You could not prove it," Rawton rapped out.

"If you believe that," said Graun, "why not carry out your intention of a moment ago to give me in charge?"

The millionaire stood, his teeth tightly clenched, his hands working nervously. It was clear both to Grayling and to Graun that he was at a loss.

"You see you do not believe it," said Graun with an air of finality. "I will leave you and Grayling to discuss the subtleties of the position. I regret that I cannot myself be present, as I have to catch a train."

The master schemer made again toward the door, and this time the millionaire did not bar his progress.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said Graun. Bowing ironically, he passed unmolested from the room. They heard his hard, metallic chuckle as the door closed behind him.

On the train that took him back to the city Graun was reflecting upon the result of his interview with Grayling.

From time to time his thin lips parted in a smile. An elderly lady sitting opposite him thought that he looked an extremely benignant old gentleman.

Graun, as a matter of fact, was well contented with his day's work.

"This has been a very useful feeler," he said to himself. His lips did not move, but in his orderly brain the thoughts arranged themselves neatly and concisely as in speech. "Grayling has proved difficult, as I knew he

would. All the best men always do prove difficult. It is fortunate that this Zaroia business is a matter of no importance. But Grayling has balked, and he must be taught his lesson."

Graun returned to his headquarters on Bruce Avenue, slept like a child, and awoke the next morning eager for his day's work—work which hourly advanced his tentacles farther and farther to the political and business life of the great city. The latter part of the afternoon he left the shop and, summoning a taxi, drove to the building in which Dempster had had his offices. He stopped inside to consult the directory.

"Margrave. Yes, that's it," he soliloquized. "Margrave was the man who took Dempster's offices. If I remember rightly, he moved in the week after the poor fellow was murdered."

He passed through and tapped on the door of the office.

The door was opened by an elderly clerk.

"Mr. Margrave in?" asked Graun.

"No, sir," replied the clerk.

"You are Mr. Walters, his clerk, I believe?" said Graun.

"Yes, sir."

"And you were clerk to poor Mr. Dempster, were you not?"

The clerk seemed vaguely disturbed by the question.

"Yes, sir," he answered, in the peculiar tone which custom prescribes when speaking of the dead.

"I thought so," said Graun. "To tell the truth, I want to see you more than I want to see Mr. Margrave. I had merely wished to ask Mr. Margrave to give me an opportunity of talking to you. May I come in?"

"Certainly, sir," said the clerk with grave courtesy. "If you will come into Mr. Margrave's room——"

"I would rather come into yours, if I may," replied Graun genially. "We should not then be interrupted if Mr. Margrave were to return.

"I should, perhaps, explain to you who I am. I am an uncle on Mr. Dempster's maternal side."

As he spoke Graun realized that he would perhaps have done better to have described himself as the deceased lawyer's great-uncle. He noticed, however, that the clerk did not look in the least incredulous. The lie, at any rate, had served and would justify the interest and curiosity he was about to exhibit in the circumstances of Leonard Dempster's death.

"As you will naturally understand," said Graun, "my nephew's tragic death was a very great blow to me. Such a brilliant young man! And only beginning his career, in spite of his many triumphs."

"I can understand how you must feel, sir," said Walters sympathetically.

"I was sure you would sympathize with an old man's sorrow," continued Graun. "You will also sympathize with the feeling that I am bound to have that the murder ought to have been more thoroughly investigated."

"I think the case against young Van Winkle was sufficiently clear to leave little doubt, sir," said Walters.

"Oh, yes," admitted Graun. "Van Winkle was undoubtedly guilty. But at the same time, you, as a gentleman of the law, know a great deal better than I that a murder can be committed, generally is committed, by more than one person, although only one hand may strike the fatal blow. Now, in your evidence at the inquest, you spoke of another man whom you found in these rooms on your return after the murder. You stated that that man struck you and rendered you temporarily unconscious while he made his escape. Now, you will not tell me, Mr. Walters, that that was the act of an innocent man."

"Certainly not, sir," replied the clerk. "I have no doubt whatever that that man was an accomplice."

"I share your opinion, Mr. Walters, said Graun emphatically. "I, too, have no doubt that that man was an accomplice. What I want to know is, why has that man not been arrested?"

"The police did all they could at the time, sir. Their investigations were most thorough."

"Thorough, perhaps," said Graun, "but unsuccessful. My own efforts have been a little more fortunate, though as yet my evidence is far from complete. The question I have come to ask you, Mr. Walters, is whether you would recognize that man if you were brought face to face with him."

The clerk, emerging momentarily from the frigid formality which is the pride of his caste, regarded his visitor with an almost human interest. To a mild extent his pulses were tingling with excitement. He had had a deep regard for Leonard Dempster. Besides, at the inquest the coroner had been none too considerate in his comments on the clerk's failure to detain the man he had found in the room with the body.

"I feel sure I should recognize him, sir," he answered firmly. "It's a long time ago, of course, but his face sticks firmly in my memory. The whole scene does, sir. One remembers things like that. I can see him now as vividly as if——"

"I'm extremely glad to hear it, Mr. Walters," replied Graun. "Your evidence may be very, very valuable."

"Evidence, sir!" repeated the clerk. "Has an arrest been made, may I ask?"

"Not as yet, Mr. Walters, not as yet," answered Graun. "One has to go to work very carefully. I have hinted that I have made it my duty to begin my investigations where the police left off. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that the case is complicated, very complicated. Have you any idea of the nature of certain private work which Mr. Dempster had taken on—let us call it rather a mission than work—at the time of his death?"

"No, sir."

"I thought as much," said Graun. "Carry your mind back, Mr. Walters. Can you remember about ten years ago a big scandal, in which a rising young physician called Andrew Grayling was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude? You may remember that, some five years after being sentenced, Grayling made a very remarkable escape from prison in an airplane."

"Yes, yes, I remember quite well," said the clerk almost eagerly. "I remember, too, that Mr. Dempster conducted the defense at Grayling's trial, though I was not with Mr. Dempster at the time."

"Quite right," said Graun approvingly. "Well, now, Mr. Dempster firmly believed that Grayling was innocent. It is not for me to say whether he was right or wrong. The fact is sufficient that he believed it. Now, information of an entirely indisputable nature has reached my hands that Grayling, knowing Mr. Dempster's opinion of his case, came here and persuaded Mr. Dempster to get to work with a view to procuring evidence for a retrial."

"Oh, indeed!" answered the clerk. "And do you mean to tell me, sir——"

"I mean to tell you, Mr. Walters, that the man who struck you in this room and made his escape was none other than Andrew Grayling himself. He goes under a different name now, but he is Andrew Grayling none the less. I can prove it. But I can bring the charge home only with the aid of your evidence."

Graun waited for the other to digest his words.

"I am ready to identify that man, sir, as soon as I see him," said Walters. "May I ask if you intend to take me to him at once?"

"I wish I could, Mr. Walters, but I fear that is impossible," answered Graun. "It is a matter of the utmost delicacy, for Grayling, under another name, now occupies a—er—very good position. It will be impossible for me to confront him with you and denounce him. We must go to work more carefully. In a few days, in a few weeks, maybe, I shall ask you to accompany me to a place where we can together see him unobserved. You can then tell me if you are able to make your identification."

"You may count on me to do that, sir, if it is the same man," replied Walters with conviction.

"Thank you, Mr. Walters," said Graun and took his departure.

Graun summoned a passing taxi. This time he alighted in front of a milliner's shop, and entered the building by a doorway to the left. At the foot of the stairs a placard, painted with a bizarre touch, proclaimed to those interested that Madame Zaroia occupied the first floor.

Ascending the stairway with that care which his age demanded, Graun entered the reception room of the so-called clairvoyant.

A young girl of singular prettiness, who officiated as secretary, came forward to receive him. He asked for Madame Zaroia.

"Do you wish the five-dollar reading or the ten-dollar reading?" asked the young girl mechanically. "Madame recommends the ten-dollar reading because——"

"I will have the ten-dollar reading, please, as soon as possible," said Graun.

A moment later he was ushered into the inner shrine, an exotic apartment, redolent of Eastern perfume and hung with heavy black velvet curtains, on which, in gold thread, were worked the signs of the zodiac.

As the young girl disappeared Graun came straight to his point.

"I have done my best for you, dear lady," he said, "but, as I feared, I am unable to prevent the summons from being issued. You need have no fear. You will not have to appear in court for two weeks or so after the issue of the summons, and I have reason to hope that much may happen in the meantime. But you will have to do what I tell you. As you know, it is a great deal more than a mere matter of a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar fine for this clairvoyant business. There are other dangers for you."

"Oh, don't I know it!" exclaimed the woman wretchedly.

She turned aside with a hunted gesture that would have been pathetic had it been unstudied; but, like the rest of her, its effect was calculated. The whiteness of her face, the raven darkness of her hair, the intense scarlet of her lips—all were artificial. Only in her eyes, the "eyes of mystery" that had impressed so many credulous minds, there lurked a genuine emotion, that of fear.

"Do tell me what I am to do," she pleaded. "You know I will carry out your orders faithfully."

"Yes, I know that," said Graun grimly. "Have you ever heard of Mr. Ismay, a politician?"

"Yes, I think so," answered the woman indifferently, "but I cannot be sure. What about him?"

"I am going to arrange for you to hand out the magic patter at one of his affairs in the near future. It will be a week from next Wednesday. And if you listen carefully I will tell you what you must say."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### MADAME ZAROIA AT WORK.

WITHIN a week of Graun's visit Grayling and Mary, with their child, were in occupation of their residence in the city.

On the Wednesday following their return from the country, Grayling, over a hurried breakfast, discussed with Mary their joint duties for the day.

"To-night it is absolutely necessary that we go to that reception at the Ismays'," said Grayling. "The mayor will be there. I must have a word with him, for there won't be a chance all day."

"Very well, dear," answered Mary. "But why does everybody go to the Ismays'? I don't think Mr. Ismay is very interesting. He's no one of importance, is he?"

"No, dear," answered Grayling. "He's just a genial nobody who, somehow or other, collects people round him. We shall get the hang of these things in time, Mary. We are bound to feel like fishes out of water for a while."

"Speak for yourself," said Mary with a laugh. "I think we're doing splendidly, considering we've been, as you might say, rushed into this sort of thing."

The whirl of social life that came with her husband's successful career had at first been alarming to Mary, for her life previous to her marriage had been extremely quiet. She had applied her faculties to the task, and, being by nature sociable and immediately popular, she found the new order of things full of color and interest.

"Your father said he would be there to-night with Mrs. Rawton," Grayling told her as they set out together.

There was the faintest perceptible hush in the buzz of conversation as the butler announced:

"Mrs. Corran. Mr. Corran."

Although the Graylings did not know it, they were considered a most interesting couple. His brilliant career was admired and envied—envied no less than his beautiful wife, whose gentle charm was such that she had no enemies, even among those women whom she outshone.

Grayling and his wife were soon separated. For an hour they did not see each other. Then they found themselves together again, and there came a lull of voices in the great drawing-room which told of a sudden awakening of interest.

"What's happening?" asked Mary of Grayling, but before he could reply some one else answered.

"It's Madame Zaroia," said a man's voice behind them. "The clairvoyant, you know. Spiritualism is one of Ismay's star stunts."

Grayling started unpleasantly at hearing the name, which he immediately recognized.

The woman who called herself Madame Zaroia passed through the crowd of guests into the center of the room. She was elaborately dressed as an ancient priestess, which of itself lent a certain color to her claims to occult power. There was no doubt she had already awakened interest. She was a woman of considerable presence, and, whatever else she might be, was certainly no fool.

She held up her hand, and the buzz of voices died down to nothing.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she began, in clear, bell-like tones, "Mr. Ismay has invited me to come here this evening in order to give you an exhibition of the mystic power which has been vouchsafed to me. I have brought with me my crystal, which was the gift of a fakir, who helped me to develop my powers when I was in India. If any lady or gentleman would care to hold my crystal for a moment I will tell you all that it reveals to me."

For a moment no one seemed inclined to accept the invitation. The woman had the wit to perceive that her entertainment was in danger of falling flat at the start, and so hastened to save the situation.

"But wait!" she exclaimed, as if in excitement. She closed her eyes and placed her hand over her brow. "I feel myself drawn by some powerful personality, some psychic force; a man who wants me, I think, to reveal his destiny, but will not say so. Will he not speak now?"

An interested silence followed her question, which was just what she wanted.

"Still he will not speak. But I am drawn toward him—I am drawn. I must find him—I must!"

Again she placed her hand over her eyes. The other hand undulated before her like a serpent, as if it were peering among the guests. Then her hand steadied, and she began to walk in the direction in which it was pointing.

She came to a stop in front of Grayling.

"It is you, sir," she said firmly to Grayling. "Why are you afraid to admit it?"

A laugh went up at Grayling's expense. Grayling felt mildly uncomfortable.

"I assure you I am not afraid," said Grayling, "and I had no idea that I was drawing you. Nothing was farther from my intentions."

The laugh was in danger of going against Madame Zaroia, but she was quick to act.

"Then take the crystal," she cried entreatingly. "Oh, please, please take it! I shall not be able to use it for any one in this room until I have first read it for you."

Grayling shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing to do but to take the crystal as the woman asked. He held it in his hand as she directed him and a moment later returned it to her.

Fully half the guests were by this time watching the proceedings with varying degrees of interest.

"Ah! The crystal clouds. I see a man's face. It is your face. I see you inclosed in a narrow space and you are very miserable. You are wearing some strange clothing. What is the space that incloses you? Perhaps it is a dark cave. I do not know. The scene is changing. Somehow you have broken free. I see horses cantering. Now, again, you are in an inclosed space. It is light and airy. It rocks. Perhaps it is a ship. No, I think—I think it is an airplane. You are tearing off the strange clothing——"

The woman broke off as there came a low moan, followed by a thud.

Mary Grayling had fainted.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### GETTING THE EVIDENCE.

THERE was a very good reason why James Rawton, millionaire, with his beautiful wife, had failed to put in an appearance at the evening reception at the house of the Ismays.

Rawton had been out by himself in the afternoon. By dinner time he had not returned, which surprised Delia, as he was normally among the most punctual of men.

In half an hour she sat down to dinner by herself, offended by the fact that he had not even sent her word as to his movements, and not a little apprehensive as to what the reason might be.

She had dressed in the belief that he was going to take her to the Ismays'. Her snowy shoulders gleamed from a daring toilette of almost fierce scarlet.

About nine o'clock he came in. Delia glided into the hall to meet him, struggling to suppress her annoyance.

"James, I have been so worried about you! Has anything been the matter? You will have to dress at once if you want to take me to the Ismays'," she said in a single breath.

James Rawton did not answer. Delia feared the worst from his silence, and she was soon to learn that her fears were not unjustified.

"Do you mind going into my room?" he said with cold formality.

Delia shrugged her shoulders. Without answering she walked into the little room that was her husband's den, and which took the place, in his town house, of his beloved library in his country home. Rapidly she was turning over in her mind the possibilities of the situation. What had happened that he should behave thus toward her? True, things had never been quite the same since the confession of her past had been extorted from her on that dreadful night when he had canceled his candidature on account of Lipscom's revelations. Nevertheless, he had forgiven her whole-heartedly, and his manner toward her had been consistently affectionate.

He followed her into his room and closed the door ominously behind him.

"I have seen Graun to-day," he began.

"Well?" she demanded.

"I met him on my way home to dinner this evening. He accosted me. He asked me why I regarded him as my personal enemy—why I was doing all that money and energy can do to smash him. I told him."

Delia perceived the line of danger. But she wished to make sure of her ground.

"It was curious that he should ask you," she said. "Surely he knew that you wished to punish him for the part he has played in my life."

"I told him that. He denied it."

The words were snapped out with a fierceness that made her tremble.

"Of course!" controlling her fear of him. "He would deny it."

"He proved it."

Delia tried to frame a reply, but faltered before the piercing gaze which he turned upon her.

"I am always ready to hear a man state his case," continued Rawton, speaking in the voice of a man who is restraining some strong emotion, "even if I despise that man as much as I despise Graun. I told him that he lied. I told him that you had confessed to me. I told him that, foolish as you had been in the past, it was not in you to lie to me. He invited me to accompany him to his office. From a sense of fairness I agreed to do so."

Rawton paused. Delia perceived that her one chance lay in boldness. She made a daring counterattack.

"James, I don't know why you are adopting this tone to me," she said with a show of indignation. "You seem very ready to take the word of a blackmailer against mine. He took you to his office and told you some cock-and-bull story about me——"

"He showed me letters from you which prove conclusively that you did not meet him until three years later than you stated. Letters which proved that you had been well advanced in your career of infamy before he crossed your path."

"Nonsense!" said Delia.

Boldness, boldness alone could save her. And even boldness might fail. She would see.

"I tell you I have seen letters in your own handwriting," repeated Rawton.

Now at last, thought Delia, she knew what she had to face: Letters in her own handwriting proving that Graun had not known her until she was notorious. That, at any rate, could easily be bluffed.

"Those letters were a fake, James," she said coolly.

"Do you mean that you did not write them?" he demanded.

"Oh, no! I wrote them. But I wrote them by arrangement with Graun himself."

Rawton looked at her suspiciously.

"I don't follow you," he said curtly.

"If you stop hectoring me, I will explain," she said.

"I am not hectoring you," he re-

torted. "I am telling you that, when you pretended to confess to me the whole story of your past life, you were fooling me. You attributed the kind of life you led to Graun. You excused yourself in my eyes on the ground that you were a young and innocent girl, coerced into cheating and swindling by an elderly schemer. For that reason I forgave you. I was willing to regard even your deception of myself as being practically forced upon you. I now know that you fooled me, even in your confession."

"You know it!" exclaimed Delia scornfully. "You know it, because Graun has told you so. Very well. This really 's the end. I won't stay in your house another night. And you needn't even make me an allowance. I have wits enough to earn my own living."

She spoke with just the right note of tragedy. She watched his face out of the corner of her eye and noted that her bluff was beginning to take effect.

"Can you explain those letters?" he demanded.

"Yes," she answered, "but I am not going to. There is no object. You are content to believe that I lied to you when I made my confession. That's quite enough for me. I have no longer any interest in convincing you, James."

She arose and made toward the door slowly, in order to give him time to stop her.

"I will tell you this, James," she said, with her hand on the doorknob. "I don't pretend that I was a very good girl and that he compelled me against my will to do the things I did do. I simply say that I allowed him to lead me, when a better woman might have defied him. I can't help that. I never had the sense that cheating was wrong until—until I met you. Now that you have shown that you can be as unjust as anybody else, you have killed the feeling which you created. I shall leave you to-night. To-morrow I shall drop your name. I shall go back to the old life—as Delia Swayne."

She turned the handle of the door.

"Wait!" cried James Rawton.

Slowly she closed the door.

"Delia, this is a crises in our lives, and we are behaving foolishly," he said. "If I have spoken to you in a manner which has hurt you, I apologize. You must admit that I have had a certain justification. I have seen letters in your handwriting——"

"I know," she said. "You have seen some of them. You might have seen fifty or sixty, all referring to the fact that I had just met Mr. Graun, and all of different dates, ranging over a period of years."

Rawton looked at her in surprise at this explanation, an explanation she had invented on the spur of the moment.

"In spite of our precautions, we were often seen together," continued Delia. "He wanted to protect himself, I suppose, and from time to time he told me to write a letter, which he dictated, which would furnish him with proof that we were only slightly acquainted. I didn't care at the time. I didn't really understand what it meant. There were a lot of things he made me do which I didn't understand or bother to inquire about. And now those letters have robbed me of my husband."

The very simplicity of her explanation carried conviction to the mind of the husband who wanted to be convinced. She saw him wavering, and hastily added:

"It's deceitful and horrible, and you despise it, James. But it's all of a piece with the life which I confessed to you I was leading at the time. You said you had forgiven me. I don't doubt that you meant to do so, that you meant what you said. But you can't forgive me, James. It's beyond your power."

"Delia, Delia, I have done you an

injustice," he said, seizing her. Artistically she lay cold in his arms. "I can forgive you for what is past. I do; I have forgiven you. I will never bring that up against you, as I have told you. These things are strange to me. But you, too, must show forgiveness."

"I'll try," she answered, "as hard as you do. Don't let's talk any more about it."

The millionaire's brow puckered.

"There's one question I would like to ask you, if you will let me," he said.

"Well?" she asked.

"Has this fellow any hold on you at the present?"

"No," she answered firmly, "at least, none that you are not aware of. He can put me in prison for perjuring myself in the Grayling case."

"Hm! The Grayling case," said Rawton thoughtfully. "It was very strange that that fellow Van Winkle should have killed Dempster, the man who was about to establish Grayling's innocence, and then have shot himself without even having the decency to leave a confession behind him. Now, it was to Graun's interest that Grayling's innocence should not be established. Do you think Graun had anything to do with the murder?"

"I should think it quite probable," said Delia with seeming indifference.

"Wait a minute," said Rawton.

He began to pace the room nervously, lost in thought. Delia perceived, with an inward sigh of relief, that he was following a fresh train of thought.

"You must hate Graun almost as much as I do," said Rawton presently. "Apart from what he has done in the past, he made a distinct attempt to-day to make fresh trouble between you and me."

"Of course I hate him," said Delia.

"Well, now, do you think you could trap him into giving himself away?" suggested Rawton.

Delia considered the proposition seriously, and then:

"He's the hardest man in the world to trap, because there's nothing furtive about him," she answered. "It's easy enough to get him to refer to things when you are alone with him. He never goes to the trouble of denying what he has done—when there are no witnesses. But once there's a witness, he never lets slip the faintest syllable."

"But suppose he does not know there are witnesses on hand," said Rawton excitedly.

"He always would know," dispiritedly answered Delia. The idea of betraying Graun was extremely attractive to her; she was furiously angry with him for telling her husband the truth. "After all, you can't hide people behind screens nowadays, especially with a man like Graun."

"Screens!" exclaimed Rawton. "Look here, Delia. You know I've got the old crowd to work against Graun, don't you? The same crowd of splendid blackguards who got Grayling out of prison. Well, two of them were in the police force until they were thrown out, and one of them is an expert mechanic."

"What about it?" asked Delia curiously.

"There's a trick they use a great deal, which is worked by means of an instrument called the dictaphone," explained Rawton. "It consists of a small disk of metal, concealed somewhere in the room, connected with an electric wire. Every word that is spoken in the room is transmitted by the disk over the wire, is magnified on the other end, and can be taken down in shorthand and used as evidence. I can get that fixed in this room."

"Oh!" exclaimed Delia, with a long-drawn exclamation of delight. "You mean—I get him here—make him talk——"

"And at the other end of the wire

we have half-a-dozen detectives," said Rawton.

"Look!" he cried excitedly. "This bowl of flowers! I'll have the water taken out of it, and Jakes can put a disk among these very flowers, and run a wire through the table under the floor into the next room."

The old spirit, the old love of intrigue, that had made her notorious years before her marriage, descended again upon Delia. She looked at her husband with intense admiration.

"How splendid, James!" she said. "We will do it. I will undertake to make him talk. I know just how to draw him out."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### A BOWL OF ROSES.

WHEN Mary fainted at the words of Madame Zaroia, she unconsciously took the very surest course of preventing the incident from doing even the most indirect injury to her husband.

Her fainting created an instant diversion. To the guests there was no direct connection between Mary's seizure and the words of the so-called prophetess. To have connected the two would have been to assume that the police commissioner was actually an escaped convict, and that his wife had fainted at the revelation—and this, true though it was, was too great an absurdity to occur to the minds of any.

Grayling immediately rushed forward, picked her up in his arms and, declining the assistance offered, carried her out of the drawing-room into the cooler air of the balcony. Only the host and hostess accompanied them.

Presently Mary opened her eyes. Mrs. Ismay was busy with restoratives, and in a few minutes Mary was brought back to full consciousness and able to rise.

"I think, if you don't mind, I'll take her home at once," said Grayling.

Mary added profuse apologies for her physical weakness, and all agreed that it would be best for her to go home at once.

In the taxi that took them home Grayling said nothing about the incident. He was thinking deeply. It was obvious that Madame Zaroia had been acting on Graun's instructions—equally obvious that Graun had intended the incident to serve as nothing more than a warning, a hint that he was able to strike, when he wished, through strange, unsuspected channels.

When they reached home Grayling took Mary to her room. Then for the first time she spoke. The dizziness had gone from her, leaving only a vague alarm at the cause of her faintness.

"Wasn't it dreadful, Andrew!" she exclaimed, with a shudder. "I had no idea that people could see things like that. She must be a wonderful clairvoyant."

"She is nothing of the kind," said Grayling. "The whole thing was a put-up job. But you are too tired to talk about it to-night, my dear. I will tell you some other time."

"No, I am quite recovered," she protested. "Tell me now."

As briefly as he could, Grayling told her the whole story of his relations with Graun, culminating with his last visit, when he had asked him to stop the proceedings against Madame Zaroia. He would have saved her the pain of knowing that he was being subjected to blackmail, but he could no longer do so without deceiving her.

"How awful to think that you are in that man's power!" she said. "I had no idea we were to have this added horror."

"It is worse for you than for me," he answered. "I would rather you had not known; but to-night you made it impossible for me to keep you in ig-

norance. I am very grieved indeed that you have had to know. You will worry about it."

"I will not worry about it, Andrew," she answered firmly. "I promise you that. I am very tired now."

"I have some work to clear up before I turn in," he answered. He spoke in a matter-of-fact tone in the hope of distracting her thoughts.

Presently he left her and passed into his study. Here he attempted to wrestle with the problem. That, in addition to the sword of exposure that ever hung over their heads, Mary had now to bear the burden of the knowledge that he was being blackmailed was almost more than he dared face. The thought of her suffering unnerved him.

Strange thoughts came and went, thoughts that he would rigorously have excluded in the ordinary case.

Madame Zaroia! Did it matter very much whether this particular charlatan were prosecuted? Would society suffer if she were not arraigned and fined?

The reports of all special prosecutions of this nature were sent to him. Seated before his desk, he opened a bunch of papers he had brought home with him, found the desired document, and carefully studied it.

A couple of minutes later he started almost guiltily as the door opened and Mary, in her dressing-gown, entered. She came over to where he was sitting and placed her arm on his shoulders. As she did so, her eyes fell on the word "Zaroia."

"Darling," she said, as her cheek nestled against him, "I had to come before I went to sleep to tell you that I am not going to let this thing worry me. I can stand anything in the world, Andrew, with one exception: that you should do anything for which you or I should be ashamed."

As she spoke, her hand went to the paper and turned it face downward.

Grayling took her in his arms, and there was a catch in his voice as he kissed her and said:

"Beloved, you shall never be called upon to face that. I swear it."

On the day following the meeting with James Rawton, Graun received a note in a familiar handwriting.

I am in trouble. It is of vital importance that I should see you at once. I dare not come to you; my husband has forbidden me to do so, and is having me watched. But there can be no harm to you in coming to see me. He will be out to-morrow afternoon between three and five. I beg you to come at this time. It is my very last chance of being useful to you. DELIA.

Graun chuckled as he read the note.

"In trouble, eh?" he soliloquized. "Women like you, my dear, are always in trouble sooner or later. I don't know that this is any particular concern of mine. On the other hand, I am prepared to admit that a millionaire's wife in trouble may suggest a source of—er—legitimate business.

"I wonder if it's a trap. What sort of trap could it be? The savage millionaire can't very well have made her write that to me in order to murder me when I get there. Violence is an absurd assumption—and nothing else matters. I think, on the whole, I might as well accept this very pressing invitation from a lady in distress."

Shortly before four o'clock on the following afternoon Graun presented himself at the house of the millionaire. He was shown immediately to the little room that was James Rawton's den.

Delia greeted him with just the right note of nervous anxiety in her manner to suggest that she was genuinely in distress.

"I thought we'd have tea in here," she said. "It's a nicer room to talk in than the drawing-room. It's extremely good of you to come."

"Dear lady, could I do otherwise when you so graciously invited me?" answered Graun, with the gallantry which he invariably affected. "Besides," he added with a sudden change of manner, "you have more to talk to me about than your troubles, or you would have spared yourself the trouble of sending for me."

She answered him with a peal of silvery laughter.

"Don't you admire my roses?" she said, as if she wished to change the subject.

She called his attention to a bowl of magnificent roses on the table within a couple of feet of his chair.

"They are very beautiful," said Graun, whereupon she took one from the bowl and placed it in his buttonhole. He suffered her to complete her task, and then, with cruel fingers, deliberately tore the rose from his coat and threw it into the grate.

"You did not invite me here in order to present me with roses," he said. "Hadn't we better cut out this nonsense and come to business?"

Delia laughed again, but this time to herself. She glanced almost lovingly at the rose bowl. She was laughing with the knowledge that the roses he had insulted were to be the means of his undoing.

"I almost like you sometimes," she said, seating herself on the opposite side of the rose bowl. "You are such an honest brute. It's all right; I'll come to the point. I am having trouble with my husband. He is mad enough to think that I was Leslie Van Winkle's accomplice in the murder of Leonard Dempster."

Graun looked at her with critical interest.

"Why does he think that?" he demanded.

"He knows the facts," answered Delia. "Dempster was working for Grayling, and if he had succeeded I might have been taken in for perjury. And as Van Winkle was in the same boat, he and I are supposed to have put our heads together. It's absurd, but my husband believes it; and somehow he must be convinced that it is not true. That is what I want your help for. I want you to convince him."

"You have surely not brought me here for such a purpose," said Graun angrily. "How could I interfere, even if I wished to do so?"

Delia glanced at the rose bowl. She knew she was getting nearer to her real point. She was about to place the bait in the trap.

"He thinks that you and I are at swords' points," she answered. "He thinks that each of us wants to do the other harm. For this reason, if you were to say something in my favor, he would believe it at once. I simply want you to see him on some pretext or other, bring the matter up, and make it clear that you know I had nothing to do with it."

Graun chuckled.

"I see you have lost nothing of your nerve," he said sarcastically.

Delia knew the value of flattery in handling men.

"You know you could do it if you were to try," she said. "You would find your own way of convincing him. He is no fool, I know; but you are a much cleverer man than he."

Graun shrugged his shoulders, but she could see that her flattery had been appreciated.

"If I were to consent to do my best for you," he said, "what do you offer me by way of fee for my trouble?"

"I offer you nothing," she answered. "Unless you do as I ask, I shall tell him the truth. From what I know of him, I don't think he will keep it to himself. I rather fancy he will tell it to the police."

Delia was drawing a bow at venture. She knew Graun and she had known

Van Winkle, and had come to the inevitable conclusion.

"A threat!" exclaimed Graun, with every appearance of delight. "And what, may I ask, is this catastrophic truth that you are going to tell your husband?"

"I shall tell him that you coached Van Winkle in his part. That you instigated the murder. That you shielded Van Winkle after he had committed it, and did your best to protect him, knowing him to be a murderer."

"And you think your husband—you even think a judge and jury—will believe this interesting little story," he demanded.

"I do," she said. "It is true. Van Winkle confessed to me, told me all about it, before they came for him."

It was a lie, but she knew that, as far as Graun could tell, it might be the truth. There was the tiniest shade of uneasiness in his voice as he asked:

"Did Van Winkle put this in writing?"

"N—no," she admitted. "But I know it is true."

A look of obvious ease crossed the old man's face.

"A legal truth," he said, "is a statement supported by witnesses. That statement of yours is supported by no witnesses. Consequently, as far as the law is concerned, it is not a truth."

"Oh, your devilish ingenuity!" she exclaimed. "You don't even take the trouble to deny it to me, do you?"

"There is no reason why I should deny it to you," he answered.

"But why did you bother yourself?" she asked. "What did it matter to you?"

"It mattered very much to me," he answered. "Andrew Grayling is a great deal more use to me out of prison than in prison. Dempster tried to interfere with my plans by establishing Grayling's innocence, and so I decided that Dempster must be silenced. Van Winkle offered a convenient medium."

Delia shuddered.

"I can hardly believe it," she said. "Do you mean to say that you are so farsighted, so relentless in the pursuit of your schemes, that you decided to kill a man who threatened to interfere with them?"

"I do mean to say exactly that," replied Graun. "It is unsafe to interfere with me, as your excellent husband will find out before very long, if he should persist in his antagonism."

Delia smiled. The smile was not for Graun, nor was it caused by the mention of her husband. It was caused by the knowledge that, with the aid of a little flattery, she had at last obtained her revenge upon the crafty schemer who for years had bullied and driven her—a little flattery, and a bowl of roses which contained an electric disk which had rendered every word that Graun had uttered clearly audible to those who were listening at the other end of the wire.

"To come back to the point," said Delia. "Are you going to help me?"

"If it is to be made worth my while I will convince your husband that you had nothing to do with this matter."

"All right," replied Delia. "I will give you a thousand."

She would as readily have promised ten thousand. For she knew that before Graun could take the first step in keeping the bargain he would be arrested for complicity in the murder which she had made him confess.

She picked one of the roses from the bowl and laid it lovingly against her lips.

**To be concluded in the next issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out on Tuesday, August 17th. Do not forget that, as the magazine is published every week, you will not have to wait long for the next installment of this exciting serial.**

# Salary for Five Years

By J. R. Ward
*Author of "Benny Apologizes," etc.*

WIZARDS are becoming rare, and their day is rapidly passing. In these modern times, however, an aptitude or natural endowment for some special pursuit may entitle a man to be called a "wizard"—at his particular calling.

Attorney Dudley W. Turpin was a wizard in every sense of the word. He was an expert manipulator, a born diplomat, a psychologist, and a criminal lawyer of no mean ability. Turpin's "bag of tricks," which it is generally understood all lawyers must have, contained a seemingly inexhaustible supply of schemes, tricks, and subterfuges designed not only to protect the innocent from the clutches of the law, but to shield the guilty as well. He was a master at suppressing evidence. He knew just how to procure the absence of a material witness in a case about the time it was to be called for trial. Many of the defendants whom he represented had disappeared suddenly without explanation when it was obvious that the evidence against them was so convincing that a prison sentence was almost inevitable. He knew the value of evidence, did Turpin, and his idea of a successful lawyer was one who "got his man off" whether he was guilty or not. Therefore, Turpin regarded himself as a success in his chosen profession.

Some persons probably will say that Turpin was unscrupulous. Be that as it may, he was a man of attainments along the criminal line of the legal profession. Although not having a very select class of clients, he nevertheless had many of them and managed to derive a very satisfactory income for himself.

Turpin had a distinctive way of doing business. When a client called to see him, or when he was summoned to the jail in his legal capacity to interview some unfortunate who had not arranged for bond, his *modus operandi* was always practically the same. After listening impatiently for a few moments to his client's version of the affair he would adopt a brusque manner and impressively clear his throat.

"Gimme fifty dollars, and I'll get you off," he would invariably say, reducing or increasing his price to conform with his opinion of the client's capacity to pay.

This confident way of making promises—and they were by no means extravagant ones—had its effect upon the clientele, and, inasmuch as Turpin seemed to have uncanny luck both in and out of the courtroom, his fame spread and his bank account grew accordingly.

Business was always very good with Lawyer Turpin. Each day saw new problems presented to him to solve. Each day gave him new opportunity to

ruminate on the gullibility of the human race.

It was probably this of which he was thinking as he sat in his private office on a sultry summer day. As he idly fingered a paper weight his thin, wizened face was twisted into an expression of deep thought. About his watery, blue eyes lurked a pronounced hint of shrewdness and artfulness. About the thin, tightly drawn lips was an expression of craftiness which was partly concealed by an artificial smile which pervaded his sharp features and which was plainly part of his general expression.

A loud whistle and the sound of heavily shod feet making their way through the hall toward his office attracted Turpin's attention. Hastily he grabbed a pencil and began scribbling upon some of the papers which littered his desk. The steps advanced until they stopped just outside Turpin's door. He cleared his throat preparatory to calling a businesslike permission to enter in answer to the knock which he was confident would come. But he was disappointed. The door was suddenly and unceremoniously opened and a large-sized man, a cigar gripped between his teeth and slanting toward the ceiling, entered and slammed the door behind him.

The stranger's gaze rested upon Turpin for a moment; then he turned, opened the door again, and gravely examined the legend on the glass.

"Are you Attorney Turpin?" he demanded abruptly.

The lawyer carefully scrutinized the countenance and appearance of his visitor. The man's attitude was bold and swaggering. He was well, but flashily, dressed. The expression about his eyes plainly told the lawyer that his visitor was disappointed about something.

"I asked you if you were Attorney Turpin," repeated the big man in a loud voice. A frown of annoyance crossed his features for a moment.

Turpin always considered twice before speaking; three times before answering a question.

"Er—my name is Turpin," he stated noncommittally.

The visitor looked disappointed. "I've heard a lot about you," he said abruptly. "You don't look the part."

Turpin was a person who, it might be said, possessed a well-balanced mind. He very seldom was angered; it was next to impossible to insult him. Now, however, his body stiffened perceptibly. He prided himself on his appearance; he was positive that he was always distinguished looking. Unwittingly the stranger had touched his tenderest spot.

Impressively Turpin cleared his throat. He drew himself up to his full height of five feet three inches.

"I'm very busy," he said, regarding his visitor with a flinty eye. "Your card—ahem——"

"Card!" ejaculated the big man insolently as he crossed the room and seated himself comfortably. Taking his cigar from his mouth, he pointed it accusingly at the lawyer. "Say! Look here! I got three thousand dollars to hand you if you do a little job for me which is right in your line. Now—do I need a card?"

Turpin saw the point readily, but even the mention of the money was insufficient to cause him to forget his professional dignity. He smiled amiably and cleared his throat again.

"Ahem—you wished to consult me —professionally?"

"Right the first time," acknowledged the other as he blew a large cloud of tobacco smoke over his head. "I won't waste your time. First, I want to ask a question." Pausing for a moment the big man eyed Turpin with a shrewd, calculating glance. "How long would a man be sentenced to the peni-

tentiary for stealing—say—thirty-three thousand dollars?"

Turpin adjusted his spectacles on his nose carefully. "Well," he finally answered, "in this State the theft of that much money constitutes grand larceny, and the penalty, presupposing conviction, would be anywhere from one to fifteen years."

"Humph!" grunted the other as though dissatisfied with the answer. "Fifteen years, eh? That's kinda steep, ain't it?"

Turpin was an excellent judge of human nature. He was sure that his visitor was either a client or had a client somewhere. Turpin sensed a client much on the same order that a hound senses game. He resolved to draw the other out. Shrugging his shoulders, he grimaced in a meaning way.

"Well, yes, it is rather steep. Ahem—but there are ways of—er—doing things."

The big man slapped his knee with a heavy hand. "Exactly!" said he breezily. "Now you're talking, Turpin. Let me ask one more question. If you had a client who had stolen thirty-three thousand dollars, and the money was never recovered, and this client of yours refused to tell where that money was, do you think you could get him off with a sentence of five years in the pen, or less?"

"You mean——"

"Just what I said. Could you fix it so that your client would be sentenced to five years or less, if you got three thousand dollars for doing it?"

Turpin reflected deeply for a moment. He knew his own capabilities, and his self-confidence was a thing of large proportions.

"I think—ahem—it is very probable that I could," he replied guardedly.

"I don't care what you think!" said the other belligerently. "I wanta know what you can do. Can you do it?"

Turpin hesitated but a moment. Then he nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Good!" the big man said with a grunt. "Better than a gambler's chance. I've heard that you know your business." For a moment he remained silent, apparently ruminating. Then he arose from his chair and slapped Turpin on the back.

"All right," said he; "you're hired. Gimme a match."

The match forthcoming, the visitor lit his weed and sat down again.

"Here's the case," he began in a businesslike way. "My name is Charlie Bobbs. No doubt you've heard about me if you follow the ponies at all. I'm head cashier at the Onkomo race track. I handle lots of money every day, which is put into the mutual machines by the bettors. Now——" Bobbs leaned over and again pointed his cigar at the lawyer. "The Onkomo Horse Breeders' Association is rich, while I hardly ever have an extra dollar. If I had thirty thousand dollars I know just how to make myself a half million in a few years. My point is this: To get that thirty thousand I would be willing to give five years of my life."

The speaker paused significantly. Lawyer Turpin squirmed in his chair. This was more than he had expected. He felt that he must say something, no matter what. Bobb's intention was plainly evident.

"Er—uh—you have a way to get this money?"

Bobbs banged his fist on the arm of his chair.

"Easiest thing in the world," he replied earnestly. "To-morrow I'm going to steal thirty-three thousand dollars. Three thousand dollars of that belongs to you if I get five years or less. I could steal more than that, but I won't need more than thirty thousand. The more I get the harder it will be for me, and the harder your job will be. I

will take the money, and some few hours after that I will be arrested; I don't doubt that for a moment. As a matter of fact, I would rather be caught, because after I serve my time nobody can bother me, while if I make a clean get-away I will be a hunted man as long as I live. I intend to let myself get caught, and then I will have the whole thing over with. But when I do get caught they won't be able to find the money, and I won't tell them where it is. You get three thousand dollars after the case is tried if I get five years or less. If I am sentenced to more than five years you won't get a red cent."

Turpin suppressed a gasp. Was the man insane? No. One glance at the thoughtful expression on the face before him put such an idea to rout.

"Ahem—do I understand that you haven't sto—er, uh—taken this money as yet?"

"I told you I was going to take it tomorrow," replied the other impatiently. "This is a business proposition with me. I want to be sure you can do the job before I take the money. If you can't do what I ask just say so, and the deal is off. I wouldn't fool with it if there was a chance that I would get more than five years."

"Oh! I anticipate no trouble along that line," Turpin hastily assured him. "But I really can't understand why it is——"

"I know you can't. The explanation is simple, however. I have never been able to make over two thousand dollars in any one year of my life. If I steal thirty thousand dollars and serve five years for it, I will be making six thousand dollars per year, which is three times more than I have ever been able to make. Besides, the jail will board and lodge me and furnish me clothes, and I will save money that way. I may get time off for good behavior, too. I am young and strong. Unless something unusual happens, I don't doubt but that I will live through those five years in jail. Many people live through fifteen and twenty years of it. In other words, I am willing to give five years of my life for thirty thousand dollars. It will be just like salary for five years."

"But suppose, after you are released, you are apprehended as you get this money you have hidden. They will take it away from you, according to law, and——"

Bobbs waved his hand as though this were a trivial matter. "Don't worry about that. The minute I get ahold of it and get it into my pocket without anybody seeing me, it's mine. Money can't be identified, and they can't prove that it's the money I stole."

"But you do not reckon on the disgrace and publicity attached to——"

"Yes, I do, too," interrupted the other. "And I don't care a hang. I haven't any relations; there's nobody to care what becomes of me. Besides, the day is gone when a man is disgraced because he was once a convict. It's just a simple proposition. Instead of working for private people, I will work in the penitentiary for the authorities, and when I come out I will draw my salary for five years and go on about my business."

Turpin shrugged his shoulders unconcernedly. "Of course, all I am interested in is my fee," he said in oily tones. "If you think that you can safely hide the money for five years and get it after you are released, and not be bothered by the police, that's up to you."

"Exactly!" agreed Bobbs. "All you got to do is knock the sentence down to five years or less. After that you get paid, and your work is done."

The big man coolly extracted a hundred-dollar bill from his wallet and passed it to the lawyer. "This is a retainer," he explained. "This afternoon

I will steal three thousand. They won't know it's gone until they balance up, and I'd be the last person in the world they'd think took it. I'll deposit that money in the bank to-morrow morning under an assumed name. When your job is done I will get you to bring me, to the jail, a blank check on the bank. I'll write you out the check for the money, and you can get it cashed. To-morrow I'll steal the thirty thousand, and then the fun commences."

For a moment the heavy brows of the big man knit themselves in thought.

"I've been thinking it over," he said frankly, "and it looks like a hard job to hide that much money for five years without anybody catching on. If I put it in a safe-deposit vault I'll have a hard time getting myself identified after five years, and I'd arouse suspicion, too. If I bury it in a vacant lot somebody's liable to build a house over it. I can't take it in jail with me. I don't know anybody I'd trust with it for that long. About the only thing left for me to do is to bury it 'way out in the country some place."

The gaze Turpin turned upon the big man was disinterested. "Of course, you must get rid of it. If you are arrested and they find the money on you, I can't guarantee anything."

It was perhaps a half hour later when Bobbs, with much legal advice in his mind as to how he should conduct himself when arrested and what he should and should not say, took his departure. It was as impressive as his entrance. Turpin's office door was again slammed, and his client's heavy footsteps could be distinctly heard as he made his way to the elevator in the hall.

## II.

The treasurer of the Onkomo Horse Breeder's Association found that the accounts were three thousand dollars short that afternoon. Furthermore, a careful investigation had availed nothing. The association employed many men to act as cashiers. Out of such a large number it was practically impossible to detect the thief.

The next day Charlie Bobbs, the head cashier, became suddenly very ill after the fourth race had been run. After asking and obtaining permission to go to his home Bobbs made his way through the crowds of pleasure seekers, and in a short while he was walking along the railroad tracks leading to the park.

The Onkomo race track was situated in the suburbs. For miles about it were open country, thick woods, and deep valleys.

As Bobbs slowly made his way along the tracks his mind was working rapidly. What safer place could he find for his money than this? It was a sure bet that building operations would not extend out to this part of the country. It was improbable that some one would build a house on the spot where he intended to bury his money. His——

Bobbs stopped short and without undue haste looked behind him. Nothing but the railroad tracks curving gracefully around a bend in the road and the high, red-clay banks on either side of it, met his glance. Yet he was positive that some one was following him. For a moment he stood, his eyes irresolutely glued to that spot where the roadbed curved into the hills.

Five minutes later he made his way through a mass of shrubbery and bushes situated about fifty feet beyond. In their shelter he waited for a full half hour, his nerves strained, his heart beating rapidly, his eyes carefully scanning the country about him. Nothing came to him but the gentle murmur of the tree boughs as a zephyr passed through them.

Finally he left his hiding place and made his way through the brush to a

narrow valley beyond. Reasonably sure now that his imagination was playing him tricks, he made little effort to conceal himself or proceed with caution. At last he stopped. Carefully he looked about him, taking note of the exact location of the trees and the immense rocks which protruded from the ground. Then he produced a large jackknife from his pocket. Painstakingly he cut a square sod of moss from the ground. This he laid to one side and began digging. From beneath his coat he took a small, steel box. Into this he put a bundle which he took from his pocket. Carefully lowering it into the hole he had dug in the earth, he covered it, pressing each handful of dirt down with his foot. Then he replaced the sod of moss and carefully removed all evidence that the ground had been disturbed.

III.

The next three days were nerve-racking ones for Charlie Bobbs. Anticipating that he would be taken into custody any minute, he was impatient for the ordeal to be over. Resolved to be calm, he had made no effort to conceal himself. On the contrary, he had deliberately visited his old haunts and had spent hours at a time standing on the front doorsteps of the lodging house where he lived. However, nothing occurred. Numerous policemen had passed him by without a second glance. To his further mystification a careful search of all the newspapers failed to bring forth an account of the robbery.

On the fourth day Bobbs made up his mind to hasten his arrest. He deliberately set out for the race track. Once there, he made his way to the treasurer's office. He found that worthy sitting at his desk calmly smoking a cigar.

To Bobbs' surprise the treasurer greeted him warmly. Inquiries were made as to his health and as to when he expected to return to duty. Bobbs stammered some unintelligible reply and left the office.

Later he met several of his old friends. Without exception their greeting was cordial. There was no doubt about the sincerity in their voices as they inquired if he had entirely recovered from his indisposition.

For fully an hour Bobbs loafed about the course. He took no interest in the sport. His mind was chaotic; he was completely mystified.

And then an idea occurred to him. Slowly, in order not to arouse suspicion, he left the course and made his way to the railroad track. With an occasional glance about, to assure himself that he was not being followed, he made his way along the roadbed until he came to the clump of shubbery. In a few moments he had scrambled through the bushes and was carefully picking his way to the spot where his precious booty was hidden.

A moment later a cry of horror came from his throat. His eyes bulged with astonishment as he stared stupidly at the ground before him. At the spot where he had been digging several days before the ground was turned up. A hasty inspection told him that the box containing the money had been removed.

Hysterically swearing, Bobbs ran down the railroad track toward the course. Impotently he shook his heavy fist in the air; his hard and irregular features were contorted in rage and indignation.

He caught a train into town; each minute seemed to be so many hours until he reached the city terminal. Catching a surface car, Bobbs made his way hurriedly to the building where Lawyer Turpin had his office. In a few moments he was standing before

the door bearing the attorney's name. With a heavy fist he pounded and endeavored to turn the knob. His efforts were interrupted by the elevator boy.

"Mist' Turpin ain't been hyah for three or fo' days, boss," he said.

Descending to the lobby of the building, Bobbs called Turpin's home on the telephone. He failed to get a reply.

Really alarmed by now, he hurried to the bank where he had deposited the three thousand dollars he had stolen the first day. He experienced no difficulty in drawing out the amount. With this safely placed in his pocket he made his way to the railroad station. A train was within a minute of pulling out. When it left the station Bobbs was comfortably seated in the smoker, nervously puffing on a cigar.

Leaning his head in his hand Bobbs endeavored to think. He was sure that he was not suspected of committing the theft. The attitude of his employer had told him that. Then what was the answer to the problem? Surely the theft had been discovered. Furthermore, some one must have followed him and taken the money. It was——

A newsboy, shouting his wares as he walked through the moving train, interrupted his thoughts. Bobbs purchased the evening paper and carelessly glanced over the headlines. Then he gasped. The cigar fell from his lips. His eyes bulged in excitement as he read:

**ATTORNEY ACCUSED OF GRAND LARCENY.**

**Dudley W. Turpin Arrested.**

Dudley W. Turpin, prominently known about the city as a criminal lawyer, has been under arrest at police headquarters since last Friday, charged with the larceny of $30,000 from the Onkomo Horse Breeders' Association, it was learned to-day.

A theft of $3,000 having occurred last Thursday, Detective Porter, who was assigned to the case, advised the use of marked money, as far as possible, the following day.

Thirty thousand dollars disappeared on Friday, the next day, and while Mr. Porter did not know that a theft had occurred, he noticed Mr. Turpin acting in a suspicious manner while the races were in progress. He followed the lawyer for over a mile into the open country, and, according to his statement, discovered the defendant in the act of burying a steel box containing $30,000. As some of the hills were marked, the money was easily identified as that which had been stolen from the Onkomo race track about an hour before.

It is stated by the police that Mr. Turpin has made many conflicting statements, and so far has been unwilling to tell how the money came in his possession

## BURGLAR TRAP KILLS BOY

FEARING that burglars would attempt to rob the office of the lumber company of which he is president, F. L. Parker, of Oakland, California, set a gun trap in one of the rooms and brought down a ten-year-old boy with it. How or why the boy entered the office is not known, but the trap worked with such effectiveness that the boy was killed.

Mr. Parker, returning to the building one night after the trap had been set, discovered the body. He became so distraught at what had happened that he wrapped the boy's body in an overcoat and carried it two miles to the Oakland estuary, where he threw it into the water. By the following morning he had recovered his mental poise, went to the police, and told them his story.

# Headquarters Chat

AND when morning came, the wild cat—what's that you said? We are ending up our story before beginning it, and without putting in any middle part; and besides, this is no nature-faking magazine?

Quite right. We beg your pardon, but we are in a state of great excitement, suffering much mental perturbation, for if that wild cat had not—— But there we go again.

Well, we, all of us, very, very nearly lost our Louise. And she only just went out of this room a moment or two ago, leaving us all excited and worried over what might have been, when in came the ogre from the composing room. That person is the most persistent being Heaven ever created. I suppose we couldn't get the magazine out without him. But, honestly, he has more rules about the time copy should be upstairs, and he sniffs and snuffs about our being "temperamental." "Spell it l-a-z-y," he says, gibing us.

But let's not give him any more space. Why discuss unpleasant subjects? He says he *must* have a Chat *now*, or—et cetera. However, we will get hunk some day, by having him put right into a story, and the things Amos Clackworthy, The Early Bird, Thubway Tham, and fourteen others will do to that smartie will be—— But to take up the thread of the story again:

Louise Rice has just arrived in town from a trip to Canada. We do wish Louise would stay home. But she insists she can't get through her work unless she is out in some wild, remote section of the earth. I guess, though, she has had wildness and remoteness to last her a while. But you never can tell. Some people simply will not stop doing what they want to do, regardless of consequences.

Well, Louise was looking for a quiet place in Canada, and bought a ticket to a station in that neighboring land. We can't attempt to pronounce the name of the place, much less spell it, and it's not on the map, anyway. When she got off the train she found a small boarded-up station, set in the middle of the woods, and just twenty-two miles from the nearest habitation.

The rig that was to meet her never came, but darkness—and a *wild cat* did! Yes, sirs and ladies, a wild cat!

Louise made most desperate efforts to break into the station, but before she could do so the wild cat bounded on the roof of the building, perched himself over the door, and began to pur, with eyes front.

Now, it has never been our privilege to hear Louise warble, but she says she starts the birds asingin' and sets the bells aringin' when her top note she tries to bring.

So she went after that high note for all there was in her, and kept walking up and down the platform. We forgot to ask her if she ever reached the peak of her vocal attainment; but, however that may be, she kept that wild cat at bay—whether by charming him or by scaring him into a state of inactivity, she does not know—till sun-up, when *he* took to the woods, and a train took Louise back to civilization and safety!

Do you wonder we are a bit—er-r—disturbed? Do you wonder we ask to be excused from further effort? "NO!" We hear the answer from all sides. But just a minute; the galaxy of popular literary stars that spangle the pages of our next issue would spur on to one last glorious spurt the most jaded

spirit. Hark to some of these names, and then dash to the nearest news stand, to command that a copy of the August 17th number be held for you. Here are some: Johnston McCulley, Herman Landon, Victor Lauriston, Bryan Irvine, and Charles W. Tyler.


**If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send Louise Rice, in care of this magazine, specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned, and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. She will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.**

**Every communication will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in the department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.**

**Miss Rice has on hand a thousand or more specimens of handwriting from readers who wished their handwriting analyzed in the magazine. On account of restricted space, it will be a long time before these letters appear. We therefore suggest that these readers send Miss Rice a stamped, addressed envelope, and she will give them an analysis of their handwriting in a personal letter.**

PRESTON C. FIRL.—If you continue to use that downward inclination of your writing, my son, you will continue to be the discouraged and unhappy young man that you now are. Not that your character will be changed because you change your writing, but because your writing will change as soon as your character does. You are too much engrossed with the difficulties, troubles, and impulses of P. C. F. Try being interested in other people, and put on a daily grin, even if you are unaccustomed to it. You'll soon find that it is a fixed and pleasant habit, which will bring friends and success to you.

G. M.—I don't need to be a graphologist, George, to tell you your faults. You ask me whether you would be a good "actor, lawyer, or salesman," you ask me not to use your name in the magazine, and yet you give me no address, and no substitute for your name. See? All that inaccuracy and vagueness corresponds to your cramped and unassertive writing, in which the basic line wavers so much. What you need is to stop wondering what you are going to be and turn your attention to making a success of your job in the mercerizing plant. Until you learn that a man gets a better job only because he has made

good on a small one, you'll keep right on being the inefficient, restless person that you now are. The specimen which you inclose shows a person who is more serene of soul than you; more patient, and probably more efficient.

O. W.—Your signature is so interesting that I wish you had given me permission to use it. It shows so much more assertiveness than the body of your writing; and that always means that you have deliberately trained yourself to assume a positive and self-confident manner, and it usually means that you have had a great deal of financial responsibility. You are, aside from this rather assumed and yet not artificial personality, good-natured, warm-hearted, and very normal in all your emotions. I estimate you as possessing unusual talent for the work of organizing and combining, in business matters.

C. R. P.—I can't imagine you being "satisfied" as the employee of a railroad. Your writing, while revealing a proportionate lack of training, shows a mind which is potentially of the artistic and literary type; one which is marked by strong leanings toward the instinctive development of critical faculties. What you need is direct and specific training to this end. Look into the matter of journalism. That would start you on the right road.

E. Chambers.—I disagree with your friend, who wants you to go into the detective business. You haven't any of the talents necessary for that most arduous profession. What you do possess is real clear-sightedness so far as business is concerned. I wonder if you would not be successful as a promoter of real estate, or in some branch of the publicity game? Look into these. Your handwritting shows me that your greatest weakness is your tendency to get into a rut and to continue doing what you have once started. Persistence is a good thing, but it can be carried too far. I'll give you a good rule about that: Don't persist in things unless you like 'em.

Beatrice R. S.—You say that you disagree with your girl friends. Well, my dear, *I'm* going to say something disagreeable. You are something of a prig and have entirely too much conceit. I know that you won't agree with me, but I believe that in time you may get my angle of thought. What I mean is that you are just absorbed in yourself, that you are no doubt self-conscious, and that all this reflects in your personality and causes people to feel vaguely uneasy with you. Why shouldn't you go to dances, too? It's a pretty pastime, and would bring you into closer contact with other young people. If your soldier cousin likes to dance, why not go with him and share the fun, just as you used to share the outdoor sports? It's really very difficult to give you advice in this brief space, because what you need is to have a whole philosophy expounded to you. If you want me to explain, write and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope.

Mrs. J. R. Kitchel.—Any reader of this magazine is entitled to a reading from me, whether a subscriber or not. Your handwriting, so simple and unpretentious, shows me a nature which is childlike in its faith and good will, and clear-sighted as to moral issues, in the unsophisticated way of a child. What you lack are what we may call the maturer virtues. You haven't much power of concentration, and as for ambitions, they're rather dim, aren't they? I believe that you are naturally a home maker, but I am sure that you would be greatly benefited by encouraging your mind to expand.

J. R. Kitchel, Jr.—One thing is in your favor, in that desire of yours to "amount to something." You have a buoyant and hopeful disposition, which is shown by the upward swing of your writing. You have vitality, too, as is indicated by your strong, even pressure. That same pressure shows that you

are inclined to be rather too fond of pleasure and ease, however, so look out for that. You are best fitted for work which involves some degree of physical activity, with mental resourcefulness. You would be a good traveling salesman, for instance. As you grow older, try to enjoy more and more the beauties of mind and spirit; otherwise you may fall into a way of living which will end in moral weakness and personal unhappiness.

ESTHER R.—You want to know your faults; well, you are stubborn and aggressive and far too critical. Those are your outstanding defects. To counterbalance that, you have honesty of purpose, great sincerity, and unusual freedom from deceitfulness. The specimen numbered two shows a person of unusual vitality and ardor, courage, impatience, and intensity of feeling. If a better education were secured I would feel safe in predicting a very successful future for this writer, on the basis of probabilities. The specimen numbered three is the type of writing which really exasperates me. This writer is so exacting and so self-satisfied, and so without any human faults! I suspect that he or she is one of those annoying persons who are always right. Such a person as this is never a source of happiness to friend, acquaintance, or family.

LE ROY, A. G.—Some motion-picture actors are successful who haven't a particle of dramatic talent; so you might be a success as one, but it is most assuredly not your line of work. You are not only a good mechanic but a gifted one, and there is no reason why you should not be exceptionally successful. Why don't you want to be a "mechanic all your life?" Edison called himself a mechanic, the other day, in an interview. If you know motion-picture operating, why not look into the enormous field of camera manufacture, which offers a fine field for the mechanic with natural talent. Don't dream and wish; act and strive.

JOHN W. C.—Well, my dear boy, I think a lad who is married at eighteen has started off with a tremendous handicap. Not because of the financial end of the business, so much, as because most very young folks don't know how to help and encourage each other. However, yours may be the exceptional case. I hope so; but eighteen is pretty young for a family man, isn't it? Why did you give up the automobile business? You, like the case discussed above, have real mechanical talent. If I were you I would return to that work, and I would go to some school at night, whereby I might perfect myself in the business. You really have intelligence, although it has not been trained.

EUGENE LOPEZ.—Boys who graduate at the age of thirteen are usually pretty smart, Eugene, and while your writing would not inspire a teacher of penmanship with admiration, it pleases the graphologist, who sees in it an eager and active mind, pleasant freedom from the conceit and self-consciousness which are the twin curses of youth, and a nature which is loving and warm-hearted. That's a fine basis for future development. I strongly advise you to turn to the professional fields. Since you are drawn to chemistry, try that; but I suspect that you will end in some line of work with a semiliterary or scholarly angle.

N. DARMOS.—It is a pity that you haven't a stronger will. That very short and ineffectual "t" bar of yours reveals a serious weakness in your character. It is all the more serious because you have such a lot of energy and such a hearty interest in life and its possibilities. Unless you are mighty careful you will wake up some day and discover that all of your life has slipped by, with nothing accomplished. Turn your attention to booming and selling real estate and to aggressively constructive enterprises.

JACK CANUCK.—I don't care what your doctor says, Jack; I don't take any stock in that organic heart disease diagnosis. Heart disease is one of the few bodily disturbances which register quickly and unmistakably in the handwriting. I do not find that characteristic mark anywhere in your writing. What you probably have is a serious functional condition, coupled with a nervous temperament and a disposition to be easily immersed in your own bodily sensations. I suppose I am due for some sarcastic remarks from the learned gentleman who pronounced your doom, but I don't believe you need to give up your medical career, at all. And why music? If there is one form of work on earth which is stimulating to the heart it is the playing of an instrument. And I don't see any exceptional musical talent in your writing. Mind you, I say "exceptional." For an amateur you possess a great deal, but that is not enough for a professional career. Try deep breathing and very gentle "applied" exercises. I think you understand the sort I mean.

O. A. R.—These specimens you inclose cannot be used successfully to decide such important questions as you ask. However, I can tell you that he is very ambitious and very proud and very fond of money, and that I don't believe that affection and home ties mean as much to him as you would want them to. Since that is the case, why not try to be a little more the wife and not wholly the mother? So many passionately devoted mothers make this mistake and end by finding themselves alienated from their husbands, in feeling if not in fact. Write me more confidentially about the situation, inclosing a stamped, addressed envelope for the reply.

BILLIE.—You have a lot of cleverness, and ought to be skillful in many things. You are inclined to be suspicious and untactful, however, and those qualities greatly militate against your success and peace of mind. Put them out of commission, and you'll find that everything will look different to you. The specimens you inclose have no sign or name by which I may identify them to you. Send me others, numbered, with a stamped and addressed envelope.

ANXIOUS.—The name you have chosen is really characteristic of you. Your handwriting, so uneven of pressure, so irregularly spaced, so uncertain of what it really does want to do, is the expression of an anxious, nervous, and self-distrustful nature which is greatly in need of more self-control and more definiteness. As a step upward, try to get some exacting but interesting job, and just buckle down to it and try to forget whether you have a fine character or not. Just bend your energies to getting the most out of each hour and out of yourself. In time you'll wake up and discover that you have straightened out all the kinks.

CURLEY.—I like your openness and frankness and your pleasant disposition. I approve of your normal and sane attitude toward the world. I do not approve of your tendency just to slip along from day to day, doing whatever you really have to, and never definitely planning for real accomplishment. You are a good friend and a person who is naturally very affectionate.

M. N. BUNKER.—Your letterhead says, "editor, journalist, physical culturist." The latter I would not have suspected but for that sweeping, virile line which ends your signature, and which, in your smooth, reflective writing, is like the bulge of a muscle dimly perceived beneath a correct dinner coat. That you would be drawn toward literature is indicated by your letter formations, but as an editor you are wholly in your right place. A curious thing is that of all the editors in these United States at least half use almost precisely your

type of writing, so that, of course, is the special line which I would recommend your following.

a specimen of my daily
— rapidly written at
— 9:10 pm. Dec. 9, 1919.
M. N. Bunker

a specimen of my hand writing
at my desk 10:20 Dec. 9 1919.
J. Lynn Bowen

J. Lynn Bowen.—I haven't time to give the matter the careful study which would decide the point, but, just on the surface, it looks to me as though M. N. Bunker and J. Lynn Bowen were one and the same person, with the possibilities strong in favor of Bunker's being the real "hand" and Bowen's the secondary, as one might say. If this is not true, then Bowen has been tremendously influenced, both as to mind and character, by Bunker.

# EXPERT LEGAL ADVICE

## Conducted by LUCILE PUGH

**In writing the Expert Legal Advice Department please be careful to give full details of your case, stating whether or not it has been before the courts previously, or whether or not it has been submitted to a lawyer of your locality. If you desire Miss Pugh to find a lawyer for you give your address with care: personal address, city, and State. Unless accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope your communication will be answered in this column.**

## ANSWERS TO READERS' QUERIES

Marden Whitehouse.—If you bought the land and secured the deed and it was recorded, the person from whom you made the purchase acted in bad faith. No railroad company would declare itself the possessor of a piece

of land and demand a lease unless the facts were as they stated. Railroad lawyers are very accurate in their findings. They are obliged to be. The man from whom you bought the property is the one to whom you should look for redress. Sue, not only for the original cost of the land, but for its increased value—which you will lose—and for such annoyance, trouble, and personal inconvenience as you will be put to by this change in your plans. The house and all buildings which you have put on the property should be included in the demand for compensation.

HAVERHILL.—It is really necessary to have a lawyer for papers of incorporation. The laws concerning incorporation need careful interpretation.

R. T. McC.—You can reopen the case. Get another lawyer, tell him that your former lawyer was bought by the other side, and secure new affidavits from the hospital and from your physician now attending you in consequence of your injuries.

INQUIRER.—The writing of anonymous letters is most certainly a crime.

WILLIAM L.—If the girl is under fifteen you are taking a very wrong moral stand in trying to coax her into a marriage; so far as the legal end of the matter is concerned, if you take her across the State line, as you suggest, you will lay yourself open to a very serious charge. That a man of twenty-five should contemplate doing anything so wrong is very surprising to me. No girl of less than eighteen is of legal age to marry without the consent of her parents. My advice to you, given from both legal and moral grounds, is to drop the whole matter until the girl is of a proper age.

FARNHAM.—There is no question that owners are responsible for the acts of the animals belonging to them. You should file suit for damages.

# The How, When, and Where of Success

## Conducted by RUTHERFORD SCOTT

**If it is impossible for you to wait for Mr. Scott to touch upon the work in which you are especially interested, in one of his articles, send a stamped, addressed envelope, and a careful, accurate, and brief statement of what your education is, what your experience has been, and where you wish to begin your career; also, the amount of time and money which you can give to your apprenticeship. He will write you a personal letter, and tell you what you wish to know.**

## Fox Farming

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, in Canada, was the pioneer in this industry, and is still the place from which all the world buys its best breeders. Last year over one thousand five hundred pups were exported from the island, about one-third going to various points in Canada, and the rest distributed over the world, with a strong percentage to Michigan, in the United States, and to Japan and Norway.

At the present price of furs, a good silver fox, alive, is worth eight hundred dollars. This is not high, even at the rate of fifteen hundred dollars for a mated pair, since silver pelts receive the price of one thousand dollars each. The pelt of the common red fox ranges from forty to ten dollars, according

to its condition. Some reds are beautifully marked and command the top price. Silvers which are not at all exceptional as to pelt receive the price of two hundred dollars.

The breeding of wild foxes is a business not lightly to be undertaken. It requires capital. To breed just a few pairs of silvers would take five thousand dollars, at least—but with the first litters of pups the initial investment would begin to come back. The real way to make money at the business, however, is to buy, say, two good pairs, and to keep the pups and breed them, for perhaps two years. In that way a good start would be procured.

It is not so difficult to breed the common red fox. Five hundred dollars would start any one in the business.

The animals, whether of the aristocratic silver variety or of the common red, must have strong, well-built runs. Mated pairs must be separated from the younger stock. As in all other stock breeding enterprises, good food and plenty of fresh water are essential. As the silver is a northern breed, Michigan Vermont, Maine, and New York State have so far been most successful in developing the industry.

Wild fox breeding is still in its infancy, and is, I believe, a most promising field for the man or woman with some surplus capital. I confidently expect all of our northern States to be heavy producers of such captive-bred, wild, fur-bearing animals. It is not a business, however, to which I would recommend any one who expects to make a livelihood soon upon the investment of capital. Foxes in captivity are still a bit of an experiment, though, as I have stated, a most promising one.

It is to be noted that the official center of the fur-trading industry is, with this year, to be removed to Montreal. The large fur trading houses in St. Louis—which has been the center of the fur business since it was first founded by the French—and those in New York City will not go out of business, but it is anticipated that the bulk of the buying and selling, at first hand, will occur in Montreal.

An experimental station for the wild fox industry is to be established at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, N. S., Canada, and will be in charge of the well-known pathologist, Doctor Allen. Experiments will be made there as to nutritive foods for foxes, as to diseases, the development of fine pelts, and other points of interest to the industry.

Last year one million dollars was received in this industry for the sale of pelts alone. The value of the live animals exported was about half a million.

All fur traders unhesitatingly state that the price of furs will double in the next twelve months, and that high prices will continue to prevail. The fox business is something which promises well for the future, it would seem.

# UNDER THE LAMP

## CONDUCTED BY HENRY A. KELLER

THIS week's cipher problem is an excellent illustration of the results attained through the workings of the practical side of our department. Not long ago one of our readers was going over some old papers left by his grandfather, and among them he came upon a cryptic message. For some time he tried to work it out, but in vain, and finally he decided to send it in and have us solve it for him. We did, and he was more than pleased with the result.

Here is a reproduction of the cipher as it originally appeared, except that the names and locations have been changed. See what you can do with it, and look for the solution in next Tuesday's issue.

RG IEGM YR MZC TGJTNXJ
REN WNZXNX GK REYU JGRN YU WNCGJQ ZPP QGOWR REN GJPC PYLYJH ENYX GK REN PXRN MR UMYRE GK KZPZMZBGG MYTEYHZJ EYU KYXUR QYPP QZU URGPNJ ZJQ Z KGXHNQ GJN PNKR YJ YRU DPZTN REN KYXUR QYPP TZJ WN KGOJQ OJQNX REN J N TGXJNX GK REN GPQ QNPP ZR EYU NURZRN YJ DZXYU KNJROTKC

Here, our correspondent says, a portion of the original document has been burned away. This is the end of it:

Y REN OJQNXUYJHNQ QG UQNZX REYU RG WN REN RXORE
Y ENXNWC UYJH MCUNPK
REGMZU MYRTENPP

The solution to last week's route transposition cipher is: "Have job for to-night. Need tools. Bulls are shadowing me. Can't go to my room to get my kit, for the Haffney loot is hidden in my mattress there. Bring your outfit to Fifth and Pine at one sharp. Even split. Ten thousand at least. Cinch. Don't fail." There were 48 words, which gave us these possible combinations: 6 and 8, 4 and 12, 3 and 16. The last was the one the author of the cipher used. He made 16 vertical columns of his text, each containing three words; to encipher he copied successive horizontal lines.

## CRUEL CRIME AGAINST BEREAVED PARENTS

ONE of the meanest crooks in the United States recently swindled George H. Coughlin of twelve thousand dollars. Mr. Coughlin's thirteen-months-old baby, Blakley, was kidnaped as he slept in his home, and the meanest crook, who calls himself "The Crank," wrote to the distraught parents and agreed to return the child if he were given a ransom of twelve thousand dollars. Six letters were sent Mr. Coughlin and two telephone conversations were held between the father and The Crank before an agreement was reached in regard to the placing of the money.

With difficulty the required amount was raised and deposited at the spot designated. No one was left to watch the money, the police were not notified of the negotiations, and every effort was made to comply with the man's demands. Yet the crook did not play fair. Some one took the money away, but the baby was not sent back to its parents.

The Crank may not have had the child in his possession or he may be the kidnaper, holding little Blakley for a larger ransom. Whichever is the case, there is no doubt of the swindler's cruelty in playing upon the emotions of frantic parents to extort money in such distressing circumstances.

# MISSING

**This department, conducted in duplicate in DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE and WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.**

**While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.**

**If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that these persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.**

**When you hear from the person you are seeking, tell us, so that we may take your notice out.**

**Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.**

**WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," at eaters, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.**

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**A. W. E.**—Good news, April 20th. Write for explanation. Look in S. F. newspapers missing columns, and "Morning Oregonian" personals. Write Madre.

**MARSHALL, M. C.**—He was last heard of in St. Louis, Missouri, on December 15, 1919. He is twenty-three years old, about five feet nine inches tall, and has black hair and blue eyes. His wife and mother will be deeply grateful for any information about him. Please write to O. M. Marshall, 610 Locust Street, Montgomery, Alabama.

**MADDOX, A. J.**—When he was last heard of he was leaving Birmingham, Alabama, and was supposed to have returned to Texas. His wife died in Waynesboro, Texas, in 1915, and left four children, the youngest three months old. Later her husband married again. Her sister is very anxious to find the children, and will appreciate any information that will help her to do so. Any one who knows of them will do a great kindness by writing to their aunt, Mrs. G. W. Harrington, General Delivery, Wichita Falls, Texas.

**ALLEN, LILLIAN.**—She is twenty-five years old, about five feet five inches in height, and has black hair and eyes. She left Lincoln, Nebraska, about three years ago. Any one having news of her will give great happiness by writing to F. B., care of this magazine.

**MUIR, LAWRENCE H.**—He is about thirty years of age, and was last heard of in Chicago about five years ago. His father is anxious to hear from him, and hopes that some one who sees this may be able to help him find his son. H. M., care of this magazine.

**VARRIER, ARTHUR JOHN**, of Lawrence, Massachusetts, who, in 1916, was in the 132d Battalion band, stationed in Chatham, N. B., and was last heard of in St. John after he returned from overseas. His Chatham friends would be very happy to hear from him. L. E. I., care of this magazine.

**ESTHER.**—Please write to your husband. He is lonesome and wants to hear from you. August Jeffries, 675 Wisconsin Street, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

**SURRATT, MR. and MRS. JOE.**—When last heard from they were in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1918. Any news of them will be gratefully appreciated by Mamie Sanders, Route 3, Box 53, Henryetta, Oklahoma.

**CASSIDY, W. J.**, who was an Alaskan miner, and was interested in property on Willow Creek and Hope. When last heard from he was at Frye Hotel, Seattle, in the spring of 1917. Any information in regard to him will be appreciated. George E. Dismukes, Biloxi, Mississippi.

**COFFEY, ED. M.**, a private in Co. E, 128th Infantry, A. E. F. He was wounded in action on October 12, 1918, and started for the first-aid hospital. This was the last known of him. He was reported dead, and his burial place given, but the date of his death, and the cause, have not yet been ascertained by the war department. If any of his comrades know how he met his death, and will write to his mother, she will greatly appreciate their kindness. He enlisted in Colorado, and went as a replacement man from Camp Kearney, California. His commander was Captain Robert Christie. Mrs. Birtsel Weaver, R. 2, Charleston, Oklahoma.

**GELATT, MONTERVILLE and MORTIMER.**—A near relative is anxious to know where these men are, and will be grateful to any one who can give some information of them, or can tell whether they are dead or alive. C. B. D., care of this magazine.

**BROWN, FLORENCE.**—She has dark hair and eyes, and was last heard of in Grimsby, England. Her cousin wishes to find her, and will appreciate any assistance from readers. W. G. Lindsey, care of this magazine.

**HENRY, CORA BELLE.**—I am the daughter of your sister, Irene May, who died in February, 1898. Your father and mother are dead, and I do not know of any living member of the family except yours. I would be very happy to hear from you and to see you. Please write to your anxious niece, Irene J., care of this magazine.

**HANNON, W. L.**—He is of medium height and has blue eyes. When last heard from he was living in Los Angeles. His relatives are very anxious to find him. His father died in 1918. Any one who knows of him will do a great favor by sending his address to his sister, Mrs. Carl Gamill, 1135 Platt Avenue, Wichita, Kansas.

**MULLEN, GEORGE.**—We have a letter for you from your family. Please send your address to this magazine.

**WALLI, KARL ELIS.**—He was born in 1868, in St. Marie, Finland, and left his home about seventeen years ago. He was living at San Juan, Washington, about fourteen years ago, and has not been heard from since. His son will be deeply grateful to any one who will be kind enough to help him find his father. Harry V. R. Walli, Finland S. S. Co., 5 State Street, New York City.

**RAINS, MRS. DAVE.**—She was last heard of as being near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1914. If any one knows where she is now her nephew will be very grateful if they will kindly write to him. Louie Lamar, 503 West Sixth Street, Austin, Texas.

**VALENZUELA, SANTIAGO.**—He is thirty-one years old, of Spanish-Mexican nationality, and was born at Phoenix, Arizona. On May 5, 1918, he married at San Francisco, California, Miss Mercedes de Lira, of that city. He suddenly disappeared from San Jose a few weeks after his marriage. If he should see this notice he is asked to communicate with friends. Mercedes is dead. F. S. G. sailed for Vladivostok on March 16 last. Any one knowing of this man will do a favor by writing to Harry A. Flory, Jr., Route No. 1, Cambridge, Idaho.

**HILSWICK, HAL W.**—Write to your old pal Rhody, who worked with you at Camp Stanley in April, 1918. He wants to hear from you. Frank Boschetti, 58 1-2 Gesler Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

**MENHENNACK, JOHN LEWIS.**—He is about fifty years of age, and was born in London, Ontario, Canada. He was last heard from about twelve years ago, when he was working in Morgan's mill in Snohomish, Washington. He is of medium height, rather heavy build, with sandy hair and mustache, and blue eyes. Any information about him will be gratefully received by his daughter, Mrs. Nellie M. Casey, 4146 Forty-first Street South, Seattle, Washington.

**GRIBAYEDOFF, ROBERT V.**—He is twenty-four years old, strongly built, fair, with blue eyes. He left his home in 1911 to work on a ranch near Woodland, Yolo County, and a few months later his mother received word from the ranch that he had been discharged. She has never heard from him since, and she fears that he was killed by some accident. She has worried and grieved for him all these years, not knowing whether he is dead or alive, or what can have happened to him. If any one can give any information about him they will do a great kindness by writing to his brother, R. W. Gribayedoff, Hotel St. James, San Jose, California.

**RADABAUGH, ALVA F.**—He was born in Florida, and is about twenty-eight years old, and six feet tall. He was last heard from in February, 1918, at Carthage, Missouri, where he was employed in a powder plant. His sister will gratefully appreciate any news of him. Mrs. F. B. Mullen, Box 621, Jerome, Arizona.

**WILKERSON.** first name not given.—He was a patient at Mount Alto, P. H. S. Hospital, at Washington, D. C., and Markleton, Pennsylvania, from where he has disappeared. If any one knows his present address, they are asked to be good enough to send it at once, as the advertiser has something very important to return to him. An ex-soldier will appreciate this kindness. E. R. Grimm, P. H. S. Hospital, New Haven, Connecticut.

**WEDDE, ROBERT.**—He is about thirty-seven years old, and has curly hair. He is a carpenter, and was last seen in Umena, Minnesota, in 1910. His nephew will appreciate any information that will lead to his getting in touch with him. Alice H. Wedde, Y. M. C. A., Superior, Wisconsin.

**MADDEN, MARIE A.**, formerly of Cincinnati, Ohio, and last heard from in 1915. Charles' sister would like to have her address. Ada M. R., care of this magazine.

**THOMPSON, CLARENCE CHARLES**, who left Red Wing school about eighteen months ago, is asked to write to his mother at once. Laura Thompson, Box 363, Ashland, Wisconsin.

**WINNINGS, RAY.**—He is about twenty-eight years old, five feet in height, has brown hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. When last heard of he was with a base hospital unit at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Any one who knows his present address will do a favor by sending it to H. J. Gibson, 1102 West Dayton Street, Flint, Michigan.

**BUCHANAN, CHARLES ARKWRIGHT.**—He is forty years of age, five feet four inches in height, with light-brown hair and brown eyes. He was last heard from while traveling through Arizona on December 19, 1914. He might be known as Charles Arkwright. Any information about him will be gratefully received by his mother, Mrs. Anna Buchanan, 19 Center Market, Newark, New Jersey.

**SULLIVAN, JAMES J.**—He is about twenty-six years old, and was discharged from the U. S. Marine Corps on December 23, 1919. He was on military duty in the West India Islands from 1917 till 1919. Please address all information to his pal, Fred J. Wenneman, 492 Hickory Street, Buffalo, New York.

**MILLER, GERTRUDE,** who used to live on Fifty-second Street, New York. Her address is wanted by an old friend. F. G. Reiner, care of this magazine.

**ADAMS.**—Information is wanted of the relatives of Maggie Adams, who was born at Reed City, Michigan, January 5, 1873, and was adopted in March of the same year by William and Caroline McLaughlin. According to the adoption papers her father's name was John Adams, and he was dead at that time. Her mother, Mary Jane Adams, was heard of in the summer of 1903 at Howard City, Michigan. She had remarried, and her name then was Bartles or Bartels. Any information that will help to find her relatives will be greatly appreciated. C. M. J., Lock Box 318, Wheaton, Minnesota.

**L. C. C.**—Mother is worried about you, and I am very anxious to hear from you. P. E. C., Walson, Colorado.

**NUGENT, A. L. (GUS).**—Miner, hunter, prospector, desert rat. Last heard of in 1912 at High Grade, Oregon. Is known throughout Nevada, eastern California, and Arizona camps. Is about fifty-two years old. Any one who knows his present address will do a favor by writing to his brother, James E. Nugent, 2305 Greenwich Street, San Francisco, California.

**VAN OVERSTRACTEN, ANNA,** who is reported to have been living somewhere in Ohio. Advertiser, who believes she is related to her, would be glad to have her address, and will greatly appreciate any assistance in the matter. Ruth van Overstracten, 197 Bank Street, New London, Connecticut.

**DREXEL, A. NICHOLAS,** who, when last heard of, was in Camp Bowie, Fort Worth, Lexington. His home was somewhere in West Virginia. Any information regarding his whereabouts will be appreciated by a friend. M. S., care of this magazine.

**WRIGHT, DOROTHY,** formerly of Akron and Marion, Ohio, and last heard of in Brooklyn, New York, in 1918. She is asked to send her address to F. E. Murphy, 1611 Fulton Street, Houston, Texas.

**HEALY, BELLE.**—She left her home in Omaha, Nebraska, on February 25, 1918, and is believed to have gone to Chicago or Minneapolis. She is twenty years old, five feet four inches tall, weighs about one hundred and thirty pounds, and has large brown eyes. Any information regarding her will be thankfully appreciated. R. S. L., care of this magazine.

**NOTICE.**—Jack Dyer wishes all his friends and relatives to know that his permanent address will be 2720 Booker Street, Little Rock, Arkansas.

**ESH, ALFRED.**—Dear brother, mother is not well, and is worrying about you. Won't you please come home, or at least write to her? She is very unhappy. Alfonso Esh, Box 147, Onaway, Michigan.

**WITT, MRS. IRENE,** who, about seven years ago, lived on West Twenty-second place, Cicero, Illinois. A friend would be very glad to have her present address. O. B., care of this magazine.

**MOSS, ALBERT.**—He was last heard from three years ago when he was working for the Noble Company, of Perry Sound. His family is very anxious about him and will be grateful for any information. Mrs. Mildred Moss, 3610 Summit Street, Toledo, Ohio.

**FAIRLANDS, MARION K.,** former president of the Meridale Social Club. When last heard from she was in Montreal, Canada. An old friend will gratefully appreciate any information about her. B. L., care of this magazine.

**L. R. S.**—Will send your things and will come to you. Write me at home, 1018. Your wife, F. B. S.

**REID, JAMES EDWARD.**—He was born on January 2, 1883, and left the home of his parents at South Carthage, Missouri, about nineteen years ago. He was of rather large build, with dark-brown hair and eyes. He had four sisters, Nora, Ella, Alice, and Lillian, and one brother, Ben. His father is now seventy-two years old, and his mother is sixty-five. If he would write to them it would brighten their few remaining years to have news of him, and his sister Lillian begs him, if he sees this, to do this kindness and make his parents happy. Any information about him will be gratefully received. Mrs. Arthur H. Morgan, 507 North Vine Street, Commerce, Oklahoma.

**MAHER, WILLIAM P.**—He was a shipmate with me when the "Ticonderoga" was sunk on September 30, 1918. If he sees this he is asked to write to his old pal Jack Mooney, General Delivery, Kirkville, New York.

**BIBLE WANTED.**—An old Bible, that has not been seen for over fifty years, is sought. It is over a hundred years old and contains the birth records of an old Brewer and Wicoff family. It was last seen in Illinois. If any one can produce this Bible they will do a great favor, as it is the only means of establishing the identity of the persons interested. The man who had it last is supposed to have gone to Missouri about 1850. Please write to E. V., care of this magazine.

**SHERLOCK.**—We are still your friends. Come to us and you will be looked after. I am now in Dolly's city. Write to me or Marie, Box 1064, Hawkshaw.

**WALLACE, ED.**—He is about fifty years old, five feet six inches tall, with red hair, sandy complexion, and blue eyes. He was last heard from in Burdette, Kansas, in June of 1918. It was reported that he was working in a mill in Kansas City, Missouri. His father lives at Marquette, Kansas. He is getting old and would be very happy to hear from his son. If any one knows where he is they will do a great favor by writing to his sister, Mrs. J. E. Robinson, Box 327, Kingfisher, Oklahoma.

**ROSCHI, CHARLES E.**—Very slender and tall, with brown eyes, black curly hair, mixed with gray, and fair complexion. He usually works in the baggage department of a railroad or a steamship company. He wears a signet ring with the initials C. E. R. Any one who knows of his whereabouts will do a kindness by writing to C. E. R., care of this magazine.

**HENDRICK, JESSE.**—He was captain of the old "Northern Light" that used to run from Chippewa to Fort Erie, Ontario, some years ago. He was a Canadian and lived part of the time at Toronto. He was married to Ellen Elizabeth Rowe, of Harrison, Ohio. The "Northern Light" was a sailing vessel, and carried tannery as freight. Any information will be gladly received. Please write to E. H., care of this magazine.

**MOUNT, JOSEPH WALTER.**—He left home in January, 1908. He was last heard from when he wrote to his sister Hattie, in 1918, saying that he was a traveling salesman in Ohio. He is about five feet nine inches tall, forty years of age, and has brown eyes. Any information concerning him will be gratefully appreciated by his daughter Florence, care of this magazine.

**SHAW, CHARLES EMERY,** who, in 1894, lived at Bangor, Maine. He was married and had two children, a boy and a girl. He is now about forty-seven years old. His daughter would like to hear from him, or to get some news of him from some one who knows him. Esther L. Wilson, care of this magazine.

**GARY, JACK.**—He and his brother William were working with the pipe repair gang on the railroad between Flagstaff, Arizona, and El Paso, Texas, in 1911. He was last heard of in 1912 when he said that he was going to Mexico. He is now thirty-four years old, five feet ten inches tall, with gray eyes, and dark hair slightly gray. His mother and brother are very anxious to hear from him and will be grateful for any information about him. Mrs. A. M. Venable, care of this magazine.

**PETTEE, RAY BOUCHER.**—He is asked to send his address to G. A. R., care of this magazine.

**GEORGE, HELEN E.**—She has relatives in Pennsylvania, and when last heard from was living in New Brunswick. She is asked to write to her friend in Johnstown. L. E. H.

**MYERS, LEONARD.**—He is thirty-six years old and does steam-shovel work. He was last heard from in San Francisco, in 1917. Any one who knows where he is will greatly oblige by writing to his brother, Arthur Myers, Painters' Local Union, No. 511, 244 South Spring Street, Los Angeles, California.

**KLEINERMAN, MAX.**—He left his home on January 19, 1919. He is fourteen years of age, about four feet eleven inches in height, weighs about ninety pounds, and has black hair and eyes. A black mole is on his left cheek. His mother is broken-hearted over his disappearance and will be most grateful to any one who will give her some news of her son. Mrs. L. Kleinerman, 719 Princeton Avenue, Trenton, New Jersey.

**ALTHUSIUS, JACK.**—He was born in Holland, and is about forty-eight years old. He generally works in lumber camps. Any information about him will be appreciated by A. Bolia, 1517 Garland Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**ASPENSTROM, HARRY,** generally known as **BINK.** His brother saw him last in Brainerd, Minnesota, in 1909, but he was seen by others in 1913 in the same State. He is about five feet ten inches tall, weighs one hundred and forty-five pounds, has sandy hair and reddish complexion. Any news of him will be appreciated by his brother, Charles Aspenstrom, care of this magazine.

**KATSENMOYER, HENRY GEORGE DEWEY.**—He was last heard of on July 15, 1919, at Camp Mills, New York, and was about to be discharged from a casual company. An old friend would be glad to know where he is and will be greatly obliged to any one who will be kind enough to send his address. O. R. B., care of this magazine.

**SWEITZER, SAM.**—Please write to your son, who would be very glad to hear from you. Samuel E. Sweitzer, 618 I Street, S. W., Washington, D. C.

**VAN FLIET, JAMES** and **VIOLA**, whose children were placed in the Children's Home at Paulding, Ohio. Their son, who was too young to remember anything of them, will be grateful for any information that will help him to find his parents, or any of his brothers and sisters. John van Fliet, 416 Fifth Street, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**ULSES, MRS. EMMASETTE A.**—She was last heard of in Tampa, Florida, in 1904. If any of her relatives or friends know her present address they will greatly oblige by sending it as soon as possible to R. B. W., care of this magazine.

**ROSBOROUGH, ROBERT.**—He left Ottawa about eighteen years ago and went to Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When last heard of he was in Black Duck, Minnesota, in April, 1908. He has not been heard of since he left there. It was rumored that a man of his name was killed in a railroad accident in the United States. He would be now about thirty-five years old, five feet six and a half inches tall, dark complexion, rather small, dark eyes. He is joint heir to an estate, and any information about him, dead or alive, will be thankfully received by his brother, William Rosborough, 133 Waverly Street, Ottawa, Canada.

**EDGELL, ALMA M.**, who was a trained nurse in the Widener Home for Crippled Children in Philadelphia, and left there in 1914. She is asked to send her address to C. H. Doyle, care of this magazine.

**BOSWORTH, EMMA L. CHAPPEL**, a teacher who lived at 3215 Sixth Avenue, Troy, New York, in 1900. After she married Alfred P. Bosworth she went to Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, and left there in 1902. Some of her old friends are very anxious to get news of her, and will be grateful to any one who will be kind enough to send her address. Mrs. Bertha V. Helm, 18 North Albemarle Street, York, Pennsylvania.

**MONTAGUE, TOM**, known to his friends as **DIXI**, and last heard from when he was coming back from France. He is an actor and singer, and before we entered the war lived in San Francisco. He is asked to write to Larry Mertes, 1927 West Fifty-first Street, Chicago, Illinois, care of Cornell Square Theater.

**CURREO, ROSE.**—Her brother, who has not seen her since he was put in an orphans' home, is very anxious to find her. His father died two years ago, without giving him any information about his sister. If any one can help him to find her he will be most grateful for their kind assistance. Charles Curreo, care of this magazine.

**DAVIS, JEROME.**—He is sixteen years old, and left the St. Emma Industrial School in January of this year. Any news of him will be gratefully received by his mother, Mrs. Josephine Davis, 514 Hartridge Street, Savannah, Georgia.

**BALL, J. F.**—He is six feet one inch tall, with brown curly hair, deep-set brown eyes, medium complexion, and even, white teeth. Also **CLARENCE C. PHILLIPS**, thirty-two years old, about five feet six inches tall, is sometimes known as **PHIL**. He works on railroads and was last heard of in Pocatello, Idaho. These two men are asked to write to M. B., care of this magazine.

**RYAN, WILLIAM.**—He came from England about thirty-one years ago, and went to Watertown, Connecticut. He was last heard of in 1903, when he was somewhere in Pennsylvania. His son would like to hear from him, or from any one who can give him any news of his father. Herbert Ryan, care of this magazine.

**MAYERS.**—Information is wanted of Alexander Mayers, who disappeared from Gloster, New Jersey, in 1902. His three sons were put in the Warburg Home, in Yonkers, New York, at that time, and a fourth son was brought up by the Steinman family, of Ridgefield Park, New Jersey. He is now seeking his brothers, Ward, Alex, and Louis, all between twenty-one and twenty-five years of age. William R. Mayers, care of this magazine.

**LEIZ, GUS.**—He left his home some nineteen years ago, and his family has heard nothing of him since. He is the son of Charles and Caroline Kramler Leiz. He was very fond of horses and other animals, and may be engaged in some business that would bring him in contact with them. His sister, who has not seen him since she was a very little child, would be very happy if she could find him, for her parents are always talking about him, and hoping that he will some day return to them. Mrs. Elsie P. Cook, Jamaica Creek, Springfield, Long Island.

**BURT, ERNEST CLAIR.**—He visited his sister in 1908, and after four months left, saying he was going to see his mother in Berkeley, California. Nothing has been seen or heard of him since that time. He is about five feet eight inches tall, with dark hair and gray eyes, and has a scar over his left eye. He was seventeen years old when he left his home. His mother would be thankful to get any news of him and will be grateful to any one who may be able to tell her something of him if they will write to his sister, Mrs. Herbert Dopson, 129 Cherry Street, Woodbury, Long Island.

**GAITHER, IRA HERMAN.**—When last heard from he was in San Antonio, Texas, on August 19, 1913. He married Miss Ione Campbell, of El Paso, on November 10, 1916. Any one knowing him or his wife will do a great favor by sending their present address to his brother, T. L. Gaither, 209 Merrick Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**GOODMAN, FRANCE G.**—He is thirty-two years old, six feet one inch tall, and weighs about one hundred and fifty pounds. He has black hair, gray eyes, and a dark complexion. A small scar is on each cheek, and one on his right wrist. His left forefinger is slightly ridged through being crushed. When last heard from he was in Fort Worth, Texas. If any one who knows where he is they will do a great kindness by writing to Mrs. Sarah Goodman, Route 4, Box 91, Salisbury, North Carolina.

**VARDON, CLEMENT.**—He was last heard from in Buffalo, New York, over ten years ago. He was born in Jersey, England, and is of medium size. His brother George would like to hear from him, and hopes if he sees this, that he will write to him soon. George Vardon, Box 10, East Munising, Michigan.

**HALSTEAD, MRS. WILBUR**, formerly Mrs. William Berry. Her maiden name was Stephens. She is twenty-four years old, with light hair and blue eyes, and has been missing since 1917. When last heard from she was in Charleston, West Virginia. Also her little daughter, **LENA BERRY**. They are wanted to help settle up their grandfather Campbell's estate. If any one knows where they are they will do a great favor by notifying her brother, A. D. Stephens, Phillipston, Pennsylvania.

**QUINN, ROSE**, who was in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1914. It is thought that her home was in New Orleans. I would like to hear from her, or from one who knows her. Please write to Mrs. Lella Ponce, 37 East Church Street, Jacksonville, Florida.

**ODELL, MRS. LOUISA C.**, my mother, whom I have not seen for twenty-four years. She has lived in Ardmore, Oklahoma, in Sherman, Denison, Gainesville, and Dallas, Texas. Any information about her will be most gratefully received by her daughter, Mrs. Leora Burleson, Box 123, Pecos, Texas.

**GILBERT, JAMES WESLEY.**—He was last heard of in Ellsworth, Kansas, on August 28, 1910. He is about five feet eleven inches tall, and has medium brown hair and eyes, with a light spot in left eye. He is twenty-nine years old. His sister will be deeply grateful for any information that will help her to get in touch with him. Mrs. Freda Baker, 338 Inca Street, Denver, Colorado.

**MURRAY, MRS. LAURA**, maiden name Smithies. She was last seen in Detroit, in June, 1918, where she was employed as waitress in a restaurant. If she sees this she is asked to send her address to Richmond, care of this magazine.

**DEHN, JACK C.**, known as **TEXAS JACK**. He is five feet eight inches tall, twenty-five years old, and has light-brown hair and blue eyes. He wears a black leather belt with brass spots, a skull and cross bones, and the figures 101 in the center of back. His family is anxiously seeking him and will be thankful for any information that will lead to their finding him. J. C. D., care of this magazine.

**WILLIS, AMOS B.**—He was last heard of in Lexington, North Carolina, in 1916, and for a while was in Concord. Later he joined the navy in the same city. He is asked to write to his old chum, who has something very important to tell him. Dewey Lambeth Sult, 1821 Kenyon Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

**SCHIMPF, JACOB** or **JOHN JACOB.**—He was locomotive engineer for many years for the A. C. L., and later was engineer at the company's plant at Gainesville, Florida. It was reported that he went on a small farm near Miami. I have valuable information for him. J. B., 116 Hyde Park Place, Tampa, Florida.

**DRANDORF, WILLIAM FRED.**—He came to this country in 1915. He is fifty-five years old, six feet five inches tall, weighs about two hundred pounds, and is a shipbuilder. He came from Newcastle, England. If any one knows his present address they will do a favor by sending it to H. Hoffman, 411 Fourth Avenue, Long Island City, New York.

**SMITH, MRS. MARY**, whose children, Louise, Mary and Thomas, were placed in a home in Chicago, in 1874. Their home before that was in South Bend, Indiana. They were taken into different families, and never heard of their mother again. If any one knows anything of her, or of any relatives of this family, they will do a great kindness by writing to Louise Smith, care of this magazine.

**LONGFELLOW, CHESTER DELBERT.**—His mother and sister will be grateful to any one who will help them to find him. If he sees this he is earnestly requested to write to his anxious mother, Mrs. Lillie Longfellow, 798 South Main Street, Akron, Ohio.

**COHEN, IRVING**, who worked in C. E. for W. U. as a messenger last summer, 580, or "Whitey," would like to hear from you, care of this magazine.

**HAUPT, DORA.**—She disappeared from Brooklyn about twenty years ago, when she was about thirteen years of age. It was heard that she went to Africa with a man named Brandt. Any information about her will be greatly appreciated and thankfully received by her sister, Margaret Haupt, care of this magazine.

**RICHTER, ALEX.**—He was last heard of at Vancouver, Washington. His address is wanted by an old friend, who will appreciate any information, and will be glad to hear from him, or from any one who knows where he is. B. A., care of this magazine.

**BOOTH, CHARLES.**—He is about fifty years old, and when last heard of was living on a farm near Byron, Texas, about fifteen years ago. He has a sister, Martha Elizabeth, Mrs. R. M. Leggett, at Camden, Texas. Any information regarding him will be gladly received by his nephew, M. I. Leggett, care of Allen A. Coderny, Byron, Texas.

**ESTES, LEONA,** nicknamed **JAP ROSE,** is asked to write to her old friend, B. H., Denver, Colorado.

**BLACKMAN, JOHN,** my brother-in-law, and **PASCAL,** my nephew. I last heard from them about four years ago, when they were in Oil City, Texas. I should be very glad to get some news of them, and hope, if they see this, that they will write to me. Jewel Whitton, Box 131, Crossett, Arkansas.

**BROWN, MRS. MAGGIE.**—She was last heard of in Boulder, Colorado, in 1910, and said that she was going to Denver. Her daughter is very anxious to hear from her. S. H., care of this magazine.

**HISER, VIOLET,** who, in 1917, lived at 49 Main Street, Alliance, Ohio. If she sees this she is asked to write to M. J. Shriver, 552 Seventh Avenue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**KING, JULIA,** who left Oakland, California, in November, 1919. She is of Irish descent, thirty-nine years old, five feet five inches tall, and has a boy three years of age named Clifford. Her maiden name was McDonald. She has relatives in San Francisco. Any one knowing her present address please write to H. King, 14 Soscol Street, Napa, California.

**HOPPER, JOSEPH B.**—He is forty years old, six feet one inch tall, and has dark hair and eyes. He was last heard from in 1916, at Marysville, California. His mother will be very thankful for any information that will help her to find her son. Mrs. N. E. Hopper, 1505 Third Street, Selma, California.

**GAULT, JOHN ERNEST,** formerly of Fort Collins, Colorado. Information is wanted as to his present whereabouts. Valuable property interests are involved, and the advertiser says that he will pay one hundred dollars for positive information that will lead to a personal interview with Mr. Gault. H. I. Garbutt, Colorado Building, Fort Collins, Colorado.

**FRISBE, CLARK LAMARTINE.**—He is seventy-two years of age, and was born and brought up in Gonzales County, Texas. He is over six feet tall, with very wide shoulders. He has black hair and gray eyes. He was last seen in Washington, in 1915. His daughter is anxiously seeking him, and will be deeply grateful to any one who will be kind enough to assist her in her quest. Mrs. Laura L. Evans, 231 1-2 East Twenty-seventh Street, Tacoma, Washington.

**LIND, ERIC.**—He sailed from New York for Jacksonville, Florida, in the fall of 1919. His home is in some small town near there. While in New York he did some motion-picture work with John H. Pross, who would appreciate any news about him. Care of this magazine.

**BRANDLEY, PAUL.**—He is Swiss by birth and is thirty-six years old, with brown hair, blue eyes, and a healthy complexion. He is somewhat of a globe trotter, and was last heard of about four years ago in Crescent City, California. His brother Fred, to whom he sent a picture of himself as a cowboy in 1912, is hunting everywhere for him, and will greatly appreciate any information that will help him in his search. Fred Brandley, care of this magazine.

**ENGBLOOM, NELS.**—He came from Sweden about 1902. I would be glad to know what city he went to when he came to this country, and what name he was known by. He is now about seventy-five years old. He may be somewhere in West Virginia. Any information will be very much appreciated. P. D. Maitland, 102 South Euclid Avenue, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

**MORTIMER, HIRAM T.**—Dear uncle, I have tried very hard to find you since you left. You did not give me an address in your letter. Please write to me again. If any one knows the whereabouts of my uncle and will write to me I shall greatly appreciate their kindness. Beatrice Cooney, Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

**GOULD, WILLIAM.**—He is about five feet ten inches tall, and has dark wavy hair and blue eyes. When last heard of he was in East Liverpool, Ohio, working at the Walkus Sewer Pipe Works. He is about forty-five years old. His daughter will be grateful for any information that will help her to find her father. Mrs. Ethel Wescott, Box 161, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

**DEAR DADDY.**—Please come home to us. Mother died on April 21, 1920, grieving for you. Only Helen and Bob are left to take care of us, and if you don't come home soon the worry will kill us all. The twins want you. Dorothea L. Hempson, Beloit, Kansas.

**PRICE, JEAN.**—She was last seen in Norfolk, Virginia. Please write or come, if possible. T. E.

**ELDRIDGE, EDMOND E.**—He left Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in April, 1917, for overseas duty in the medical department. He is known to his pals as Doc Iodine. Any information will be gladly received by Vernon C. Price, care of this magazine.

**MELLOTT, ELWOOD,** who left home when he was fourteen years old, in 1892. His parents were then living at Mount Savage, Maryland, and the boy was learning to be a printer, working at Hyndman, Pennsylvania. He had dark hair and dark-brown eyes. His mother has been grieving for him all these years, not knowing whether he is dead or alive, and if some one among our readers can give her any information whatever of her long-lost son she will be deeply grateful for their kindness. Mrs. H. R. Mellott, care of this magazine.

**PEIZE, MRS. ELLEN.**—Thirty-six years ago she placed a boy in Father John Drumgoole's Home on Great Jones Street, New York City, under the name of Charles McNeill. Any information about her will be gratefully received by P. R., care of this magazine.

**BELLANE, TESSIE.**—She was last heard of in Larchmont, New York. She is asked to send her address to G. V., care of this magazine.

**BEECHER, AUGUST,** is anxious ot find his parents or relatives. He was born June 26, 1891, and was left in a New York foundling hospital on July 17th of the same year by his mother, who has not been heard of since. Any information that will help this young man to find his relatives will be thankfully appreciated. August Beecher, care of this magazine.

**LANCASTER, JOSEPH,** who lived at one time in Marianna, Florida. He was married and had four daughters, and it is believed that he was a thirty-third degree Mason. Information is wanted of his family. W. R. Hearst Battle, 1026 East Twenty-second Street, Kansas City, Missouri.

**JORDAN.**—I am anxious to have some information about my parents. I was brought up by William and Caroline Hoffman, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I am twenty-eight years old and have light hair and blue eyes. I have been told that my parents live somewhere in one of the Virginias. They may spell their name Jordon. If any one can help me to find them I shall be most grateful. Mrs. Alice J. O'Connell, 773 West Lexington Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

**DILLIARD, GEORGE.**—He was last heard of in August, 1909, at Bozeman, Montana, having just come in from the harvest fields. He is about forty-five years old, six feet tall, with light hair, and blue-gray eyes. He was born near Cleburne, Texas. Any one who knows where he is will do a favor by writing to W. L. Dilliard, 768 Gaviota Avenue, Long Beach, California.

**COOPER, JENNIE,** a sister of the late Captain Austin Cooper, who lived at 37 Waterloo Place, Dublin, Ireland. She came to her mother in America twenty-eight years ago, and when last heard of was living in New York City. Her friend Mary Mernagh would be very glad to hear from her, or to get news of her through any one who may know her. Mrs. Mary Healy, 970 Home Street, the Bronx, New York City.

**McMINN, JAMES ROBERT.**—He was born at Dorchester, New Brunswick, and married a New York girl named Maggie May about thirty years ago. It was heard indirectly, about six years ago, that he was living in or near New York City, and had a family of four children. His sister is seeking him, and will be most grateful for any information that will help her to find him. Mrs. B. McMinn Taylor, 163 West Twenty-second Street, New York City.

**SMITH,** Christmas, 1918. M. G. L. D., on Western Front. V. Rusty N. 6-12, W. D., would like to hear from you. P. O. Box 67, San Pedro, California.

**BARCLAY, WALTER T.**—He is thirty years old, has dark hair, and his left eye is slightly crossed. Formerly of Braddock, near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He was last heard of about twelve years ago in Virginia, having just returned from a trip to England. Any one knowing of his present whereabouts will confer a great favor on his family by writing to his brother, George R. Barclay, 460 Swissvale Avenue, Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania.

**SHACKEFORD, WILLIAM.**—If any one can help me find my father, whom I have not seen since 1899, when I was two years old, I shall be ever grateful to them. My mother died when I was born, and my father left me with my grandmother, Mrs. Lizzie Smith. Any assistance from readers of this magazine that will lead to my finding him will be thankfully appreciated. Mrs. Dorothy Exline, Route 2, Box 427A, Long Beach, California.

**DRAKE, LUCIEN C.,** better known as **COONEY.** His father and mother are getting old, and his sister begs him to write or come home as soon as he can. Leatha.

**MAUK, ELMER M.**—He is thought to be in Richmond, Virginia. His brother wants to hear from him, and will appreciate any information that will help him to communicate with him. Fred B. Mauk, Box 2, Station G, Columbus, Ohio.

**YORK, C.**, formerly of Kingston, New York, and last heard of in New York City. Any news of him will be greatly appreciated by R. Fitzgerald, 64 Main Street, Poughkeepsie, New York.

**PRATT, THOMAS**, formerly of Philadelphia. He has been missing for about twenty-five years, and when last heard from was working in Baltimore. He was sometimes known as **SCRAP PRATT**. His nephew would be glad to get news of him. William L. Simpkins, 1241 South Twenty-sixth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**RATHBONE, JACK**, who lived in Cincinnati about four years ago. He is asked to send his address to M. W., care of this magazine.

**OLIVER, DALHIA**, and **OMAH FILLMORE**. Please write to your old friend, who has not forgotten the school days. A. J. Young, 402 West Huntingdon Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**SCENTER, S. A.**, who used to live at 1024 Patterson Avenue, Roanoke, Virginia, and left there in July, 1919. He is asked to write to his friend who has important news for him. J. W. Jordan, Dixie Hotel, Jefferson Street, Roanoke, Virginia.

**KNOX, MRS. MINNIE.**—She was last heard from twelve years ago, in Prescott, Arkansas. Her sister Mattie is very anxious to find her, and will be thankful for any information about her. Mrs. S. R. Merritt, 313 C Street, Fourth Avenue, Meridian, Mississippi.

**MOULTON, ROGER McCLELLAN.**—Please write to me at 26 South Oriental Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, or in care of the Missing Department. J. M.

**ORVIS, BENJAMIN.**—He was last heard of in Redlands, California, in March, 1912. His sister would very much like to hear from him, and begs him to write to her. She will be most grateful for any information that will help her to communicate with her brother. Mrs. Arthur Hart, Box 11, Shuttle Meadow Avenue, Plainville, Connecticut.

**ROBINSON, JOHN** and **ROSE**, my parents. I was born in Chicago, in 1897, and was brought up by a lady named Ella McKinley. I know nothing about my father and mother, but have heard that they are in Chicago. Mrs. Eva Roads, and Mrs. Frances Wilkins are asked to write and give some of the information they have about me. Any assistance in finding my relatives will be greatly appreciated. S. R., care of this magazine.

**COUGHLIN, LAWRENCE.**—He has not been heard from by his family since the Slocum disaster, and it is feared that he may have been one of the victims, although there is no proof of this. He lived in Brooklyn at that time. He had dark hair, mustache, and eyes. His brothers Tom, Bob, and Jim, and his sister Jennie are very anxious to know what has become of him. His twin sister Mary is very ill, and is not expected to live long. James A. Coughlin, 1432 West Twenty-eighth Street, Cleveland Ohio.

**HUSTON, HOWARD L.**—He is a discharged soldier and left his home on March 17th last to go to a hospital in Clarksburg, West Virginia. He wrote saying that he had arrived in Clarksburg, but he was not found in any of the hospitals there. He is twenty-four years old, about five feet six inches tall, and has brown eyes and hair. He has some tattooed marks on both arms. His wife fears that he may have lost his reason and wandered away, and will be deeply grateful to any one who can help her to find out what has become of him. Mrs. Daisy Huston, 641 North Seventeenth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**BRAMBLE, MAXWELL T.**—He disappeared from Cleveland, Ohio, in July, 1916. He is twenty-two years old, about five feet seven inches tall, weighs one hundred and forty pounds, has light hair and blue eyes, and stoops slightly. His relatives will be more than grateful to any one who can give them any information about him. Please write to his father, G. T. Bramble, 812 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

**TURNER, WALTER ELMER.**—He was a shoemaker in Lynn, Massachusetts, and has not been heard from since 1906. His youngest brother died lately, and his father would like very much to hear from him. William Turner, 2598 Taylor Street, San Francisco, California.

**SUDONAS** or **SUBLOSKY, WILLIAM** and **LOUIS.**—They were last heard of in Great Neck, Long Island, where they were working as plumbers' helpers. They are asked to communicate with Alex. Geraltasky, care of this magazine.

**HORSTMANN, ANTON** and **ALBERT.**—They were born in Bremen, Germany, and when last heard of were working as ranchmen in Omaha or California. They are asked to write to their sister, Mrs. John Eckworth, care of Mrs. A. Marsillo, 65 Main Street, Nyack, New York.

**HICKS, JOHN TULLY.**—He is an Englishman and was last heard of five years ago, when he was living on East Eighty-sixth Street, Cleveland, Ohio. An old friend would be glad to hear from him, and will appreciate any news that will lead to communicating with him. E. B., care of this magazine.

**ELMER.**—The boy has gone with his father. Please come or write. Everything is forgiven. M. J.

**McNEIL, ALEXANDER.**—He is an actor and was last heard of in California. Any information about him will be gratefully received by his sister, Mrs. James Mulvey, 571 Congress Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut.

**FESSENDEN, GEORGE H.**—He disappeared from his home in Rutherford, New Jersey, on November 28, 1919. If any one who knows him will ask him to communicate with his wife, they will do a great favor to both, as good news awaits him. Mrs. G. H. Fessenden, 67 Addison Avenue, Rutherford, New Jersey.

**WOOD, EDWARD T.**—He is twenty years old, five feet nine inches tall, and has dark-brown hair and eyes. He was last seen in Salt Lake City. If any one knows where he is, or has seen him recently, his only sister will be glad to hear from them. Miss C. L. Wood, 609 South K Street, Tacoma, Washington.

**TENNY, MRS. P. M.**, formerly of 3116 Sixteenth Street, San Francisco, is asked to send her present address to C. F. Suter, 1915 Brush Street, Oakland, California.

**SMITH, JAMES ROBERT.**—He is about forty-five years old and was last heard of in San Jose, California, over six years ago. His daughter, who has not seen him since she was a small child, is very anxious to find him, and is sure that he would be glad to see her again. Any one who can help to bring these two together will be doing a great favor to both. Please write to Mrs. Frank E. Brown, 1390 North Seventeenth Street, Salem, Oregon.

**WARREN, MRS. CORA.**—She formerly lived in Dayton, Ohio, and has been gone since 1908. Her maiden name was Dunseth. Her little daughter needs her, and will be glad to get her address, as something of importance to her has happened. Please write to Venita Warren Dunseth, 1222 1-2 Santee Street, Los Angeles, California.

**SCHUSTER, GEORGE M.**—He is a butcher. His son is anxious to communicate with him in regard to an important matter. Any one knowing his address will do a kindness by sending it to George C. Schuster, 1201 Olive Street, Seattle, Washington.

**MAHKORN, JOHN G.**—He is thirty-two years old, about five feet eight inches tall, and rather broad-shouldered. When last heard from, in February of this year, he was in Lincoln, Nebraska. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Eleanore Mahkorn, 2301 Cherry Street, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

**McCARTY.**—Wanted to find the relatives, a brother and sister, of Mary McCarty, who died in Davenport, in 1903. M. M., care of this magazine.

**BAKER, JACK.**—He was last heard of in Parsons, Kansas. His sister is very ill, and his nephew is anxious to get his uncle's address. Frank Hazzard, Route 4, Box No. 111, Granberry, Texas.

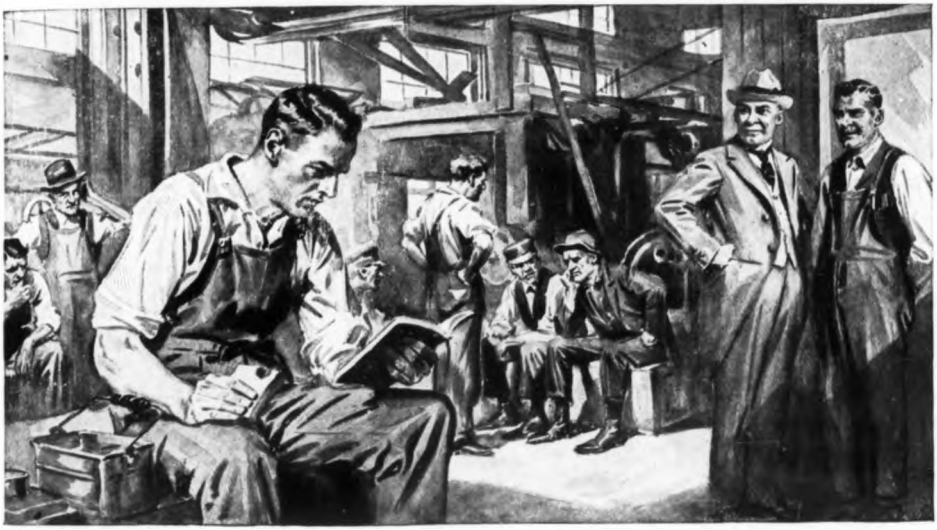
**PRINCE, PHILIP SHERIDAN.**—He is twenty-eight years old, six feet tall, with blue eyes and dark-brown curly hair. He was last heard of in Great Falls, Montana, over five years ago. He may have been in the war, but it has been impossible to get news of him through the War Department or the Red Cross. His father is dead, and his mother and all the family are very much worried. If Philip should see this he is asked to write as soon as possible to his sister, Ada Prince Papescu, R. F. D., No. 1, Montague, Montana.

**VAN WINKLE, SAMUEL.**—He lived in San Francisco from 1895 to 1905, and went from there to Los Angeles, where he lived at 820 Date Street, and later on East Second Street. Also **GEORGE W. WENDING**, of New York, who lived in Los Angeles in 1905-06. Also **BARTHOLOMEW SWIFT**, native of Ireland, who was last heard of in Spokane, Washington, and San Francisco. These three men disappeared and all have left money which is still in bank. Relatives are asked to communicate with P. C. Hughes, attorney, 100 East Fifth Street, Oklahoma, Oklahoma.

**LA BELL, STELLA.**—Her maiden name was Purdy. She was born in Petersburg, Canada, and was last heard of at Mount Pleasant, Michigan, about twenty-five years ago. She is the mother of Bert, Susie, and Myrtle. Any news of her will be gratefully received by her son, Bert Irving La Bell, 912 South Fifteenth Street, Toledo, Ohio.

**GOINGS, LAWRENCE**, and his wife. They were farmers in Adonis, Texas, in 1899. Their daughter Julia would be glad to hear from them, or to get any news of them, or of her brother, H. Webster Goings, and will be grateful to any one who can tell her where they are. Mrs. Julia Brooks, 221 East Fifth Street, Bulkburnett, Texas.

**FITZGERALD, JAMES**, formerly of New Brunswick. He had a sister named Mrs. Ellen Tobin, who had an only daughter named Elizabeth. His niece would like to hear from him or from any member of his family. Mrs. Elizabeth O'Keefe, 13 1-2 Chandler Street, Calais, Maine.



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- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
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- ☐ Marine Engineer
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