

EVERY WEEK

MAY 24, 1924

DETECTIVE

STORY MAGAZINE

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THE
SINISTER
MAN

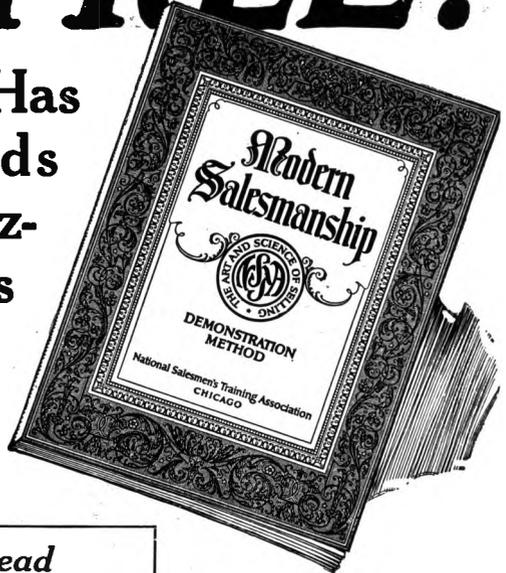
BY
Edgar
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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

E V E R Y W E E K

Vol. LXVI

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When you decide your wife is superfluous, you are signing the ledger of Fate. She may not know it, but you have already put yourself in the way of life's final count. If you are interested in the solution, read next week's excellent novelette.

SUPERFLUOUS WIVES

By ADELE LUEHRMANN

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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXVI

May 24, 1924

No. 5

WARNING! Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but we feel sorry for the reader who buys an imitation. Do not be deceived; insist upon having the original DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

The Sinister Man.

by Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Hairy Arm," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A PROPOSAL.

YOU have beauty," said Mr. Maurice Tarn carefully; "you have youth. You will in all probability survive me by many years. I am not the kind of man who would object to your marrying again. That would be sheer selfishness, and I am not selfish. When I die you will have great property; while I live you shall enjoy my wealth to its full. Possibly you have never looked upon me in the light of a husband, but it is not unusual for a guardian to marry his ward, and the disparity in our ages is not an insuperable obstacle."

He spoke like one who was reciting a carefully rehearsed speech, and Elsa Marlowe opened, stunned.

If the old-fashioned sideboard had of its own volition stood on end, if Elgin Crescent had been suddenly transported to the suburbs of Bagdad, she could not have been more astounded. But Elgin Crescent was in Bayswater, and the gloomy dining room of Maurice Tarn's maisonette remained undisturbed; and here was Maurice Tarn himself, sitting on the other side of the breakfast table, an unshaven, shabby man of fifty-six, whose trembling hand, that went automatically to his shaggy gray mustache, was an eloquent reminder of his last night's carouse—there

were three empty bottles on the table of his study when she looked in that morning—and he was proposing marriage.

She could only gaze at him open-eyed, scarcely believing the evidence of her senses.

"I suppose you think I am mad," he went on slowly. "I've given a lot of thought to it, Elsa. You are heart-free, as I know. There is no reason in the world, except—except the difference in our ages, why this should not be."

"But—but, Mr. Tarn," she stammered, "I had no idea. Of course it is impossible!"

Was he still drunk, she wondered, without a tremor of apprehension. For fifteen years of association with Maurice Tarn had not tended to increase her awe for him; if she had not been so staggered by this proposal, which had come like a bolt from the blue, she might have been amused.

"I don't want to marry you—I don't want to marry anybody. It is very—very kind of you, and of course I feel"—she could hardly bring her lips to say the word—"honored. But it is too ridiculous!" she burst forth.

His tired eyes were watching her, and he did not even flinch at the word.

"I'm going away—to—somewhere. I've got to go away for my health. Since Major Amery has come into the firm, it is impossible to continue."

"Does Ralph know this—that you're going away?" she asked, curiosity overcoming her amazement.

"No!" He almost shouted the word. "He doesn't—he mustn't know! You understand, Elsa? Under no circumstances must Ralph know. What I have said to you is confidential. Think it over."

With a gesture he dismissed the subject, to her great relief. For fully ten minutes she sat staring out of the window. Mr. Maurice Tarn's dining room looked out upon the garden of Elgin

Crescent, a garden common to all the houses that backed upon it. It was not a garden in the strictest sense of the word, being no more than a stretch of worn grass, intersected by brown paths; and its chief value was best appreciated by the parents of very young children. On sunny days the shade of the big tree in the center of the garden was a favorite resting place for nursemaids and their tiny charges. At this hour the garden was deserted. The pale yellow sunlight, slanting through the big window, lit a diagonal patch on the table, and gave to the spring flowers, that, by a movement of her chair, mercifully hid Mr. Maurice Tarn from her view, the glory which belonged to them.

She stole a glance at him past the flowery screen. He was wearing yesterday's collar—he invariably made a collar last three days; and his rusty black cravat was fastened behind with a tarnished buckle. The lapels of his ancient frock coat shone with much wear; his cuffs showed ragged threads. Speculatively she examined him in the light of a possible bridegroom and shuddered.

Elsa had preserved toward her guardian and his habits an attitude of philosophical patience. She had grown tired of urging the purchase of clothes. He had a fairly good income, and once she had surprised the information that he had a substantial balance at his bank. But by nature and habits he was miserly. She owed him something, but not much: an education at the cheapest boarding school he could find; a dress allowance reluctantly given; an annual holiday at Clacton; a fortnight in a crowded business school; and a postgraduate course in shorthand and typewriting, which was to fit her for the position of a private secretary to old Amery. In addition to these things Maurice Tarn gave her what he was pleased to call "a home."

She had often wondered what freak

of generosity had induced him to adopt the orphan child of a distant cousin, but the nearest she had ever reached to explaining that fit of altruism was when he told her one evening that he hated complete loneliness and preferred a child in the house to a dog.

He was apparently absorbed in the deviled chicken he was cutting into microscopic pieces, for presently he asked:

"Is there anything in the paper?"

He himself never read the newspapers, and it had been part of her duty for years to supply him with the principal items of the morning's news.

"Nothing," she said. "You know about the parliamentary crisis?"

He growled something under his breath and asked:

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing, except the drug scandal," she said.

He looked up suddenly. "Drug scandal? What do you mean?"

She picked up the newspaper from the floor where she had dropped it.

"It is about two gangs that are importing drugs into this country. I didn't think you'd be interested in that," she said, searching for the paragraph.

She happened at that moment to look across at him, and she nearly dropped the paper in her surprise. Mr. Maurice Tarn's complexion was one of consistent sallowness, but now his face was a deathly white. His jaw had dropped, and his eyes were staring.

"Two gangs?" he croaked. "What do you mean? Read it, read it!" he commanded huskily.

"I thought——" she began.

"Never mind what you thought—read it!" snarled Tarn.

Masking her astonishment, she found the item. It was a half column on the top of the principal page.

Yesterday morning Detective Inspector Bickerson, accompanied by half a dozen police officers, made a raid upon a small ware-

house in Whitechapel and, after arresting the caretaker, conducted a search of the premises. It is understood that a considerable quantity of opium and a package containing sixteen pounds of cocaine were seized and removed. It is believed that the warehouse was a distributing center used by one of the two gangs which are engaged in putting illicit drugs upon the market, both here and in America. The police believe that one of these nefarious associations is conducted by a Japanese merchant named Soyoka, who, however, is the mere figurehead in the business, the operations being carried out by a number of unknown men, said to occupy good social positions, and two of whom are believed to be officials in the Indian civil service. The composition of the second gang, which, during the past two years has amassed a considerable fortune, is not so well known. Behind these two organizations are hundreds of agents, and a small army of desperadoes are employed to cover the gangs' workings. The recent arrest of a Greek in Cleveland, Ohio, and his confession to the Federal authorities, has enabled Scotland Yard to get a line on the British branch of the "business." From the statement of the Greek, Poropoulos, it is believed that the heads of the second gang include an English doctor and a leading merchant of the City of London.

"Ah!"

It was not a groan; it was not a sigh; but it combined the quality of both. Elsa looked up and saw her guardian's head sinking over the table, and she sprang to her feet.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

He waved her aside. "Get me some brandy—in the cupboard of my study," he mumbled, and she hurried into the stuffy little room, returning with a tumbler half-filled, the contents of which he swallowed at a gulp. Slowly the color came back to his face, and he forced a smile.

"You're responsible," he grunted, with heavy pleasantry. "A fellow of my age doesn't propose at this time of the morning without feeling the effects—eh? A little too old for love-making, I guess. Think it over, Elsa. I've been a good friend of yours."

"Do you want me to read any more?"

He stopped her with a gesture. "Stuff! A newspaper invention! These fellows are always out for sensation; they live on it." He rose to his feet with an effort.

"I shall see you at the office," he said. "Think it over, Elsa!"

The door of his study slammed behind him, and he was still in his locked room when the girl boarded an east-bound bus that carried her almost to the door of the Amery corporation.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF AMERY.

THE house of Amery & Amery stands where it stood in the days when its founder marshaled his apprentices and clerks to fight the great fire of London; so that, when the holocaust had smoldered to ashes, the cramped old house alone raised its head amidst the blackened ruins of Wood Street. Improvements had come with the years, an exigent city council had demanded certain structural alterations, but in appearance the Amery building remained what it was in the days when the *Mayflower* set forth from Plymouth Harbor and narrowly missed fouling the *Pleasant Endeavour*, the first of the Amery Brothers' fleet of East Indiamen.

The centuries had seen many fluctuations in the fortunes of the house. One evening at White's, in the days of the Regency, an Amery had dined the fleet out of existence; later another Amery had won back its equivalent in the tea trade; but the narrow-fronted house, with its uneven floors, its poky little cupboards and presses, its low ceilings and tortuous stairways, defied the passage of time.

Above the thick green glass window-panes that admitted light and distorted vision, the faded inscription "Amery & Amery, Shippers & Importers" appeared in the identical lettering that an Amery had chosen on the day George,

the III., went to his rest. The little room, where Elsa Marlowe attended to the private correspondence of the newest proprietor, had been furnished in his youth by a chief clerk who, as an old man, had seen the first policeman on the streets of London.

Elsa, sitting before her worn writing table one morning in late spring, when the sunlight poured into the room, seemed as much out of place in the grim setting as the little bunch of lilies of the valley she had arranged in a cheap glass vase beside the typewriter.

There was a sculptor in Paris who speculated in dainty statuettes of slim Parisiennes, and she might have posed for M. Milliere, a straight-backed, long-limbed girl, with the tilted chin, the straight nose, the large, inquiring eyes, and the confusion of spun-gold hair he loved.

She had that complexion which made wise and skeptical women look twice at her; yet her pink and white owed nothing to artifice, and the rich red of her mouth was as everlasting as the deep gray-blue of her eyes.

Her forehead was puckered, as she listened to her voluble companion. She was never quite comfortable when Miss Dame came to her favorite topic of discussion, though the gaunt woman expressed much that she thought.

Elsa Marlowe was not prepared to accept Miss Dame's judgment on any other subject than stenography. Her views on human affairs were inclined to be colored by the peculiar brand of romance she had absorbed overnight. But when she described the house of Amery & Amery as "creepy" and spoke of Paul Roy Amery as a "sinister figure," Elsa found herself ranged on the side of Romance.

"You can laugh about the pitchers," said Miss Dame earnestly, "but you get ideas of life out of 'em—types, characters—if you understand me? It's experience to a young girl like me. The

villains I've seen! My word! But I've never seen anybody like the major. Sinister! You've only to look at him, Miss Marlowe. And why your dear, good uncle, the finest gentleman that ever breathed, should let you stay in this place, is more'n I can understand. See what I mean?"

Miss Dame glared fearfully through her big rimless spectacles, her large mouth grotesquely open, her little button of a nose redder than ever. She was tall, round-shouldered, awkwardly made. Her hands and feet were large; her bobbed hair, refusing to behave as bobbed hair should, spread like a fan from her head.

"I wouldn't call him 'sinister,'" said Elsa thoughtfully; "he is certainly unpleasant. I don't think he is used to dealing with white people."

"That's what I say," broke in Miss Dame. "Negroes, and black people an' Injuns! I'll bet he lashes 'em to death. Anyway, he's sinister," said Miss Dame firmly, "and so is this building, hundreds of years old. There ain't a floor that's level, or a door that fits; and look at the poky little windows and the beams over the ceiling! And there's no proper washing place, and in the heart of the city, too! Where did he come from, anyway? Old Mr. Amery never said he had a nephew, and your dear uncle was that surprised when the will was read that he could have dropped. He told me so himself."

For the moment her "dear uncle" was as unpleasant a subject as the sinister Mr. Amery. It was accepted by the employees of Amery's that Mr. Tarn and she were uncle and niece, and she never attempted to correct that erroneous impression.

"We shall get used to him," she said with a half sigh. "New people are always awkward at first, and probably he isn't used to business. He had an official position in India. I know that——"

She stopped. Here she was going beyond the bounds of propriety. She could not tell of the mysterious letters which Paul Amery dictated, letters in which whole lines were made up of unintelligible code words.

"Mr. Tarn knows something about him," Miss Dame nodded vigorously. "They were together *hours* yesterday—I heard 'em! Gee, the noise they made!"

Elsa turned startled eyes to the other. "Quarreling?" she said incredulously.

"Quarreling!" repeated Miss Dame triumphantly. "You never heard anything like it! It was when you were out at lunch. When I say 'hours,' I mean twenty minutes. I never saw your dear uncle so upset in my life."

Elsa was not impressed. Mr. Maurice Tarn was easily upset in these days. Was she responsible for that, she thought whimsically. But a quarrel? Why should Amery quarrel with his general manager? They hardly knew one another, for Paul Amery had not occupied the presidential chair a month as yet, was new to the business, and scarcely acquainted with its routine.

"Are you sure?" she asked.

Before Miss Dame could answer, a bell shrilled, and Elsa hastily gathered her notebook and pencil and passed into the lair of the president.

It was a pleasant room, carpeted in a dull blue that showed the polished black paneling to advantage. Over an old fireplace, a solemn-faced clock ticked sedately. The leaden windows were curtained with dark-blue velvet; the only touch of gay color in the room was the scarlet leather of the fender and seats.

The man at the big writing table was glowering at a letter on his blotting pad and, seemingly oblivious to her presence, was reading it over to himself, his thin lips moving silently, as he assimilated every line, every word. A minute passed, and then Paul Amery looked up with that expression on his saturnine face

which never failed to rouse in her breast something that was akin to fury. Not that he was consciously offensive; her resentment would have been excusable if he were.

There was just the faintest hint of a sneer, a downward droop of the corners of his mouth that coincided with the lift of his upper lip and a something—a cold, appraising something—in his blue eyes that was altogether and yet indefinitely insulting.

She had surprised that expression before. Invariably it followed upon the interruption of a reverie. And Paul Amery's daydreams were not pleasant. Only for a second did that twisted smile disfigure his thin, dark face. In another second it set like a mask of fate, except that the black brows had met in a frown that hardened and almost dehumanized him.

"Yes?"

His voice had the quality of granite. Instantly he had passed through the stage of transition between dreams and reality, and his eyes were searching hers suspiciously. There were people who would think he was good looking, she thought, and she was sufficient of a woman to concede this advantage to him. The hot sun of India had tanned his face to a permanent brown; it had given him, too, something of the character of the jungle beasts he had stalked. She never saw him come noiselessly, almost furtively, through the outer office without thinking of a cat.

"Yes?"

He never raised his voice; he did not display his impatience, but his "Yes?" was like the flick of a whip in her face.

"You rang for me, and you wished to see the bills of lading—Chi Fung and Lee, Mr. Amery," she stammered and despised herself for her deference.

Without a word he reached out his hand and took the papers she had brought to him. Silently he examined them and then put them aside.

"Why are you afraid of me?"

The question stunned her; it was so unexpected, so utterly unanswerable that she could only stand and stare at him until, before the masterful blaze of his eyes, she lowered her own.

"I'm not afraid of you, Mr. Amery," she said and tried hard to keep her voice level. "What a queer thing to say! I'm—I'm not afraid of anybody." This defiantly.

He did not speak. His very silence gave her the lie as plainly as if he had spoken.

"Besides," she went on with the ghost of a smile, "isn't it the proper attitude of a secretary toward her employer? A wholesome respect——"

She finished lamely, feeling a fool. He was looking through the window into the dusty sunlight of Wood Street. Apparently his attention was absorbed in the laden trucks that lined the narrow road; in the red-faced policeman who was engineering a passage for a steam trolley; in the drab face of the office block opposite—in anything but one pink and white girl, with a mop of fine, brown hair that defied regulation.

"You are five feet three inches," he said, going off at a tangent. "Sixty-three inches! The little finger of your left hand is crooked. You must have broken it when you were a child. You live constantly in association with somebody who is deaf; your voice is just a little too strong. Of course, Mr. Maurice Tarn! I have noticed that he is deaf."

Elsa drew a long breath.

"Shall I leave the bills of lading, please?" she asked.

His eyes were no longer on her face. They had dropped moodily to the blotter.

"No, I wanted you. Take this letter to Fing Li T'sin, 796 Bubbling Well Road, Shanghai. '*Tang chiang chin ping ch'ang*——' I beg your pardon, you do not understand Chinese, of course?"

He was not joking. She saw him flush with annoyance at his mistake—at the possibility that she might think he was being funny at her expense.

"He reads and speaks English better than you or I, for the matter of that," he added hurriedly. "Take this, 'I am looking for a trustworthy man to cover the Nangpoo province. Feng Ho has arrived. You may send letters to him here. When you see the Long Sword of Sun Yat tell him——'"

Here he paused and passed a slip of paper across to her. Carefully penciled in capital letters were the words: "Barrow Tendency Makeshift Warlike Candle Stencil Pendant Maple Crest Hamlet Desire."

He was looking at her, as she read, a thin hand caressing the little black mustache that covered his upper lip, and, as she raised her head, she met his glance and went hot.

"Nice job, this?" he asked absently. "Not too much work? Wages good?"

It was the first time he had displayed the slightest interest in her. Hitherto she had had the feeling that he had regarded her as part of the movable fixtures of the establishment.

"Yes, it is a good job," she said awkwardly and added—fatuously, as she told herself—"I hope my work is satisfactory?"

He did not answer, and she added boorishness to his sins.

"You knew my great-uncle, Bertram Amery, of course?"

He was not looking at her; his eyes were still on the street below.

"Slightly," she said. "I was here during the last few months of his life. He only came in for a few minutes each day."

He nodded slowly.

"The ancient ran the business, of course?"

"The ancient?" She frowned and then realized that his flippant reference was to Mr. Maurice Tarn. "Mr. Tarn

has always helped to run the business," she said, a little stiffly, though Heaven knew she was in no mood to feel offended because he spoke slightly of her very distant relative.

"Mr. Tarn always helped to run the business," he repeated absently and then jerked his head round to face her. "Thank you, that will do," he said.

She was at the door, when his voice arrested her.

"How much does the Stanford Corporation pay you?" he asked.

She turned round, staring at him in wonder.

"The Stanford Corporation, Mr. Amery?"

His keen eyes searched her face.

"I'm sorry," he said simply. "I see you do not know that enterprising business."

He nodded to the door, and she was back at her desk before she realized the indignity of her dismissal.

CHAPTER III.

THE MENACE OF SOYOKA.

WHAT did he mean? Stanford Corporation! Did he suggest that she was secretly working for some other house? If she had been on better terms with her uncle she might have solved the puzzle; but for the moment their relationship was more than a little strained.

She was typing the letter when she heard the door of her room open and close, and, looking up, she saw the tall, hollow-eyed man whom she had particularly wished to avoid that day.

He stood for a while, fingering his bristling gray mustache, his small, faded eyes fixed moodily upon her, and then he came slowly across the room and towered above her. He was an unusually tall man, and, for the general manager of a prosperous business, shabbily attired. His cuffs were ragged at the ends, his black cravat rusty with age.

"Where's Amery?" he asked, lowering his voice.

"In his room, Mr. Tarn."

"Humph!" He fingered his bristly chin. "Did he say anything?"

"About what?"

"About anything?" he asked impatiently.

She shook her head. It was in her mind to tell him about Major Amery's inquiry, but she could not bring herself to the point of taking him into her confidence.

"Have you thought over the matter I spoke about this morning?"

He stole a quick glance at her and read her answer before she spoke.

"No, it—it doesn't bear thinking about."

He blinked at her, and his face twisted to an expression of pain.

"Too old, I suppose? I'll make any arrangement you like, only I want company. I hate being alone. I want somebody I can talk to—a wife—somebody I know and can trust. I've got to get things off my mind. They can't make a wife tell—you understand? Any arrangement," he emphasized the words, and she grasped his meaning. But he was not looking at her, as he spoke. That "any arrangement" promise was a lie. He wanted more than a trustworthy listener.

She drew a long, impatient sigh.

"We needn't go back to that, need we?" she asked. "I wish you wouldn't, Mr. Tarn. It worries me terribly, and I know it is going to make life insupportable."

He was still fingering his chin nervously, his eyes straying to the door of Paul Amery's room.

"Is anything wrong?"

He shook his head irritably. "Wrong? What should there be wrong?" He glanced apprehensively toward the door. "I'm going in to see him."

There was a note of defiance in his voice which surprised her. She had not

seen this side of Maurice Tarn's character. She knew him best as a most self-possessed business man without imagination. At his worst he was a slovenly domestic tyrant, with a passion for secret drinking. Yet here he was, bracing himself, as for a great ordeal, the hand that touched his mustache trembling, his eyes fearful.

"I've got to go away." His voice was lowered. "I don't know where, but—but—somewhere."

He heard the turn of the handle and looked round affrighted. Paul Amery stood in the doorway, that hateful smile of his upon his thin lips.

"I—I wanted to see you, Major Amery."

Without a word Paul Amery opened the door a little further, and his general manager went in. Amery closed the door behind him and walked slowly to his desk. He did not sit down, but stood, his hands in his pockets, his head slightly bent forward, his cold eyes scrutinizing the man.

"Well?"

Twice the lips of the older man moved, and presently, in a half-unreal voice, he spoke.

"I feel I owe you an apology for that—that scene which occurred yesterday, Major Amery. I fear I lost my temper; but you can quite understand that one who has held a trusted position in the house of Amery, who was respected, I venture to say, by your uncle——"

"Sit down."

Mechanically the man obeyed.

"Mr. Tarn, I'm new to this business. I ought to have come over eight months ago, when my uncle died, and the property passed into my possession. There were certain things that I did not realize, but which I realize now. I looked upon Amery & Amery as a corporation that could get along very well without me. I never looked upon Amerys as an enemy I should have to fight."

Maurice Tarn stared at him. "Fight?"

I don't understand you. An enemy, Major Amery?" he said tremulously.

"Who is the Stanford Corporation?"

The question rang out like a pistol shot, and Mr. Tarn winced, but did not answer.

"There is a business being carried on in a block of offices in Threadneedle Street," said Amery slowly; "not a very flourishing business, for the Stanford Corporation occupy one large room and employ no clerks. All the work is done by a mysterious individual who comes after most of the other offices are closed, and he leaves just before midnight. He types his own letters, of which he keeps no copies; he has interviews with strange and disreputable people; and, although the name of the Stanford Corporation does not appear in the books of Amery & Amery, I am satisfied that our very reputable business"—his lip curled again—"built up by the labor of years and founded on the honesty and integrity of my dead relatives, is a screen behind which a certain traffic is in progress."

"Major Amery!" For a second Maurice Tarn's pose of virtuous indignation held, and then, before the glittering eyes of the other, he wilted. "If you feel that," he mumbled rapidly, "the best thing I can do is to get out. I've served this firm faithfully for thirty-five years, and I don't think you're treating me well. What traffic? I know the Stanford Corporation—I've just remembered them. They're a perfectly straightforward firm."

The lifted lips, the hard, smiling eyes silenced him.

"You'll bluff to the last, eh? Well, so be it! Tarn, you're doing something of which I do not approve, and that is a mild way of putting it. And I'm going to stop you—I'm going to stop you, if it means killing you! Do you get that? You know what I am—you guess a whole lot more than you know! You're in my way. Tarn I didn't expect to

find this obstacle here." He pointed to the floor, and Tarn knew that he was speaking about the house of Amery. "I'm going to put the matter plainly to you," he went on. "Fortunes are to be made, and are being made, by two gangs that are running a dope industry. Maybe you saw something about it in the morning paper. Two gangs! There isn't room for two—is that clear to you?"

Tarn's face had gone ashen; he was incapable of speech. The man by the writing table was not looking at him; his eyes were fixed on the street below. He seemed to find in the life and hurry of Wood Street something of overpowering interest.

"Not room for two—hardly room for one," he repeated. "The second gang had better shut up business and get out, while the going's good. There are many dangers. Soyoka's crowd aren't going to take competition lying down. I am telling you this as a friend."

Tarn licked his dry lips, but did not answer.

"The girl isn't in it?"

"No." The older man blundered into this partial admission. "You're—Soyoka!" he breathed. "Great Cæsar, I didn't dream—I knew they were working from India and the East, but I never guessed." His voice sank to an indistinguishable rumble of sound.

Amery did not answer him; with a sideways jerk of his head he dismissed the man. Elsa saw him stagger through his office like one in a dream, and she wondered what was the reason for his white face and trembling hands.

Left alone, Amery walked slowly to his desk and sat down, his chin on his hands. Facing him on the wall hung a picture in an old-fashioned gilt frame—a portrait of an elderly man in a long, flowing wig; he wore a coat of homely brown, lace ruffles swelled under his ample chin, and in his hand was a half-unrolled map of the world. The first

of the Amerys! The last of the race looked up into the hard, gray eyes of his ancestor, and he nodded.

"Illustrious forbear"—with mock gravity—"the crooked house of Amery salutes you!"

CHAPTER IV.

DOCTOR RALPH HALLAM.

IT was the custom of Amery's, and it had been the custom from immemorial times, to allow the staff an hour and twenty-five minutes for luncheon. Nobody knew why this extra twenty-five minutes had been granted. It was a tradition of the house, and it was a very welcome one to Elsa Marlowe that day, for she had decided to take counsel of the only man in the world who could help solve her problems.

On the stroke of one o'clock she was out of the office and was hurrying toward Cheapside. Taxis there were in plenty, and within fifteen minutes she was alighting at the door of a small house in Half Moon Street. Scarcely had she paid the driver than the door was opened, and a good-looking man of thirty was halfway across the sidewalk to meet her.

"This is a miracle! Has the noble house of Amery gone bust?"

She preceded him into the house, and not until she was in the sedate little dining room did she answer.

"Everything has gone bust, Ralph. No, my dear, I couldn't eat. Go on with your lunch; and I will talk."

"I have had my lunch. Bring something for Miss Marlowe," ordered Doctor Ralph Hallam, and, when his man had gone, he asked anxiously: "What is wrong?"

She had known Ralph Hallam in the days when she was a lank schoolgirl. A friend of her "uncle's" and a frequent visitor to their house in Bayswater, they had grown up together. He was, by his

own confession, so inefficient a doctor that he had never practiced since the day he left hospital. A keen business man, he had employed the small fortune which his mother had left to him to such advantage that he could afford to dispense with the problematical income which might have come to him from his profession.

A fair-haired, clear-eyed man of something over thirty, his boyish, clean-shaven face and irrepressible good humor gave him the impression of one who had not left his teens very far behind.

"You're not ill, are you?" he asked, and when she shook her head smilingly, he sighed his relief. "Thank Heaven! I should be obliged to call in a real doctor if you were."

All the time he was speaking, he was disposing of her fur, her gloves, her hand bag, in his helpless way.

"You know that Mr. Tarn isn't really my uncle?"

"Eh?" He stared at her. "Oh, yes—your cousin or something, isn't he? Queer old devil—doesn't he bore you?"

"Ralph, he wants to marry me!" she said tragically.

He had taken a wineglass from the sideboard and was putting it on the table when she spoke. The glass dropped from his fingers and splintered to a thousand pieces. Looking at him, she saw his face go suddenly white.

"I'm a clumsy fool." His voice was very steady. "Say that again. He wants to marry you—that—that——"

She nodded. "Exactly—that! Isn't it hideously unbelievable? Oh, Ralph, I'm worried. Something queer has come over him in this past week. He has quarreled with Mr. Amery——"

"Steady, steady, old girl. Sit down. Now tell me all about it. Quarreled with Amery—that's the Indian fellow?"

She told him as coherently as she could of the scene that had occurred that morning. Ralph Hallam whistled.

"The old villain!" he said softly. "But what is the idea? Why this sudden desire for matrimony? He never struck me as a marrying man. And to be mistress of the ménage at Elgin Crescent is not the most pleasant of prospects."

"He is going abroad," she said. "That is why he wants to marry in such a hurry. Oh, I ought not have told you that!"

Too late she remembered her guardian's injunction. But if Ralph Hallam was surprised by the news, he did not betray himself.

"You'll not marry him, of course. That kind of December doesn't belong to your kind of May, Elsa."

It seemed to her that he was going to say something, but checked himself. For a second she had a spasm of fear that the day would bring her a second proposal, for a meaning light had kindled in his expressive eyes. She liked Ralph Hallam—but not that way. He was so good, so kind, such a good pal, and it would spoil everything if the unspoken message was delivered. To her intense relief he spoke of Amery.

"What kind of a man is the Indian?" he asked. "Wasn't he in the civil service?"

"I know very little about him," she said. "None of us does. He was in India for years. They say he isn't even English—he belongs to the American branch of the Amerys—and it was old Mr. Amery who found him his position in India. He is so strange."

Ralph Hallam smiled. "Mad, probably. Most of these Indian fellows go daft. It is the sun."

She shook her head. "No, he isn't mad. His manners are awful; he is abrupt to the point of rudeness. And yet, Ralph, there is something queerly fascinating about him. I find myself wondering what his life must have been—what his recreations are. He seems to move in an atmosphere of mystery.

I can't tell you what happens at the office—that wouldn't be fair—but his correspondence is so unusual. And he's magnetic. When he looks at me sometimes I have the feeling that I'm—out of control. That sounds alarming, doesn't it?"

"It certainly does," smiled her puzzled companion. "Does he hypnotize you?"

"Ye-es," she hesitated. "Perhaps that is it. He reminds me of some beautiful sleek animal, though he isn't at all beautiful! Sometimes his eyes are so cruel that I shudder, and sometimes they are so sad that I could weep; and generally he is so hateful that I loathe him." She laughed softly at her own inconsistency. "Jessie Dame calls him 'the sinister man,' and perhaps she is right. Sometimes I feel, when I am in his presence, that he has the burden of some terrible crime on his mind. He is so suspicious, so horribly unbelieving. When he asks you a question he gives you the impression that he is prepared for you to tell a lie. You feel that he is watching you all the time. Everything about him is that way. He wears shoes with thick rubber soles, and when he moves it is with a sort of stealthiness that makes you jump. Mr. Tarn hates him."

"A singularly unpleasant person," said Ralph with a chuckle, "but impressive. Don't lose your young heart to him. As to Tarn, I think it would be a good idea if you went away for a while. You have never met my sister-in-law?"

"I didn't know that you had one," she said, and he smiled.

"You will like her," he said simply. "I'll get her to invite you over for a few days."

The servant came in with a tray at that moment, and, until they were alone, neither spoke. She had finished her lunch and had risen to go, when the sound of a taxi stopping at the door brought his eyes to the street.

"Wait."

She followed his glance, but from the angle at which she stood she could not see the figure that was paying the cabman.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"The admirable Tarn," he said. "I don't think he'd better see you here. Go into the library; you know your way. When I show him into the dining room, you can make your escape. I'll take care that he doesn't see you."

There came the sound of the door-bell, and she hurried into the little study and presently heard Maurice Tarn's deep voice in the passage. She waited a second, then, tiptoeing along the passage, opened the door and let herself out.

Tarn, his nerves on edge, heard the thud of the closing door and looked round suspiciously.

"What was that?"

"My man going out," said Ralph coolly. "What is your trouble?"

For a while the other man did not answer; then, with a groan, he dropped into an easy-chair and covered his face with his hands.

"As bad as that, eh?" Ralph Hallam asked.

"He knows," said the muffled voice of Tarn.

"Which 'he' is this—the Indian gentleman? And what does he know?"

"Everything. Hallam, he is Soyoka!"

Hallam looked at him, open-mouthed.

"You're mad—Soyoka?"

"He's either Soyoka, or he's somewhere high up in the gang. Why shouldn't he be? The profit of Amery's isn't eight thousand a year. We know what profit there is in Soyoka's; they're making millions, while we're making thousands. He's been living in India, not guessing that old Amery would leave him this business. We've always known that Indian officials were hand in glove with Soyoka's gang. Otherwise, how would he have known where to look in

the books for the consignments we've had? The first thing he did was to put his finger on a case of fancy goods we had from Stein of Leipsic and ask for particulars. He told me to get, and I'm getting. Hallam, it's death to fight Soyoka! They'll stop at nothing. I can't stand any more, Hallam. I am too old for this kind of business."

"Not too old to marry, they tell me."

Tarn looked up quickly. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I understand that you contemplate making a get-away with a lady, who shall be nameless."

Maurice Tarn shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm scared."

"Scared you may be." There was nothing pleasant in Ralph Hallam's voice; his face had hardened, and the lower lip pouted ominously. "And if you feel like getting away, why, you can go. You've enough money to get your nerves in order. South America, of course? I thought so. Go and be blessed! You've lost your nerve, and, so far as I am concerned, you're valueless. You're worse than that—you're a danger. We'll have a quick division, and then you can go—to the devil if you like."

Slowly he crossed to the broken man and stood looking down at him.

"But you go alone. I want a partner."

"Elsa?" gasped the other.

"Elsa," said Ralph Hallam. "I can talk her into my way of thinking. That will be easy. I want her, Maurice. She is altogether adorable. I don't blame you for wanting her. She is divine! But I want her, too. There is a whole world of happiness in that slim lady, Maurice!"

"But—but——" Tarn was looking at him, horror-stricken. Some solitary cell in his brain, where decency had once dwelt, was operating powerfully, "but you can't, Ralph! You're married—I

know that you're married. You can't marry Elsa!"

"I said nothing about marriage," said Ralph Hallam testily.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN IN THE ROOM.

IN the drive back to the office Elsa was in a quieter frame of mind and could think clearly. She had not told Hallam everything. He knew nothing, she thought, of her nightly ordeal, when, his study table littered with the bottles he had emptied, Maurice Tarn had talked and talked until her head reeled. She used to think his oblique references to matrimony, its advantages and compensations, were efforts of sheer loquacity. She understood now. Muddled and bemused, he was trying to prepare her for his monstrous proposal. Something was wrong—badly wrong. He did not drink so heavily in the old days. She checked a sigh, as the cab turned into Wood Street, and she tapped at the window to stop the machine before it reached the door of Amery's.

It was half past two when she hurried up the narrow stairs, hoping that her unpleasant employer had not rung for her. As she opened the door of her room, she saw a man sitting on a chair by the window. Though it was a warm day, he wore an overcoat, over the collar of which his black hair flowed. His back was toward her, for he seemed absorbed in his contemplation of the street below, and not until he heard the click of the closing door did he turn round suddenly and stand up. For a moment Elsa stared at him, open-mouthed. It was a Chinaman!

He was dressed in the height of fashion. His smartly cut overcoat was wasp-waisted; his striped gray trousers were rigidly creased; and over his enameled boots he wore a pair of white spats. The fashionable cravat, the neat gloves, all these things were European.

But the face! The fathomless black eyes, set behind lashless lids; the yellow face like wrinkled parchment; the bloodless lips; the protruding jaw—she had never seen anything quite so hideous; and, as though he read her thoughts, he said, in perfect English:

"Handsome is as handsome does. Feng Ho, bachelor of science—my card!" And, with a little bow, he handed her an oblong of pasteboard; which she took mechanically.

At that moment she became aware of a strange and lovely sound. It was the glorious note of a bird in song. Perched on a shelf was a cage of exquisite workmanship. Gold wire and colored glass combined to make the palace of the little songster a thing of rare beauty. Standing on the perch was a lemon-yellow canary, his thick throat throbbing in the song of his kind.

"How wonderful!" she breathed. "Where did it come from?"

Feng Ho grinned. "I brought him here. 'Pi' always accompanies me. In the street many people looked round, thinking it remarkable that a Chinese gentleman, a bachelor of science, should carry a common birdcage in his hand. But Pi needs the air. It is not good for a little bird to live all the time in rooms. Pi, unworthy and ugly little crow, sing your stupid song for the beautiful lady."

The bird had been momentarily silent, but now he burst again into a flood of melody that filled the drab room with golden sound.

"He is wonderful!" said Elsa again and looked from the bird to his owner.

The inscrutable eyes of the Chinaman were watching her.

"I am afraid I gave you rather a shock," he said, in his queer, mincing way. "You are probably not used to meeting Chinamen, Miss Marlowe."

She gasped. How did this creature know her name?

"You—you want to see Major

Amery?" she said, recovering her equilibrium.

"I have seen him. He asked me to wait a little while and to introduce myself when you came. I am afraid I shall be a frequent visitor."

She forced herself to smile. "You need not be afraid of that, Mr.—"

Should she call him Mr. Feng or Mr. Ho? Again he must have read her thoughts.

"Feng Ho is a compound name," he said, "and it is unnecessary to employ any prefix." He was looking complacently at his brand-new gloves, as he spoke, and then: "Major Amery has just come in."

She looked up at him quickly. "I didn't hear him," she said.

He nodded rapidly. "Yes, he is now walking across the room; he has stopped by the fireplace." He held his head erect in an attitude of listening. "Now he is at his desk, and he has picked up a paper. Did you not hear the rustle of it?"

She looked at him suspiciously. Was this wretched man, who had so easily assumed terms of equality, amusing himself at her expense?

"I hear everything," he said. "Now he is sitting in his chair. It creaked."

She walked to the door of the major's room and opened it. He was sitting at his desk; his hand was outstretched to touch the bell that summoned her when she looked in.

"Come in," he said brusquely. "You've met Feng Ho?"

He saw her flushed cheeks, and his lip lifted in that hateful smile of his.

"He has been giving you a demonstration of his hearing? That is his one vanity."

He looked round at the Chinaman. Feng Ho displayed the immense cavity of his mouth in a grin that stretched from ear to ear.

"Close the door, please," he said, and then, as she was about to obey, shutting

the Chinaman out, a string of unintelligible words came from his lips, and she saw Feng Ho hide his hands in his sleeves and bow.

"You may see a great deal of Feng Ho. On the other hand, you may not. Take this letter."

For the next quarter of an hour her fingers were flying over the pages of her notebook, for, when Amery dictated, he spoke at a speed that tried her ability to the limit. His words came like the staccato rattle of a machine gun, and the sentence ended as abruptly. She looked up, expecting to be dismissed, and found him looking at her.

"Feng Ho is Chinese," he said unnecessarily, then added, with a look of annoyance, when he saw her smile: "So many people mistake the Chinese for a neighboring nation." He paused and then went on slowly: "Soyoka, on the other hand, is a Jap, and Soyoka is a very good paymaster."

The name seemed familiar to her, but for the moment she could not remember where she had seen or heard it.

"A very excellent paymaster," he went on. "I think you might do better if you served him instead of this amateur crowd. Soyoka pays well."

His eyes did not leave her face, and he saw that she was still puzzled.

"Do you want me to leave you—Amery's?" she asked. "Who is Soyoka? I seem to have heard the name somewhere."

"Soyoka is a Japanese gentleman," he said, a hint of primness in his tone, "and a very powerful Japanese gentleman and a very rich Japanese gentleman. There are no"—he paused—"flies on Soyoka. And his friends are always willing to enlist the services of people who are likely to be of help. Soyoka would not object to engaging one who had been working for his competitors; in fact, he would welcome the opportunity. And, as I say, he is a very excellent paymaster."

She shook her head.

"You bewilder me, Major Amery. I really don't know who Soyoka is, and I don't think I should care to work for Eastern people."

He made no reply. Then:

"You can trust Feng Ho," he said unexpectedly. "He has all the virtues and none of the vices of the East. Most Chinamen are amiable souls, with a passion for song birds. If Feng Ho ever walks into this office, however, you may like Feng Ho. He improves upon acquaintance. A river pirate killed his father," he went on in his inconsequent way. "Feng Ho followed him into the mountains of Ningpo and brought back seven pirates' heads in a Gladstone bag. A queer fellow."

She was speechless with horror and amazement. "That—that little man?" she said incredulously. "How dreadful!"

"It's rather dreadful to have your father's throat cut," said the strange man coldly. And then, again going off at a tangent: "Feng Ho is death to Soyoka's rivals—remember that."

"Who is Soyoka?" she asked, a little exasperated. "You've made three references to him, Major Amery, and I may be dull, but I really can't see their application."

He did not reply; that was his most maddening and most offensive trick.

"What do you do with yourself on Sundays?" he asked abruptly.

For answer she rose and gathered up her notes.

"You will want these letters before the afternoon post, Major Amery," she said.

"You haven't answered me."

"I don't think that is a matter which really concerns you, does it?" she said with a touch of hauteur which she felt was absurd.

His fingers were beating a rapid tattoo upon his blotting pad.

"The private lives of my employees

are a matter of considerable interest to me," he said. "But, perhaps, it isn't the practice in this country to be too closely concerned. Only, it struck me that your cottage was rather isolated and very near the river; and there should be bars on the window of your room. It is rather too close to the ground, and any active man could jump up to the portico and be in your room before you could say knife."

Elsa sat down suddenly. How did this man know of Maurice Tarn's little week-end cottage on the upper reaches of the Thames? And yet he not only knew, but had examined the place so carefully that he had located the room in which she slept on her week-end visits; had even made calculations about the height of the window. It was unbelievable.

"I really don't understand you, Major Amery. There is something behind all these questions, and, frankly, I am not very easy in my mind about—about things."

She hated herself for this failing of hers; there was always a lame end to her sentences when she was speaking to this man. And then, to her amazement, he laughed. She had never seen him laugh before, and she gazed, fascinated. His whole aspect was changed, and for a second he was human; but, as suddenly as he had begun, he stopped, and his face was frozen again to a graven inexpressiveness.

"You must ask Feng Ho for one of his canaries; he has several. But, unless you promise to take the little bird for a walk every evening, as the Britisher takes his dog, he will not give you one. Thank you, that will do for the present."

Elsa came out of the office, her face flushed, her mind disordered, hesitating between anger and amusement. Feng Ho had gone. She wished he had left the canary behind; she needed some antidote to the sinister man.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. TRENE HALLAM'S CONSIDERATION.

FEW people who visited Mrs. Trene Hallam's expensively furnished flat in Herbert Mansions, associated her name with that of the prosperous young doctor of Half Moon Street; and those who, by coincidence, were acquainted with both, never for one moment supposed that this pretty, golden-haired woman, with her pale blue eyes and tight, hard mouth, was in any way related to that popular and pleasant man.

For a consideration Mrs. Hallam lived apart from her husband and claimed no relationship. She bred Pekingese dogs, was a member of two bridge clubs, and apparently was a lady of independent means. It was not likely that people would think of Doctor Hallam in her connection, for she was a daughter of the people, whose lack of education and refinement was sometimes only too painfully apparent.

She had married Hallam with the object of getting away from the tiny villa where he had lodged with her mother during the days when he was a student at St. Thomas'. The marriage had not been a happy one. Louise Hallam, to other failings, added a somewhat erratic conception of common honesty. She was a born pilferer, and not even her changed circumstances eradicated the habit. Twice Ralph Hallam had to pay heavily to avoid a scandal. Once this kleptomaniac had narrowly escaped arrest. Thereafter they had lived apart, and, for the "consideration" she now enjoyed, she was quite willing to remain in her present state for the rest of her life.

He was the rarest of visitors at Herbert Mansions, and the surprise she displayed when he was shown into the drawing-room, where she was taking her rest, with a cup of coffee by her side and a cigarette between her lips, was not wholly assumed.

"Welcome, stranger!" she said genially. "This is a sight for sore eyes. What's up?"

His expression was one of pain. "I wish you'd get out of that gutter habit," he said wearily.

She was eying him keenly and unresentfully. The taunt of her humble origin had not aroused her anger in years.

"What do you want?" she asked bluntly. "A divorce?"

He took out a cigarette and lit it before he answered.

"No, thank goodness, I've recovered from that folly! When I think of the fools I should have married if I'd divorced you when I wanted, I am grateful to you. You're my safety, Lou. Never divorce me!"

"You needn't fret," she said complacently, "I shan't. If I wanted to marry again it would be different, but I don't. One marriage is enough for little me! Ralph, what are you doing nowadays?"

"What do you mean—what am I doing?" he demanded.

"You're making money. I'm not complaining about that; but you're making big money, and I'm wondering how? You've increased my allowance, bless you! And when I asked you to buy me that little place in the country, you bought it without a kick. You're not doing that out of mamma's money. What is the dope?"

He started and looked at her suspiciously. "I'd like to know what you mean by that?" he asked.

She struggled to a sitting position, laughing.

"You're getting touchy, Ralph! What I meant was, how are you getting it? I can't imagine you committing a burglary, though I've always known there was nothing crooked you wouldn't do. It must be a safe swindle, because you don't look a day older than when I married you. Worry ages."

"Never you mind how I get my money," he said shortly. "I want you to do something to earn yours. I've made life pretty agreeable to you, haven't I, Lou?"

She shrugged her shoulders, and the tight mouth became a straight red line.

"I mistrust you when you start in to tell me all the things you've done for me," she said truthfully. "At the same time, I'll admit that you've never stinted me of money. What is the hook to this bit of bait?"

"You're a suspicious woman!" he said. "All I want from you is information. A few years ago you wanted to see the world, and I sent you to India."

She nodded, watching him. "Well?"

"You had a chance of meeting the very best people in India, and apparently you did. You came back with more jewelry than you took out—a diamond sunburst was one thing." She did not meet his eyes. "A rajah gave it to you—you were there a year. Did you ever meet a Major Paul Amery?"

She knit her brows.

"Amery? Why, yes, I think I met him. One of those reserved people who never speak, and you get an idea they're thinking a whole lot, until you know them better, and then you discover that they're worrying about their overdraft. Paul Amery? Why, of course! He was rather nice to me, now I come to think of it. Attached to the political service, isn't he?"

"That I don't know," said Ralph; "but if he was rather nice to you, and you're friendly with him, I'd like you to improve his acquaintance."

"Is he in London?"

He nodded.

"What do you want? Are you stringing him?"

"I'm not stringing him," said the other with elaborate patience, "if by stringing you mean——" He paused for a smile.

"Kidding," suggested his wife, light-

ing one cigarette from the glowing end of another. "I'm out of practice with that work, though I'll do anything to oblige a loving husband. Which reminds me, Paul, that my car has reached the museum stage. That Boyson woman has got a cute little car, one of the new kind——"

"We'll talk about that later," said her husband, with a touch of irritability. "The point is, will you go along and see this fellow? I have an idea he's engaged in a—er—an unpleasant business. At any rate, I want you to get acquainted with him. That's one thing."

"And the other?" Mrs. Hallam's eyes narrowed. "In my experience of you, Ralphie, it's the other thing that's most important. You always make a fuss about the least important job and pass the other over carelessly. What is it?"

Ralph rose with a laugh.

"It is nothing, really. Only Tarn's niece is having a little trouble with him. Tarn is the man I've told you about. The old fool wants to marry her, and I think it would be rather doing the girl a service to get her away for a day or two. I want you to invite her to come and stay with you, and you can be my sister-in-law for the occasion."

"Pretty?"

He nodded.

"I'll bet she is. And she thinks you are the wonderful boy—handsome Alec! And when she comes here, what happens? Do I go out when you visit? Or am I called away into the country?"

There was an ugly look on his face. "You get a little too fresh sometimes, Lou. I don't keep you to amuse me. There are four good theaters in town that I can go to when I want to laugh."

She waved him down. "Don't lose your temper! Tempers worry little sister! Write down her name and address. Have you spoken about me?"

He nodded.

"Yours to command," she said lazily.

"Now, what's the consideration, Ralph?"

"You can have your new car," he growled. "But I'm serious about Amery; it is necessary that you should see him. You can't miss the place; it's in Wood Street, the Amery building. And you'll see the girl, she's working in the office—her name is Elsa Marlowe. You can't very well mistake her, either, for she's a peach! And be careful with Amery; he's sharp!"

She smiled contemptuously.

"I've got a new gown from Poirer's that would take the edge off a razor," she said. "When do you want me to go?"

"To-day. You can speak to the girl; tell her you're my sister-in-law."

"And a widow. My departed husband will have to have been dead for a year or so, for that gown of mine is slightly on the joyous side."

She made no further reference to the girl, her future, or her fate. That was not the kind of "consideration" that ever troubled Mrs. Trene Hallam.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INDIAN ACQUAINTANCE.

THERE was a tap at the door, and, without moving her eyes from the notebook from which she was typing, Elsa said:

"Come in."

The faintest whiff of an exotic scent made her look round in surprise. The lady who stood in the doorway was a stranger to her. Elsa thought she was pretty in her thin and dainty way. The dress, she saw with an appraising woman's eye, was lovely.

"Is this Major Amery's office?"

The voice was not so pleasing; there was just the faintest hint of commonness. But she had no time to form an impression before, with a sweet smile, the woman came toward her, her gloved hand extended.

"Isn't this Elsa Marlowe?" she asked.

"That is my name," said Elsa, wondering who this unknown might be.

"I am Louise Hallam—Mrs. Trene Hallam. Ralph told me about you."

A light dawned upon Elsa.

"Oh, yes, of course—you're Ralph's sister-in-law?"

"Yes, I married his dear brother—such a sweet man," murmured Mrs. Hallam. "But much too good for this world!" She sighed and touched her eyes daintily with a little handkerchief, providentially at hand. "The good die young," she said. "He was thirty. A few years younger than Ralph, but, oh, such a sweet man! What a dear little office!" She beamed round approvingly to survey the uninspiring scene. "And how do you get on with Major Amery? I always thought he was such a perfectly lovely man when I met him in India. My dear husband took me there for a holiday."

She sighed again, but this time perhaps with a little more sincerity, for India held memories which were at once dear and dour.

"You know Major Amery?" said the girl eagerly. "What sort of a man is he—to meet, I mean?" she grew hot, as she realized that her eagerness might be misunderstood.

"A sweet creature," said Mrs. Hallam, and the description was so incongruous that Elsa could have laughed.

"I've called to see him, and I was killing two birds with one stone," Mrs. Hallam went on, and, with a roguish little smile and uplifted finger, she said: "I know a little girl who is coming to stay with me for a whole week!"

Elsa flushed and, for some reason which she could not fathom, hesitated.

"I don't know whether it will be possible, Mrs. Hallam," she began.

"It must be possible. I'm going to give you a really nice time. It was very stupid of Ralph not to tell me that he had such a charming friend. I would

have asked you over before. We'll do some theaters and concerts together, though concerts certainly bore me stiff—I mean, they bore me," she corrected herself hastily. "I will not take no for an answer. When can you come?"

Elsa thought rapidly.

"To-morrow?" Mrs. Hallam suggested.

She could not understand her own reluctance to accept an invitation which sounded so enticing.

"To-morrow I shall expect you."

Mrs. Hallam took a card from her case and laid it on the table.

"You shall have the dearest little room of your own. I'm all alone, and you won't be bothered with servants; it is a service flat. If you want anything, you just ring for it. I think you'll be very happy."

"I'm not so sure that my uncle can spare me," said Elsa, more loath to go than ever, now that she had practically accepted.

"Your uncle *must* spare you. And now I must see dear Major Amery. Would you tell him I am here?"

Elsa tapped at the door, and her employer's sharp voice answered her.

"Mrs. Trene Hallam to see you, Major Amery," said Elsa.

He stared up from his writing.

"Mrs. Trene Hallam to see me? Now isn't that nice of her? Shoot her in!"

Elsa opened the door for the woman and closed it behind her, as Major Amery rose slowly to greet the visitor who sailed across the room.

"You don't remember me, Major Amery?" she said, with a hint of coquetry in her pale blue eyes; a smile at once pleased and reproachful.

"Indeed, I remember you very well, Mrs. Hallam. Won't you sit down?"

"It was in Poona, I think," said Mrs. Hallam when she had settled herself. "Do you remember that delightful ball the governor gave—those glorious roses everywhere? Don't you remember what

a terribly hot night it was, and how they had great blocks of ice on the stairways?"

"Are you sending back Lady Mortel's diamond brooch?"

At the sound of that metallic voice the smile left the woman's face, and she sat up.

"I—I don't know what you mean," she faltered. "I—I really don't understand you."

"While you were the guest of Lady Mortel, a diamond sunburst was missed. A servant was arrested and tried for the theft; he went to prison for three years. The other night I saw you at the theater—I saw the brooch, too."

She went red and white.

"I really do not understand you, captain——"

"Major," he said laconically. "I have been promoted since. Hallam sent you here, of course?"

"Hallam? My husband is dead."

"That's news to me," he broke in. "He was alive when he left your flat at Herbert Mansions this afternoon. Street accident?"

"I think you're very horrid," she whimpered. She was no longer the urbane woman of the world. Under his merciless glance she seemed to cringe and shrink. It was as though the meanness of her had worn through the veneer which modiste and milliner had overlaid upon the hard and ugly substance of her soul.

"I thought you were a friend of mine. I would never have called on you if I'd known you could be so horrid."

"I'm not being horrid; I'm being truthful, though I admit that truth is pretty beastly," he said. "Why did you come here?"

"To call on you," she said. "Just to renew—to meet you again. I didn't expect——"

Again he checked her.

"Tell Hallam from me to find a new occupation. Tell him I am after his

blood, and I mean it! I want that amateur dope-running corporation out of my way."

"Dope running?" she gasped.

He nodded. "You didn't know? I wondered if he had told you. My last word to him is—git! You'll remember that?"

He had not resumed his seat, and now, leaning across the table, he jerked out his hand.

"Good-by, Mrs. Trene Hallam. Trene is your maiden name, if I remember rightly? Your mother lived in Tenison Street, Lambeth. Don't forget the message I have given you for your husband—git!"

It needed all her artistry to compose her face into a smile, as she passed into the outer office, pulling the door behind her.

"Such a dear, sweet man, but a little changed," she murmured and took the girl's hand in hers for a second. "You will remember, my dear?"

"I will try to come, but if I can't—"

"You must come," said Louise Hallam, and there was a sharp quality in her voice. "I will not take no."

She seemed in a hurry to leave, did not linger for another second; and all the way home she was wondering whether Major Amery and his secretary were on sufficiently good terms for him to take her into his confidence.

She had hardly left the room before Amery turned quickly and opened a door that led to a tiny room, which served as a clothespress and wash place. Its solitary occupant, who was sitting on an old trunk, rose, as the door opened, and came out into the office. The major held Mrs. Hallam's card between his two fingers.

"Go to this address some time tonight. Search the flat thoroughly. I want every document that you can find."

He spoke in the sibilant dialect of Canton, and Feng Ho was sufficiently Europeanized to nod.

"You must use no force, unless it is absolutely necessary. You may find nothing. On the other hand, you may get some valuable information. If necessary, you may be able to use the name of Soyoka to advantage. Go!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EXPLOIT OF FENG HO.

ELGIN CRESCENT was singularly unattractive to Elsa that night. She came by bus from the City to Trafalgar Square and walked the remainder of the way through the three parks. The crocuses were blooming; the trees were shooting out emerald-green buds; the early bushes were in full leaf; here and there she saw the beginning of rhododendron flowers, hard little sticky masses of an indescribable color that would presently set the park aflame. But, wherever her eyes roamed, her mind was completely absorbed, even to the exclusion of Maurice Tarn and his amazing proposal, in the strange man who had suddenly come into her workaday life. She did not even resent the companionship of the voluble Miss Dame, who had insisted upon coming home with her. Miss Dame lived at Notting Hill Gate, and her company could hardly be refused.

The speech might have been all on one side but for the fact that Jessie Dame chose, for her discourse, the subject of Elsa's thoughts.

"What I hate about him," said Miss Dame, with typical energy, "is his slinkiness. Have you ever noticed, Miss Marlowe, how he slinks around, wearing sneakers, too?"

"Sneakers? Oh, you mean his rubber shoes?"

"Sneakers is the word for them, and a very good word," said Miss Dame.

And yet, thought Elsa, the sinister man did not "slink." He was furtive, but not meanly furtive. You could not imagine a mean leopard or a mean lion

stalking his prey. The thought startled her. Was that the reason for his queer secretiveness? Was he stalking somebody? She dismissed the possibility with a smile.

"I'm getting romantic," she said.

"You *are* romantic," said Miss Dame decisively. "I've always said that you're wasted in an office; you ought to be in the pictures. You're svelte—that's the word—svelte. You'd be perfectly marvelous on the screen. I thought of going in for it myself, but only as a comic," she said with a sigh. "I'm not svelte enough."

Out of the corner of her eye Elsa caught a glimpse of the ungainly figure and agreed.

Mr. Tarn had not returned when she got to the *maisonnette*. They kept no servants; two daily helps came in, in the morning and in the evening, and from one of these she learned that he had telephoned to say that he would not be home until late, and that she was not to wait dinner for him. For this she was grateful, for she was not inclined to resume the conversation of the morning.

No. 409 Elgin Crescent consisted of two *maisonnettes*, a lower, comprising the ground floor and basement, and an upper, which her guardian occupied, comprising the remainder of the house. The study and dining room were on the first floor; she had the back room on the second floor, above the dining room, for a bed-sitting room; and to this safe harbor she retreated, just as soon as she had finished her dinner.

It was a pleasant little apartment, with a writing table, a dozen well-filled bookshelves, a cozy chair that she could draw up before the gas fire, and a tiny wireless set, which had filled so many long and dreary winter evenings with amusement.

She tried to read, but between her eyes and the printed page came the face of the sinister man, and the lifted lips sneered up at her so vividly and so in-

sistently that presently she closed the book with a crash. She wondered what this man did in the evenings. He had a club, perhaps. She remembered that Ralph had told her he had seen him there. Perhaps he went to theaters. What sort of plays would arouse him from his ingrained cynicism? Had he any relations or friends? In a way she felt a little sorry for him, just as the sight of a prison would arouse sorrow for its undeserving occupants.

She fitted the headpieces and heard part of "Aïda" relayed from the Opera House, and she found herself speculating as to whether he would be in the audience. At this evidence of imbecility she viciously tugged off the headpieces and prepared for bed. She was undressing when she heard the blundering steps of Mr. Tarn on the stairs and the bang of his study door as he closed it. At any rate he could not bother her that night. She said her prayers, turned out the light, and jumped into bed, and in a few minutes she fell into the sweet, sound sleep which is youth's greatest, but least appreciated, blessing.

She was not a heavy sleeper, but, if she had been, the sound would have awakened her. The room was in complete darkness. She could hear the ticking of the clock on the mantel, and, for the rest, silence reigned in the house.

What was it? She sat up, trying to recall the noise that had awakened her. It came again, but this time it could not have been so loud—a faint, snapping sound, which came from the window.

Slipping out of bed, she pulled aside the curtains. The fading moon still bathed the world in its eerie radiance and reflected evilly from a glittering something that lay on the window sill.

She threw up the window and, with a cry of astonishment, took the thing in her hand. It was a dagger, and the handle was inscribed in Chinese characters!

CHAPTER IX.

"MAYFAIR 10016."

A KNIFE! Who left it there? She had to remove the wedge which kept the upper sash of her window in place, before she could lift the lower and look out. For a second she saw nothing, and then she understood.

A builder's long ladder had been reared against the wall, and the explanation of the midnight visit was now clear. The top of the ladder reached within two feet of her window, and, as she looked, she saw a dark figure slide down to the ground, pause for a moment, and look up before it vanished in the shadow of the big tree. In that space of time she saw the face distinctly—it was Feng Ho!

What should she do?

"I ought to scream, I suppose," she said to herself, but never felt less like screaming, although she had had a bad scare.

She turned on the light and looked at the clock. It was half past three. Mr. Tarn would be in bed, and he was the last person she wanted to arouse. Pulling on her dressing gown and slippers, she went out of the room and down the dark stairs to the dining room, the windows of which were shuttered and barred. Here she made herself tea with an electric kettle and sat down to consider what she should do next.

Feng Ho! She frowned at the thought. "You will see a great deal of Feng Ho," Amery had said, and her lips twisted in a smile. At any rate, she did not wish to see a great deal of Feng Ho in circumstances similar to those in which he had made his appearance that morning.

And then came to her a wild and fantastic idea. It was the sight of the telephone on the sideboard that gave it to her. Major Amery occupied his uncle's house in Brook Street.

She put the thought from her, only

to turn to it again. Presently she went in search of the telephone directory and found it in her uncle's study. The place reeked with the smell of brandy, and for a moment she felt physically sick and hurried out with the thick volume under her arm.

Yes, there it was—"Amery, Major P., 97b Brook Street. Mayfair 10016." He would be in bed and asleep. The prospect of rousing him filled her with malicious joy, and she lifted the hook and waited. It was a long time before the operator answered, but within a few seconds of his answering her signal, she heard a click and a sharp voice demanded:

"Who is that?"

Elsa's lips twitched. "Is that Major Amery?" she asked sweetly.

"Yes. What do you want, Miss Marlowe?"

He had recognized her voice! The discovery took her breath away, and for a moment she was unable to proceed.

"I—we've just had a visit from a friend of yours," she said, a little wildly. "At least, he didn't come in!"

"A friend of mine? You mean Feng Ho?"

His coolness was staggering.

"Of course I mean Feng Ho. He was trying to get in through the window of my room," she said, her anger rising.

"Your room?" came the quick response. "You mean your bedroom?"

"That is the only room I have," she said, and there was a silence at the other end of the phone.

After a while he spoke. "You must have been mistaken. It could not have been Feng Ho," said his voice. "He is with me now. One Chinaman looks very much like another to the uninitiated eye. I'm sorry you have been frightened."

The last words came in a different tone. He had explained her error hurriedly, which was not like him. She

knew it was useless to argue the matter on the telephone.

"I'm sorry I got you out of bed," she said.

"Are you scared?"

Was she mistaken in imagining an undercurrent of anxiety and concern in his voice?

"No, I was startled."

Another silence.

"Does Mr. Tarn know?"

"No, he is asleep; I haven't wakened him, unless I'm waking him now. I'm sorry I bothered you. Good night."

"Wait," he said sharply. "You are sure you're not frightened?"

"Of course I'm not frightened, Major Amery. You're for ever thinking that I'm frightened," she said, with a smile, remembering the conversation of the morning.

Was it a quiet laugh she heard? Apparently not, for there was no laughter in his voice when he said, with his customary brusqueness:

"Good night. Go back to bed."

How like him to finish that strange conversation with a peremptory order, she thought, as she hung up the telephone. At that moment Maurice Tarn, with an old dressing gown huddled about him, came blinking into the light.

"What's wrong?" he asked harshly.

"What are you doing here, telephoning at this hour of the morning? Whom were you talking to?"

"I was talking to Major Amery."

"Amery!" he squeaked. "Major Amery? What were you telling him?"

He was terrified, and in his agitation gripped her wrist with such force that she cried out.

"I'm sorry," he muttered. "What is it all about, Elsa?"

"I was merely telling Major Amery that I caught a friend of his to-night trying to get in through my window."

For a moment he could not grasp her meaning.

"Who was it?"

"I don't know—a Chinaman."

"A Chinaman!" he screamed. "A friend of Amery's, trying to get in!"

In as few words as possible she told him all she had seen, and he listened, his teeth chattering.

"Oh, my Lord!" he said, his hand on his brow. "A Chinaman! Had a knife, had he? You're sure about the knife?"

"He may have only been using it to open the window," said the girl, astounded at the extraordinary effect which the news had upon her relative. She had never seen a man in such an abject condition of fear. By the time she had finished, his pallid face was streaming with perspiration.

"You phoned Amery?" huskily.

"What did he say?"

"That it wasn't Feng Ho."

"He's a liar! It was the Chinaman, who came into the office to-day. I just saw him—Feng Ho! Elsa, that's my finish! They'll be watching for me now—every port."

"What is the matter, Mr. Tarn?" she asked, frightened in spite of herself by the terror of the man. "Have you done something——"

"Don't talk, don't talk." He waved her to silence. "I don't want to discuss it, I tell you. I was expecting this." He dived his hand into the pocket of his tattered dressing gown and drew out a long-barreled revolver. "But they'll not get me, Elsa!"

The hand that held the pistol shook so violently that she was in some fear that it would explode by accident, and she was relieved when he put it back in his pocket.

"Paul Amery, curse him! I could tell you something about Amery—not now, not now! I'm going into my study."

He rushed out, and she heard the key turn in the lock, and then, through the thin partition which separated the dining room from the study, there came the clink of glass against glass. Mr. Tarn was fortifying himself against the

terrors which the remaining hours of darkness might hold.

CHAPTER X.

MR. TARN MAKES A WILL.

MR. TARN was not at breakfast the next morning; she would have been surprised if he had been. His door was still locked, and only after repeated hammerings did his sleepy voice growl an intimation that he would be out in a few minutes. Elsa hurried her breakfast and was successful in leaving the house before Tarn made an appearance.

She was anxious to get to the office and curious as to what explanation Amery would offer. She might have guessed that he would offer none. When, at half past nine, his bell summoned her, she went to meet a man who certainly bore no appearance of having spent the night out of bed. He met her with his characteristic lack of greeting and plunged straightway into his letters, firing across the table magazine after magazine of words, to be caught and recorded. It was not until she was leaving that he made any reference to their conversation of the early morning.

"Didn't you call me up in the night? I have a dim recollection of the circumstances."

"I had almost forgotten," she said coolly, and his face twitched.

"Possibly you were dreaming," he said. "But it is a dream which will never come true—again. When Feng Ho comes, ask him to tell you the story of his finger."

"His finger?" she repeated, surprised in spite of herself.

"His little finger. You broke yours at school, playing hockey. Ask him how he lost his."

"I didn't know he'd lost a finger."

"Ask him," he said, and his head jerked to the door.

She wished he would find another way of telling her that she could go.

It was nearly lunch time when Feng Ho came, as dapper as ever, his coat spotless, his trousers even more rigidly creased, his white spats exchanged for articles of bright yellow leather; his umbrella and his hat were in one hand, and in the other the gilded cage, with a dignified canary balancing itself on the central perch.

He greeted the girl with a grin.

"My unworthy little bird has been sick all night. I have been sitting by his side, feeding him with sugar—from midnight till six o'clock this morning. And now he is better and will sing for us. Pi"—he addressed the yellow songster—"open your hideous little beak and emit unmusical noises for this honorable lady."

"Feng, you are not telling the truth," said Elsa severely. "You weren't sitting up all night with your bird."

The little man looked at her, blandly innocent. Then he turned his melancholy eyes to the bird.

"Little Pi, if I am lying, do not sing; but if I am speaking the truth, then let your ugly little throat produce contemptible melody."

And, as though he understood, the loyal little bird burst into a torrent of sunny song. Mr. Feng Ho smiled delightedly.

"It is a peculiar and noteworthy fact," he said, with his best European manner, "that has been observed by every seeker after truth, from Confucius to Darwin, that the animal world—by which I refer to the world of vertebrate mammals—are the living embodiment of truth and the chief exponents of veracity. I will now, with your gracious permission, sit down and watch your vivacious fingers manipulate the keyboard of your honorable typewriter—to employ the idiom of our neighbors, but not friends, the Nipponese."

He sat patiently, practically without a movement, except to turn his eyes from time to time to the bird, and there

seemed some strange understanding between these two, for no sooner did Feng Ho's slit of a mouth open in a smile than the bird seemed to rock with musical laughter.

Miss Dame came in, while Elsa was typing, dropped her jaw at the first view of the Chinaman, but graciously admitted that the canary was the best song bird she had ever heard.

"It must be a gentleman bird," she said. "Gentleman birds always sing better than lady birds. And why shouldn't they? They've got less responsibility, if you understand me."

She glanced coldly at the Chinaman, as he nodded his agreement.

"If you've got to lay eggs, you can't find time for keeping up your singing. Excuse me, do you know Sessuwaka?" This to Feng Ho, who expressed his grief that he had never heard of the gentleman.

"He's the model of you," said Miss Dame, glaring at him. "Slightly better looking, if you'll excuse my rudeness, but that's probably the paint and powder he puts on his face. You've never seen him in 'The Bride of Fuji Yama'—that's a mountain?"

The explanation was necessary because Miss Dame pronounced it "fujjy yammer."

"You've missed a treat," she said regretfully when he shook his head. "He was simply marvelous, especially when he committed—what's the word?—haki raki?"

Elsa refused to assist her and paused in her work with such point that Miss Dame was conscious of the interruption she had produced, and retired.

"A very pretty young lady," said Feng Ho, and Elsa, who thought he was being sarcastic, was prepared to snub him, but his next words demonstrated his sincerity. "The Eastern view differs considerably from the Western view. I can tell you that, speaking with authority, as a bachelor of science."

She wondered what special authority this particular bachelorhood conferred when it came to a question of judging looks, but wisely she did not pursue the topic.

When she got to the office she had found a note from Miss Trene Hallam. It would have been a letter from anybody else, for it occupied two sheets of notepaper; but Mrs. Hallam's caligraphy was not her strong point. The lettering was enormous, and ten words a page was a generous average.

You will come to-night at seven. I will have dinner ready for you, and I will drive you every morning to your office.

There was a postscript.

Please don't tell Major Amery that you are staying with me. He may think I have some reason.

The postscript annoyed her, though why she did not know. Perhaps it was the assumption that she would tell Major Amery anything about her private affairs.

She only saw her uncle for a few minutes. Coming in from luncheon, she had to pass his door, which was open, and she saw him sitting at his table and would have gone on if he had not called her back.

"Shut the door," he growled. "I've been to see my lawyer on a certain matter, and I've made my will."

This was rather surprising news. She had never thought of her uncle as a man of means, or having property to dispose of, and she could only utter a commonplace about the wisdom of taking such a precaution.

"He's a shrewd fellow is Nigitts," he said, "very shrewd. And remarkably well up in the matter of"—he cleared his throat—"criminal law. The most one can get in this country for a certain offense is two years, and Nigitts says one would probably get away with less, if a statement was made voluntarily."

She wondered what on earth he was

talking about. Had he been drinking? His face was flushed, his eyes heavy with want of sleep, but from her own experience she thought he was sober.

"I've had to give the matter a whole lot of thought—there are other people besides me involved in this business," he said; "but I thought you'd like to know that I'd improved the shining hour"—his attempt to be jovial was pathetic—"and I've left you a little bit of money, although I don't suppose you will touch it for years. Would you like to be rich, Elsa?"

He looked at her from between his narrowed lids.

"I suppose everybody would like to be rich," smiled the girl.

"You'd like to be good and happy, eh? Like the girl in the storybook?" he sneered. And then: "What has Amery been doing all the morning?"

"Working," she said.

"Nothing unusual?"

She shook her head.

"I'd like to take a look at some of his letters, Elsa. Anyway, I'm in the business, and Major Amery has no secrets from me. Where do you keep the copy file?"

"Major Amery keeps his own copies in the safe," she said.

He played with a blotter.

"I don't see why you shouldn't slip in a second carbon?" he suggested.

There was no profit in discussing the matter with him.

"I can't do that—you know very well I can't. It would be dishonest and mean, and I'd rather leave Amery's than do it."

"You like him, eh?"

"I loathe him," she said frankly, and his face brightened.

"That's the kind of talk I like to hear, little girl. He's a swine, that fellow! There's nothing anybody could do to a man like him that could be called mean."

"I am the 'anybody' concerned, and

there are some things I will not do," she said and walked out.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SYNDICATE.

THERE were times when Ralph Hallam's mind went back to the days of romance, and conspirators, cloaked and masked, met in underground cellars to plan their dark deeds. Certainly there was the advantage of safety in that picturesque method, and Ralph played safe all the time. Such meetings gave to the leaders an anonymity which must have been very comforting.

This thought occurred to him, as he went slowly up the stairs that led to No. 3, the largest of the private dining rooms that the Café Fornos had to offer to its clients. For luncheon these rooms are very seldom taken, but once a month Doctor Hallam gave a little party, where business men could meet, discuss politics, theaters, the contemporary events of sport, and, when the coffee and liquors were served, and cigar cases came to light, and when, moreover, the waiters had withdrawn, the peculiar business which brought them together.

As Ralph stood in the doorway, smiling and nodding to the waiting guests, he decided that he had never seen an assembly that looked less like a meeting of conspirators. They were stoutish business men, lovers of good living, middle-aged, slightly or completely bald; men in the sober habiliments of their class. Jarvie of Birmingham greeted him warmly and looked past him, seemingly expecting a companion.

"The old man couldn't get away," said Hallam easily. "He's not particularly well."

He shook hands with the half dozen guests and took his seat. No. 3 had an outer and an inner door, and when at last the waiter had placed his cigar boxes and liquor bottles on the buffet

and had withdrawn, Hallam walked to the doors, turned the key on both, and came back to his chair.

Instantly the company relaxed, and the atmosphere changed. It was as though, for the past hour, everybody had been playing a part, and all that had been said and done was an act from a dull comedy.

Without preamble Hallam spoke.

"There are three new consignments, the largest in London, the second largest at Hull——"

"Bonded or through the customs?" somebody asked.

"Out of bond, of course," replied Hallam. "Jarvie, you will arrange the distribution. It is consigned to Stanford's Birmingham address. The second came into Avonmouth yesterday and goes forward to Philadelphia."

"What about this Greek they caught at Cleveland?" asked Jarvie, and it was clear that this question was on the lips of the whole company, for there followed a babble of questions.

"You need not worry about him, and the story of the American police tracing a doctor and a City merchant is all bunk. Some imaginative American reporter invented that. No, that isn't our trouble. Bickerson——"

"Hasn't anybody tried to straighten Bickerson?" asked a voice. "A couple of thousand would put him quiet."

Ralph shook his head.

"I know Bickerson; he's not that kind. And if you straightened him, he'd slack down, and the higher-up people would put another man into the case, and he'd have to be straightened," said Hallam. "The only man you need worry about is Tarn, who is getting cold feet. And Soyoka," he added.

There was a glum silence at this. Soyoka was the specter that walked at every man's elbow, the terror of the unknown. They were business men, each with his little bolt hole, his alibi, his ready explanation if the police by

accident hit upon his story, and behind each was a reputation for commercial integrity that could not be gainsaid. Moral considerations did not concern them. That they were marketing a vile poison that wrecked men and women and drove them to insanity, hardly counted. They were marketing a commodity which paid enormous profits, and for which there was an increasing demand.

"Soyoka?"

Jarvie took his cigar from his mouth, looked at it thoughtfully, and put it back. He was a heavy-browed man, with a fringe of hair above his collar and a shining head.

"There's room for Soyoka," he said.

"So I think," nodded Hallam, "but he doesn't share the view that there is room for two. Now I'm going to tell you fellows something. Old Tarn is certain that his boss is either Soyoka or Soyoka's leading agent!"

"His boss? Who is he?" asked Jarvie, scowling at his chief.

"Major Amery."

Ralph saw the eyes of the beetle-browed man open wide.

"Amery?" he said incredulously. "Not Paul Amery?"

"Why, do you know him?" demanded the other.

Mr. Jarvie was whistling softly.

"Paul Amery! I wonder if it's the same? It's not Paul Amery of the Indian political service, by any chance? The man who got into trouble at Shanghai?"

In his excitement Ralph pushed back his chair from the table.

"Let us hear this," he said. "You've got the man right enough. Do you know him?"

Jarvie shook his head.

"No, I don't know him, but one of my managers knew him very well. We have a branch house in Shanghai; we export Brummagem goods and that kind of truck; and my manager, who came

back a year ago on sick leave, was full of him. He is not by any chance connected with Tarn's firm, is he?"

"He is Amery & Amery," said Ralph. "His uncle left him the business some time back."

Again Mr. Jarvie whistled.

"I only know what my man told me. It appears that Amery was lent by the Indian government to the board of control, or whatever they call it, in Shanghai. In Shanghai, as you probably know, there are three or four millionaire families that have made their money out of opium smuggling and running guns to the rebels. He was sent up to keep an eye upon the arms gang, but got into the opium commission and had to leave suddenly. I don't know the right of it, but my man says he was caught in the act of passing out opium. There was a tremendous scandal and a veiled reference to the case in the Shanghai press, but, of course, no reference to Amery, because these Europeans in Shanghai are pretty clannish. All that was known was that his name was taken off the roll of members of the French Club, and he disappeared by the first mail boat. It was the gossip of the place that he was working with Soyoka, who has a pretty vivid reputation in the China Sea. There was also talk of his having knifed a Chinese policeman who was going to give him away. They say he's better than the best knife thrower that ever starred in a circus. Learned it up in Nepal, and he never carries any other weapon. It works silently, and in his hands very effectively. What makes Tarn think he's Soyoka?"

"Something he said to him," replied Ralph, "some threat of his. If he is Soyoka's man——"

"If he is Soyoka's man," interrupted Mr. Jarvie, "he's more dangerous than a bagful of rattlesnakes." He looked meditatively at Ralph. "Isn't there a way you could fix a fellow like that?" he asked.

"How do you mean—fix?" demanded Ralph bluntly, conscious that the curious eyes of the party were on him.

"I don't mean anything illegal," said Mr. Jarvie virtuously, and he again examined his inspiring cigar. "But I think, if a fellow like that had a bit of a shock—well, he'd go carefully and probably save us a few uncomfortable minutes."

This was evidently generally agreed. Somebody at the far end of the table murmured:

"Not illegal, of course," though his tone hardly convinced.

"There is only one way to stop Soyoka, if he is Soyoka," said Ralph coldly, "and that is to put him beyond the power of troubling us. Does anybody mean that?"

Nobody apparently did mean that, for the company murmured a soothing denial.

"No, what I mean," said Jarvie, who hesitated so long that apparently he was not quite sure of what he did mean, "is that, if he can't be straightened, he ought to be frightened."

He puffed at his cigar and looked up at the ceiling.

"I don't know much about London; I'm a provincial man myself; but I'm told that there are places in this town where you could hire a man to beat up your own grandmother for a ten-pound note. Personally I do not approve of violence; it is foreign to my nature. But there must be people who—ah, could scare—that is the word, scare—Amery."

It was four o'clock when the luncheon party broke up, and Ralph went downstairs alone. In the vestibule he saw a very plump, pleasant-looking gentleman being helped on with his greatcoat. At first he could not believe the evidence of his eyes, and then, glancing through the doorway, he saw a very sedate Rolls draw slowly up to the curb and a footman alight and open the door.

"Why, Tupperwill," he said, "you're in a strange part of London!"

Mr. Tupperwill, proprietor of Stebbing's Banking Corporation, looked round leisurely. Every movement of his was deliberate, and his round blue eyes lit up in a stare of recognition.

"My dear doctor," he murmured, "extraordinary—most extraordinary! A queer place for Stebbing's indeed—a very queer place!"

In the City of London, Stebbing's Bank was respected without being considered. A survival of one of those private banking corporations that had come into existence in the early part of the eighteenth century, its business was comparatively small, and its clientele extremely select. Stebbing's had resisted the encroachments of the great joint stock companies and maintained its independence largely on the tradition established by its founder, who in the early days of the firm had gone to prison for contempt of court, rather than produce books which would have incriminated one of his clients. For generations men with great names kept private accounts at Stebbing's—accounts which their confidential secretaries never scanned; for even the owners of great names have affairs and businesses of a peculiarly private kind, and Stebbing's flourished by its very secrecy.

Mr. Tupperwill, its present proprietor, was wont to boast that he had not an employee under the age of fifty, though he himself was on the breezy side of thirty-five, a stout, youthful-looking man, with a large face, many chins, and hands of exceeding plumpness.

"Heavy luncheons are anathema to me." He put his hand in his pocket, pulled out a little pile of silver, and, selecting sixpence, handed it to the unsatisfied cloakroom attendant with a benevolent smile. "*Anathema maranatha!* But some of my clients are rather sybaritic. Sybarite, as you probably know, is the name given to the

people of Sybaris, an ancient town of Greece, the citizens of which were given to self-indulgence and luxury."

He said this with an air of revealing a mystery which hitherto had not been made public. This passion for passing on information was one of his characteristics, and it may be said that, in nine cases out of ten, he really did convey information to the City men with whom he was mostly brought into contact.

Ralph had his private account with Stebbing's, and in a way he could claim a sort of friendship with the banker, who was a member of two of his clubs. If he had one drawback, it was his mild interest in medicines, a source of embarrassment to Ralph, who had almost forgotten his early training.

The fat man sighed heavily as he pulled on his gloves.

"A glass of milk and a few crackers constitute my normal lunch, and I shudder to contemplate the effect that lobster mayonnaise would have upon my system. You're not coming my way?"

Ralph was walking with him to the open door of his car.

"No, I'm not coming your way, though I shall be in your neighborhood to-morrow or the next day."

Mr. Tupperwill shivered.

"I commiserate with you," he said. "The City lacks æstheticism—a cult which, as you may know——"

He stopped suddenly, looked along the crowded sidewalk, and his fat chin wagged downward.

"The cosmopolitan character of our streets at this period of the year is always to me a fascinating and interesting feature."

Following the direction of his eyes, Ralph saw a man standing on the edge of the curb, a slim little man, in a gray felt hat and violent yellow gloves. His face turned at that moment.

"A Chinaman!" said Hallam in surprise.

"A Chinaman," agreed the other

soberly, "one Feng Ho, the bodyguard and confident of one Major Amery, an astonishing gentleman."

Before Ralph had recovered from his astonishment sufficiently to ask what the banker knew of Paul Amery, the glistening car was threading its way through the traffic, on its way to the unæsthetic purlieu of Old Broad Street.

The Chinaman was looking steadfastly toward him, but made no move to approach, and presently, when Ralph began to walk in his direction, he turned and moved swiftly away and was lost to sight in the crowd.

Feng Ho, Amery's man! It was the first time Ralph had heard of the Chinaman, and he wanted to get a closer view of him. If all that he had heard that day was true——

But Feng Ho had disappeared, and, looking at his watch, Ralph remembered that he had promised to make a call on his wife. He was paying the cabman at the entrance of Herbert Mansions when, looking round, he saw another cab stop a little distance down the road. A man got out. It was Feng Ho!

Ralph did not hesitate. He went toward the second cab, and the Chinaman awaited his coming with an expressionless face.

"I want a word with you, my friend."

Feng Ho's head bent slightly.

"When I came out of the Fornos a quarter of an hour ago, you were standing on the sidewalk, obviously watching me. Not content with that, you have followed me here. Now what is your little game?"

Feng Ho's grin was as expansive as it was unsightly.

"Little game? I have no little game," he said blandly. "I merely come this

way; perhaps to-morrow I go some other way."

"You're making a call—where?" asked Ralph roughly.

Feng Ho lifted his thin shoulders in a shrug.

"That is not good English politeness," he said. "There is a policeman," he nodded in the direction of a patrol. "Perhaps you will send for him and say 'Take this Chinaman and put him in the cooler. His name is Feng Ho; he is a bachelor of science, and he has followed me.' Mr. Hallam, you cannot go anywhere in London without following somebody."

"Why do you follow me?" asked Hallam, ignoring the logic of the statement.

Again that little shrug.

"I am bachelor of science, interested in phenomena. My specialty is crime! Not only do I like to attend the court when a man comes up before the judge and hear the story, but I wish to see the crime when it is committed. A depraved and morbid ambition, Mr. Hallam, but you, as doctor of medicine, will understand."

"What crime do you expect to see here?" asked Hallam, watching him narrowly.

"Murder," was the startling reply.

"Murder!" Ralph wondered if the man were joking, but there was no trace of a smile on his immobile face.

"Murder," repeated Feng Ho, his face beaming. "When Soyoka kills you, I desire to be near, so that I may see ingenious methods employed. That he may kill that antediluvian gentleman Tarn, is possible, or sprightly Miss Marlowe, but that he will inevitably and completely kill *you*, you shall find!"

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.



Simon Trapp Returns By Roy W. Hinds

Author of "Execution Island," "The Slim Chance," etc.

THEY came from the length and breadth of the city, but chose their time and means of approach so as not to attract attention. There were nimble-fingered pickpockets; clever penmen who signed other men's names to checks; fleet-footed purse snatchers and daylight prowlers who flitted in and out of hallways and vestibules; confidence men who talked convincingly of Wall Street connections and dressed the part; women, young and old, who plucked wealth from the counters of department stores; men skilled in the arts of plying a jimmy, of swinging open a safe door, by violence or the more gentle method of outwitting the combination by the touch system, of inducing cashiers and bank messengers to stand and deliver—all these, and many others, to a total number when finally they were assembled of seventy-eight noses—including the red, potato-shaped nose of Dave Blake, the burglar.

From all points of the compass they came, but, being wise, they pursued their way quietly and without ostentation, with eyes ever alert for a wandering plain-clothes man. They came singly for the most part—at intervals of a minute, two minutes, three minutes, a half hour, though there were a few who came in couples, such as Bertie Ray, the dapper pickpocket, and his moll, Bessie Quinn, dainty and demure, who certainly knew how to wear the ex-

pensive stuff she acquired when the eyes of saleswomen were averted.

The gathering touched every note in the scale of the city's underlife, for Montague Beamish, the aristocrat of the confidence game, was there with his handsome wife, who had achieved fame and the honor of a lengthy page in the record book at police headquarters, as "Contralto" Madge, on account of the soft, alluring tones with which she drew rich "chumps" into the traps laid by Mr. Beamish and his talented friends.

The seventy-eight also included "Carryall" Tucker, the housebreaker, a man of tremendous strength, with cropped red hair and a blunt, melancholy countenance, who wore a cheap, baggy suit, a rubber collar and a necktie which had been knotted in the factory seven years previously, and who had earned his sobriquet by bearing away plunder of great weight and bulk. It is said that he once made off with an antique table and two chairs, carrying the great burden himself nearly a mile to the shop of a "fence." Carryall Tucker was there with his wife, a red-faced woman with a shawl about her shoulders, who, as a housemaid in her younger days, had made things easy for the enterprising housebreaker. Mrs. Carryall Tucker stared at the gorgeous hat worn by Contralto Madge, but found time at intervals to reproach Mr. Tucker for the unblinking constancy

with which he regarded demure Bessie Quinn.

The seventy-eight reached the seclusion of their meeting place without advertising their presence or their mission. The point of their disappearance from the street did not draw attention as a place of assemblage. Each and every one was extraordinarily gifted in subterfuge and the stratagems of deception.

The policeman on the beat sauntered by in blissful ignorance of the fact that seventy-eight rich prizes were within the four walls of a shabby building; that he had but to send in a call for the police reserves to achieve for himself enduring fame in the police history of the city, and promotion beyond his fondest dreams. The policeman stopped next door to chat with Tony and to eat a few of Tony's peanuts, and then went on. He had rubbed elbows with the chance of a lifetime, but was never to know it.

The seventy-eight waited within the pawnbroking establishment of Simon Trapp, in Broome Street—waited with a pleasant air of reunion and anticipation.

They had the pawnshop and the four living rooms at the rear in which to roam. The shutters were up at the windows and door in front; at the rear, the shades were drawn. The time was about eight o'clock in the evening. There were lights, but so skillfully had the shutters and shades been fashioned that no gleam sifted outside. There was conversation, laughter even, but things went on in such a guarded and subdued manner that none outside would suspect that the pawnshop was not a respectable place of business shuttered and closed for the night.

There was a smell of coffee in the place. In the methodical and ever-vigilant way of their kind, the guests had arranged their things, hats, wraps, sticks, so that they could regain them

without the slightest confusion in case of necessity. They trod the floors softly and easy. Groups mingled and intermingled in friendly intercourse, friendships were renewed, others formed, and smoke grew denser and denser. A handsomely-gowned shoplifter sat on a sofa and made a fuss over a snub-nosed poodle, from which she was inseparable, while Mrs. Carryall Tucker, mother of seven children, sniffed disdainfully.

"Puggie" Rooks, a protégé of Simon Trapp, a youth whom the old pawnbroker had taken from the gutters of the East Side, moved among the guests with coffee, cigars and cigarettes. Montague Beamish, the confidence man, glanced at his watch and addressed Puggie.

"Simon is due any minute now, isn't he, Puggie?"

"Yes, sir. His train's in now, if it's on time."

Mr. Beamish's calm gray eyes roamed over the rooms. He smiled. "Simon will be surprised, to see so many old friends all at once," he said. "How long has he been away, Puggie?"

"A year—and a few days over," the young man replied, "and I'm glad he's gittin' back, I tell yuh!"

"No doubt, no doubt. You've been pretty busy, I suppose."

"That ain't no name for it. I c'n run the pawnshop all right, but—but— Well, yuh know what I mean, Mr. Beamish—the old man's other bus'ness. I git kinda mixed up on that. Things is in bad shape—good thing he's gittin' back."

"Yes," Montague Beamish agreed. "It's a good thing, for every one here."

"Indeed it is, sir!"

The news spread that it was past time for Simon Trapp's train. The air of expectancy heightened. Quiet voices grew even quieter. The slightest sound from the street was a signal for alert watchfulness. Smiles broadened, and

the spirits of all grew more cheerful. The return to New York and to business of Simon Trapp, the Broome Street pawnbroker, was an important event in the underworld of the city, as every one there knew.

One who had been a captain of crime for so many years could not withdraw without leaving more or less disorganization. There is nothing quite so profitable as organized crime, and Simon Trapp had organized things on a scale that provided for every angle of the game. He planned, he assembled crews, he set them to work, he provided tools and all the accessories, he provided channels for the disposal of loot, he saw to it that nothing was left undone to rescue a man or woman who fell into the clutches of the law—even to following them into prison and providing the instruments of escape, if all legal means failed.

He was the head and genius of a vast organization. His business was founded on scientific principles. He realized that organization was the secret of success in all fields of endeavor. He organized. He conducted schools in efficiency. He trained criminals with all the precision that a great police department trains detectives.

But a year previously Simon Trapp had retired. He had been ill. He went to the far West, and there set himself to the task of recovering his health with all the energy that characterized his other pursuits. He refused absolutely to mix in affairs back home. Implying letters got no more than feeble response from him. The quieter he remained, the sooner he would be back on the job, with his old-time vigor. None knew that better than Simon Trapp.

And now he was returning. The news had spread, and seventy-eight of his friends had gathered to bid him welcome—and incidentally to learn what the old man had in mind. It was a

great day for them, and a sad day for the peace and quiet of New York.

Simon Trapp would come alone.

No one was to meet him at the railway station. This was his own wish, and in keeping with his policy of unostentation.

A taxicab drew up at the door. Puggie Rooks was already on the lookout there, and, while the guests waited quietly in the rear rooms, he helped get the old man's baggage into the shop. The door was closed again, locked—and the joy of Puggie Rooks was given vent.

Simon Trapp was much improved in health. There was a healthy freshness in his cheeks and renewed light in his old eyes.

"Oh my, oh my!" the pawnbroker exclaimed. "You shouldn't be so excited, Puggie. It's only me got back." He took in the pawnshop in a searching, comprehensive glance. "Looks good to me, the old place, but—" A question leaped into his eyes. He went on: "I smell a lot of tobacco smoke—thick smoke. Who is it that should be smoking so much, Puggie?"

"Just come back here, and I'll show yuh," Puggie returned happily.

Simon Trapp was soon in the midst of his friends in the living quarters at the rear.

They swarmed about him and chattered, telling him how fine he looked. There was much talk and laughter, but quiet and restrained—always restrained, as befitted the character of the participants. It was ten minutes or more before the conversation took on an orderly nature.

Simon Trapp sat in his easy-chair. His friends were scattered all about, on the sofa, in chairs, on the arms of chairs, standing, and some seated on the floor. All were eagerly attentive to the old man's every word.

"Well," he said, "I had a fine time. You shoulda seen me, out there by the

ocean—promenading up and down the beach, and in the gardens and in the woods, among the flowers. I tell you the truth, I never seen so many flowers in my life. And the air—oh my, oh my! Acres of 'em—flowers; and the air just like a perfumery store. They should charge so much a breath for that air out there. Sometimes it seems a waste just to use it for breathing. But I tell you the truth, it didn't smell so nice to me as New York. The minute I got off the train, I got that kind of a smell—you know what I mean—the New York smell, and it made me feel so fine. I said to myself, I'm back home now, and I should get right down to business."

These sentiments elicited a chorus of approval.

"We've been yearning for you, Simon," said Montague Beamish. "Things haven't seemed the same since you went away. For my part, I've been doing well enough, but not so well as I did when you kept us moving: It takes us longer to pick up a few dollars these days. Nothing like system. I've found that out, like every one else here. The old games are the best—with you running things so that a man doesn't have to make any false moves—doesn't waste time."

"It's nice that you should say that," Simon Trapp rejoined. He meditated a moment, plucked thoughtfully at his thin gray beard, and then looked with a serious and businesslike air from face to face. "I'll tell you what," he added; "on the train coming in I got a good idea."

They gathered closer.

II.

WHEN I went away from New York," Simon Trapp went on, "there was many things that I left unfinished. Some big jobs, some little jobs—there's so many of 'em that I

can't remember. Maybe some of 'em was handled—I don't know how that should be. But I'll find out about 'em and get things shaped up. Don't worry. There'll be plenty for everybody. I was reading in the newspapers only to-day that business is good—prosperous. Well, that means money for us. Don't worry.

"But I got a new idea that I want to try out. I heard some traveling men talking on the train—you know how traveling men talk about business. Business all the time—business, business. If anybody wants to get a good idea of the way to do business, he should listen to traveling men talk. They know everything. But I didn't have to find out from them that business is good. I can tell that by the newspapers, and the way the country looks—with big crops on the farms, and factories smoking everything up.

"There was one traveling man, a young fellow, that talked like a wise man. He was talking to a friend, just after the train left St. Louis, out there by the Mississippi River. I heard their talk. I couldn't help it. They sat right in front of me. At first I didn't pay no attention, but pretty soon I got an idea from that young fellow's talk.

"He said there was the biggest money now in specialties—specializing, you know. Get one article, he said, even if it's a little thing, and drum it till the cows return home, or something like that. Advertise it, hammer it into people's heads what the name of that article is—and pretty soon they get so that they call it by name every time they buy that kind of goods. Instead of saying soap, they say the name of that particular soap.

"I ain't exactly in the selling business, but that young fellow's talk made a hit with me. It gives me an idea. Maybe in my business, I said to myself, I should specialize—not all the time, you know; but first one thing

and then another. I'm gonta try that, just for the fun of it. I'm gonta advertise my people, and——"

There was a nervous stir in the room.

"Advertise us!" Dave Blake, the burglar, exclaimed.

"I don't want no press agent," said Bertie Ray, the pickpocket.

"I am too well known now, in certain quarters," announced Contralto Madge.

"I see an advertisement fer me t'day," declared Carryall Tucker; "stickin' up in the post office, with my picshur an' all on it."

"I'll surrender my advertising space to Mary Pickford," remarked little Bessie Quinn. "I am of a retiring disposition. Extensive publicity always makes me crave a long railroad ticket."

Simon Trapp turned his eyes full upon the last speaker. He observed her thoughtfully for a few moments.

"Bessie," he said, with a grin, "you're exactly the young lady that I should start with first, in my new advertising campaign."

"Why pick on me, Mr. Trapp?" Bessie demurred.

"Because," the old man said gallantly, "you'd look nice with bobbed hair."

Every one looked at Bessie. She gasped.

The handsomely-gowned shoplifter ceased petting the poodle for a moment. "I'm jealous," she pouted. "My hair is bobbed now."

She removed her hat, shook her head vigorously, and with her long, slender fingers fluffed her bobbed hair so that it stood out.

"Very beautiful," said Simon Trapp, at which dimples appeared in the cheeks of the shoplifter. "But you're a little too tall and stately for this thing. I want little girls, like Bessie—blondes; six of 'em, if I can get 'em."

Bertie Ray, Bessie's sweetheart, spoke up. "What's the idea, Simon?"

"I want to put a bobbed-hair bandit on the market," the old man announced;

"something that everybody will talk about."

The purpose of this, of course, was not understood. It was a bizarre idea, and one which held much danger for the bobbed-hair bandit. The assembly looked from Bessie Quinn to Simon Trapp.

"I want that it should be easy for the original bobbed-hair bandit," the pawnbroker explained, "so I'll work a half a dozen of 'em, in a way that everybody'll think there's only one. I want the bobbed-hair bandit to become the talk of the town. I want the police to be bombarded with letters about her, and the newspapers to print stories about her every day—stories of the things she does, and funny stories kidding the police for not catching her. This bobbed-hair bandit has got to become the craze of New York, and it won't take long."

"But I don't see what good that will do," said Bessie Quinn.

"It will get everybody excited," Simon Trapp argued; "and make it easy every time one of my bobbed-hair girls holds a place up. Don't you see?"

Despite their faith in the judgment of the Broome Street pawnbroker, the guests frankly did not "see." That theory, in the experience of many, was not tight. Many of them so expressed themselves.

"If you'll pardon a suggestion," said Montague Beamish, "I think that your idea would have an opposite effect. It would turn the attention of every one to the bobbed-hair bandit, but instead of exciting them this attention would serve as a warning. What kind of holdups are you thinking of, Simon?"

"Small stores—drug stores, cigar stores, and places like that," Mr. Trapp replied. "Every night there should be at least one holdup by one of the bobbed-hair bandits, and the jobs figured out so that the police'll think only one girl is working."

"But the profits will be so small, from little stores," Montague Beamish urged. "What are you thinking of, Simon?"

"Now listen, Montague," the pawnbroker rejoined, "I wanta put this thing through. I wanta test my theory. I bet that after a while a storekeeper will shake like a leaf and hand his money right over every time the bobbed-hair bandit puts a gun on him. I bet it makes him deliver. Just like finding the money, it should be for the bobbed-hair bandit after a while."

"And I'll bet," Mr. Beamish countered, "that this advertising, this bobbed-hair bandit stuff, will put every storekeeper on guard. Mr. Storekeeper will be ready for her. She'll fall—all of them will fall—as sure as the world, if she gets the advertising you figure on."

"Don't you think it," Simon Trapp contended. "I know the—what d'you call it—the psychology of this thing. My bobbed-hair girls, they'll have the town scared stiff, and walk off with the money as easy as if they just bought a powder puff. I know what I'm talking about."

"Well, maybe you do. We'll see—if you can get the girls to stage it."

Simon Trapp and all the others turned toward Bessie Quinn. There was silence. Bessie exchanged glances with Bertie Ray.

"I have confidence in Mr. Trapp," said Bessie.

"If Simon Trapp guarantees it," said Bertie Ray, "I'm willing for Bess to try it. I know he'll protect her."

"You bet I will!" the old pawnbroker assured them. "I got that all figured out. These girls won't work alone. I'll have a clever man go inside with 'em—and there'll be men outside for protection. Nobody'll know it, but this bobbed-hair bandit and her gentleman friend'll be backed up by the quickest and cleverest bunch of get-away men in the business. And no loaded pistols, understand. This is just

an advertising stunt, and I don't want nothing tragical to come of it.

"Now everybody listen. I want six girls, five others—blondes, and about the size of Bessie. I know where I can get two others. You folks see what you can do. And Bessie, to-morrow you have your hair bobbed. To-morrow night you come to see me, and I'll have some of the others here. I'll have a man here that'll learn you just how to work the stick-up."

Thus was the bobbed-hair bandit inflicted on New York.

The guests in Simon Trapp's living quarters lingered a few minutes in the hope that he would have something else, something bigger, to offer, in line with their various capabilities, but the old man seemed centered on his bobbed-hair bandit whim, and would talk of nothing else. Occasionally his eyes drifted toward a man known in the underworld as "Lofty" Baynes—for he specialized in the theft of silks and furs from loft buildings. Too, Simon Trapp studied Dave Blake, the burglar, with uncommon interest.

He let these two know that he would talk privately with them, if they came back after the homecoming reception was over.

Montague Beamish and his wife, Contralto Madge, walked a few blocks from the pawnshop of Simon Trapp before Mr. Beamish hailed a taxicab. They were strangely silent on the subject of Simon Trapp until they gained the privacy of their apartment in Riverside Drive. Then Mr. Beamish spoke the thought that had disturbed him.

"You know, Madge, I'm afraid age has got Simon Trapp. Getting a trifle childish, it seems to me. We were there, expecting such big things—all of us. The cleverest fixer in New York back after a year's vacation—we thought with wonderful stunts in mind. But we didn't find the same old Simon Trapp. A lovable old fellow, of course,

but finished for the big things. He'll putter around, I suppose. This bobbed-hair bandit stunt, it's so silly."

Contralto Madge hummed a little tune, in her soft, alluring tones, and then rejoined: "One never knows, my dear, what is in the mind of Simon Trapp."

III.

SO far as advertising went, the amount of space accorded in the newspapers to the bobbed-hair bandit exceeded the fondest expectations of Simon Trapp. She became at once a daring and romantic figure in the news of the day.

There was, to the general public, only one bobbed-hair bandit. She confined her holdup activities to drug stores and small establishments. She was always accompanied by a young man who came to be known in the newspapers as the "cake-eater," due to his stylish garb and slender, thin-waisted figure. Their method was quite simple.

They entered the drug store, for instance. The cake-eater waited near the door. The young woman of the bobbed hair made a purchase. At a favorable moment she and her companion flashed guns, small automatics. Storekeeper, clerks and customers were herded into the rear, and the sprightly pair made off with the contents of the cash register.

Their notoriety spread. The police were seemingly powerless, for bobbed-hair banditry flourished. The newspapers came to treat the situation jocularly. There was no shooting; no casualties. The losses in most cases were small. Feature writers and rewrite men having a turn for clever phraseology wrote wittily of this picturesque element in the city's crime wave. It was something new, refreshing as compared with accounts of hold-ups in which guns smoked and men died, and sordid safe-cracking jobs.

Sob sisters were turned loose on the story, and consumed columns of space in analyzing the psychological quirks and twists that project such an evidently refined couple into a life of crime. There were hints that the bobbed-hair bandit was a society maiden with a leaning toward the spectacular. A reckless girl who should be spanked, some called her. A tool in the hands of clever thieves, others said. Other and less picturesque phases of crime fell to the level of humdrum news.

The police were nettled, galled. Every fresh exploit of the bobbed-hair bandit and the cake-eater laid them open to charges of incompetence. The city began to laugh at the police, and it is generally conceded that bitter criticism is easier to bear than laughter, ridicule. The pair never appeared where the police were on the lookout, and therefore went uncaught.

Police officers in one district received an ultimatum from headquarters. The dashing pair had been unusually busy thereabouts. There would be transfers and demotions in that district, the ukase said, if the bobbed-hair bandit continued to ply her game there unhindered.

All kinds of crime, of course, went on in the city. There was, for instance, the great Vandergriff robbery.

The difficulties of robbing a loft building are numerous. The profits are large, if the thieves can get away with a sufficient bulk of goods, but the very bulk of the haul is one of the chief difficulties. There are watchmen to consider, and policemen, of the regular and special forces.

These things were well understood by the man known as Lofty Baynes and by Dave Blake, the burglar.

Mr. Baynes was not skillful at burglary, but he understood the loft business. Mr. Blake knew little of silks and such goods, nor of the means by which they might be assembled, loaded and quickly hauled off, but he did un-

derstand doors and windows and how to "beat" them. For the purposes of loft robbery, Lofty Baynes and Dave Blake were a hard pair to better.

It was a daring and efficient gang that were assembled under the leadership of Lofty Baynes and Dave Blake. This gang descended, in sections, on the Vandergriff loft building—the burglars and "smokers" first, then the loft robbers, and finally the huge automobile truck that bore away the loot.

The burglars of course effect an entrance to the building, the "smokers" are sly, strong men, who creep about the interior of the building, waylaying watchmen, seizing them and tying them up, and attending to the business of "pulling the bells" for them at the proper intervals. It must be understood that a loft robbery follows only after a thorough investigation, and in this investigation the robbers usually have the advice and assistance of some one employed in the building. They learn the routine of watchmen, and are enabled to "ring in" for the watchmen, and thus register the signals that all is well at the central headquarters of the special police agency which has the contract for guarding the building. The preliminary work on the Vandergriff building had been painstaking and thorough.

Dave Blake and his crowd opened a rear window in such fashion that the burglar alarm was not set off. A half dozen "smokers" crawled inside. They soon had the watchmen safely tied up. The burglars then entered, and began their work on the inside doors of the numerous business establishments in the building. Then the "weavers" went in, the men under command of Lofty Baynes, and these assembled expertly and swiftly the bales of silk that were to be transported away. They knew just what to take and what to discard so that a maximum profit would be realized. At the proper moment all hands joined forces and

piled the bales at a point from which they could be expeditiously loaded into the truck.

Now came an extremely ticklish part of the job. The truck must be driven up, loaded, and driven away without a hint of the job getting to the regular policemen on the two beats that converged at the Vandergriff building. These policemen had but to blow a whistle to summon an imposing array of pursuers. Special police automobiles would get on the job quickly, and the truck would have no chance of outdistancing these. Needless to say, such a job had been calculated to its numerous and smallest details.

These two regular policemen had long been the chief obstacle to those who would loot the Vandergriff building. But this night the obstacle was overcome.

At exactly the right moment the truck slid into the alley in back of the Vandergriff building. It was loaded with the baled silks, and what had long been regarded as an impossible robbery became an accomplished fact.

The truck thundered away, and within a few minutes had joined a line of late night traffic streaming toward the ferries. The trail was cut.

Simon Trapp, waiting up in his living room at the rear of the pawnshop in Broome Street, received a report from Lofty Baynes and Dave Blake.

"The biggest drag I ever worked on, Simon," said Lofty Baynes, "It'll make us all rich."

"Good!" the old man ejaculated. "And everything in the clear, eh?"

"Absolutely. Delivery'll be made by noon to-morrow. The money'll be in our hands here by six o'clock to-morrow evening."

The old pawnbroker meditated. "I'm expecting other visitors," he said. "You boys can wait, if you should wanta."

They sat down, and they hadn't long to wait before the first of the other

visitors put in an appearance. She came in through the rear door—a little, bobbed-hair blonde accompanied by a young man who might be mistaken for a member of the cake-eater species.

Others followed, at intervals. In time there were gathered in the living room of Simon Trapp six small, bobbed-haired blondes, and their cake-eater escorts. These were known to all present, but not as cake-eaters.

Bessie Quinn, the original bobbed-hair bandit, was the first to speak.

"Well, Mr. Trapp, you've got us all here together now." She was still surprised by the appearance of her five sisters-in-crime and their male companions. "How does it come that we meet like this? Have all you girls been working to-night? I thought, Mr. Trapp, that we were to work one at a time."

The others were as mystified as Bessie.

"Tell us about it, Mr. Trapp," one of them insisted, snapping her gum emphatically. "What's the idea of the reunion, I'd like to know."

The old man grinned. "Only to tell you," he said, "that the bobbed-hair bandit business is finished."

There were no objections to this.

"Well, we've had a lot of fun," said one.

"But there hasn't been much money in it," Bessie Quinn put in. "Especially lately. The drug stores and places like that don't keep much on hand at night. They've got the shivers, and the clerks throw up their hands every time a bobbed-hair dame walks in."

"There ain't much in it, you say?" said Simon Trapp musingly. "Just you wait and see."

"What's that?"

"What're you talking about?"

"What's the big mystery, I'd like to know."

Simon Trapp informed them. "You

come to my place here to-morrow night, and you'll get your share, girls. You should worry!"

"Share of what?"

"To-morrow night I said for you to come here." He warned them: "But remember now, no more bobbed-hair bandit business. It'll be too dangerous after to-night. You just wait and see the morning papers. The bobbed-hair bandit business is played out. Six holdups in one night—that's too much. You know that yourself. The surprise is all over. You girls can't surprise a storekeeper no more. Every one will be watching for you, after to-night—and it'll be dangerous."

The girls presently departed with their escorts, all save Bessie Quinn and Bertie Ray.

"Now," said Simon Trapp to these two, "I'll tell you about it. Them other girls are all right, but maybe it shouldn't be wise to let 'em know just yet that they helped me to-night in the biggest silk robbery in the history of New York City."

Bessie Quinn and Bertie Ray expressed their surprise.

"Yes, that's what you done," the old pawnbroker went on, "as Lofty Baynes and Dave Blake here can tell you. That place—that Vandergriff lof building—I been trying to clean out that building for a long time. That was one of the big unfinished jobs I had when I went away from New York—the biggest, to tell you the truth—and I made up my mind that I should try that the first thing when I got back. Well, the job is finished now, and the money as good as in our pockets. It's a big one for everybody—you bet!"

"Well, you shouldn't be surprised. I didn't come back after a year's vacation just to get a lot of girls to pull chicken-feed holdups in little drug stores. I——"

"I knew that all the time," Bertie Ray interjected. "You didn't have me

fooled. I didn't know what you played, but I knew it was something big."

"You did, eh? Well, it's big enough all right. You see, I cracked down to-night with six bobbed-hair holdups in the same district as that Vandergriff building. There was a hot time at every police station in town, I bet, when their reports come in. That Vandergriff district went all up in the air, and the policemen on the beats there kept away from the Vandergriff building just long enough for us to get the stuff away without a ripple. The general alarm that the bobbed-hair bandit was in the district was enough for that. That's all I wanted. I been educating the police up to this for a couple of weeks now, and it worked nice, eh? I tell you the truth, there's nothing like advertising. I advertised the bobbed-hair bandit, and the policemen of this town didn't think about nothing else."

Bessie Quinn smiled. She understood. But Bertie Ray and the burglar, Dave Blake, and the loft robber,

Baynes, were practical men, without much imagination.

"It was a success," Dave Blake said, "but I don't think yet that you needed to pull all that fancy stuff. We coulda handled them cops."

Bessie Quinn spoke up. "But don't you know that Mr. Trapp doesn't do things the way you'd do them? There's something in this business besides the haul and the get-away, isn't there, Mr. Trapp?"

The pawnbroker nodded approvingly. "You know how I feel about it, Bessie," he said. "An old man like me has got to do something to amuse himself—and I like games, games with a lot of players, where the stakes are big. A man should feel better after winning a game like that than he should just to go out and get money without the fun of moving the pieces around the board. Besides, handling cops is dangerous—very dangerous." Simon Trapp heaved a sigh of vast contentment. "It's nice," he said, "to be back on the job."



IN HIS WOODEN LEG

THIRTEEN thousand dollars in large bills and half a dozen bank books, showing deposits totaling an additional fifty thousand dollars, were found in the possession of Charles E. Stock, a confessed mendicant, when arrested a short time ago in Los Angeles, California. Stock had run down a young girl in his automobile and refused to stop and render aid. The fortune in currency was found concealed in Stock's wooden leg. He made a practice of stationing himself on Sundays in front of churches and soliciting alms after he had removed his artificial limb.



ESKIMO PRISONER WANTS TO RETURN TO THE NORTH

THE department of justice recently received a queer petition. Nad Kood-Le, sentenced to serve ten years for slaying a fellow Eskimo, has asked to be removed from Manitoba's prison and sent back to his native haunts to serve out his sentence. Thirty below zero is not an unusual temperature for Manitoba, but it is not cold enough for Nad. Moreover, he has starved for the food which his palate craves, and in the climate of Winnipeg he has grown soft and sickly. Last summer he was brought down to Winnipeg from Pond's Inlet on the northeast coast of Baffin Land.

Tragic Transients

By *Madeleine Sharps Buchanan*

Author of "The Crime in the Green Room," "The Dagger in the Dark," etc.

CHAPTER I.

MR. AND MRS. DELANEY.

TASTENING the crimson cord, which held the dressing gown about her plump figure, Mrs. Iris Pettigrew, who kept a rooming house at Brant Harbor, one of the quaintest resorts on the Maine coast, gave a little pat to the curlers upon which she had just wound her very yellow locks. Beyond the dull draperies at the windows of her room, there was nothing gloomy in the vicinity of Mrs. Pettigrew. She herself, wrapped in the gay red dressing gown, her much too yellow hair crowning her round florid face, was anything but drab or dull. Her taste manifested itself all about her, in the frilly little pillows, the motley litter of trinkets on bureau and dressing table, and the torn lace spread and bolster thrown over a faded old-rose sateen lining.

Despite the untidiness of the landlady's room and person, which extended to the rest of the rambling old house, her rooms during the three summer months were always eagerly sought. Possibly some of this was due to the charm of her young niece, Molly, who was the most attractive thing in Brant Harbor, if one except the coast line, the restless seas that broke upon the picturesque rocks, and the romantic walks one might take, armed with a camera.

Mrs. Pettigrew's roomers ate at the Sunset House, not a stone's throw distant, where a very excellent table was set, although in the winter her "per-

manents," of whom she had some three or four, enjoyed pretty Molly's cooking. Since Iris Pettigrew, careless enough about dust on the piano and the temporary abiding place of her overshoes and magazines, powder puffs and soiled lingerie, was shrewd about her accounts, the boarding house prospered.

Upon this certain July night Mrs. Pettigrew should have been more than usually content, for not only was her house filled, but the day was her forty-fifth birthday, and the roomers had presented her with a string of pearls. However, she did not look content, and there was a distinct frown on her brow, while every now and then she tiptoed to the door, opened it a crack and listened, and, having returned to patting small wads of cold cream into her round cheeks, paused occasionally to listen again.

There could be no mistake about it. Mrs. Delaney was berating her husband, and, judging by the way the old-fashioned chandelier in Mrs. Pettigrew's ceiling danced and shivered, she was pacing up and down the floor as she did so. A thud now and then caused the nervous widow to start violently, and, following each shock, she would pause in her massaging and steal to her door. She wished Molly had not gone to the picture show, and she determined that those Delaneys should leave soon. The Morison sisters had been called West, or she would never have taken the Delaneys into her house a week ago. Their quarreling ever since had caused the permanents to complain more than

once, but never had it been so annoying or alarming as it was to-night.

Mrs. Pettigrew prided herself upon the fact that her house, although it sheltered some eight people when it was filled, had never been the home for any sort of scandal. If one of her paying guests gave signs of being other than peaceful or respectable, she requested them politely to give up their rooms. She most decidedly did not approve of the Delaneys, for several of the plump widow's admirers had shown signs of transferring their allegiance to the lovely stranger, signs which Mrs. Delaney ignored, but which irritated Iris Pettigrew beyond endurance, though she gave no evidence of it, even to Molly. Still, it made her all the more eager for an excuse to ask the couple for their room. A thud more than usually ominous sent her with grim-lipped determination to the door.

Miss Mary Wallace leaned over the banister on the third floor, as the stout landlady began the creaking ascent of the stairs.

"What do you suppose they are doing?" she asked in a hoarse whisper. "I can't sleep. They're worse than ever to-night."

Miss Wallace taught school in Brant Harbor and was one of the permanents, so that her ability to sleep was most important to Mrs. Pettigrew.

"I think they are leaving soon," she replied. "But, if they don't, I'll give them notice."

With an answering nod, Miss Wallace went back into her room, which was next the third-floor front, the one occupied by the Delaneys.

Mrs. Delaney opened the door when the landlady knocked, opened it and closed it behind her, stepping into the hall to confront Mrs. Pettigrew. She was slim and tall, of the brunette type, and her body was exquisitely rounded, though she seemed so slender. Her age was somewhere in the twenties, and a

reader of character might have guessed that she had a temper, for her eyes were dark and flashing, and her lips thin and very red.

"I must ask you two not to make so much noise," said Mrs. Pettigrew with dignity, feeling herself grow ugly and old before the other's flaming dark beauty, the sort of beauty one associates with castanets and deeply fringed shawls. "Some of my folks can't sleep."

"It cannot be helped," sighed Mrs. Delaney with a sweet, pathetic smile. "Mr. Delaney has been walking the floor with a horrible toothache, and at such times he goes mad with pain and flings the cushions about, and I simply leave him in peace. What is he to do?"

"He might have it out—the tooth, I mean," said Mrs. Pettigrew dryly, not believing a word of it. "Anyhow, you got to keep quiet. None of the rest of us have a toothache. We can sleep, and we want to."

Turning herself about, she walked, with as much dignity as her costume permitted, down the stairs which creaked under her tread, followed by, she knew without seeing, the mocking amusement of the other woman's eyes. Back in her room, Iris Pettigrew got angrily into bed; for it always infuriated her when another woman insulted her intelligence. A toothache! Recalling the thin, unattractive Mr. Delaney, a man of mild voice and meek visage, she thought it far more likely that his sturdy wife had been beating him.

There was no further disturbance that night, however, and Mrs. Pettigrew was taking her coffee on the back porch the next morning, where it was cool, when Malviny, her colored servant, approached her.

"Miss Iris," began the maid, "that Mrs. Delaney, she say as how her man is powerful bad with that tooth. Asks could she prevail on you, ma'am, to break the rule and send her up some toast and coffee?"

Mrs. Pettigrew glanced up from her dreamy contemplation of the ocean. In her trimly corseted state, with the waved hair drawn back beneath a net, her cheeks, eyes, and lips touched with aids to beauty, the widow was a good-looking woman and appeared much younger than she was. More than one retired and retiring sea captain, of which Brant Harbor and the vicinity were full, sought Iris Pettigrew's plump hand.

"I am not surprised that he is sick," she nodded, as she rose. "Malviny, I'll take up that tray. It wouldn't surprise me if she had killed him."

Fifteen minutes later, however, whatever curiosity she entertained regarding the strange couple in the third-floor front, was not satisfied in any way. Mrs. Delaney in a thin bedroom robe, which was so delicate and beautiful that the eyes of the landlady opened very wide when she beheld it, took the tray with her usual sweet, mocking smile.

"This is so good of you," she nodded. "Mr. Delaney had a wretched night, as you know, and he is quite unable to go out for breakfast. I am going to try to persuade him to take this."

Mrs. Pettigrew, trying vainly to see into the room, set her lips grimly. "We got a pretty good dentist in this town," she nodded. "Doctor Wils on Main Street. Why don't you send for him, or take your husband to him? No use suffering."

"Perhaps I will," said Mrs. Delaney and closed the door.

In the lower hall Mrs. Pettigrew encountered her niece. "Molly, I am real upset about the Delaneys," she frowned. "They act mighty queer. I don't think much of her high and mighty airs with the poor men around here, who stare at her like they never seen a city woman before. And I got the idea that that Delaney man wasn't in the room at all just now. I wouldn't be a mite surprised if she had made away with him!"

"Auntie!" Mollie Pettigrew opened

her lovely eyes in horror. "You've read that awful book which Captain Joel brought you yesterday! If you think such queer things about these people, you had better not leave them here when we all go to the festival to-night. What could be wrong with them? Mrs. Delaney said he had come here for his health."

"You can all go to the festival," replied Mrs. Pettigrew, "but I stay here. I ain't a mite afraid, and I've had my eye on them ever since they come. I wouldn't trust that woman out of my sight!"

CHAPTER II.

THE NIGHT OF THE FESTIVAL.

ALL that long hot day the Delaneys remained in their room, and, although many times Mrs. Pettigrew crept to their door to listen, she was rewarded only by silence and never by any sound that gave hint of two living people within the room. At last, around five o'clock, with Molly by her side, she knocked on the door and was answered by Mrs. Delaney's sweet voice.

"Who is it?"

"It's Mrs. Pettigrew," replied the landlady in bold, clear accents. "I come up to see if your husband wanted anything."

"No, thank you," said the voice inside the room. "He is resting just now."

Mrs. Pettigrew rose from her stooping position before the keyhole and met her niece's eyes with her mouth set firmly. "How are you feeling, Mr. Delaney?" she called.

"Much better, thank you," replied a man's voice, and Molly grasped her aunt's plump arm.

"You see, he is all right," she whispered, with her eyes dancing. "You just imagine things. They are queer, staying up in this stuffy room on such a glorious day, but they pay us, and so why need you care? He is able to talk, you see."

"I have a strange feeling about them, and I can't shake it off." Mrs. Pettigrew drew a long breath. "You all go to the festival, and I shall stay home and watch these Delaneys."

Practically the whole of Brant Harbor expected to attend the church festival, which was to be given on the lawn of the old Cooper home, two miles out of town, that night. The Cooper place was used for this affair every year, and the church gathered in a goodly collection from the summer boarders, campers, and residents. The house itself stood high upon a hill and had been closed for years, but the grounds were kept in excellent condition and used for any sort of outdoor affair by the people of Brant Harbor and vicinity.

Pretty Molly and her escort departed early, and when the buxom widow had disposed of two of her swains, who had invited her to go with them, and Malviny had sauntered out the back way, the place seemed pretty lonesome. She had never missed the festival before, and she knew that, save for that strange couple in her third floor front, she had her house and a large part of the town to herself.

Rocking more or less serenely on her porch, the local paper in her lap, Mrs. Pettigrew wondered whether the Delaneys would take out the little car they had hired every night during their stay. Delaney himself drove, and no one had thought anything of those moonlight wanderings in an antiquated car along an ocean drive, that was famous for its beauty, and through country lovely enough to be put on canvas.

The town was certainly quiet. The Widow Pettigrew, not accustomed to being alone upon such flirtatious evenings, rocked and sighed softly. She had perhaps been a fool not to have gone to the festival with Captain Joel, or Doctor Lense, or even Jim Hayn.

What could the Delaneys do, after all? She had no valuables in the house,

and, no matter how she disliked her, the Delaney woman was a lady. She had about decided to listen again outside the door of the undesirable pair in the third-floor front, when there was a step on the stair, and Mr. Delaney opened the screen door and, without a glance at her, where she sat behind the vines in a shaded corner, strode down the street, with far from the manner of a man who had recently been so ill. Mrs. Pettigrew bent from her rocker and stared after him. There was nothing at all in the fact of Mr. Delaney leaving the house alone and walking down the moonlit street to alarm her, or to arouse any one's suspicion, and yet an eerie sensation crept about the widow's spine, as she watched him.

They did not conduct themselves at all like any one else who came to Brant Harbor. Why had they not gone to the festival, if Mr. Delaney had recovered so entirely? Iris Pettigrew drew a long breath. Blessed with a keen curiosity, she yet felt that she had sacrificed much in remaining at home to watch the Delaneys.

Mr. Delaney did not return, and the moonlight grew stronger on the picturesque street before her, while every tiny wave on the sands far below tumbled in, tipped with silver.

After a short time Mrs. Pettigrew entered the house quietly and stood at the foot of the stairs, listening. She could not rid herself of the uncanny feeling that was growing more pronounced, as the time went on. When the door of the third-floor front closed softly, and a step came down the stairs, the curious widow drew back in the shadows of the parlor and stood there, holding her breath, expecting she knew not what.

The woman who presently crossed her vision was handsome and unmistakably a lady; Iris Pettigrew had to admit that. Mrs. Delaney wore a white gown, was hatless, and carried a heavy blue sweater

over her arm. As she appeared at the door, a man stepped upon the widow Pettigrew's porch and, without a word, Mrs. Delaney took his arm and walked down the path with him toward the runabout and fat brown horse that waited at the curb.

Mrs. Pettigrew knew that runabout well, also the horse and the man, and she stood in her door, staring after the two, with the angry color creeping under the slight touch of rouge on her round cheeks.

Captain Joel Snodgrass calling in style like that for the Delaney woman! A mere two hours previous Captain Joel, who had been at the widow Pettigrew's feet for years, had insisted that Iris go with him to the festival!

What could have happened? Mr. Delaney vanished down the village street for what seemed a very long time to the lonely, suspicious woman, and the wife going out at—Iris glanced at her watch—a quarter of ten o'clock with her, Iris', own lover!

Quite suddenly Captain Joel became very valuable in the eyes of Mrs. Pettigrew, and she did not hesitate. Turning the key in her front door, she hastened around to the small garage, where she kept her car, a cheap little car, but one which she had learned to manage expertly.

CHAPTER III.

THE COOPER HOUSE.

THE horse Captain Joel Snodgrass drove was well known to all of Brant Harbor, in a day when every one rode in a car. The speed of the animal, which the captain loved devotedly, had been the topic of conversation for a long time, and Iris Pettigrew, having given the two a good start, had no difficulty in keeping far enough in the rear. As she drove, her anger subsided, and her bewilderment grew; for the captain was not ambling along, as he did when he

took the plump widow for a drive; he was unmistakably hurrying.

What business could he have with the Delaney woman? Mrs. Pettigrew had not known that the two had more than a bowing acquaintance, and when, granting something between them, hard as it was to believe, had the Delaney woman arranged this meeting? Had Captain Joel known of it when he had called to ask her, Iris, to go with him to the festival on the Cooper lawn? If she had accepted, what would he have done with her while he came back to keep his tryst with Mrs. Delaney?

Captain Joel was a man of forty-seven years, and he had been settled for some time. There was nothing in the least skittish about the captain, whom secretly the flirtatious widow had marked for her own. What could this mean?

To her amazement, the brown horse ahead was leading her straight to the festival, and already the sound of the band could be heard. Was it possible that the captain had gone to call for Mrs. Delaney merely with the intention of giving her a good time, possibly while her husband sat in the dentist's chair?

Never had the stolid captain seemed so desirable to Iris Pettigrew, and she felt an honest anger consuming her. Keeping at the same distance behind the runabout, she soon saw that it was skirting the two public entrances to the grounds and was heading, beyond any doubt, for the lower gate, which was little else than a few bars and opened into a twisting lane that led by back ways, through sheltering trees, to the rear of the Cooper house. As Iris Pettigrew stole after her lover and the mysterious woman on the third-floor front, she felt that queer chill creeping up her spine, and more than once she was tempted to turn about and drive home as fast as she could.

Captain Joel stopped the runabout in the shadow of a few tall trees and helped his companion out, while Iris, descend-

ing from her car, stole closer to them through the darkness.

Astounded and hurt at the part the captain was playing in the affair, she yet was resolved to spy upon the mysterious Delaney woman. Moving silently after the two through the trees at the rear of the house, while far below on the lawns the festival went on, the gay lanterns and parked cars making a picture like fairyland, Iris Pettigrew was startled and astonished to see Captain Joel open the rear door of the big Cooper house, stand aside to permit his companion to enter, follow her in himself, and close the door!

Curiosity has its limits. Disgusted and indignant, Mrs. Pettigrew went back to her car and drove out again by the rear entrance, skirting the crowds on the lawns below. Still in an angry daze, she put the machine away and let herself into her house, where she ascended to the third-floor front and opened the door. The room was in order, and, so far as she could see, not a thing belonging to the Delaneys had been left in it. They had gone then for good, without paying her! What had become of the suit case the two had brought, and how had the arrangement been managed between Mrs. Delaney and Captain Joel Snodgrass?

As the remembrance of her late experience at the rear of the Cooper house swept over her, Iris Pettigrew winked back angry tears. There had never been such a thing heard of in Brant Harbor! A man like the captain, stealing into that empty house with a woman like Mrs. Delaney, a married woman and a lady, even though she was far from an agreeable person! And where, all this time, was Mr. Delaney, who had walked out of the boarding house so naturally, right before her eyes?

No good would come of it, Mrs. Pettigrew decided with a toss of her blond head, as she turned on the light in her room and prepared for bed.

With her door open and a book in her hand, wrapped in the red dressing gown, she saw and heard the boarders, when each one returned. There was no sound of the Delaneys, and when pretty Molly came in, a rose in her hair and her cheeks flushed, the widow could contain herself no longer.

"I said there was something queer about those two people, and there is," she declared, her lips pursed. "Did you see either of them, Molly, to-night?"

"The Delaneys?" Molly laughed. "Goodness, no! Whatever ails you about them, auntie. You always seem to be worrying about them."

Mrs. Pettigrew set her lips. "I know what I know," she nodded. "I'll wager anything you want, Molly, we'll never set eyes on them again."

Determined to keep awake that night, the widow fell soundly asleep and awoke in the morning, with the sun streaming in past the dull window draperies and falling on her face. Instantly the events of the past night rushed upon her, and she dressed rapidly, curiously afraid for some reason, of the day that lay before her.

Encountering no one she ascended to the third-floor front and knocked. Receiving no reply she pushed open the door and looked in. It was only too obvious that neither of the Delaneys had returned since her visit to the room the night before. Honestly alarmed, Mrs. Pettigrew closed the door and went in search of Molly, to whom she always turned in any emergency.

"I may as well confess," said the widow, when she admitted her fears to that wide-eyed young woman, "that I followed Mrs. Delaney last night to the back door of that Cooper house and saw her go in there. I do think we ought to look for her there, for she had no hat on, and all her things have been removed from the room. It is my opinion that that poor hectored Delaney man up and left her."

"Left her!" snapped Molly. "He has probably killed her out there. It was simply awful the way they fought."

"What!" Mrs. Pettigrew's eyes opened with horror. She saw Captain Joel entering that back door with the Delaney woman. After all, had they better go out there? Would it not be more sensible just to keep her mouth shut and let the room rent go? What difference what had happened to the Delaney woman?

"I guess the most sensible thing, Molly, is just to keep out of it all," she said weakly. "They owed me fifteen dollars, but I shan't miss that. We don't know who they are. I think we had best keep quiet."

"You've kept at it too long now," Molly replied. "I could not rest until I went through that old Cooper house. The poor thing! Maybe she is dead out there! We can go out alone, or else we might get Captain Joel."

"Oh, no—my Heaven, no!" gasped Mrs. Pettigrew and laid her hand on her heart. "If we must go, let us steal away and do it quietly."

"Well," said Molly with a nod, "there is no time like the present. Come along, auntie! We shall have to get the key from old Tom Timmons, anyhow, but we needn't say what for."

Mrs. Pettigrew shuddered, as she followed her niece to the garage.

Where had Captain Joel and the Delaney woman got the key they had used on the back door the previous night?

As she entered the car and sat beside Molly she resolved never to breathe to a living soul Joel Snodgrass' connection with the affair of the night before. Not only would it involve him in trouble, perhaps serious trouble, but it would mark her forever in Brant Harbor as a woman who stole after her lover and another woman, a married one at that!

Joel Snodgrass was safe in the widow Pettigrew's hands. She would be silent at any cost.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT MRS. PETTIGREW FOUND.

AS the little car, driven by the resolute Molly, approached the house, where the night before Iris Pettigrew had seen Captain Joel with the Delaney woman, the widow felt herself growing cold with apprehension. Why could she not have kept quiet? There was no stopping Molly when once she had started, and she should have known that. Why had she said anything to rouse interest in the vanished couple? Enough that they had gone without paying for their room, thinking that every one was at the Cooper place.

The lawns were strewn with the debris of the festival, which no one had as yet arrived to remove, and the lanterns hung dismally from sagging wires. It was a clear, lovely day, but, so far as Mrs. Pettigrew was concerned, it might have been one of the gloomiest.

Molly walked directly to the front door and inserted the key she had received from Timmons, who took what care of the place he pleased. The Cooper family had long since gone abroad, and it was doubtful if ever the big house would be inhabited again. All but the most undesirable furniture had been removed, and it really needed very little care.

Mrs. Pettigrew hugged herself in her pretty lavender sweater, her round face, under its suspicion of rouge, very white.

"Molly, I have the most terrible feeling about coming up here," she declared. "Do let us go back now. Who cares if that woman is in here? And we haven't got any earthly reason to think she is."

"Well, I've got to know now," said Molly with a nod. "I never was so curious in my life!"

As she spoke, the heavy door swung back into the darkness of the hall, and the two women stood still a moment peering fearfully through the opening. Then Molly grasped her aunt's arm.

"Come, auntie!" she said briskly. "You stand here, and I'll go about and open the shutters. Leave the door as it is. This old place certainly needs all the sunshine it can get."

Mrs. Pettigrew, shuddering, kept her place by the door, while Molly flung open the windows which Timmons was in the habit of opening once a year. She closed her eyes, as she waited.

What errand could Captain Joel have had with the Delaney woman in that place? It seemed ridiculous and grotesque, and for a moment, as she waited for Molly, she fancied she had dreamed the entire thing, as she sat in her rocker on her own porch.

A cry from her niece drew her into the house before she realized what she had done.

"Aunt Iris! A good thing we came! Look at this poor soul!"

Iris Pettigrew, trembling, crept forward and approached the foot of the stairs, where Molly was standing. The windows had been opened, and the sun and fresh air were streaming into the musty old house. On the floor, at the foot of the long steep staircase, lay the body of Mrs. Delaney, in the white gown and blue sweater she had worn the night before, when Captain Joel had met her at the door of the Pettigrew house. Apparently she had fallen headlong down the stairs, and her head had come into sharp contact with a pointed leg of a heavy old table which stood near by.

"Is—*is* she dead?" whispered Mrs. Pettigrew.

"I think so," said Molly softly. "Yes, I am *sure* she is. I suppose she fell down these stairs in the dark. See where her head struck the jagged edge of that table leg? That killed her. But what on earth was she doing here? I never knew Timmons had but one key. We can soon find out whether all the doors are locked."

Mrs. Pettigrew felt very faint. She

saw Captain Joel, whose next proposal she had determined to accept, throwing the woman down the stairs in the darkness of the musty old house, while the gay festival on the lawn below went on, and the music of the band was plainly heard; she saw him making sure his victim was dead and stealing out that back way, locking the door behind him.

"Oh, Molly!" she cried shrilly. "Maybe she isn't dead! Had I better go for a doctor right off?"

"She is dead," said Molly gravely. "She is cold, and her heart doesn't beat. She has been dead for hours, Aunt Iris. See her head? That gash killed her, right on the temple like that."

"Where do you suppose her husband is?" asked Mrs. Pettigrew. "I last saw him strolling down the street, without a bit of baggage. I thought he was going to the dentist. What do you suppose they did with the suit case?"

"I imagine there is a good bit to find out about this," said Molly. "Nothing, anyhow, can be done for this poor soul, and we must not touch her. You sit down here on the step in the sun, while I go over the house. I may come upon something which will be a valuable clew. Then we can drive to the doctor and the police."

"I never had a scandal or anything wrong in my house before, and you know it!" cried Mrs. Pettigrew hysterically. "This will ruin us, Molly, absolutely ruin us."

"I don't see why," said the girl stoutly. "She didn't die in your third-floor front."

"I'll sit here until you come back," said the widow resignedly and sank down on the top step of the porch, the big door wide open behind her. "I don't see how you ever have the nerve to go over this dreadful house, and nothing would induce me to go with you."

"I know that," said Molly with a faint smile. "I just thought maybe I would find something important before the con-

stable got here. I never could stand Clade."

With a glance back at her aunt, Molly stepped carefully past the body at the foot of the stairs and ascended slowly, studying each step.

The house was only two stories high, but reached out at both sides in a rambling fashion that was picturesque and oddly attractive. As Molly went about on the upper floor, opening an occasional window, she saw that not much of the furniture had been left in the spacious rooms, and the floors were bare. A more dismal place she could not well imagine, and, as she took in more thoroughly the details of the deserted old mansion, the mystery of the presence there of the woman in their third-floor front became more and more apparent. There was no doubt that the woman had been on the second floor, for she had plainly fallen down the stairs and killed herself. Molly, although positive of that, yet felt greatly excited, for Brant Harbor had never had anything of the kind in its midst before, and she knew Constable Clade would make the most of it.

In the few moments she had before she must report the case, she wished she could stumble upon some clew as to what the Delaney woman had been doing in that well-nigh unfurnished floor. It was not until she was about to descend that she found anything of interest, and then, opening a closet door at the head of the stairs, she came face to face with a suit case, with the initials "R. D." on one end of it, evidently the suit case the couple had had at her aunt's during their short stay there!

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND DISCOVERY.

KNOWING enough about the law to be aware that she should not touch anything on the scene of crime, Molly, not regarding the fact of the Delaney

woman falling down the stairs in the empty house and hitting her temple on a table leg, in the same light as a murder, gave way to curiosity and opened the suit case. It contained nothing belonging to Mr. Delaney, but the suit case contained apparently everything belonging to the young woman, even her coat and hat, which had been ruthlessly crushed in on top of gowns Molly recognized. The underwear was exquisite and marked with the initials "R. D."

Mrs. Pettigrew, shivering in the warm sunshine, started, when Molly rejoined her.

"I found the suit case and all her clothes in it," nodded the girl. "Hat and coat, too. Looks as if she had moved here to stay. Now, auntie, I am going over the lower floor, and then I'll be satisfied to report the thing. She clearly fell down the stairs and hit her head and killed herself; and, as I said, she didn't do it at our house, so you need not be so scared."

Mrs. Pettigrew stared at Molly in amazement, as the girl turned aside and began her exploration of the lower floor. The suit case! Neither Captain Joel nor Mrs. Delaney had carried a suit case, when Iris had followed them from the house. Mr. Delaney had had no baggage. Had the husband returned during her absence, used the extra key which he might have acquired, without her knowledge, from any of the roomers, since they passed it about as they wished, packed the suit case and—— Mrs. Pettigrew paused in her rapid thoughts. In that case Delaney had taken the suit case to the Cooper house after she herself had left it! Then the husband, as well as that old fool, Joel Snodgrass, had been on the scene of the tragedy!

Meanwhile Molly was going carefully over the lower floor and finding everything locked. She came upon nothing unusual until she was returning to her aunt through the narrow hall that led from the back door to the front, past all

the big rooms that opened from each side. There on a shelf, which jutted out beside the wide parlor door, and was apparently meant to hold a vase or a palm, she found a glove—a small exquisitely dainty thing, unlike any she had ever seen.

Lifting the pretty bit of kid she saw that it would not go on her own hand, and she was equally certain it would never fit the hand of the Delaney woman, who must have worn a six at least. The glove was for the left hand and was a delicate fawn color, with a long flaring wrist like a gauntlet, and an exquisite pattern embroidered on the wrist in small pearls. Molly was lost in admiration of the dainty trifle and turned it about curiously. Scarcely worn at all, the inside of the fingers were much soiled on the tips, and, touching one gently, Molly saw that the soil rubbed off easily and was merely an accumulation of dust. At a sudden thought the girl stepped into the hall and retraced her steps to the kitchen door, studying the dust-coated walls, as she did so. She was instantly rewarded. The woman who had worn the glove had come from the kitchen toward the front of the house, if the left glove was the only one that was soiled in that manner, for all along the wall there was plain to be seen the dragging marks of finger tips, as though some one walked slowly in darkness and felt his or her way.

Had the left glove been stripped from its dainty wearer in disgust, because of its soil from the walls of an old unused house, and carelessly left there, or had it been accident?

Imagine a woman who would wear a glove like that! One got the impression of exquisite daintiness and doll-like beauty and wealth. For the little thing must have cost horribly, and no woman would have worn it unless the rest of her apparel had been in keeping.

Molly sighed, carefully folding the

glove so that the soil would not rub off those delicate finger tips. It was seldom, if ever, that she came into contact with such exquisite things that women of wealth wore as a matter of course.

Returning to her aunt, she said nothing about the glove, and so, with Mrs. Pettigrew's knowledge of Captain Joel's presence at the Cooper house the night before being kept from Molly, the two women set out from the start to keep their own secrets.

"Now we'll go down and get old Clade and let him take charge," said Molly. "But first I want to see if there is a key left on the outside of any of the doors. Everything was locked inside."

For many feet around the Cooper house the weeds had been permitted to grow, and below this wild, unkempt-looking circle of ground the lawns had been kept in good condition because of the many church affairs and private lawn fêtes that were given there during the summer months. The two women trod unheedingly through the weeds to side and kitchen doors, and at the back of the house Molly gave a quick exclamation.

"The key is in the outside of this door, auntie!" she pointed to the kitchen door. "Some one beside Mrs. Delaney was in that house and locked the door. The person was so scared that he or she forgot the key! Now, if Mrs. Delaney fell down the stairs and killed herself, what scared the other person? In that case, why didn't he or she call a doctor?"

Mrs. Pettigrew was staring, as though fascinated, at the key which protruded from the kitchen door. She had seen Joel open the house with that. Why had he gone away, left the woman dead in a house he locked up, and forgotten the key?

"There is a lot to this thing," nodded pretty Molly, thinking of the costly glove in her bosom. "We had better not delay any longer. I'll stay here, while you go down to Clade, auntie. I

don't think I care to leave the place alone until some one gets here."

"Molly Pettigrew, I can never leave you here in this terrible place!" cried the widow nervously. "Who knows what might happen to you?"

Molly sat down on the front step in the cool sunshine. "You get the car and run along," she nodded briskly. "And do be quick about it. Get your wits together, auntie, for you'll be questioned to death."

"I will?" Iris Pettigrew gazed helplessly at her young niece.

"I should say so. You were here last night, weren't you?"

"Molly Pettigrew, if you ever mention that, I shall disown you!" gasped the widow, turning white. "Why must any one know that?"

"Why not?" asked the young girl with direct candor. "It won't reflect anything on you because you followed your roomer when she acted suspiciously, and you thought maybe she had gone for good."

"I wouldn't think that, when she had no hat and carried no bag with her," sighed Mrs. Pettigrew.

"Well, I can't make out what you tracked out after her for, anyhow, auntie," said Molly.

As she set her trim plump foot on the starter of her car, Mrs. Pettigrew wondered miserably enough whether every one would be asking that. If only she had let the Delaneys go and had kept her mouth shut!

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MAZE.

TWO hours later Mrs. Pettigrew and Molly sat upon the steps of the Cooper house, while the coroner and his physician from Bernerville, a town of considerable size, some fifty miles distant, and the excited Constable Clade, whom Molly disliked, completed their investigation.

Mrs. Pettigrew had told the same story she had told Molly, and she was filled with satisfaction when she realized that she need not mention Captain Joel's part in the matter at all. No matter if he had been false to her and had gone off to an empty house with a married woman; she would not involve him in this disgraceful and mysterious affair, if she could help it!

Several men had been engaged for an hour clearing away the débris from the lawns below, and Mrs. Pettigrew was watching them idly, when the coroner, a man of pleasing presence and keen eyes, came out to the porch.

"This is a serious case, madam," he told the widow, his gaze resting in appreciation upon her florid charms. "A case of undeniable murder. I must ask you to hold yourself in readiness, and you also, Miss Molly, for inquiries at any time."

"What do you mean, murder?" gasped Mrs. Pettigrew. "Molly said she fell downstairs and hit her head against the table leg."

"So she doubtless did," nodded the coroner, whose name was Wilson. "That is, she was thrown down the stairs after she was dead."

"But her head—that wound——" stammered Molly.

"My dear young woman, we have found this," said the coroner. "Mrs. Delaney, whom your aunt has identified, was dead some fifteen minutes, or possibly more, when her body was flung down the stairs, and her head accidentally came into contact with that sharp edge of the table leg. Ten minutes after death blood still flows freely, and the body is still warm. If you noted such things, you would have seen that there was very little blood about that horrible wound in the temple of the dead woman. Had that fall and blow killed her, there would have been a great quantity of blood upon herself, as she was lying in her white gown upon

the floor. There is no doubt about that. The body was thrown downstairs by a second party, any time after the fifteen minutes which followed death."

"But what then, if such a terrible thing could be, killed her?" gasped Molly.

"Mrs. Delaney was stabbed with a thing very much like a dagger, stabbed in the back and apparently bled to death internally. All we can say positively is that she was flung down the steps sometime after she was dead. That presents the unusual element in the case."

"Unusual element!" cried Mrs. Pettigrew who had been listening with growing horror. "Don't you think it unusual enough for one of my roomers to be found here in this empty house?"

Coroner Wilson shrugged. "You say there was no one with Mrs. Delaney when you followed her here, Mrs. Pettigrew?" he glanced keenly at the widow.

"No one at all," replied Iris Pettigrew firmly.

"H'm! Well, it is very strange, very strange indeed, and will probably work up into a big case, though we never know. Depends upon who this dead woman is, and whether we can locate her husband or not."

"Can you determine what time the crime took place?" asked Molly.

"Oh, approximately—sometime about eleven or twelve o'clock last night. There are a number of other strange features about the case. The suit case is one. There seems to be no particular reason for the woman to have her suit case here in an empty, unused house, to which she had come with no hat on her head and nothing but a sweater."

"Find the Delaney man, and you will find her murderer," said Molly firmly. "They used to quarrel horribly."

"It was the night of the church festival on the lawn down there," mused the coroner. "Hard to say who attended that, or who might have left the crowds and entered the house. The fête being here

at the time may aid us and may not. You will be notified regarding the inquest, madam."

And the coroner with a bow entered the house and closed the door. Molly looked after him with a smile. She had the beaded glove in her bosom, and she was quite sure the man and his assistants would find nothing in that empty house which she had missed.

"Come on, auntie," said she and rose. "They no longer want us here. Let us interview old Timmons regarding those keys on the way home. There will be excitement enough now in Brant Harbor!"

Iris Pettigrew was glad to have her niece take the wheel, and she sank back in her corner of the little car, with a long breath. The statements of the coroner had left her dazed. The Delaney woman had been stabbed fifteen minutes or more before she was flung down those steep stairs! Who could be brute enough to do that? She could not picture Joel Snodgrass in either rôle.

When Molly stopped before the rather dilapidated cabin where Tom Timmons lived, she roused from her miserable reverie. Not sure whether she wished the investigation to go on or not, the widow Pettigrew was in a sorry predicament. Surely she was a fool! Would she consider marrying a murderer after she had refused him and half the eligible men in Brant Harbor for some fifteen years?

Old Timmons, a shiftless individual of some sixty years, who had once been a sailor, came to the door and grinned genially at the two women. There was no one in Brant Harbor whom old Timmons did not call by their first name.

"Tom, I've come to ask you about the key to the Cooper house," began Molly in her brisk fashion. "Did you only have one key?"

"Only the one you've got, yep," replied Timmons. "Don't want more than one. Why would I? Coopers give it

to me years ago when they promised to pay me by the month for life for keeping an eye on the house."

"You never had a key to the back door then?"

"Back door? Never in my life. What would I want with that, Molly?" Timmons opened his eyes very wide and Molly saw that he was telling the truth.

"There is one, Timmons," she said, as she turned away. "It is in the back door this minute. Mrs. Delaney who had auntie's third floor front room is dead in the Cooper house. I couldn't bring back your key because the coroner and Clade and the coroner's physician are all up there now."

Old Timmons took his pipe from his sagging lips. "What you mean, Molly?" he shouted. "Somebody dead in the Cooper house?"

But Molly was driving swiftly away and did not turn to reply.

"I've got to find out who had the extra key to my house last night, Molly," said Mrs. Pettigrew, as they neared the village. "The folks pass it around, you know. After I locked up and went after Mrs. Delaney, that Delaney man must have come back and got that suit case and took everything from the room. Then he went out to the Cooper house and killed her. We got to prove that. He got my key from one of the roomers, or else he had it himself."

"There is one thing you haven't told me, auntie, and it is a question you will be asked right off the bat at the inquest," said Molly gravely. "When you followed Mrs. Delaney in this car last night, she could not have been walking. How did she get to the Cooper place?"

Mrs. Pettigrew's red lips fell open, and the color drained from her face. What could she say that would not involve that arch villain, Captain Joel?

Molly, knowing her aunt well, shook her head.

"You're keeping something back,

auntie. I knew it right away. This is a serious thing, and we won't hear the last of it for ages. If you don't speak out you will get into all sorts of trouble. How did that woman get to the Cooper place last night?"

"She—she walked, Molly," said Mrs. Pettigrew at last.

"Walked! And you got your car and drove after her! What made you take the car? You could not have known where she was going."

"That was it," said Mrs. Pettigrew, regaining her courage. "I didn't know."

"Well, of course, I don't believe you," said Molly with a long breath. "But I know you well enough not to insist on getting the truth. Just you think it over, auntie, and you will find it best to speak out."

It was not, after all, necessary for Iris Pettigrew to question her roomers regarding that key, for, while Molly was putting the car away, she entered her house by the rear door to avoid the little knot of curious people gathered before the house, and she was accosted immediately by Mrs. Morrow, one of the year-round boarders and the widow of a sea captain.

"Dear Iris," cried this nervous little person, twisting her hands, "I am so upset! Right on top of this awful thing out at the Cooper house, I've got to tell you that I lost the key to your door last night. I don't know how! It did not really worry me until I heard of this terrible affair, and now I shall be afraid to go to bed with that key lying around loose somewhere! I'll have to get a new lock for the front door!"

Iris Pettigrew sat down weakly on a kitchen chair, her plump bosom rising and falling agitatedly.

"Ann Morrow, where did you lose that key?" she demanded.

"How should I know?" cried Mrs. Morrow shrilly. "I got it yesterday afternoon from Mr. Walton, who had it from the night before, and I thought

Mary and Mrs. Fisk and Miss Brown could all come in with me from the festival. You never care who has that key. If I knew where I lost it I would have had it back long ago!"

"I don't suppose you have an idea?" murmured the widow. "But then you never have."

"I shall have another lock and key made at my expense, of course," said Mrs. Morrow stiffly.

"Why do you suppose I care about the key?" cried Mrs. Pettigrew sharply. "It is the part it has played in this terrible murder that worries me. While I was out last night for a short time, and the house was alone, that Delaney man returned here, got in the door with my key, the one you lost, and took away his wife's suit case and whatever was in that room belonging to them."

"Her suit case!" Mrs. Morrow sat down opposite Mrs. Pettigrew, and Malviny paused in her pudding stirring to stare.

"Then he took that suit case to the Cooper house and left it there—after he had killed his wife," finished Mrs. Pettigrew, taking a miserable pleasure in the shock she was giving her two listeners.

"But where would he find that key, and what good did it do to take all their stuff to the Cooper house?" gasped Mrs. Morrow.

"I can answer the last," said Iris Pettigrew. "That old Timmons only opens the Cooper house about once in a year. You can figure why Delaney left his wife there dead and all her things with her."

"He hoped, the brute, to make a get-away long before the crime was discovered!" cried Mrs. Morrow. "How terrible! But where could I have lost that key? So unlikely, Iris, that that man would find it."

"It is my opinion that *he took it*," said Mrs. Pettigrew dryly and left the kitchen, going deliberately to the third-floor front, toward the windows of

which the groups in the street were gazing.

Iris Pettigrew had more than the question of the key to settle in her bewildered mind. Who had arranged the meeting between Mrs. Delaney and Captain Joel? Where did Captain Joel get the key with which he had opened the back door of the Cooper house?

She knew that it would only be a matter of time before the authorities would take charge of that room, since the woman had been murdered so strangely and the man was a fugitive.

Once more Mrs. Pettigrew looked about it, seeking some clew to the strange pair. She was quite sure that, no matter how deeply Captain Joel was involved, or how much he knew, Delaney himself had killed the woman who had made his life so unbearable, and that he had taken all their belongings to the empty house, hoping that the slipshod habits of the caretaker would assist him in keeping his crime hidden until he had time to get away.

But how had Delaney known that his wife and Captain Joel were going to the Cooper house? Joel Snodgrass had always been one of the steadiest and finest characters in Brant Harbor.

Iris Pettigrew touched her wet eyes with her tiny scented handkerchief, as she left the room at last. Now and then her disillusionment completely overpowered her indignation.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INQUEST.

DURING the few days that elapsed between the discovery of the crime in the Cooper house and the inquest, Iris Pettigrew for the first time in her life developed nerves. She followed every new move in the mystery with feverish interest, and, as the hours piled up, it became apparent that Captain Joel was not going to come forward and tell what he knew.

To Mrs. Pettigrew's way of thinking that was no course for an innocent man to adopt, and she swung between her belief in Delaney's guilt and her suspicion of the man she had frequently refused to marry.

Joel Snodgrass had not been to see her since the night of the festival, and her usual admirers were crowding about with questions. Not even to Molly would the widow confide her fears, and she had made up her mind, before the inquest took place, that she would stick to her story regarding Mrs. Delaney walking to the Cooper house, no matter what any one thought of it. What would be the feelings of the man who had so basely deceived her when he heard her rise and swear to a lie for his sake? All was over between them, of course, but she would stand by him!

Her house was overrun with reporters, and groups of the curious stood constantly before it; its pretty old-fashioned front figured, for the first time in its sedate life, on the front pages of the press. A determined search was being made for the Delaney man who had apparently vanished from the face of the globe.

When the afternoon of the inquest arrived, Mrs. Pettigrew took great care with her appearance, wearing her most becoming gown and hat and making the best of every charm. She had read about juries who were swayed by a woman's beauty, and she intended to make the best of hers, since she did not expect to tell the truth, despite the last advice Molly gave her.

"Now, auntie, don't try to keep anything back. I know you have discovered something you have not told me, and they will know it, too. You can't fool a coroner and a jury."

The day was balmy, and a crowd had gathered at the court-house steps, where the inquest was to be held. All sorts of rumors had been flitting about, but no one really knew how matters stood.

The room was packed. Summer people and farmers from the country about, many who had driven in from towns a great distance away, sat close together, and the air was tense with the interest the mysterious case had aroused. It was common property that there had been untiring attempts since the crime to trace the movements of Mr. and Mrs. Delaney before their arrival at Brant Harbor a week previous, but whether these efforts had been crowned with any success or not, was not known.

Iris Pettigrew and Molly, sitting near the coroner's table, listened with eager interest to the testimony of the two physicians who swore that Mrs. Delaney had been dead fifteen minutes at the least, when her body was flung down the stairs.

Molly herself testified next, answering the questions of the courteous coroner frankly and fully, but saying nothing about the beaded glove which she had hidden away in her room. Her aunt might have her secrets, but she, too, would keep her own council. Of what use to put these bloodhounds upon the trail of the dainty little lady who had worn that glove and felt her way so uncertainly along that narrow hall from the kitchen to the parlor? Let them discover those things for themselves.

Mrs. Pettigrew came next, and, to the surprise of Molly and herself, she got off very easily with her statement regarding the manner in which Mrs. Delaney had gone to the Cooper house.

After all, it was not so far-fetched, for many walked there along the ocean drive, which cut back, after a time, into the wildly picturesque country. Captain Joel, Iris had seen at once, was seated among the crowd, not even a witness. And why, indeed, should any one regard him as such? Iris Pettigrew did not look at him again, after she had given her testimony; she dared not. What was he thinking, and what did he fancy

that she was thinking? She felt the eyes of the room upon her, and she was conscious of the admiring gaze of the jury, even though Molly was at her prettiest that afternoon.

Her roomers were all called next, and the affair of Mrs. Morrow dropping the key to the Pettigrew house was made much of, but no real information was gathered in that direction.

Tom Timmons followed the roomers, but he told merely what he had already admitted to Molly. So far as he knew he had only one key to the Cooper house, and that one he had given Molly Pettigrew upon the morning she and her aunt discovered the crime. He no longer heard direct from the Coopers, but his monthly check reached him from their lawyer in New York.

The next witness called was a young man who wore tramping clothes, a white shirt open at his brown throat. He had a frank, likable face, and Molly was instantly attracted toward him.

"Your name?" snapped the coroner.
"Harrison Curtis."

"You have a camp near the Cooper house?"

"Yes, about a half mile away, on the edge of Big Deer Creek."

"Tell us your story, Mr. Curtis. What did you hear upon the night of the crime in the Cooper house?"

"My friend Sands, with whom I am camping, and myself had just got back from the festival, and we were turning in," began the young man obligingly. "It was a quarter after twelve, for I looked at my watch, when we heard two distinct screams from the direction of the Cooper place. We were nearer, as you know, to the house than we were to the front, where the festival had been going on, and, anyhow, by that time it was all about over, since the music stopped at half past eleven. People were getting away rapidly when we left."

"You heard only the two screams?"

"Yes, one right after the other."

"What did you think they were?"

"I thought they were the screams of some woman in distress, and so did Sands. We both flung on our coats and started running toward the Cooper place, but when we got there the last car was disappearing a good way off, and everything was quiet and deserted."

"You heard nothing else?"

"Not a sound, and we walked around the house a bit, too. As everything seemed regular, we went back and got to bed."

"No light anywhere in the Cooper house?"

"No. If there had been we would have broken in, but, as it was, we could not be sure by the time we got there whether those screams had come from the Cooper place or not."

The testimony of this young man and his friend Sands, which matched his exactly, sent a thrill of horror through the room.

It set Molly to wondering. How had those two young men, half a mile away, heard Mrs. Delaney screaming?

Iris Pettigrew stole a horrified look at Captain Joel, and she saw that he was leaning forward, with intense interest, his eyes on the coroner. What did he know about those two uncanny screams?

"Mrs. Burton," said the coroner, and Iris Pettigrew sat suddenly erect and shot a glance at Molly.

Elvira Burton was the wife of the man who ran the Sunset House, and she was the busiest person in Brant Harbor, cordially disliked by every one. Every small town has its Elvira Burton.

"Might know she would have to get into it!" whispered Mrs. Pettigrew to Molly.

The preliminaries over, Mrs. Burton, with evident glee, swung into her testimony.

"The Delaneys ate at my house, as most of the strangers in Brant Harbor

do in the summer," she began, her sharp little eyes sparkling. "I had an idea from the first that there was something queer about them. They certainly did fight a lot, in a subdued well-bred kind of way. I got to keeping an eye on them, as we do around here with strangers."

A twitter ran about the room, instantly hushed by the coroner's quick glance.

"The night before the festival I saw the Delaney man burning some papers in the grate in the room that leads off the main sitting room," resumed Mrs. Burton, with a glare at her neighbors. "I went close and got a look, and I could have sworn it was some of my newspapers from the center table he was burning. It made me mad, for sometimes I keep papers there a year old, just to refer to things that have happened, and lots of the summer people ask for old papers for some reason or other. I asked him what he was doing, and he said it was none of my business real sharp, and walked off. I made it my business then and there, for it was my house and my fire, and, I suspected, my papers. The most of the page he had tried to burn was gone, but I got the tongs quick and rescued a bit of it. I couldn't make much of it, but after this thing happened I thought maybe it meant something. You can see where somebody has marked this with a blue pencil. I found out for sure that he had torn it off the front of one of my newspapers on the sitting-room table, maybe afraid some one would see it."

Everybody craned their necks, and some stood up to see the charred scrap of paper which the thin little woman, with a glance of triumph about the room, handed the coroner. That gentleman's eyes narrowed, as he read it, and, lifting his head, he glanced about.

"It will do no harm to read this bit aloud," he said to every one's vast relief. "In my opinion it has a direct

bearing upon the case and possibly establishes identity."

The paper Mrs. Burton had rescued from the fire in her grate, read thus:

"Cooper Heiress Elopes with Chauffeur! Ruth Mildred Cooper Runs Away and is—— Family of Girl is—— Andrew D——"

Mrs. Pettigrew and Molly looked at each other with the same quick thought. Both had seen the initials "R. D." on the end of that suit case in the Cooper house—the Cooper house! Ruth Cooper Delaney! Was that the solution?

The coroner had to rap several times before he restored quiet to the room.

"Was Mr. Delaney's first name Andrew, Mrs. Burton?" asked a stout little juror nervously.

"I do not know. He always signed 'A. Delaney' on my book," replied the village gossip and scored another triumph.

"You did not see Mr. Delaney again?" resumed the coroner.

"No, sir. I can give you the date and the rest of this paper, if you want it."

"Pray bring it to me at your first opportunity," said the coroner. "The sooner we establish the identity of this man and woman the better."

A few more insignificant questions, and Mrs. Burton stepped proudly down, to be replaced by a pale young woman whom no one in town knew. As she sat down, the coroner reached under the table and held up the blue sweater Mrs. Delaney had worn.

"Your name, please?" he asked.

"Hanna Moore, sir."

"You sell the knitted goods at Blank & Blank, New York?"

"Yes, sir. I have been at that counter for ten years."

"Is this sweater one that you sold, or that was sold at your counter? Please be sure of your reply."

The pale young woman took the sweater and examined it carefully, during a dead silence. The tag on the back

of the neck had not been removed, and she glanced at it, as she returned the garment to the coroner.

"I sold that sweater myself, sir," she said simply. "I have an excellent memory. When your man came inquiring——"

The coroner lifted his hand. "Just answer questions, please. To whom did you sell this sweater?"

"To the woman I saw dead this morning, the woman you showed me, sir," said Miss Moore in a very low voice. "It was a day in spring. She was so handsome that I remember her distinctly. I wanted her to buy the orange instead of the blue, because she was so dark, but she would take the blue."

"Did she take the garment home with her?"

"No, sir. She had it sent."

Iris Pettigrew clutched Molly's arm with tense fingers. She was convinced that the dead woman was the daughter of the Cooper millions, but what had Captain Joel known of her, he who had no more knowledge of the Cooper family than she had?

The excitement in the room was intense, as every one waited for the coroner's next question.

"To whom was this sweater sent, Miss Moore?"

It came at last. "To Mrs. Andrew Delaney, 600 West Burton Street," replied Miss Moore, and a buzz of conversation broke forth, hushed only after the coroner had several times requested silence.

"The woman you saw this morning, then, Miss Moore, is the Mrs. Andrew Delaney to whom you sold this sweater?" he went on.

"I could swear that she is the same."

"Thank you. That is all."

Evidently the coroner himself felt the keen interest in the case that was holding the room so tensely, for he wasted no time, but called his witnesses with as little delay as possible. As he did so,

Iris Pettigrew felt an immense admiration growing within her for the man and the deft way in which he was establishing the identity of the dead woman in the empty Cooper house. He was quite sure himself, she was convinced, that Mrs. Delaney was Ruth Cooper.

A stout woman in a purple suit and big hat took the chair when Miss Moore stepped down. By this time every one in the room was conscious of a wild eagerness to probe further into the maze. The woman in the gay suit declared that she was one Mrs. Dora Marcey, and that she kept a rooming house at 600 West Burton Street.

"You can swear that the dead woman you looked at a few hours ago is the Mrs. Andrew Delaney who lived in your house with her husband for six months?" asked the coroner.

"I can swear she is," nodded the big hat. "I'd know her anywhere. Didn't I see her enough? And a high and mighty piece she was, too."

"You never heard her maiden name?"

"No, but her husband called her Ruth. I do know that. She was mysterious and close-mouthed enough, and they fought something awful. She was forever upbraiding him for something, and, though I listened at their door, I could never make out what it was."

Here Molly pinched her aunt's arm, but Mrs. Pettigrew shook her off. She had even forgotten Captain Joel in her tense interest in the case.

"Did she never speak of her home, or give a hint of the place they had come from?" asked the coroner.

"Nope, not once. But she got an awful lot of mail from England, and one day she got a check. I know that because he asked her for it, and she was furious. I heard that through the door, but she always spoke low, so that I couldn't understand her. Nobody in my house liked her, for she was that high and mighty."

"By high and mighty do you mean that Mrs. Delaney was a lady?" asked the coroner.

Mrs. Marcey tossed her beplumed head. "I suppose you'd call her so. I thought her a disagreeable piece. It is no wonder to me he killed her, poor man."

"Confine yourself to the replies to my questions, please," snapped the coroner. "They left your house definitely when they came to Maine?"

"I'll say it was definite," said Mrs. Marcey, with a wide smile. "They just paid me one morning, sent out that black suit case, which was every bit of luggage they had, and beat it. Just a bare good-by, and that was all. I don't know another thing about them."

"You never saw the place in England from which those letters came marked on the envelopes?"

"I never did."

"What was the date upon which the Delaneys left you?"

"The twelfth of July. I am sure about that, for it was my birthday, and I ain't so old that I can't mention them any more."

Mrs. Marcey was excused amid broad smiles, having definitely established the identity of the dead woman in the minds of all present. The newspaper Mrs. Burton possessed and the effort Delaney had made to destroy the account of the elopement of Ruth Cooper, both meant a good deal. The coroner called Mr. James Alvord.

As a tall, white-haired, smooth-shaven man, breathing culture and aristocracy in every line of face and figure, took the witness chair, every one stared. Interest could grow no keener, and amid a dead silence the coroner began his questions.

"Your name?"

"James Falcon Alvord."

"You are the lawyer in charge of most of the American interests of the Cooper family?"

"I am."

"You are the lawyer who sends Thomas Timmons his monthly check for keeping an eye upon the old Cooper house?"

"I am, yes."

"You are aware of the elopement last year of Ruth Mildred Cooper, the elopement with her chauffeur?"

"Pardon me, I am not aware of any such occurrence."

There was a stir in the room, and the coroner's brows lifted.

"You would know, if such a thing took place in the family?"

"I am positive that I should, yes. I have known them all intimately for some twenty-five years."

"Who of the family is now at the Cooper place in Shropshire, England?"

"Mr. Cooper, his brother, his son, and his daughter Ruth."

"Mrs. Cooper is dead?"

"She died ten years ago."

"You know them all well, as you say?"

"Very well indeed," replied the lawyer firmly.

"You have seen Ruth Cooper lately?"

"I saw her two years ago when I crossed to interview Mr. Cooper regarding some business matters."

"You also saw the dead woman found in the empty Cooper house, this morning?"

"I did."

"Is that dead woman, this Ruth Delaney, by any chance Ruth Mildred Cooper?"

"She most certainly is not!" said Mr. Alvord haughtily, with a lift of his white head. "The supposition that she is, is outrageous and absurd!"

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN JOEL TESTIFIES.

THERE was an instant sensation. For a moment the coroner made no effort to quell it, and it occurred to several that he must have known in

advance that Alvord had refused to identify the dead girl as Ruth Cooper.

"This is most important, Mr. Alvord," he said, when the room had grown quiet. "You have listened to the evidence of the other witnesses. You can swear that the girl found dead in Ruth Cooper's old home, on the night of the church festival, is not Ruth Cooper?"

"I can swear it, yes. Ruth Cooper is small and a blond. She has a doll-like beauty not easily forgotten. There is no possibility of mistaking her."

Into Molly's mind flashed the memory of the small beaded glove that lay at home in her bureau drawer. Who had, after all, been the other woman in the Cooper house that night?

It should not be hard for the authorities to ascertain whether Ruth Cooper was still in her Shropshire home in England, or whether she had, despite what the haughty family lawyer said, eloped with her chauffeur and come to America. If what he said was true, of course the woman who had been with Delaney at the house of Mrs. Marcey, the woman who had been stabbed and flung down the stairs of the Cooper house, was not Ruth Cooper. Yet that woman had been, as the Marcey person testified, a lady, and a lady she was known to be to all Brant Harbor. There was no mistaking that. Molly felt her head spin.

"You think it not necessary, then, to cable to the Cooper family regarding the death of this poor girl in their home?" asked the coroner.

Mr. Alvord shrugged. "I see no reason to notify the Cooper family of something that would only horrify them. The death of the girl in the Cooper house can only have been an accident, and I have looked at the deceased and sworn she is not one of the Cooper family."

"She must be buried then at the expense of the State?"

The eyebrows of the haughty lawyer lifted slightly. "Really, I cannot see what that is to me or any one else, if the unfortunate girl's family cannot be discovered," he replied.

He left the chair then, and for a moment every one relaxed, while stealthily Mrs. Pettigrew's eyes stole to Captain Joel's face.

During this conflicting testimony, did he know the real truth—did he know whether the woman he had taken into the back door of the Cooper house was Ruth Cooper, or some stranger? To the amazement of the widow she saw that Captain Joel was bending forward, gazing at the lawyer of the exclusive Cooper family, with a kind of fixed horror, touched with a dazed astonishment.

In her own mind the widow was convinced that the dead girl was Ruth Cooper, and that Joel Snodgrass knew it, but that the haughty Cooper family, furious at the step she had taken, was inclined to let her lie in the bed she had made. Joel, simple, straightforward Joel, who never had had a secret from her! Mrs. Pettigrew felt her throat swell. If she had accepted him on one of the numerous occasions, which would never come again, how much of this might have been prevented; nay, if only she had gone to the church festival when he asked her, two hours before he came back to get Mrs. Delaney!

Everything in Mrs. Pettigrew's mind pointed to the dead girl as Ruth Cooper, and she shared the indignation of the crowded room against the haughty lawyer. Being Ruth Cooper, too, the key to the back door of the old Cooper home might have been in her possession. But how could that key have come into the possession of an entire stranger, like the Delaney woman, who would merely happen into the old Cooper home, as Mr. James Alvord had hinted? Iris Pettigrew knew Mrs. Delaney had not "happened" into the Cooper house. She

had gone there deliberately with Captain Joel, of all people in the wide world!

But there was an unexpected stir in the room, and Iris Pettigrew sat erect, her face suddenly going so white that Molly gazed at her in alarm. Before the coroner could call another witness, if he had any more to call, Captain Joel Snodgrass had risen and elbowed his way to the front of the room. His honest face was red with anger, and he pointed a finger at Alvord.

"Coroner, I have something to tell regarding this case," he said very loud and clear, and Iris Pettigrew laid her hand on her throat, where her new string of pearls lay. "If that lawyer there says the dead woman found in the Cooper house ain't Ruth Cooper, then he lies! He knows darn well she's Ruth Cooper, and so do I know it! I took her to that house, myself, the night she was killed!"

Iris Pettigrew sank back in her chair, trembling, but with a singing triumph at her heart. Joel would probably get into all sorts of trouble, but he was a man—he had spoken! He would not let her lie for him!

Molly turned and met her aunt's eyes. Her own danced.

"Shame on you, Aunt Iris!" she whispered. "So that was what you knew!"

Mrs. Pettigrew nodded, starry-eyed. When she deemed it no longer possible, the attractive widow was touching the gossamer wings of romance.

Captain Joel was put into the witness chair amid a confusion that it took the coroner some five minutes to quiet. Alvord sat regarding the captain impersonally, a suspicion of a smile on his lips.

"Tell us your story, Captain Joel," said the coroner and sat back with a long breath.

Joel Snodgrass glanced about a bit defiantly, but he did not look at Iris.

"I didn't know Mrs. Delaney when she first come here," he began at last.

"I met her one night in front of the post office, and she asked me if I didn't remember her. I said I didn't, and she laughed and said it would not be possible, since she was only nine years old the last time she visited Brant Harbor. She remembered me because I took her down and showed her my launch. Then I knew her right off, and we walked out toward the old Cooper house, and she told me what she'd done to ostracize herself from her family—run off with her chauffeur, and was unhappy enough. She said she was going to leave Delaney, but he never let her get away because he thought some day she would come into a lot of money, when her family relented. We had a nice walk and talk, and she said she had a key to the back door of her old home, which she had always had, and would like to see inside it some day if I would go with her. Of course I promised to do that, for I was mighty sorry for her, and I promised, too, to keep her secret."

"You have merely her word that she was Ruth Cooper?"

"Her word? No, sir. She showed me pictures of her father and mother and brother, and I knew her folks well at one time," replied Captain Joel stoutly. "She showed me letters from her father, which she got when she was away the summer before, before she run off. She had pictures of this very Cooper house taken in its prime, when she was a baby. Wouldn't that be enough for you?"

"Where are those letters and pictures now?" asked the coroner. "Nothing of the sort was found in the suit case or the room the Delaneys occupied at Mrs. Pettigrew's."

"Well, I don't know what became of them," said the captain wearily; "I'm just telling you what I know. When that lawyer there, acting for her family, disowns the poor girl after she's dead, I reckon it's time I spoke up, whether anybody believes me or not."

"Go on," said Wilson briefly.

"The morning of the church festival I was coming in from a trip up to the harbor, and I met Ruth walking brisk-like along the road. I stopped and gave her a lift, for I was driving my horse."

Mrs. Pettigrew was conscious of a sense of amazement. When had Ruth Delaney got out of her house on that day of the festival?

She had come in, too, without her knowledge. A sly piece the girl had been!

"She asked me then if I would take her to her old home that night," resumed Captain Joel. "She said she didn't want any one to know it, and she was going to hide from Delaney and wait until he gave up looking for her, and then go back to England. She wanted to hide in her old home, and she had a key; she thought I would bring her some food for a day or so until Delaney had cleared out. Then she would leave, too, and be everlastingly grateful to me. Well, I tried to tell her to walk right out and leave him, but she said she had tried that before, and that she was afraid of him. I said I'd settle with him, if she didn't have anybody else to turn to, but she said she didn't want to mix me up in her troubles. In the end I promised to get her the night of the festival, when the whole town was out on the lawn in front of her house, and take her in the back door, since she had the key. I expected to take a lady friend to the festival, but at the last minute she turned me down, and I wandered around until it was time to call for Ruth."

Mrs. Pettigrew did not glance at the captain when he mentioned the lady friend. Her cheeks were a real and lovely pink.

"I can't get the picture the captain is painting of her," whispered Molly in her ear. "We know, and every one else has testified what a terror she is—or was."

"I got Mrs. Delaney and drove her

out to the Cooper house," went on Captain Joel. "Mrs. Pettigrew, if she really did follow her, followed my runabout and my horse, and she saw me let Ruth into the Cooper back door. I reckon Mrs. Pettigrew thought she would leave me out of it, when she said Ruth walked there alone."

Every one turned and looked at Iris Pettigrew, but the plump widow met their eyes serenely. She cared for nothing now, for the captain was proving himself a man.

"I'll question Mrs. Pettigrew later," said the coroner impatiently. "What happened after you opened the back door for Mrs. Delaney?"

"I had a flash light, and she had candles," replied Captain Joel. "We went all over the house, and she kept remembering things that had happened. I didn't want to leave her there, but she said she was happy and free for the first time in a year or more, and that she wasn't afraid of a thing. I asked where Delaney was, and she said she had persuaded him to go to the dentist. I didn't stay there long, only just long enough to make her comfortable on the sofa in the parlor, and to promise that I would bring her some food early the next morning, before anybody would be about. I was going to get her a ticket for New York next day and drive her to Bernerville in the car which she and Delaney used to use every evening.

"It was all fixed when I left her, and the band was playing on the lawn below. She seemed happy and content, and she said she was going back to her folks. She locked the back door after me, and I went."

"What of the suit case?" asked the coroner.

"I didn't see any suit case," replied the captain. "I was to get it next day, somehow, from Mrs. Pettigrew. She had been afraid to take it for fear Delaney would see her and guess she was leaving him."

"H'm," said the coroner, staring absently at the witness. I am afraid your kind heart has got you into a snarl, captain. You say that Mrs. Delaney locked that back door after you?"

"She did. I tried it to make sure she was safe."

"And the next morning the key was found in the outside of that kitchen door."

"I know that, but I'm telling you all I can about it," said Captain Joel shortly. "I could not get back to the Cooper place next morning as early as I had expected to, because I had some unexpected work to do, and, before I even got to the grocery store to buy some things to take out there, I heard what had happened. I was near frantic, but I thought I'd keep out of it, since I couldn't tell anything that would help. Then I sat here and heard that lawyer say the deceased wasn't Ruth Cooper, and I couldn't stand it. It is my opinion that Delaney tracked her and got in and killed her, but I ain't going to hear it denied by one who knows that that dead girl is Ruth Cooper!"

A few more unimportant questions, and the captain was dismissed, and Iris Pettigrew was called.

Mrs. Pettigrew, willing enough to talk then, told the true story of her experience that night, dimpling, as she admitted that she had deliberately tried to shield the captain.

Having straightened out that little affair, the weary coroner summoned the lawyer, James Alvord, again to the stand.

"Mr. Alvord, you have listened to Captain Snodgrass' testimony?" asked Coroner Wilson.

"I have," replied Alvord courteously.

"What have you to say?"

The lawyer glanced at Captain Joel, with a pale smile. "I can only repeat my former assertion that the dead girl shown to me this morning as Mrs. Delaney, found dead in the old Cooper

home, is not, and never was, nor could be, by the wildest stretch of imagination, Ruth Cooper!"

"You stand by that then and permit the State to care for the disposal of the body?" asked the coroner with his eyes narrowing slightly.

"I most certainly do and will," replied Alvord with sudden spirit. "The girl is nothing to the Cooper family."

Captain Joel sprang to his feet, his face flaming with rage. He lifted his hand with a grand gesture that compelled attention.

"Ruth Cooper shall never be laid away like that!" he announced in clarion tones. "Have the body sent to my house this very day! I will have services there, and, whoever they say this poor girl is, I will pay her funeral expenses! God will judge those who this hour are casting her off!"

There was some further effort made to trace Delaney, the coroner calling Doctor Wils, the dentist, and the station master, but neither had seen the Delaney man on the evening of the festival, and at last the only possible verdict was brought in, by a greatly stirred and bewildered jury, "death at the hands of an unknown person or persons." All Brant Harbor settled down to wait with bated breath any further developments in the strange case.

CHAPTER IX.

RUTH OR NOT RUTH?

THE funeral of the girl took place that afternoon from Captain Joel's pretty home at the edge of town, and, to the horror of Mrs. Burton and a few like her, the body was laid in the Snodgrass vault.

"That family of hers will get remorseful and take her back to England some day," the captain told Molly.

Coroner Wilson was still at the Sunset House when, during the evening, Mr. James Alvord knocked at his door.

"I am sorry to disturb you," said the lawyer coldly, "but I have just received some word from my clients in England that I think you should hear."

"From the Cooper family, you mean?" asked the coroner.

"Yes. I have had a cable informing me that Ruth Cooper eloped with their chauffeur, a young American, a year ago. The message was in reply to one I sent them the moment I heard of this horrible affair. I cannot blame them for keeping it quiet, of course."

"Yet you gave the impression at the inquest that the Coopers knew nothing of this murder, and you made your statements before you had an answer to your cable?" asked the coroner, regarding the gentleman before him with obvious distrust.

Mr. Alvord lifted his shoulders haughtily. "What had this news to do with my statements? I still say that the dead girl is not Ruth Cooper. I merely came to tell you that the account which that little busybody found in the paper, which I see there in your hand, was probably correct."

"Does it not seem strange," asked the coroner dryly, "that the Delaney man, whose wife Mrs. Marcey says received frequent word from England, and whose name is the same as that of the chauffeur with whom Ruth Cooper eloped, should endeavor to burn the old newspaper which gave an account of that very elopement and might have set the tongues to wagging here? Very strange, wasn't that?"

Mr. Alvord bowed. "There is some peculiar connection," he admitted. "It is not my business to ferret it out, or to catch the fugitive, Delaney. You think, with Captain Joel, that I am denying the identity of the girl in the Snodgrass vault. That is not true. Of course you must judge me as you please, but I repeat that the dead girl buried to-day from the Snodgrass home is not Ruth Cooper. If you wish to find me

you have only to write or wire. I am leaving on the ten o'clock train."

Coroner Wilson had no time to return to the newspaper account which he had been reading in an old paper, for a copy of which half the housewives in Brant Harbor and neighboring towns were searching their cellars, when there was a knock at the door, and, at his slightly impatient bidding, Harrison Curtis, the young man who had camped on Deer Creek, came in.

"I just dropped over to ask you something, sir," Curtis said, as the coroner indicated a chair. "It occurred to me at the inquest."

"Well, what is it?"

"I thought there was too much done about establishing the identity of the girl and too little made of the one outstanding feature of the case."

"Yes?" The coroner frowned. He always disliked any interference. "What feature was that?"

"The matter of Mrs. Delaney being stabbed fifteen minutes or more before she was thrown downstairs, sir," replied Curtis quietly. "If we go at this thing from some other end than that of identity, I think we'll get on better."

"We?" Wilson lifted his shaggy brows in unfeigned astonishment.

Young Curtis grinned. "I am a private detective, sir. Made fairly good, too. I am interested in the case, mightily interested."

"You're going to work on it for whom?" The coroner was amused.

"Myself, entirely. I came down for a vacation, but I can't resist this. I wasn't quite fair with you, sir, at the inquest. You see, when my chum and I ran around that closed Cooper house, after we heard those screams, I came upon this in the weeds of the garden, and, just to show that I am not afraid to put my cards on the table, I've brought it to you. There are no finger prints."

As he spoke, to the coroner's utter

astonishment, Curtis laid on the table a small thin-bladed carving knife, with a silver handle, upon which was engraved plainly enough the two words: "Sunset House." The blade of the small sharp knife was dull with a dark stain.

"Good Heaven, you found this!" Coroner Wilson almost jumped.

"I did. I was tempted to go in the house, but I would have had to break in, and I couldn't just see that, when to all intents and purposes the screams had come from outside. So Sands and I beat around a long time all over the place, but we found nothing. Do you get what I do about my not breaking in? I could kick myself."

"Get what you do?" repeated the coroner, staring at the knife.

"Why, sure!" said Curtis impatiently. "While we were looking around outside there, like a couple of boobs, the body hadn't been thrown down the stairs yet!"

"You mean you would have caught the murderer red-handed?" asked the coroner slowly.

"Nix," said Curtis disgustedly. "It is my opinion the murderer had beat it instanter. We have no evidence that says the man or woman who did the stabbing threw her downstairs, have we?"

"You are arguing the presence of two criminals," said the coroner, endeavoring to recover his dignity in the presence of this astonishing young man.

"I don't know," frowned Curtis. "Maybe not two criminals at all. I can't seem to get the hang of that throwing the dead body downstairs, can you?"

"I cannot," admitted Wilson honestly. "What sense would there be in it? Unless some lunatic——"

"Now you're running off with it," grinned Curtis. "Lunatic nothing! There's none around here. Depend upon it, if Alvord says he doesn't know this girl, and everybody thinks Captain Joel didn't know her either, *somebody*

did, and mighty darn well—well enough to kill her."

"She was a complete stranger in these parts so far as any of us know," said the coroner stiffly.

"She wasn't a stranger to Delaney," said Curtis. "And if he got a chance to swipe that paper from the sharp-eyed Burton dame, I guess he could crib a knife. He seems to have been swift on that sort of thing. He got the key to the Pettigrew house from Mrs. Morrow so clever she thought she had lost it, and he came back and took his belongings and his wife's out."

"Then you think Delaney left the suit case in the Cooper house and killed his wife?" asked the coroner slowly.

"I say it's mighty likely," nodded Curtis. "Everybody saw the lady's temper but Captain Joel, and him she sure had hypnotized."

"Do you think the dead girl is Ruth Cooper?" The coroner, lost in bewilderment, could not resist that.

"I'd be surprised to death if she was," said Curtis grimly.

"Why?"

"Oh, because I can't get the idea of a girl like that running off with a man like Delaney. Saw the chap once. And—because—oh, for any number of reasons! Still, you never can tell. I just came in to show you this and to say that I was going to snoop about a bit on my own."

Wilson reached out an eager hand for the carving knife. "You'll leave this with me?" he asked.

"Yes. Make what you can of it. Maybe Mrs. Burton can say when she used it or missed it, or something. I thought you ought to have it."

When Curtis left the hotel he stopped a moment or so on the street, looking about in the moonlight and listening to the sound of the surf. Two questions kept annoying him.

Had the crime really taken place at the time Sands and he had heard those

screams? If one was to take the doctor's words for it, it must have.

Why had the dead girl's body been flung so ruthlessly down the stairs? Had it been an attempt to conceal the real cause of death from what the criminal possibly considered the "rubes" in the vicinity? But the wound was too apparent for that, the gash left by the carving knife, and why had the criminal waited so long?

Why not have thrown the girl down the stairs immediately after death? What had the person who stabbed her been doing in the intervening time? It did not seem natural. Also, the knife that had apparently done the deed was in the grass when he and Sands reached the place, and, according to the doctors' statements, the body was not flung down those stairs for some little time later. It had not taken them long to reach the Cooper house, for they had taken a short cut and jumped rails.

As he had told the coroner, this last was the unusual and the puzzling feature of the case. Knowing nothing of the little glove Molly had found, Curtis had come upon those uncertain finger marks along the dust of the wall in the lower hall, when, with Clade trotting after him, he had gone over the house, just for curiosity, as he had told the suspicious constable.

Those finger marks, telling their story plainly, remained in Curtis' mind. Grasping a chance to examine them, he came to the conclusion that they had been made by gloved fingers, for there was no mark of identification about them. The height of the trailing marks gave him the idea that a little woman had made them; if a man, then a very short man, but certainly not the tall, slim girl now buried in the Snodgrass vault under the name of Ruth Cooper. On the face of it, the small woman had crept uncertainly along that lower hall, had done so in darkness, and had not apparently known the house!

"And the question is," mused Curtis, as he tramped back to his camp, "which girl was Ruth?"

CHAPTER X.

MOLLY AND CURTIS JOIN FORCES.

NEITHER the local authorities nor Harrison Curtis appeared to be making any progress. The police had traced the Delaneys from a liner to the door of the Marcey house, and they were in communication with the authorities abroad; a detective with a fair reputation had arrived from Bernerville, and he was making every one's life miserable; and the questioning of Mrs. Burton regarding the carving knife resulted in no information and merely strengthened the case against Delaney, for whom the search went on. Mrs. Burton said she had missed the knife, but more than that she could not say.

Although the case was given much publicity, Delaney was not found, nor did any friend or relative appear to claim the body of the girl in the Snodgrass vault.

Curtis had cabled the Cooper family for a description of Ruth Cooper, but he hoped for little from it. If the Coopers had given their orders to the lawyer, then his cable would be ignored. Still, if that were the case, it would point all the more strongly to the dead girl being Ruth Cooper.

Sands had gone back to town, and Curtis had taken a room at the Sunset House, where he managed to avoid Detective Rydal as much as possible. Rydal, having been apparently "put wise" by the coroner, regarded Curtis with a touch of amusement that was not especially pleasant.

And Molly Pettigrew, with that dainty glove in her possession, was tormented day and night by the desire to do something definite in the mystery. From her aunt she expected little, for Mrs. Pettigrew shuddered whenever the case was

mentioned and spent her days seeking an explanation for the behavior of Captain Joel, who had not come to see her after her efforts on his behalf. As time went on, the town criticized the captain for burying the murdered girl in his family vault.

One hot afternoon Molly left her aunt asleep and took the car from the garage, driving out toward the Cooper place.

"What would I have done, had I been the lady of the glove, after I found that key in the outside of the back door and had stolen in?" she asked herself. "I may get some sort of inspiration if old Timmons will give me that key. Aunt Iris said he had them both."

Timmons rose from a rocker in his garden, blinking when Molly drove up. He had been asleep in the shade of a tree, and it was hard to make him understand what she wished.

"The key? The back door key? What can a young girl like you want to go into that old house for, out of the sunshine of this afternoon?" he mumbled. "I can let you have it, but I'm not supposed to let anybody take it, Molly, you understand. If Clade or that coroner should find it out——"

"Nonsense!" laughed Molly, taking the old key in her delicate fingers. "You know they will not. I'll bring it back to you, and no one will be the wiser."

The Cooper house on that July afternoon, with its girdle of weeds, did not look especially sinister, although most of its windows were shuttered. Yet Molly, in her brave young strength, faltered a bit when she left her car in the lane and walked toward the back door. She knew more about the case than she had that morning when she discovered the body and the suit case in the closet in the upper hall, but she expected to get no ideas out of a place that had been so thoroughly gone over.

She reached that famous back door, she looked at it with a little shiver, and inserted her key. According to Captain

Joel, that key was turned on the inside of the door by Ruth Delaney, when he left her, but Molly had a notion that the lady of the gloves had found it on the outside when she arrived.

The door swung open, and before Molly was the square old kitchen and then the narrow hall where those fingers had left their mark in the dust. Leaving the door open, for she could not bear to close it, the girl went slowly along that hall, acting the part of the woman whose faltering hand had guided her on the side wall. It had been dark, she must remember that, although Captain Joel had said the Delaney woman had had a flash light and candles. Nothing of the sort had been found in the house with the dead girl. There were those who were beginning to suspect the story of Captain Joel, and Molly imagined that that was the reason why he had ceased to call at her Aunt Pettigrew's. Nothing could make Molly doubt the honest captain. If he said the candles had been there, then they were; and if the Delaney woman had locked the door after him, then she had opened it later to some one else. That must have been it. But had she let in the lady of the gloves? Molly felt that she had not, since in that case there would have been a light, or, if not, surely the Delaney woman's guiding hand. The wall seemed to shriek at her that the woman who had worn the gloves had walked alone.

What had she stumbled upon? Molly's steps, following those fingers, were taking her directly to the foot of the staircase. Had the strange girl, creeping along, come suddenly upon the body at the foot of those steps? Had it been her wild screams that had startled those two young men in their camp not far off? If the windows had been shuttered and the doors closed, it was not possible for Curtis and Sands to have heard those screams. But there was no way to determine whether a

window had been opened or not. Had the lady of the gloves gone upstairs? Had she stabbed Ruth Delaney with the knife from the Sunset House? How could she have got possession of such a thing? No one like the woman who had worn those gloves had been at the Sunset House, Molly was sure of that. Had she, coming upon the body, flung it down those stairs?

Molly could not believe that a woman small enough to wear the glove she had found could ever have accomplished such a thing. What, then, was her part there? Was she, and not the dead girl, Ruth Cooper?

Creeping up the stairs, Molly reached at last the top floor, where the crime must have taken place, though there had been found no traces of blood anywhere about. Not a sound was to be heard in the house, but out on the road a car passed with a shrill warning.

Molly felt cold, and she was badly frightened, but she had long wished to go over the old house at her leisure, and this was probably her only opportunity. As she stood in the upper hall in the warm silence, she tried to reconstruct the events of that night.

Suppose that the lady of the gloves was Ruth Cooper, that she had stood, frozen with horror, at the foot of the stairs in the darkness, while the crime was committed above? Suppose that the guilty Delaney had surprised her there, when he descended the stairs, candle or flash in hand; and, while they talked, Curtis and Sands had gone around the outside of the house in their search, finding the knife Delaney had flung from an upper window? Ruth Cooper, really the man's wife, had helped him at last to throw the body down the stairs, that the impression might be given that death had come in that way. No, Molly could not see that dainty little lady doing that, not the mysterious girl who had stripped from her hand in disgust that expensive glove,

when she found that it was stained with the dust of the old walls!

If the knife had not been thrown from a window, then the murderer, Delaney, who had traced his wife to the Cooper house and left all her things there with her, trusting that old Timmons would not open the place for months, had gone when Sands and Curtis had arrived. Curtis had said they tried the doors and found them locked. In that case the fleeing murderer left some one behind him who locked the back door from the inside and later departed, leaving the key in the door!

The house was so empty and still. From the spot where she stood at the head of the stairs, Molly could see the great bare rooms, with an occasional piece of furniture, like some dismal island in a vast sea of dreariness. If only there had been more in it to examine, or to serve as clues! As this thought occurred to her, Molly glanced down at the boards at her feet and saw, fallen between two of them, in a small crack, a round white object.

Removing a hairpin, she extracted from the crevice a tiny pearl. It exactly matched those worked into the pattern of the small glove in her possession, so that it was plain to be seen that the lady of the gloves had, after all, come upstairs, as far, anyhow, as the top of the steep flight down which the body had been hurled!

Molly wrapped the tiny pearl in her handkerchief and started on a tour of the upper floor, walking as silently as possible; just why, she did not know, and she experienced the desire to look frequently over her shoulder.

However she found nothing else of interest, and, pausing before a front window which had been left unshuttered, she looked down on the smooth sweep of the lawns, where the festival had been held. And she had an idea. Would any of the women who had had booths that night recall such a person

as the little lady of the gloves? She herself had danced almost all of the evening, but there was a chance that the church women who had sold fancy articles and candy might have noticed any one as beautifully gowned as the mysterious one must have been. It was quite possible that she had attended the festival before she entered the empty Cooper house.

Something the coroner had said recurred to her: "It was the night of the church festival. Hard to say who attended that, or who might have left it and entered the house. The fête may aid us, and it may not."

Molly's cheeks flushed. She would try out that idea. She knew every woman who had had charge of booths and tables that night. Certainly one of them must have noticed the little lady, if had she been there; for, though the church affair was largely attended by summer people from neighboring resorts, still the picture Molly had of the wearer of that glove must have lingered in some one's memory, unless she was all wrong about it! However, it was worth trying. No one else seemed to be doing anything.

As she came to this satisfactory conclusion, a step on the floor below chilled the blood in Molly's veins. She stood perfectly still, as the step came softly nearer, pausing at the front door, approaching that fatal foot of the stairs, and when at last it began to ascend toward her, Molly was ready to faint, and she stood with a hand at her throat, staring at the top of the staircase, expecting to encounter at any moment the gaunt face of the man Delaney, who was being hunted in every corner.

Instead, she met the astonished eyes of the young man in tramping clothes who had testified at the inquest, Curtis, whom Molly had instantly liked.

"Oh, it is you!" she gasped, her heart racing. "How terribly you frightened me!"

Curtis grinned. "You're a relief, too," he told her. "You're Miss Pettigrew, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I'm Harrison Curtis. I'm a bit of a detective. I'm much interested in this case, and I've been trying to sleuth about. I was mighty surprised just now to find the back door open."

"I coaxed the key out of Timmons," said Molly. "You must not tell on him."

"I couldn't even buy it out of him," grinned Curtis. "I was thinking of breaking a window, but, when I found that door open, I didn't know what to think, and I entered cautiously. Spooky old place, isn't it?"

"If it would only give up its secret!" cried Molly. "The town is beginning to shake its head at Captain Joel, and he is staying away from auntie because of it, and she is quite miserable, and our third-floor front is vacant, an unheard-of state of affairs for this season!"

"Let's join forces!" said Curtis, who was every minute becoming more conscious of Molly's beauty.

"I've kept something back, but if you're experienced in this sort of thing, perhaps you can advise me," said the girl after a moment's hesitancy, as she produced the tiny pearl which she had tied so carefully in her handkerchief.

CHAPTER XI.

A STEP FURTHER.

YOU have a fine idea there! By all means start making inquiries of the fête people regarding the little woman of the glove," Curtis told Molly, when they separated after returning the key to Timmons. "You see, I knew she had been there, but what you have is plain evidence. I'll see what comes of this side of the affair, and then I'm off to New York, to the place where the Coopers lived in the winter before they went abroad. I think we shall pick up the trail of the murdered girl some-

where in the vicinity of the Cooper family. No one has come forward to claim her, though I myself, outside the efforts of the police, have inserted enough personals to ruin a chap of moderate salary!"

"You think the Alvord man knew her, even though she will not prove to be Ruth Cooper?" breathed Molly.

"Well, I don't know what to think about him, the haughty snob," said Curtis, with a twist of his lip. "Hardly seems as though a man could shed responsibility like that. Anyhow, it is my opinion that Ruth Cooper was in that house that night, dead or alive, and we've got to get the identity of these two girls straightened out."

As Molly drove about to the church women who had had booths and tables at the annual fête, she felt greatly cheered with the thought that the extremely good-looking Curtis man was to help her in her efforts to unravel the mystery. The explanation was quite simple, of course, if they only had brains enough to grasp it!

The rest of the day was spent in trying to find some one who had noticed a young woman or an old woman of the description Molly had to offer, one made up purely from her own mind. But she carried about the little glove, and at last, when it was almost supper time, she sat down wearily in a rocker upon the porch of Mrs. Sapley, who had sold fudge and pinochi at the festival. Mrs. Sapley was a dressmaker and a woman of keen perception, who missed nothing in her vicinity. She recognized the glove instantly, and Molly sank back with a long trembling breath of relief. She really had hoped little from her attempt, although she had pursued it vigorously.

"I remember a young woman who came with Bruce Brent," said Mrs. Sapley, turning the glove in her fat fingers. "She was small and slim, and she wore a fawn-colored cape and a little close-fitting turban, a swell little thing, over

light hair. I noticed her because she was pretty as a picture, with big dark eyes, and her clothes were wonderful. Don't know as I would have associated her with your little lady, Molly, except for this glove. It was on her, all right, at least the right one was, for she put out her little hand from the cape and took the candy the Brent fellow bought. She didn't say a word, and he didn't say anything to her that I heard, for there was a lot of confusion about us, but you can leave it to me to notice the strangers and their clothes. I took in the gloves most especially. Did you ever see the like?"

"I never did," said Molly, trembling with eagerness. "Oh, Mrs. Sapley, that girl was in the Cooper house at the time of the crime. That is where I found this glove! Try to think of something else to tell me about her! No one else can recall seeing her at all."

"I can't think of another thing," Mrs. Sapley replied, shaking her head. "Ain't it enough that she was with Bruce Brent, the rich fellow who has that summer place up at Barford?"

"Yes, of course!" cried Molly and sprang up. "I must tell Mr. Curtis at once. He will know what to do about that."

When Molly reached home she found Iris Pettigrew walking about her room, alternately weeping and powdering her nose.

"What on earth is wrong, auntie?" cried the girl, flushed with the progress she felt she was making.

"Wrong?" Mrs. Pettigrew sank down in a rocker and surveyed her niece with hopeless eyes. "Where have you been? It's all over town that Wilson has had a cable from the Cooper family, with a description of their daughter, Ruth, in it."

"Yes. Well?"

"Well, it don't fit the girl that poor, big-hearted fool of a Joel has buried!" cried Mrs. Pettigrew, with her chin

wabbling, as she endeavored to keep from crying again. "The whole place is talking about it. They'll arrest him next, the great big goose! She took him in fine. I hated the creature from the first. I can hear her ranting away at poor Delaney yet."

"Wait a minute, auntie!" Molly spoke impatiently. "What description did the Cooper family send?"

"Something about little and fair," sighed Mrs. Pettigrew. "Anyhow, not a bit like that tall dark girl that we knew."

Molly's eyes brightened. "Little and fair!" she repeated musingly. "But, auntie, if the Delaney woman is not Ruth Cooper, who on earth is she? No one has come forth to claim her, and she must belong to somebody. Has it occurred to any of these brilliant minds that this wholesale denial by the Coopers and their lawyer may be just to disown the girl? She probably disgraced them in their eyes. Remember the letters and pictures she showed Captain Joel. And the Marcey woman said she got lots of mail from England. I wouldn't form any conclusion yet."

"They are almost hinting that Joel killed her and told this story to get out of it," cried Mrs. Pettigrew, carefully wiping her brows and lashes with her handkerchief. "I ordered that Morrow woman out of the room just now. He doesn't come near me any more, and that third-floor front is a flat loss to us, Molly."

"I shall never be satisfied until this thing is cleared up," said Molly, with a shake of her head. "You got into it, auntie, through your curiosity and jealousy, and now I've just got to finish it. Mr. Curtis and I have gone in together to discover what we can. You must not ask me anything until I am ready to tell you, but we'll do our best to clear Captain Joel. No one has any reason to suspect him of anything but a big heart."

CHAPTER XII.

CURTIS GOES TO BARFORD.

CURTIS, having received an enlightening note from Molly, entered a booth at the drug store and called the Brent house. What was evidently the voice of the butler answered him.

"Mr. Brent is not here, sir."

"When do you expect him? This is most important."

"I could not say, sir. He is dining out."

From the drug store Curtis went back to the hotel, got his motor cycle, and started off on the four miles to Barford. He would go down there and wait for Brent. If he had skipped out, he could possibly get something from the servants.

At times Curtis had a hunch that the dead girl was actually Ruth Cooper. The cable from England had reached his ears at once, as it was upon the lips of every one. There had been no reply to his own message, and he expected none. The Coopers were evidently a haughty, exclusive bunch, and had no intention of acknowledging the girl whom they considered had disgraced them.

It was not nine o'clock when Curtis turned into the gates of the pretty Brent home. A dim light shone in the hall, and Curtis rang several times. The door was opened by the butler whom Curtis fancied had answered the telephone.

"Mr. Brent in?" asked Curtis pleasantly.

"No, sir. Mr. Brent is dining out."

"What bad luck!" muttered Curtis staring out over the grounds. "I must see him to-night. Mind if I come in and wait?"

The butler regarded him with obvious distrust and did not give an inch.

"I don't know, sir," he said uncertainly, and Curtis laughed.

"It is quite all right. I am Harrison Curtis from Brant Harbor, and I am

investigating the Cooper house case. There are a few questions I must ask your master, that is all."

"Oh! Well, in that case, perhaps, sir, it would be all right," said the butler stepping aside. "But Mr. Brent may be late."

"No matter," said Curtis pleasantly. "Give me something to read."

Supplied with magazines, seated in a comfortable chair beneath a reading lamp, eyed now and then by the butler, who frequently passed the door, Curtis waited until eleven thirty, turning and twisting the mystery in his agile mind and wondering how Brent would meet his questions. At eleven thirty the master of the house returned and went at once to the den, where Curtis flung down his book and rose to meet him.

Brent was a tall, thin man, in the late thirties, with a good-looking face that somehow had a touch of something in it, about the eyes or mouth, that Curtis did not like. It was elusive, and he did not decide until long afterward just what the something was, and then he knew that the man seldom looked directly at the person he chatted with, an annoying habit.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting, Mr. —Curtis, I believe?" He advanced with his hand out. "What can I do for you?"

Curtis sat down again, and his host opened a drawer and pushed a box of cigars toward him.

"I am afraid my errand is not exactly pleasant," began the young detective. "There are a few questions I must ask you in connection with the Cooper case at Brant Harbor."

"The Cooper case?" Brent glanced at the other man for one fleeting second, his brows drawn together. "What on earth do I know about that?"

"Nothing, I dare say," smiled Curtis. "I just came up to ascertain the name of the young lady who was your companion that evening at the church festival on the Cooper lawn."

"Young lady?" Brent lifted his brows. "Some one has made a mistake. I did not take a young lady to the festival that evening."

"You did not?" Curtis felt suspicion rise within him, and he put away his sense of disappointment. Brent was going to be difficult.

"I did not. I went alone."

"Then who was the young woman for whom you bought the candy at Mrs. Sapley's booth?" pursued Curtis. "Fudge and pinochi, a pound of each."

"Mr. Curtis, I haven't the faintest idea what you are getting at," said Brent, with what was evidently merely polite patience. "I did not buy candy for any young woman the night of the fête. I was driving past the affair, and I stopped in and strolled about, that was all. I always attend, like every one else, for it is in a good cause. I bought, as I recall, some cigars and a pipe."

"And you were at no time in the company of any young woman that evening?" asked Curtis, recalling a passage in Molly's note. "Mrs. Sapley is right," she had written. "She has known Bruce Brent all his life, as most of our people here have. There is no chance of any mistake about this. She spoke to him."

"I was not. I spoke to people I knew, of course, everywhere, but I did not buy anything for any girls. What was this person like for whom I am supposed to have purchased the candy?"

"She was exquisitely pretty," replied Curtis dryly. "Had big dark eyes and light hair and wore a close-fitting little fawn-colored turban, a fawn-colored cape, and very beautiful gloves, gauntlets with the flaring wrist embroidered in small pearls. She was quite small and doll-like. You know no such person, Mr. Brent?"

Brent shook his head slowly, but his eyes did not meet those of Curtis.

"I do not, Mr. Curtis. There is a mistake somewhere. What about this girl?"

"According to the story we have," said Curtis, "she went to Mrs. Sapley's booth with you, where you bought the candy I mentioned. Later——"

"Yes?" Brent's eyes lifted for a flash. "What did she do later?"

"She entered the empty Cooper house, where the murder was committed, by the back door," went on Curtis quietly. "She felt her way along the hall from kitchen to the front of the stairs, where the body was found the next day. What she did after that I do not know, but she stripped off the left glove, which was filled with dust from the old, dirty walls past which she had crept, and left it on a shelf in the hall. We have got to find that woman, Mr. Brent."

"Good Heaven, you think a lovely creature, such as you have described, committed the crime?"

"We do not know as yet what to think, but I have my own opinion."

"You certainly have me interested. What is it?"

"That the girl we are speaking of is Ruth Cooper."

That was not Curtis' opinion at all. The action of the Cooper family inclined him to think they were casting off their child; but there was a big chance the other way, too.

"Ruth Cooper! But I thought Captain Joel had offered certain proof with the aid of photos and papers and so on, that the girl he buried was Ruth Cooper!"

"No one but the captain has seen those photos and papers and so on," said Curtis grimly. "Delaney evidently took them with him, if they ever existed."

"But why should either girl be the Cooper heiress?"

"Man, use your wits!" snapped Curtis impatiently. "The girl eloped with a man named Andrew Delaney. The man at the Pettigrews was A. Delaney. His wife was Ruth. She received foreign mail. Captain Joel swears she proved to him that she was Ruth Cooper. We get

a message from the Coopers describing, not the girl Captain Joel buried, but this little lady of the gloves, for whom Mrs. Sapley says you bought candy at the festival. One or the other is the Cooper girl. I am not so interested in that end of it as I am in deciding to my own satisfaction why on earth that girl's body was thrown down the stairs some half hour or so after she was dead."

"My man Dawes says you are a detective," said Brent, after a moment of silence.

"Yes, on my own—investigating for pure love of it. They've got a man down there, Rydal, his name is. I am helping out for the Pettigrews who want to clear Captain Joel of the mix-up he's got himself into, blundering old fool."

"I am sorry I cannot help you," said Brent quietly. "If there is anything else I can do, please call on me. You have me greatly interested."

Curtis repressed a sarcastic smile and a desire to rise and shake the truth out of Brent in some way. That the young man had accompanied that little lady of the gloves to the festival, he had no doubt.

"What time did you leave the festival, Mr. Brent?" he asked, as he rose.

"About eleven, I think. Somewhere around there."

Curtis left after that, going back to his motor cycle, with rage in his heart. Alvord and Brent! Why did those two men lie? Did Brent know more about the case than he wished to? Were his shifting eyes a habit with him, or was he really afraid while Curtis questioned him?

That Mrs. Sapley's story regarding the woman with Brent at the festival was true, he did not doubt. Brent, then, must have some guilty reason for keeping silent. Before Curtis returned to Brant Harbor he visited the railway station, but the station master had seen no one who answered the description of the woman he sought.

Brent, of course, had taken her from the Cooper place, and in one of his high-powered cars anything was possible. Deciding to keep an eye upon Bruce Brent, and, if necessary, to put Detective Rydal on his trail, Curtis motored gloomily back to Brant Harbor.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS SMITH.

THE next morning Curtis sought Detective Rydal and laid the entire matter of the lady of the gloves before him, having the supreme satisfaction of noting that gentleman's amazement and the new respect in which he immediately held the private detective.

"I'll set some men on Brent," nodded Rydal. "Have him trailed and his mail watched. Mighty good of you and Miss Pettigrew, Curtis. Appreciate it. Opens up an entirely new aspect of the case. Which girl do you, in your own mind, consider is Ruth Cooper?"

Curtis rose with a groan. "Heavens and earth, man, how old is Ann?" he snapped. "If any one asks me which is Ruth Cooper again I shall commit murder myself!"

Having laid his story before Molly Pettigrew and said a lingering farewell to that blushing young woman, Curtis left for New York, where he intended to attempt to discover something of interest about the Coopers and their connections that might make room for the girl in the Snodgrass vault.

That day was destined to be an eventful one, for the four o'clock train brought a new occupant for the famous third-floor front. Iris Pettigrew was reading on her cool porch, when the young woman walked up the path. The stranger carried a suit case, and she smiled slightly at Mrs. Pettigrew, as she sank on the top step with a long breath.

"It is terribly hot, and there was no hack at the station!"

Iris Pettigrew nodded, her curious

eyes taking in the worn little blue suit, the pale young face, the big eyes, and the dark hair drawn smoothly back under a small nondescript hat. She did not look like good pay, but Mrs. Pettigrew was willing to take a chance.

"It certainly is hot. Come up in the shade. Were you looking for a room?"

"Yes. I just came on the four o'clock train. I am after a position, and this part of the country was recommended by my doctor. I am not very strong."

"You are here permanently then?" The widow's eyes lighted. Here was unexpected good luck.

"Yes, if I can find a nice room and a position."

"I don't know about the position, but the room is right here," said the widow. "Did some one direct you?"

"Yes," nodded the girl with a faint, elusive smile. "A stout man in a blue suit and a polka-dot tie directed me. He had such a genial smile I couldn't resist his advice."

"That would be Captain Joel," said Iris Pettigrew, with a tremulous sigh. "I have a nice third-floor front room, but you may not want it."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I guess you must have read about this murder case we've had here lately—the girl who was killed in the old empty Cooper house?"

"Yes," said the young woman. "I did see something of the sort in the papers. What about it?"

"I am Mrs. Pettigrew!" said the widow, much as she might have said "I am the Queen of England!" For she had gained some fame through the case, and she was proud of it. "The Delaney girl was killed, you see, and she had my third-floor front, and it is the only room I have empty."

"But she wasn't killed in there!" said the stranger. "If she had been I couldn't consider it, but, as it is, could I see the room? My name is Beatrice Smith."

Mrs. Pettigrew rose with alacrity. She liked the sweet face of the girl and her quiet manner, and she needed her money.

"Come right up," she nodded. "Malviny will bring your suit case, if you decide to stay. The room is a lovely one, but I couldn't put you in it without telling you."

There was certainly nothing wrong with the famous third-floor front. Its windows were wide to the fresh lovely air that rushed through Brant Harbor, and its appearance was immaculate and most inviting.

Miss Smith entered and glanced about with a little smile of appreciation.

"How delightful! I shall love it here. My line is stenography. Do you fancy I can find anything to do in this quaint town, Mrs. Pettigrew?"

"I suppose so. I surely hope so," smiled Iris Pettigrew, delighted with her good luck. "You will have to eat at the Sunset House, and my terms are eight dollars a week for one in here."

Not many women, she decided, when she left the new lodger at last, would have cared to move into that third-floor front, with Delaney running at large, and the crime all unsolved! She certainly was in luck.

"A queer thing, I call it," said Molly, when she heard the news. "I myself shouldn't want to sleep up there. And she didn't ask you anything about the Cooper house affair? Humph!"

"My goodness, Molly," said the widow with a little hysterical laugh, "it wasn't so long ago you were scolding me for imagining things about that third-floor front, and now here you are at it yourself, and about a plain, sweet-looking little mouse like Beatrice Smith, who came for her health, is dressed real shabby, and wants a job! If it hadn't been for that grand old fool of a Joel, I wouldn't have had a soul in that room, and she's a permanent, too!"

"Well, maybe I imagine things,"

sighed Molly, for her attempts at detective work were not turning out as well as she had hoped, "but it does seem unnatural."

There was, however, during the days that followed, nothing strange or unnatural about Beatrice Smith. She came and went pleasantly enough, seeming to be rather a colorless personality and one who took little pride in her appearance, but every one liked her. At the Sunset House, where she ate with the other roomers, she was well spoken of, and Mrs. Pettigrew had no curiosity about the stranger whatever. Not so Molly, who experienced the same feeling the widow had had regarding the Delaney couple.

Everything Miss Smith did or said seemed suspicious to Molly, and even when she got a job in a real estate office and appeared to have settled down for the year at Mrs. Pettigrew's, the girl still watched her.

Molly was desperately discontented those days, for she felt that there was nothing being done about the mysterious crime, which would be a blot upon Brant Harbor forever. And that nameless girl in the Snodgrass vault! It did not seem right.

Miss Smith, too, never discussed the murder which was on every one's lips. She showed no apparent interest in it, though she occupied the room that had sheltered the mysterious couple.

No one in town spoke much about the quiet girl who had lately come to the Pettigrew house, and that says much for the mouselike fashion in which she dressed and got about. Her clothes and her appearance were the most ordinary, and she was always the same. Even Brant Harbor and Mrs. Burton could find nothing to talk about in that combination.

But Molly kept her strange, uncomfortable feeling regarding the new occupant of the third-floor front. She felt herself that it was ridiculous, and her

suspicions were probably centered upon the luckless Miss Smith because progress in the case seemed to be halted, although Detective Rydal still went busily about town. It was possible, of course, that the Smith girl was exactly what she said she was, but in those days Molly suspected every one. The brief notes she had from Curtis seemed to report little progress, and she was impatient.

Driving home from a call one evening, Molly came full upon a slight figure leaning against the bars which led to the lane of the Cooper house. She knew the prim little gray dress before the woman turned, and she saw that it was Miss Smith, Miss Smith who had never mentioned the Delaneys or the case!

But Beatrice Smith seemed not at all embarrassed, as she approached Molly's car.

"I walked all the way out here," she said, with a little nod. "I wanted to see this much talked-of house. Rather uncanny, isn't it?"

"It is," said Molly briefly. "May I take you home?"

"Oh, no, thank you," smiled Miss Smith. "I am not nearly through looking."

"Would you care to go over the house some day?" asked Molly. "I can get a key from Timmons, the caretaker."

"I should not care to go any nearer, I think," said the other slowly. "The story is rather horrible, isn't it?"

"It is very horrible," replied Molly with emphasis. "If it is not soon cleared up, and the man caught, or the truth brought out, I do not know what I shall do. It is making many people unhappy."

"What an unfortunate thing to happen where it is so beautiful!" said Miss Smith and turned back to her position at the patched and broken bars.

Molly drove off, but the suspicion was stronger than ever. There was something strange about the Smith girl, and

she was there for a purpose, but what could it be? Was she a detective some one had engaged? The Coopers, probably? Or had she a closer interest? Her little figure leaning on those old bars in the twilight looked rather uncanny, anyhow.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OTHER GLOVE.

MOLLY said nothing to her aunt regarding that encounter with Miss Smith at the rear entrance to the Cooper house. Instead, she determined to spy upon the strange girl herself and learn what she could about her presence in Brant Harbor. If there was nothing to learn, it could harm no one; but Iris Pettigrew would kill her, if she frightened a permanent out of that third-floor front! It was foreign to pretty Molly's nature to peer into the affairs of another, but in this case she determined to put aside all scruples until she found to her own satisfaction whether there was any reason, connected with the Delaney mystery, for Beatrice Smith to be in Brant Harbor.

Leaving Mary Wallace's room one night, Molly heard the strange girl moving about in the third-floor front, and, without permitting her manners to get the better of her, she stooped swiftly to the keyhole, a deed she had frequently chided her aunt for committing. Although there was a crack of light along the bottom of the door, the keyhole was dark! Beatrice Smith had hung something over it!

Molly went on downstairs with her sweet mouth set primly. She had been right. There was some sort of mystery about Beatrice Smith. Her quiet manner was just a pose. Who or what could she be, and why guard against some one peering through her keyhole?

When Miss Smith went to work the next morning, Molly, without a word to any one, ascended to her room, the

door of which was always left unlocked when its occupant was out, and shamelessly entered. At first glance there was nothing to rouse curiosity or suspicion, but Molly did not trust to first glances any more. She went about the room carefully, peering everywhere for some clew to the stranger's identity. At the bureau she got a shock, and the discovery she made proved that Molly's detective powers were developing. In the ivory comb she found two long blond hairs!

Since the hair of Beatrice Smith was straight and very dark and brought down primly over ears that no one had ever glimpsed, and those two hairs were full of the glint of gold and curled bewitchingly, the find was enough to make Molly pause with a thrill of delight.

Miss Beatrice Smith wore a wig! Was that why the keyhole was darkened? Unable to bear the drab disguise of the day any longer, did she throw it off in the hours when she kept her room, after her return from the Sunset House, and emerge as—what? Whom? Was she the little golden-haired lady of the gloves?

That was hard for even the suspicious Molly to believe. Yet there was the evidence right before her. From whose head had come those two curling, glinting golden hairs?

Molly removed them, looked all about for more, found none, and laid them carefully in her handkerchief. She felt she was getting quite a collection. She hesitated before bureau drawers and the suit case set far back in the closet. Could she bring herself to look into these things? Then she remembered another suit case in the closet of the Cooper house, and she turned the key in the lock of the Smith girl's door and set to work, taking out every article carefully. In the bottom of the suit case she came upon something that brought a quick cry from her lips and sent the color from her cheeks.

Beneath a heap of plain, white underclothing, wrapped in a filmy veil, lay the mate of the dainty beaded glove that had been left, soiled with dust from the old walls, on that shelf in the Cooper house! There was no mistake about it; it was the glove from the right hand, but the finger tips were not soiled, and the glove had apparently not been worn much. Holding it in trembling fingers, Molly recalled the small delicate hands of Beatrice Smith. She could not hide her hands!

Could that drab, dull, uninteresting Miss Smith be the lovely little lady whom the fastidious Brent had taken to the festival, the girl Mrs. Sapley had described? How could it be? Yet why was she here? How could she bear to go near that Cooper house? What was her purpose in coming to that very room, in such disguise that none would guess her identity, even if the presence of such a woman at the scene of the crime had been generally known?

What was she to do to make her speak? That Miss Smith was Ruth Cooper, Molly did not doubt. If it was true, what of Captain Joel who had buried the wrong girl in his family vault? Miss Smith knew the truth of that terrible night of the festival. How could she be made to tell it?

As she laid the glove carefully back in the suit case and glanced around to make sure that everything was as it had been, a plan was forming in her fertile brain. She had turned to the door, when her aunt's shrill, excited voice floated up to her.

"Molly! Molly, where are you? That Rydal man has found Delaney! They've got him down at the jail!"

CHAPTER XV.

DELANEY SPEAKS.

WHEN Rydal and two of his men captured him, hunted him down like an animal, in the woods beyond the Cooper place. Andrew Delaney had

been a shivering, half-starved wreck. While the police had thrown out their dragnet over the country, touching on stations and ports, leaving no stone unturned, Delaney had all the time been not far from Brant Harbor, afraid to come out of cover, living on what he could steal at night, starving and panic-stricken. When he was taken, he carried a paper parcel which held his clothing and the letters and pictures Mrs. Delaney had shown Captain Joel, and he seemed not sorry to enter the jail and have a wash and a meal. Rydal, Wilson, and Constable Clade waited until this food was consumed before they invaded the cell and demanded the man's story.

All Brant Harbor was roused by the capture, and the street outside the jail was jammed with people waiting to get the details of what they were sure would be a confession. For there was no doubt in any mind that Delaney was the criminal.

"We're waiting for your confession, Delaney," said Rydal, and the man looked up with a shrug.

"What's the use? You won't believe it," he replied. "You know that everything is against me."

"Go on," said Wilson curtly.

"I was pretty crazy about Ruth," began Delaney sullenly, "until she played a trick on me, and I found her out. She jawed at me a lot, but I didn't mind that. I was afraid she was getting ready to leave me, and I watched her every minute. No use telling you more than I have to. We had had an awful row just before the festival, and I had decided that if Ruth left me I would kill her. I was not myself—I was crazy. She had played me a low-down trick. No use saying what. Well, I went to the dentist to have my tooth out, but when I got to the porch I made up my mind I better not have my eye off Ruth so long as that, and I wandered up and down in the

shadows across from the Pettigrew house, and I watched it. I had the key I had swiped from the purse of the Morrow woman, though I didn't know when I took it what I might use it for.

"Pretty soon I saw Captain Joel come for Ruth, and Mrs. Pettigrew follow them in her car. I followed, too, but I ran through fields and hid behind hedges and took short cuts. I knew the country pretty well by then. I was sure Ruth was leaving me, and that Captain Joel was helping her. I was fighting mad. I saw them go into the Cooper house, and I thought I understood. Ruth meant to hide there and grab a chance to fade out of my life. It was like her, after that other thing she'd done. I didn't hang around the Cooper house. I knew what to do. I went back to Pettigrew's, and I traveled some, across fields, too, because the widow was going home by the road, heartbroken, I guess, because her captain had gone out with Ruth.

"I went in the house with the key I had and packed all Ruth's things into the suit case, wrapped mine in paper, and beat it, locking the door and chasing across the street, while the widow was at the garage. I got back to the Cooper place, and the festival was about drawing to a close on the lawns below, while the house was dark as it could be. I tried the doors, but they were locked, and I decided to wait until the folks had gone from the party, and there was nobody around. Ruth wasn't going to make a fool of me like that, not after what she had done! I'd kill her, or bring her back, and that old fool of a captain needn't think he was going to butt in and help separate man and wife.

"I hid out in the trees, the suit case and the paper bundle beside me, and it seemed like a long wait until everybody had gone from that fête. Just as the last of them was about to vanish, I heard two awful screams from inside

the house. I guess a window must have been up, though there wasn't any up when I got in. I just sat there, scared for a minute, and then I got up and ran for the house. There was nobody around but me, but I hadn't been trying the doors long, figuring on how to get in, when I heard some people coming through the woods and across the fields. I faded away then, and I watched Curtis and Sands hunting around there for some time, and I didn't move until they got away. It took me a little while to try the windows and doors, and now I've got to tell you a queer thing."

Delaney paused and regarded the men before him with weary eyes. He seemed to have no hope that they believed him.

"All the time I had trotted around that house, before those two fellows came, and when I had tried to get in right after they went, that back door was locked tight. But after I returned for the second time from the front of the house, thinking I would break in a back window, that back door had a key sticking in the outside of it, and it wasn't locked! I can tell you, I was pretty anxious to get in, but that kind of gave me the creeps. Somebody had come out of there while I was at the front of the place.

"I got myself together, and when I remembered Ruth and the stunt she had tried with me. I was mad all over. I opened the door and went in, and the darkness was smothering and pretty hot, for that old house had been shut up a good while. I had a small pocket flash, just a little one, so I went over the lower floor and found nothing; no window up, even. At the top of the stairs I found Ruth, stabbed, as you know. She was lying right across the top step, as if she might have been running from somebody.

"I can't account for what I did then. All of a sudden I was furiously mad.

Once more she had made mock of me! Some one had killed her, and it hadn't been me! I had had no chance to tell her what I thought of her. I had been balked, after I had had the biggest fraud put over on me a man could have! She had come to that empty house to meet a lover. I went crazy. I picked up her body and flung it headlong down the stairs before I came to my senses. I realized what I had done then, and that I shouldn't have touched her. I set her suit case in the closet at the top of the stairs and went all over the upper floor. There was no window up, but the air had been freshened, and I knew there had been one up when Ruth was killed, else I could never have heard her scream, nor those two fellows couldn't have heard her, either.

"I hoped old Timmons wouldn't open the house for months, like they said he didn't sometimes, and I didn't much care if Captain Joel did get into trouble. I went out that kitchen door, locked it behind me, and left the key where it was, because I forgot it. No other reason on earth. When I remembered it I didn't dare go back.

"That's all. I had some money, but I was afraid to show myself anywhere. I've been living on what I could steal ever since, for I didn't dare even beg, let alone approach a store. I heard what a hunt was on for me, and I'm glad it's over. But I didn't kill Ruth."

"Was your wife Ruth Cooper?" asked the coroner, as Rydal finished taking down the man's story.

Delaney looked up and sneered. "Find out. I been laughing at you fellows for days," he shrugged. "Is she Ruth or not Ruth? She was my wife all right, and she wasn't square with me, but I didn't kill her."

"How wasn't she square with you?" asked Rydal.

"Find that out, too," said Delaney. "I've said all I have to say."

"Well, the country about here hasn't,"

said Clade. "It will be a plumb miracle if you ain't lynched before another day."

Even this roused no alarm in the breast of the weary prisoner, for he turned his head aside and closed his eyes. "You'll not get any more out of me," he growled. "Can't you let me sleep? I haven't seen a bed for days."

Rydal nodded at the other two men. "Go out, and I'll deal with him," he said. "I'll torment him until he begs for mercy."

The coroner turned at the door and met Rydal's eyes, with a worried expression.

"Queer thing," he said, shaking his head, "but I believe his story, Rydal. I don't think we've got our man."

"I don't know," said Clade. "He's had a long time to think up his yarn, but that about the back-door key sounded straight."

CHAPTER XVI.

CURTIS RETURNS.

WHEN Miss Smith returned to the Pettigrew house late that afternoon, she passed groups of men and women who were discussing everywhere Delaney's confession, and her cheeks were flushed with excitement, as she entered the cool hall and swept her wide, black hat from her head. Molly's voice called to her immediately.

"Miss Smith! Is that you? Won't you come in a minute?"

Hesitating with a slight frown, Beatrice Smith entered the parlor slowly and paused in the door.

"Have you heard anything new about the Delaney man?" asked pretty Molly eagerly; and then: "Oh, I beg your pardon, this is my friend, Mrs. Sapley, Miss Smith."

Mrs. Sapley did not merely bow, she rose and went very close to Miss Smith and took her hand, looking keenly down into the girl's face.

"Glad to meet you, Miss Smith," she said to that slightly astonished little lady. "This is a terrible thing, this murder, don't you think?"

Beatrice Smith, gazing at Mrs. Sapley's round face, grew suddenly very red and snatched her hand away. Molly, watching her, felt more certain than ever. Was that fear in the Smith girl's eyes? Whether Mrs. Sapley recognized her or not, did she know Mrs. Sapley? Did she suspect Molly's innocent little trap?

"Indeed it is," said Beatrice Smith coldly and turned to the door. "They say they are putting the man through a third degree, and that he is worn out for lack of sleep and food. I hope they get at the truth of it and hang the wretch who killed her!"

Molly, as Miss Smith departed, sat gazing at Mrs. Sapley, with amazement. The last vehement words of the colorless little lady still rang in the room. There was intense feeling and wild desire for revenge in them, and the girl had never, save for that evening Molly had found her at the lane of the Cooper house, shown the slightest interest in the case!

"Well?" breathed Molly.

Mrs. Sapley shook her head. "My dear, I couldn't say. She is the size of the girl who was with Brent, and her eyes are big and dark. But she is dressed so plainly, and her hair is dark, though you say— Dear me, I wish I could be definite about it, for your sake, dear!"

"That is all right, I am sure," said Molly doggedly. "Her appearance and her manner are both false, and her position here is false, too. If I could only think of a way to make her talk!"

But that was not to be left to Molly. Other forces were at work, and while Mrs. Sapley and the two Pettigrew women sat alone at their supper, the roomers being at the Sunset House, Harrison Curtis walked in, with a short

stocky man, whom he introduced as Edward Binns.

"Don't give me credit for this Molly," grinned Curtis, as he met the curious gaze of his lady's eyes; "this man used to be the gardener on the estate of the Coopers at Long Island fifteen years or so ago. He found me; I hadn't the luck to find him."

"I've been West," said the man, who was a pleasant-looking person, with black hair touched at the sides of a broad forehead with gray. "I just got back a few days ago. I heard of this terrible thing down here, and, though I haven't been with the Cooper family for fifteen years or more, I saw Miss Ruth once while she was visiting friends in New York, and I should know her anywhere. It was only five years ago."

Iris Pettigrew rose with a little hysterical cry.

"Molly, this man can clear Captain Joel in the eyes of this fool town!" she cried. "That Alvord lawyer couldn't be trusted a foot away, but the word of a person like this, who is not so much interested— My, I feel like a weight had been lifted from me!"

"But maybe the girl whom Snodgrass buried is not Ruth Cooper," said Curtis dryly. "We will have to wait until we can get the pictures they took of her, and get Captain Joel and Rydal together. They told me on the way up here that Rydal was still pumping Delaney, and that the man is stubborn, though he is about dead for sleep."

"It was fortunate I heard that you were looking for some one like me," said Binns to Curtis with a smile. "I would have come, but I might not have come so fast."

"Oh, do tell us!" cried Molly, bending forward eagerly. "Was Ruth Cooper small and fair and pretty, or was she tall and dark and handsome?"

Binns looked admiringly at the earnest, lovely face of the girl.

"One of those descriptions fits her

exactly," he replied, "but I'd rather not say anything until I see the pictures and have people of authority here. I can positively identify the young lady—no fear of that!"

"We have some very excellent pictures," said Curtis, as he rose. "Wait here, and I'll get the coroner, if I can, and Captain Joel. That man certainly deserves to hear this."

Mrs. Pettigrew went with the two men into the parlor, but Mrs. Sapley grasped Molly's arm, as she was about to follow.

"There is something queer here, mark my word," she nodded.

"Didn't that man say he had just come from the West?"

"Yes," said Molly, "just a few days ago."

"Did you happen to notice that little silk flag in his coat lapel?" asked Mrs. Sapley, her lips set primly.

"Why, yes, I think I did."

"Well," the stout dressmaker drew herself up with an air of triumph, "I made that flag myself."

"What!" Molly opened her lovely eyes very wide.

"Yes, I made dozens of them, and I designed them all, my own idea, with silk French knots where the stars come. I'd know one of them flags if I met it in China! All of them were sold at the festival, and that man was there!"

"Oh, Mrs. Sapley, are you *sure*?" cried Molly feeling faint suddenly. "What could that mean? Who sold those little flags?"

"Tut," smiled Mrs. Sapley, "no hope there, child. All the boys and girls took a hand at it, carried them in little baskets. But that's one of my flags, and how else would he get it, unless he was on the lawn of the Cooper house that night? He was a fool to come wearing it here, but, like enough, he just stuck it in his coat and forgot it."

"Maybe he killed her!" said Molly in awe.

"Well," said Mrs. Sapley briskly, "somebody did."

CHAPTER XVII.

RUTH COOPER

IT seemed a very long time to Iris Pettigrew before Curtis returned with Captain Joel, Rydal, Clade, and Wilson. The coroner had the photographs taken of the girl in the Snodgrass vault, and they all gathered with tense interest about the stranger, while Captain Joel mopped his brow now and then and did not look at Mrs. Pettigrew. Iris Pettigrew looked at him, however, with the indulgent pity a mother shows her child.

"Delaney held out where I was sure he would break down," said Detective Rydal, with a long breath. He looked weary and his eyes were heavy. "But we'll get his story yet. I know how to break him."

"He'll tell after this identification," said Wilson briefly.

"Let's get it over," nodded the constable, and the coroner produced the pictures taken of Mrs. Delaney.

The pictures of the dead girl were laid in a row on the center table, and Binns bent above them in a silence that one could almost hear. Mrs. Sapley stood back in the shadows and watched the stranger suspiciously, and the steps of a returning roomer now and then passed the closed door.

"Mrs. Delaney was tall, slender, had very dark eyes and lots of black hair," said Mrs. Pettigrew at last. "She was taller than me by half a head, and her skin was olive, with the red showing through."

Mr. Binns spent not long over the photographs. He soon stood erect and looked smilingly at Captain Joel.

"Captain, I have to congratulate you," he nodded. "The Cooper family will certainly reward you some day. The girl of these photographs, and therefore

the girl you buried, was certainly Ruth Cooper and no other, no matter what Alvord or any one else says! Those haughty Coopers apparently wanted to cast the poor child off!"

A gasping breath of relief burst from the captain, but no one had a chance to speak before the door was flung open, and Miss Smith stood on the threshold. But was it Miss Smith, this golden-haired little lady, with the great flashing eyes, the exquisite color that came and went, as she gave words to the emotion that was consuming her?

"Edward Binns, how dare you stand there and say that?" she cried. "When you know, as Alvord knows, as every one knows who ever saw us, that I am Ruth Cooper!"

Binns seemed to shrink before the eyes of the small girl in the door. His mouth fell open, and he stared in speechless amazement. It was apparent that the last person he had expected to see in Brant Harbor was the young woman before him, whoever she was. But Miss Smith, silent and mouselike so long, was rushing into her story, and Molly could but look at her, marveling at the change in her appearance.

"This man knows me well," she told the dazed listeners haughtily. "He was once our gardener, and I have seen him several times since, both here and abroad, when he came to my father for references and a new position. He knows well that I am Ruth Cooper!"

"Then who," asked Rydal, recovering somewhat, "is this girl?"

He motioned toward the photographs. Ruth Cooper shivered slightly.

"She is his daughter," she said very low.

During the silence that followed that statement Binns spoke gravely. He had recovered his composure by a great effort.

"She is right," he told the men about him. "She is Ruth Cooper, and this other is my child. I wanted her to rest

in peace, to be left where she is. She played at being Ruth so much that I wanted to keep it up for her."

Played at being Ruth! Delaney's words about the trick his wife had served him, the fraud that had been put over on him, came back to the three men who had interviewed him in his cell. A faint light began to dawn on the mysterious case.

"You came down here with the idea of false identification?" flashed Rydal.

"Yes—that is, I didn't know which girl had been killed in the Cooper house," replied Binns. "There were no pictures in the papers. I made up my mind that, if the girl was my daughter, I would say she was Ruth. Of what use to disturb her? She had suffered enough."

"I came here to get at the truth of this thing, if possible," said Ruth Cooper then. "It is a long story."

Wilson pushed forward a chair.

"We've waited quite a while to hear it, Miss Cooper," he said significantly.

Binns stood with folded arms, leaning against the table, his eyes on the floor, when Ruth Cooper began.

"When Ann Binns and I were babies, my father adopted her," she said in quiet, clear tones. "We took her into our home, and we both shared everything. We were very fond of each other. I loved Ann, and I've no wish to deny it. She was dark and—but you can see how different we were. We were always together, and she was fond of playing that she was Ruth, when she met strangers. I will make this as short as possible. My father, brother, and uncle, with whom we lived, had small patience with Ann. They are proud, and they did not like the idea of people thinking now and then that she was a Cooper. I was away when Andrew Delaney became our chauffeur, and Ann fell in love with him. I knew from her letters that she played the usual game with him, that she passed

herself off as Ruth Cooper, and that he believed her. The other servants, with whom Ann was always more or less familiar, thought it a joke and kept it up. He ran away with her—believing that she was Ruth Cooper, the heiress."

Molly drew a quick breath.

"I shall have to speak now of my own unhappy home conditions," said the girl then, and her small hands twisted together. "I had been taken abroad to marry a title. We settled there with that idea. I had fought it for years, and on one of my trips here I met Bruce Brent."

Curtis recalled then the shifting eyes of that young man and fancied that lies and evasion did not come easily to him. By the light on "Miss Smith's" face he saw that Brent was her lover.

"We became engaged," said the girl, "but I did not dare tell the three men with whom I lived. Life there had become unendurable to me, and I think they cared little for me."

"Wait a minute," said Rydal gently. "This morning we found a record of the marriage of Bruce Brent and Ruth Cooper in a little church not far from here. Is that straight?"

"Yes," said Ruth quietly. "We were married. I had left home after a terrible scene, just at the time Ann did, and that is what the account in the papers meant. I had told my father and my uncle that I was going to marry a man of whom they would not approve, and I was intending to lead my own life. I am afraid they came to the conclusion that I had indeed run off with the chauffeur, or they really did not care what I did. Their pride crushed both Ann and me, and it drove her to wildness, for she was not of the breeding to stand that sort of thing. She had gone in the night, leaving a note for them, saying that she was on her way to her father, where she would take a position. At Cooper House she had little spending money.

"I remained in London for some time, getting together my trousseau, and I heard from Ann frequently. She was keeping up the farce of being Ruth, the heiress, and I feared for her and told her so. Several times I sent her a check.

"When I came over to marry Bruce I called up the Marcey house, and a servant told me the Delaneys had gone. I had been careful for Ann's sake, and I had not crossed under my own name. I was afraid, too, that my father, who has a hard, relentless nature, might stop me. I did not know where Ann had gone until Bruce told me a couple by the name of Delaney had taken a room at Brant Harbor."

"We had information this morning from London that there had been two girls in the Cooper home in Shropshire," said Wilson. "But it is hard to believe that your father, brother, and uncle can be so heartless. They must have known that one of you two was murdered in their old home at Brant Harbor."

"Alvord told them it was not I, depend upon it," said Ruth, with a twist of her lip. "And they cared little for Ann since she attained womanhood. They were glad to be rid of her."

"Alvord knew the girl, then?" said the coroner.

"He certainly did," said Ruth. "Did he say that he had never seen her before? That he did not know her?"

Wilson mopped his brow and glanced helplessly about. "Upon my soul, I don't know!" he replied. "He certainly did say many times that she was not Ruth Cooper."

"He knew Ann," nodded Ruth. "But Alvord is like those men at home—cold and proud and with a will of iron."

"Oh, do go on!" said Molly, taking one of the small, white hands that had worn the beaded gauntlet.

"When Bruce told me the Delaneys were here, I came down to Barford and

stopped with a little widow he knew well," resumed Ruth with a smile. "I was worried about Ann, and I wanted to tell her to stop the farce. I wanted to see the man she was married to and how he took it. He thought he had married millions, and that it was only a matter of time before the family would relent.

"I wrote to Ann and mentioned a place where we could meet, if she could slip away. It was at the back lane of the Cooper place."

"That was where they went every night in the little car!" cried Mrs. Pettigrew, taking her sympathetic eyes from the downcast captain.

"Yes," replied Ruth. "Ann could not get away from him. He was possessed of the idea by that time, she wrote me, that she was going to leave him, and, of course, thinking her Ruth Cooper, he was not going to permit that. She used to order that car every night, but only once did she succeed in getting away without him. Then we met and talked, and she told me all that had happened to her since her arrival in America."

For a fleeting moment Ruth Cooper's eyes met those of Edward Binns, who stood in the same position, regarding her intently.

"She was very miserable and afraid of Delaney. They quarreled constantly, she said. Her infatuation had entirely died out, and all she desired was to be rid of him.

"Two nights before the festival Ann came to me unexpectedly and told me that Delaney was suspecting her and questioning her. She was waiting her chance to leave him. She said she thought Captain Snodgrass would help her, for she had shown him letters and pictures, and he believed that she was Ruth. She told me her plan regarding the Cooper house. I was going to the festival with Bruce, and I promised after it was over to meet here there. I

was going to give her money, and I wanted her to go out of my life—poor, indiscreet Ann!”

Ruth Cooper paused and shivered, and her hand tightened on Molly's.

“I had keys to the old home in Brant Harbor, and I gave her the one to the back door,” she resumed after a moment. “It had been my intention to have the place entirely done over, but I shall never touch it now. I could not go near it again. I was tired of deception and impatient with Ann. Bruce and I were married, and it was not comfortable living at the little widow's and not daring to let any one know. After the festival we were going away. I had a serious time getting Bruce to leave me at the festival and return for me a half hour after it was over. He did not understand and grew very angry about it, but I convinced him that it was to be my last meeting with Ann, and that we must be alone. I knew she was in my old home there, and we had arranged upon the signal I was to use to make her let me in. I crept to the back door and knocked in the way we had planned, and when I touched it, the door opened. I was a bit frightened at that, but I stole in, thinking she had heard me and unlocked it. There was no one in the kitchen, and I did not hear a sound. I locked the door behind me and stood listening a moment, just petrified. Then I began to creep along that hall, feeling my way by the wall. When I got to the bottom of the steps I heard a gasp above me, and then two wild screams—right at me—Ann's voice! I shall never get over it—never!”

Ruth covered her face with her hands, Binns shifted from one foot to the other, while Captain Joel frankly shuddered.

“I stood there, having somehow reached the parlor door in the silence that followed, and then I heard a window put down very softly upstairs. Ann

was dead, I knew it. But who was in that dreadful house with me? I heard steps outside very soon after that, and the doors were tried, and I knew those screams had roused some one; but I stood there, frozen with horror, afraid to call or move, not knowing what was in the darkness about me, and afraid to be caught in a house where murder had just been done. I was not very brave.

“Then the men outside went away, and instantly a step, a soft, stealthy step came down the stairs close by me and went out that kitchen door! My hand was resting on a shelf by my side, and I found a flash light under my fingers, probably one of Ann's. I could not go and leave her like that. Perhaps she was not dead! I had my gloves on, and my fingers were trembling so that I could not find the spring of the flash, so I took off my left glove and flung it down on the shelf, for my right hand grasped the little pistol Bruce had insisted upon me bringing. I turned on the flash light then and saw that I was alone. I dared not linger long, and I fled up those dreadful stairs and found Ann at the top.”

Again the low, sweet voice faltered a moment, then went bravely on.

“It took me a second only to see that she was beyond help, and in a panic I left her there, stark terror at my heels, running madly down and out that kitchen door, where I crouched in the darkness, as a step came around the house. I could stand no more. I fled to the road where I heard the sound of Bruce's car coming for me, and it was not until he was alternately scolding and soothing and advising me, that I saw I had the flash light still in my hand.”

“And I figured because the woman crept along feeling the dusty old wall that the house was strange to her.” growled Curtis. “A swell detective I am!”

Ruth smiled faintly. “The house *was*

strange to me," she nodded. "I had not been in it since I was a child, and it was so horribly dark!"

"Mrs. Delaney had candles in there with her, too, but we never found them," said Captain Joel timidly. He felt he could never hold up his head in Brant Harbor again.

"I saw no candles," said Ruth.

For a moment she sat staring at Binns, who roused himself and started for the door.

"I'll be at the hotel if you want me," he said turning to Wilson and Rydal. "This story hasn't been especially pleasant to hear."

"I am not quite through yet," said Ruth Cooper, with a pale little smile. "I went to New York for a few days, and then I told Bruce I was coming here, to this very room, in disguise, and I was going to try to get more proof against the man who, I know, killed my foster sister. I have not succeeded, for he has kept himself cleverly away, but, perhaps, in the eyes of the law, I have enough, anyhow. Bruce says so."

"The man!" echoed Wilson. "You know the man!"

"I know the man who cast Ann out when she was little, whose cruelty caused my mother to adopt her, and who has hounded her for money ever since," said Ruth Cooper in clear, defiant tones. "I know the man who has been aware of every step Ann took, and who has been demanding that she go back to England and steal for him, steal from my father—a thing Ann had never told me until just before the murder. I know that man, and I know that it was he who stole past me out of the Cooper house after the crime! That man there, Ann's father—a brute if ever there was one!"

Binns started forward.

"What! How dare you say such a thing!" he snarled. "How dare you say I killed my daughter? That I was at Brant Harbor that night?"

"Well, he was all right," said Mrs. Sapley most unexpectedly, and all eyes turned in astonishment upon her. "That flag there in his coat, I made it. They was all sold at that festival, and nowhere and no time else. You got one on now, constable. Match 'em up. I made 'em both. Let him tell you how he got that—away out West!"

"By jinks, that's so!" cried Clade admiringly. "Where *did* you get that, Binns?"

"No matter where he got it now," said the coroner sharply.

"Go on, Miss Cooper—er—Mrs. Brent. Got any proofs of this?"

"Some," said Ruth with a wry smile. "Ann had told me her father was coming to see her, and she knew he would tell the whole thing to Delaney, and between them they would force her to go back to my father and procure money for them, if only for the trick she had played. Delaney did not want Ann herself, only what he thought she was. I think Binns here knew that I was to meet Ann at the Cooper house, and that I would give her money. I do not know what his object was in killing her, but I do know he was there, and that he did it."

"That is a serious assertion," said Rydal gravely.

"Have you seen him walk?" asked Ruth with still that little twisted smile. "Well, he does it with a peculiar limp. He can't help or hide that. I've known that step all my life, and it passed me that night in the darkness of the Cooper house, just after the crime."

"Binns, you've got to clear yourself," said Wilson sternly. "You hear Mrs. Brent? Where were you the night of the crime?"

"I—I was out West, I tell you," mumbled Binns, staring at Ruth, as though fascinated.

"You can tell us where, and you can prove it?"

"Oh, yes, if you give me time, of

course I can," said the man with a show of bravery. "All I got to say is, she don't tell the truth. If she heard a man walk past her who limped, I guess there are others in the world."

Ruth Cooper rose slowly. She lifted one hand and pointed it at the man's cringing figure.

"Edward Binns, you may as well confess!" she said simply. "I saw you—I looked right at you, when you were lighting your way to close that upper window, which you were afraid somebody might climb into, or might arouse curiosity! You may as well confess. I saw you!"

"You saw me?" screamed Binns furiously. "How could you? That window was at the back of the house, and if you were in the lower hall like you said——"

There he paused, realizing that he had made a confession, or what amounted to one.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TRUTH.

I KILLED her because she told me she had no money," said Binns a few minutes later. "I didn't believe her, for I knew from hanging about and watching her that she had promised to meet Ruth Cooper in that house, and that Ruth was to give her money. I had been in this vicinity ever since the Delaneys left New York. I was in a hole and out of work, and Ann was next to a good thing in that Cooper bunch.

"I lived at a little inn ten miles down the road, and, after I found out what was afoot, I watched my chance and got a knife from the Sunset House. I did that because I thought if anything happened it would throw the blame on some of the summer folks or Delaney. I knew nobody had ever heard of me, and Ann had Delaney fooled about thinking she was Ruth Cooper. She

told me before she died that she had let him get wise, and she was scared to death of him. I made my mistake looking on at the festival a while before I went up and knocked like Ruth had told Ann she would do. I heard her tell her. Ann let me in, and we had an awful row, but she wasn't scared of me at first, not until I demanded the money, and she told me Ruth had been there and hadn't given her any. She told me that for fear I'd wait, I guess. She run from me clean to the top of the stairs, and there I hit her with the knife, just once, but she screamed before that, and I felt a gust of wind and knew there was a window open. It was awful hot and close in there, and I guess Ann had done it herself. I left enough money in her pocket to look as if it wasn't robbery, and I flung that knife out the window before I shut it.

"There was some candles on a table upstairs, and I took them and the matches and lost them in a field, after I made my get-away, for I didn't want anybody being helped out any with lights, if they come around looking. I didn't think anybody would, because I knew all about the Cooper house and old Timmons' habits, and some fellows had been trying all the doors after Ann screamed. I never thought of Captain Joel, though I knew he had come with Ann. I had covered up my tracks well, and when I took that knife from the Sunset House kitchen there wasn't a soul around. I just walked to Barford and went home. That's about all."

"Why did you hunt me up in New York after the people down on Long Island had told you I was seeking some one who knew Ruth Cooper?" asked Curtis. "Even though she had visited there, I couldn't get a trace, not even a hint, of the Cooper family fifteen years or so before."

"I put my head in the noose," said Binns with a grimace.

"I thought by that time Mrs. Brent was far away from here, and I was curious to get on the ground and see what was doing; then, too, I was kind of remorseful, and I wanted Ann to stay where she was, in that Snodgrass vault. I thought I'd just say she was Ruth."

"All's well that ends well," said Iris Pettigrew, with a long look at Captain Joel.

That worthy rose at once and took her arm.

"This ain't no end, it's the beginning," he grinned. "Say, Iris, got any of that custard pie left I smelled, as we come in?"

Curtis turned back from the door, as the other men filed out with their prisoner.

"Mrs. Brent, would you mind telling me why you came here in disguise, and why you never spoke up before, if you saw that Binns man at the scene of the crime?" he asked.

Ruth Cooper stepped to the door. She was regaining her usual vivacity,

one could see that. Her lovely laughing eyes went from the man to the girl and back to the man with an understanding twinkle.

"Well, you see, Mr. Curtis, I did have to come here in disguise, if I wanted to pick up anything of interest," she drawled. "Because, really I had nothing to go on but my knowledge of the man Binns and his tormenting of poor Ann and that limp."

"But if you saw——" began Curtis.

"I never saw him there at all!" said Ruth Cooper with a smile. "I made that up. I figured that he would have to light his way to the window when he closed it, and I took a long chance. I just heard that limp, and I felt sure he did it. Nerve does wonders at times."

Curtis, looking after the little figure in amazement, turned to Molly and took her hands.

"I wish I had more nerve, Molly," he sighed.

"I think you have—sufficient," said Miss Pettigrew demurely.

MATRON OF PRISON MURDERED

GLADYS ELLIS, alias Katherine Rodgers, twenty-three years old, a short time ago was arrested in Indianapolis, Indiana, after she had made her escape from the Indiana Women's Prison. Following her escape, the body of the matron of the prison, Miss Louise Richards, seventy, was found. She had been murdered in her room.

The young woman was seized by detectives as she stepped from a taxi at a downtown corner, where she had made an engagement to meet a young man. She had the matron's prison keys and the personal property of Miss Richards. When taken to police headquarters Miss Ellis became hysterical and officials were unable to obtain any information from her.

The matron's skull had been fractured, and she had been strangled. Her bedroom was directly across the hall from the cell of Gladys Ellis. The prisoner before escaping bobbed her hair, placed the several ends on her pillow, and arranged the bedclothing in such a way that at first glance she appeared to be in bed.

This young girl, at ten years old, was sent to a corrective school. She was sentenced to the Women's Prison for petit larceny in 1919, and paroled the following year. A few months later she was returned for violating her parole, and escaped in October, 1923. She was arrested in January of 1924 for forgery and returned to the prison.

Without Saying Good-by

by Day Edgar

Author of "Curs," etc.

AS he let go of the big ventilator pipe and dropped through the darkness to the wet grass outside the prison wall, young Tommy Wright's thoughts were partly on the ease of his escape and partly on the surprise that would show in Allie's face, when she saw him to-night. The downpour of rain favored him, as he followed the wall to the corner and cut off into the rain-swept darkness.

It had been easier than he had dared to hope; so easy that it almost made him believe there was a hitch somewhere. Why, a man could get in and out that way, if he wanted to, a dozen times without trouble. As he hurried on in the rain, he grinned, when he thought of his earlier plans for fighting his way out by sheer force. There were times at night when he used to go almost crazy thinking about Allie's being alone and shifting for herself at a job in a store. He would spend hours figuring how to break out and get to her. And then he had stumbled upon the idea of the big ventilator pipes, with their rotary fans opening out of the prison bakery, where he worked. He'd had a hard time to keep from coughing or sneezing while he was hiding inside the pipes. But when it got dark, and they shut off the fans, the rest had been easy.

A fence loomed out of the darkness

ahead. He vaulted this and hurried along between the unhusked shocks of corn. As he neared the railroad, the headlight of a train swung around the long bend. He crouched from view in a patch of wild briars. The train lumbered by, and, as it passed, Tommy Wright saw people eating in the dining car. The soft, blurred gleam of white linen and shining silver, the ease and the warm comfort inside the diner, contrasted vividly with his own furtive position outside in the rain-drenched briars. Something gripped his throat in a dry ache. Think of eating on a diner again! It was a long time—seventeen months—but it was over now. By this time to-morrow he and Allie would be on a diner themselves, bound for the South. She'd stare when she saw him, all right. She hadn't believed he could do it, and she had set her face against the plan. Funny, how he remembered her exact words—used to think about them lying awake at night when the corridor was quiet.

"I'll do it, Tommy," she said on that last visitors' day over a year ago, before they agreed to give up her visits for the sake of his plan. "I'll do it, but won't you give it up, Tom, for my sake? Three more years isn't forever." She agreed in the end, though, just as she had stuck by him right from the start of the whole mess. But what queer notions she had! To think a fellow was under

any obligation to serve out his full time, if he could get out of it. Mighty little obligation the bonding company had felt toward him—or her! Making a crook, a convict out of a fellow just for sheer spite; it wasn't doing them any good to keep Tommy Wright in stir—not if he stayed there till he died.

The tall light of the train winked out behind a curve, and Tommy crept out of the briars; then he followed the course that he'd planned over and over again till it was almost as familiar now as if he had traveled it in fact, instead of fancy.

As he came up out of the last valley his heart was pounding from something besides exertion. The light was there! She was ready for him, even though she probably didn't believe he would come. That was like her, all right!

Five minutes later he sidled toward the yellow square of the window, feeling his way along the wall. The sound of his finger nails against the glass, a tiny noise he knew, brought his heart up in his throat. He waited. Allie would hear it. If there was anybody else in there, she'd manage.

The front door opened, and her familiar figure showed in the tiny vestibule. He felt his hand tremble against the porch rail, and his knees went weak at the sight. Then he moved toward her, stumbled, his arms reaching out, as if to shorten the distance between them.

II.

Tommy's eyes followed her, as she moved about in the little kitchen, preparing a late supper for two. It was good to be with her again, and it was good to be a free man once more. Outside in the shabby street the rain had turned to a cold drizzle. In two more hours, taking nothing but one suit case, they would board the midnight train out of the city.

Always he was growing accustomed to moving about like a free man. In her hurried trip to the corner store, Allie, all unasked, had brought home a pack of cigarettes for him. She even remembered his old favorite brand. Trust her for little things like that!

When the last dish had been put away, they went into the dim little parlor to wait. As Tommy smoked, the bitterness of the past seventeen months already began to fade in his memory, and it was as if they were back again in their first year in the house near the park. But, as they talked in lowered tones, and as the first novelty wore off, Tommy was conscious of a let-down in his enthusiasm. He noticed that at times an unhappy, uncertain expression came into Allie's eyes. Unconsciously she was listening intently to every noise out in the street. A sense of disappointment settled upon him. Somehow, things didn't seem quite the same as he had planned. He hadn't counted on this, and he mentioned it to her.

"I know it, Tommy," she said, the uneasiness for the first time showing in her voice, "but I can't help it. I keep hearing things out on the porch, and every time I look up I can just see some one standing there in the door. Do you think it will always be like that?"

"Of course not!" he laughed. "That's just because you aren't used to it yet. By to-morrow you'll be all right." But he didn't believe his own words, for he saw that strange look flicker across her face again. She sat beside him, and her head drooped in discouragement. There was a catch in her voice when she spoke.

"I wish, somehow or other, things could be like they were at first." A wave of pity for her and shame for himself went through Tommy.

"Allie, you mustn't talk like that," he said gently. "It's just because you're nervous, and it's strange here. You

wait till we get away, and in a month you'll be looking back and laughing at this." He saw her hands trembling, and there was a droop of dejection to her small mouth. The knowledge of his failing her—and all the hardship and disgrace he had brought upon her, as a result—again drove every other thought from his mind.

"Don't you worry any more, Allie," he said unsteadily. "I know what you've been through, making your own way and all. There hasn't been a day in the time I was up there that I didn't lie awake at night thinking about it."

"I—I was all right, Tommy," she faltered.

"You will be from now on," he broke in. "I'm going to make it up to you, Allie. I know what it's meant to have all your friends, even your mother, drop you. Some of it I never can pay back, but from now on you're going to have it soft and easy. You won't have to raise your hand. You'll live off the fat of the land. I'll work for it, Allie, day and night. I made good once before, and I can do it again—for you." Through his own blurred eyes he could see her tears, as she rose impulsively and stood by him.

"Why, Tommy, that doesn't matter now," she said weakly. "If I could have you back again I wouldn't care about the rest. We will——"

Together they faced the door in quick fear. The beat of heavy, deliberate footsteps on the sidewalk had mounted the steps and porch. The bell in the hall was ringing, and Tommy's heart leaped. It didn't seem possible that such an ordinary sound could hold such horror. Instantly it stripped him of his confidence, and turned him once more into a hunted thing. Allie clung to him and stared at the door. Then she turned quickly.

"Hide! Oh, hide, Tommy!" she whispered, thrusting him back from the hall door. "Give me your cigarette!"

Mechanically he obeyed. Not daring to slip out by way of the hall, he dropped to his knees and shrank back against the wall, completely hidden in the narrow space between the table and the sideboard. Holding the cigarette in her hand, Allie flew to the front door.

There was the sound of a man's heavy voice, and a moment later, from his hiding place. Tommy glimpsed Allie backing into the room, followed by the caller. Tommy could see nothing but the man's feet, as he dropped into a chair.

"Well, sister, so this is the game, eh?" The hard voice was insolent and domineering. Allie leaned back against the edge of the table, shielding Tommy's dark hiding place from sight.

"I don't understand you. What do you mean by 'game'?" Her low voice held no trace of nervousness now. The cigarette hung carelessly in the hand dropped by her side. In reply the man laughed, and there was open derision in the laugh.

"Come on, now, sister, you can drop that stuff with me. And you a regular moll, smokin' and all! Well, it all goes with the game. Won't you sit down, sister? I want to have a little talk with you."

"No, thanks," she said calmly. "I prefer to stand here. What is it that you want to say to me?"

"I just want to give you a tip, but you might as well come down off your high horse. You're not in court now." There was an abrupt change in the voice, as the man leaned forward, a new confidential note of willing admiration.

"Do you know, sister, you fooled me completely at that trial—fooled *me!* I said to myself: 'There's a straight little jane, and sticking to her man like a leech. And there's a young fellow who's made the one slip of his life.' That's why I was glad when they let the boy off light. It was mostly on

your account they did it. You were good, sister. You sure played your part. Well, you even put it over on me!"

"I won't permit you to talk like that to me!" There was anger now in her even voice. "Besides, you have no right here, in the first place."

Again the man laughed easily, and the laugh ended in a chuckle of understanding.

"Still playing the part, eh? And I s'pose you're living in this shack near the jail, under a phony name, because you like it better?"

"It is my privilege to use my maiden name if I like. And I can live where I please, so long as I keep paying the rent. The law has nothing against me, and—and I don't understand why you talk that way." For the first time there was a break in her voice, and it exacted a lessening in the hardness of the man's voice when he answered.

"No, it hasn't anything against you yet. But it will, if you're not careful." There was the sound of a match being lighted.

"Now, see here, sister, we're not getting anywhere this way. Here's what I came out here to say: Up at headquarters we got a tip that your man has been plannin' to make a get-away. You takin' this little house near the jail is just another sign that there's somethin' in the wind.

"Well, s'pose he does break loose. What good'll it do? He won't be out ten hours before we're on his trail. No matter where he goes, we'll be lookin' for him, and we'll get him. And remember, sister, by helpin' him and goin' along, you put yourself in the same boat. Then you'll be our meat, too." The man from headquarters paused to puff vigorously at his cigar before he continued.

"Of course he figures he'll pull it off right. Well, even if you two do get away with it, where will you be? S'pose you figure on skippin' out to St. Louis,

say. Well, they got bulls in St. Louis, ain't they? You two are goin' to look over your shoulders the rest of your lives, every time you hear a step behind you. You're goin' to jump whenever a book agent rings the doorbell. You're goin' to cross the street to avoid meetin' a cop. You're not goin' to live long in one place. And, what's more, you're goin' to be put in the same class with him. Yeah, sister, you want to watch your step, or you'll both belong to us soon."

The table against which Allie leaned shook from her trembling; the quaver in her voice was more in evidence now.

"Even if what you say were true," she replied, "I don't see why you want to hound and persecute us. It isn't anything to you, and it's everything to us. He has paid for it. So have——"

"No, he hasn't!" cut in the other voice quickly. "He's paid some on account, but he still owes us around two years. And the balance due has got to be paid before he's squared the account."

"It isn't as if he were a thief," she said. "He put part of the money back, and he meant to put it all back. He told me he did, and——"

"Sure he did! All of them mean to put it back, if they have time enough. The ones that get it all back in time are the ones we never hear about. But your man was one of those who got tripped up before he was ready for the bank examiner. We can't afford to let any of these cases slide. There's a thousand young fellows workin' in the banks of this country who learn a lesson, one way or the other, from how one of them turns out. If they read about one fellow gettin' off easy, why, a dozen or so will try it out for themselves."

The chair creaked as the man from headquarters rose.

"Well, sister, that's that," the voice continued. "I was told to tip you off before it's too late." He moved toward the hall. "Take it or leave it, but it

might save you both a lot of trouble, and us, too. Better have your man drop it. Two years more is a long time, but it'd be longer with time added for jail breaking."

When the front door closed, Tommy stepped out into the rooms as Allie returned. That hunted look was in her eyes, and she sank into a chair and began to cry. He stood over her and spoke first.

"Allie, I'm going back." At his words a new look leaped into her eyes.

"Oh, Tommy, are you sure you can?"

"Yes, I can," he said grimly. "I'll be back in there within two hours. Nobody will even know I was out."

"But you're doing it on my account," she said slowly. "Don't do it for that reason, Tommy. I can stand the risk, if you can." She seemed to hang in fear upon his words.

"Not only for that," he answered. "It's on my own account, too. I made the slip and I'll finish paying the cost. I won't have you and me sneaking around the country, dodging cops for the rest of our lives. I'll go back and give them their other two years. Then when I'm out we'll do as we please—you and I—and it won't be anybody's business but our own!"

A few minutes later Allie was helping him button an old raincoat over the still damp prison clothes. He fought back his own tears, as she fastened the last button for him. There was a new light in her face now. This was the way he had planned she'd be at first. Funny, how much better he felt about it, too. Never thought he'd feel this way about going back there! He'd see it through and then——"

"It didn't seem right this time, Tommy," she was saying, still crying. "Part of you is still up in that prison. But when you come back next time, you'll be all mine again." She stood very close to him. "It isn't really two

whole years, Tom; it's only a year and ten months. I'll start going up again to see you on visitors' day. I can bring you lots of things."

Out in the street he turned for a last look at her in the doorway and then hurried out of range of the sputtering arc light. A dozen doors below he stopped, when he saw two men standing by an automobile at the corner. He stood close to a tree and decided to wait until they left.

As he waited long minutes in the rainy darkness, his new exultation left him. It was a dreary outlook, he reflected. Almost two years more slaving in that dusty prison bakery. How he hated it! Even hated the smell of the new bread, when the big ovens were drawn. He couldn't bear to think of that funny look on her face toward the last, almost as if she was afraid of him. He remembered now he hadn't kissed her good-by—couple of things he forgot to tell her—he'd have time——

As he turned, footsteps sounded up the street, heavy, deliberate steps. Swiftly retracing his way, he saw the figure of the man from headquarters come within the circle of the arc light and mount the steps. That cop back to torment her! The hot blood went to his head.

Skirting the porches, he edged along the side of the house to the window. The shade was drawn, but the crack of light at the bottom was enough.

Allie was standing in the center of the room. The man from headquarters, hat in hand, stood before her, awkwardly trying to comfort her. His old, sympathetic face belied the hard voice Tommy had listened to a half hour earlier. Their words came faintly to him, as he crouched outside the window.

"It's no use worrying about it, Mrs Wright," the man from headquarters was saying. "It couldn't have worked better. You want to remember you did it for his own good, and some day you'll

both be mighty glad of it." There was a droop to Allie's shoulders, and tears were in her voice.

"I thought toward the last I wouldn't be able to go through with it," she said dully. "I couldn't kiss him good-by—I would have felt just like Judas."

As Tommy looked and understood, he felt nothing but his old awe for Allie—for her way of helping him and shielding him, without his knowledge and even against his will. He knew what torture it must have cost her to do it—to arrange for the man from headquarters to drop in on them that way and show Tommy, as nothing else could

show him the tragic folly of the irrevocable mistake he had been about to make. That danger was passed now, and she mustn't know that he'd found out what she had done. He would go back and finish out his term; then a new start for him and Allie, somewhere.

Inside, the man from headquarters was getting ready to leave. Tommy ducked from the window and darted out to the dark street.

The drizzle had turned to a steady rain by the time he left the outskirts of the town behind, as he went back the way he had come—went hurriedly, gladly.



DRUGGED CIGARETTES

MMORRIS GRETNER, an invalid, who lives on the East Side of upper New York, recently told the police that he was drugged with cigarettes in a room in East Thirtieth Street last October and robbed of his life savings, which amounted to four thousand one hundred dollars. A broker, who was introduced to him as Samuel Fogel, took him to the room, Gretner said, and convinced him that he could make a fortune by investing his savings in certain securities.

Gretner then went off to the bank and drew out his money. When he returned to the room he was induced to smoke two cigarettes. Later he regained consciousness, but Fogel and the money had disappeared. Fogel was arrested a short time ago and is now being held without bail.



VALUABLE WASTE PAPER

POLICEMAN COHEN in New York a short time ago saw four men loading bags, apparently filled with paper waste, at 625 Broadway. When the men beheld the officer, they jumped into their wagon, whipped up their horse, and dashed into Bleecker Street. Policeman Cohen hailed a passing taxi and gave chase. He overtook them at West Broadway. Drawing his revolver, he ordered them to stop. Three of the men leaped from the wagon and escaped. He took the fourth man in charge.

On examination the bags in the wagon were filled with men's suits and women's gowns, valued at six thousand dollars. They had been taken from a loft on Broadway, to which the men had gained entrance by a fire escape. The captured man insisted he had been hired by the others to remove the bags and was not aware of what they contained.

Decided by Noses

by Paul Ellsworth Triem

Author of "Right Under His Nose," "He Ain't No Tiger," etc.

THERE were many in the little hill-girdled city of Glenbrook uncharitable enough to say that "Coppy" O'Shea entered into the case, in the first place, from motives of self-interest. The election of Sheriff Tom Meserve as county peace officer had been significant. Tom was still in his middle twenties, while Coppy was sixty, if he was a day. What more natural than that the movement for replacing old men with young should presently extend to the city organization, and that Coppy's head should fall, in consequence? Also that, foreseeing this possibility—as he had a way of foreseeing things—the white-mustached, blue-eyed old chief of police should bestir himself to show up Sheriff Tom, and the latter's juvenile foibles:

All of which may have had a grain or two of truth in it. The fact remains that Coppy O'Shea was in on "The Great Bloodhound Mystery," as it soon came to be called, from the moment when it became a mystery; and that he was with it at the end, when it was so nearly transformed into tragedy.

The morning was a glorious one, with brilliant white sunshine beating down on the rounded hills and into the broad, flat valleys of Glenbrook and its surrounding countryside; so that even at ten o'clock, when the sheriff and the chief of police were investigating the first of the robberies—that of an oil station just outside the city—the shadows of the live oaks on the near-by hillside stood out sooty black against the shimmering turf.

A tule fog during the night had washed the air clean, and also had played into Sheriff Tom Meserve's hands, by keeping the scent of the robbers fresh upon the ground. Now Coppy O'Shea was standing back to watch Job, the black-and-tan bloodhound recently purchased by the sheriff, run down the malefactors.

The chief wrinkled his nose and looked down with obvious disapproval at the bloodhound. Job was not an ornamental dog, certainly. He was tall, gaunt, powerful, with long ears and a mournful, horselike face. Moreover, there was a distinctly "doggy" aroma to him.

"Sure, Tom," said he, turning a quizzical glance upon the broad-shouldered, energetic young man at his side, "if the brute can smell anything except himself, 'tis a wonder! Wid the wind blowing from the south——"

Sheriff Tom shook his head impatiently. "Don't smell him, Coppy!" he advised. "That ain't what I bought him for. You can do as you please in town, but this *county* is going to put itself on the map. Folks are going to know that the sheriff's office is run on modern lines. Now, let's see. These lads just naturally broke the glass, crawled in through the hole, helped themselves to the loose change, and vamosed. Nothing to go on—except this!"

The young man held up a somewhat soiled handkerchief, which he had found just inside the broken window pane; and next moment had stretched it out toward the bloodhound.

Job sniffed long and earnestly, drawing in his breath with a snuffling sound which Copsy O'Shea found distinctly unpleasant. The old man winced and turned away. His keen, sea-blue eyes studied the damaged glass panel through which the thieves had entered the oil station. Nothing very distinctive about it, Copsy had to admit.

With a resonant bay, Job, the bloodhound, got into action. A heavy leather harness was riveted to his powerful shoulders, and attached to this by a length of mule chain was the sheriff. At least, for a time after Job got down to his task of the morning, the sheriff had the appearance of being attached, like a chip to a string. He was jerked back and forth and round and round, as Job cast about for the trail. Then the big dog straightened out with a wheezing growl, and started away. Copsy O'Shea and half a dozen spectators who had gathered to watch the demonstration fell in behind.

For a time the dog galloped along the highway leading toward town. Then he swerved to a fence, leaped across it into the pasture beyond, and all but cut Sheriff Tom Meserve in two against the top wire. The spectators got through the wires or over them, and again the irregular procession moved on. Copsy O'Shea was running with his elbows crooked now, his chin well up, landing on the balls of his feet and springing along at the side of the unfortunate young man in charge of the dog.

"We're—going back into—town!" gasped the sheriff, as he was jerked along at the end of his mule chain. "One—of your—desperadoes, chief! Always—told you—ought to clean up!"

Copsy O'Shea ran lightly on. Time enough to comment on this aspersion when its truth was established. Now he was interested chiefly in the actions of the four-legged detective.

Job crossed the pasture and went under another fence. The entourage had

dwindled to four members. On went the bloodhound, along a back street.

"Headed for—the Boulevard!" gulped the sheriff. "Nasty neighborhood—always told you——"

But Job suddenly swerved out of the lane and into a side street. His gallop had become a frantic scramble, and that disagreeable snuffling sound—like a leaky valve, Copsy O'Shea reflected disapprovingly—had become a steady wheeze. They were going away from the Boulevard, a somewhat disreputable alley bordered by shacks and lodging houses, and were headed straight for the center of town. The chief found his curiosity mounting. Ahead was the church and the parsonage, and beyond that a turn toward the courthouse.

But the adventure was nearly over. With a yelp of triumph, Job turned in at the parsonage gate, quickened his gallop by the expedient of jerking his chain out of the hands of the sheriff, and with a final deep-throated bay, leaped up the steps and threw himself erect against the parsonage door. From this position he looked triumphantly back at the men in the yard, his red tongue jerking back and forth as he panted.

Copsy O'Shea paused just long enough to take in the full significance of what had happened. Then he doubled up, his hands on his knees and his stiff white mustache quivering with mirth. Words failed him, but his resonant laughter echoed back from the porch of the minister's house.

"Shut up, you old fool!" Sheriff Tom Meserve snapped.

He stood with his feet wide apart, staring at the bloodhound. His forehead was corrugated, and evidently he was studying the situation. Copsy O'Shea gradually righted himself and waited, with his hand over his mustache, his blue eyes dancing. He was wondering what would happen next.

What happened was the opening of a window on the second floor, through

which the minister thrust out his head. For a moment he surveyed the little group in the yard—the bloodhound was invisible, because of the porch roof—and then he asked in an amiable voice what was wanted.

“Why, I’ll tell you, Mr. Black!” replied the sheriff. “You’re wanted. If you’ll just come down and open the door, I’d like to have a few words with you!”

II.

During the days immediately following this first episode in “The Great Bloodhound Mystery,” Glenbrook found itself divided into three armed camps. To begin with, there was the sheriff’s group. Tom Meserve said that while figures might lie and liars might figure, Job, the bloodhound, was infallible. He had picked up the trail at the oil station, and had followed this trail directly to the parsonage. Sheriff Tom even checked up by taking the dog back to the oil station and doing the run over again. Nowhere in the course of the journey had Jom hesitated for so much as an instant.

“It’s all right for old O’Shea to look wise, and to say that time will tell!” commented the sheriff resentfully. “But I maintain that the preacher knows something about this business. He’s been in Glenbrook about three months, and before coming here, what do we know about him? I’m not saying he is a crook, although such things have happened. But I do say that he knows more than he is telling!”

This verdict was supported by certain citizens who were always ready to sick on a dog fight or to set a neighborhood by the ears. Sheriff Tom perhaps wasn’t best pleased to find that many of his backers came from the Boulevard, but he stuck grimly to his point.

Directly opposed to this group were most of the conservative, level-headed people of the town. They pointed out

the incongruity in the sheriff’s theory. The minister was an inoffensive little man in the middle forties—plump, pink, kindly, honest to the point of tactlessness. If he was “leading a double life,” as the sheriff and his followers intimated, then society was in a bad way.

There was another fact which didn’t fit in with Sheriff Tom’s thesis: Job had been allowed to examine the minister, in whom he had shown not the slightest sign of interest, and had been led through the parsonage, snuffing in his disagreeable way about the rooms and closets—all with a negative result. The huge black-and-tan hound seemed to consider the case closed, and was obviously bored by these latter proceedings.

The third camp was a small one. Copsy O’Shea had come and seen and pondered. He didn’t know much about bloodhounds, and he didn’t like Job, the sheriff’s protégé; but there was something peculiar in the affair. He had a sensation which had come to him many times during his career as a thief catcher, as if he were standing in the center of a cloud, through whose steamy walls he could just make out moving figures. Something was happening. But what?

That, the old man purposed in his heart to discover. And he set about it in his old-fashioned way. Instead of beginning at the crime and trying to work back to the criminal, he reversed this order and began to cast about for the other end of the tangle. For a time he made his way quietly and patiently about in the lower part of town, along the Boulevard, and into billiard halls and “soft-drink” bars bordering it. He picked up a word of gossip here and a word there. After this same fashion he had ferreted out many a mystery in his time.

Sheriff Tom Meserve was still working at his theory respecting the new minister’s connection with the robbery of the oil station, and Copsy O’Shea was

directing his deceptively innocent blue eyes this way and that, in the hope of discovering some one who might have had a hand in the affair, when the Glenbrook Dye Works was broken into and efficiently burglarized. The little brick building in which the dye works was situated stood just outside the city limits, and hence was in the domain of Sheriff Tom. He was notified of the crime at daybreak, dressed hurriedly, and went out to unchain Job, who was snoring in his corner of the garage. Afterward he called Coppy O'Shea.

The two peace officers arrived at the scene of the burglary at about the same time, Sheriff Tom in his high-powered red roadster and the chief of police in a venerable flivver which had gone into commission during the first year of the war. Together the experts inspected the scene. The front window had been smashed, and through that the thief—or thieves—had made his or their way into the building. According to the excitable little Frenchman who owned the establishment, the robbers had taken not only the money which he had hidden under a pile of sacks in one corner, but all of the finer articles of clothing left in his charge.

Suddenly Sheriff Meserve stooped and picked up something, which he held toward the owner of the dye works.

"This yours?" he demanded.

"Mine—what would I be doing with a handkerchief?"

The sheriff nodded triumphantly. "Dropped it as he was getting out the window!" he declared. "Now all we got to do is to put Job to work—and we'll see what we see!"

They were off. With a single loud bay, the big dog headed down beside the main county road and back toward town. The sun was swinging up over the rounded hills beyond Glenbrook; and somewhere in the low salt meadows that bordered the highway, larks were singing their matins. Coppy O'Shea

crooked his elbows and swung briskly in behind Sheriff Meserve. His blue eyes had the shimmer of the sea in them this beautiful fall morning, and he was smiling a little wistfully. He was wondering what would happen if the hound again led them to the steps of the parsonage.

Along the county road they cantered till they had passed the first straggling houses at the edge of town. Then Job swung to the left, down a green-turfed lane. For six blocks he galloped straight ahead, jerking the sheriff along breezily. He circled to the right—another side street, and the one leading past church and parsonage, Coppy O'Shea realized. Straight ahead they galloped.

The spire of the little church was in sight when Job suddenly swung to the right, nearly jerking his master off his feet. Quickly Sheriff Tom adjusted himself to the change of direction. Across a vacant lot, in through a back yard, and Job mounted the steps of a back porch at a gallop and threw himself with all the fervor of his one-ideal brain against a kitchen door. Tom Meserve had dropped the chain at the foot of the steps and was standing with his mouth agape, staring up at the hound. This was the Chandler back door—Deacon Chandler!

Sheriff Tom was a young man, and full-blooded. Now suddenly the belief flashed into his mind that the dog had made a fool of him. Ascending the steps in a passion, he grabbed Job by the collar and tried to shake him. Job immediately lost all interest in the kitchen door, at which he had been snuffling in his catarrhal way, and turned his attention upon the sheriff. After he had torn a long gash in the sheriff's trousers and that indignant official had planted a kick on Job's ribs, the two belligerents declared a truce.

Coppy O'Shea had watched this encounter through absent blue eyes. Now,

seated upon the top step, he shook his head mechanically.

"Did ye iver see such a brute?" he agreed, playing second fiddle to the sheriff's lamentations. "First the minister, and now the deacon—arrah, arrah, he musht be a haythen entirely!"

"The mangy idiot," snarled Tom Meserve. "He couldn't follow the trail of a billy goat!"

But still Copsy O'Shea stared through dreamy blue eyes out across the backyard of the deacon's establishment, and on and on to where rounded green hills formed the high skyline.

"Arrah—arrah!" he repeated to himself. "First the preacher, and now the deacon! And handkerchers lying all about!"

The old man arose presently, his strong, well-formed hand covering his white mustache. With feet wide apart, he stood surveying the back steps and after them the door, at which the big black-and-tan dog was again snuffing ecstatically. Then Copsy O'Shea turned and inspected the back yard, and the adjoining lots. An unthrifty vegetable garden had occupied them at some prehistoric period, but now they were a sandy waste, littered with newspapers and tin cans.

"Now, why the divil didn't this bird use a flivver?" he demanded. "First the preacher and now the deacon—and handkerchers!"

This second act in "The Great Bloodhound Mystery" caused a shifting of public opinion. There were still three camps, but the numbers of those who still believed in the infallibility of Job, the bloodhound, had dwindled almost to the vanishing point. Sheriff Meserve went to the parsonage and made a brief but convincing apology, in which he declared that the dog was an impostor; after that he turned his attention to other matters. As a matter of fact, the only citizens who persisted in accepting Job's

insinuations were a few denizens of the Boulevard.

To which general statement, one exception must be noted. Copsy O'Shea seemed to have gained immensely in his respect for Job's sagacity. As the sheriff cooled, the chief of police grew warmer. He formed the habit of dropping into the garage to visit the bloodhound. Sometimes he would bring a bag of scraps from the restaurant and stand regarding with admiration the execution wrought by his four-footed friend.

Sheriff Tom, coming in for his red roadster, grinned sardonically. "Trying to learn how he does his stuff, Copsy?" he inquired.

"Sure, he's a wise baste entirely!" the chief replied. "If the divil could talk——"

Copsy O'Shea's voice trailed off into silence, and he stood regarding the dog with fathomless blue eyes.

III.

A cat yowled somewhere down a dark alley. Another cat answered, and then the two gladiators came together with a sound of carnage and profanity that scandalized Copsy O'Shea, walking sedately home from the bedside of a sick friend.

"Scat, you divils!" he cried. "Scat now——"

The words died on his lips, and he was standing rigid in the darkness of the back street. From his left had come another sound—the squeak of a nail being drawn from its socket. Cats were forgotten as the old man stood peering into the velvety darkness, reminding himself that the block from which this sound had come was one given over to retail business establishments, and that there should be not so much as a mouse stirring there at this time of night.

The sound came again—briefer and less distinct. Without a moment's hes-

itation, the chief stepped from the walk and was making his way soundlessly across a vacant lot that separated him from the rear of the somber buildings fronting on the next street. As he came into the alley, a single silvery beam of light shot out from a window before him, wavered for a moment, and vanished. The old man understood. A burglar was at work in Munson's Drug Store. That light had come from a flash light in the little dispensary opening upon the alley.

Groping with each foot before he set it down, Copsy O'Shea reached the shed at the rear of the drug store and went through its door, which was standing ajar. He advanced silently but without hesitation, his mind fully centered on the intruder in the dispensary—

The old man cried out inarticulately and tried to throw up his hand. Something had moved in the darkness—had moved in a descending arc, which brought up with a resonant crack upon his unprotected head. Instantly all the fireworks in the universe exploded. The earth was swinging out from beneath his feet. Another crash—he knew that he had struck the floor. Then he felt himself shooting like a rocket through infinite, unlighted space.

When Copsy O'Shea next opened his eyes, the gray light of morning was filtering in around him through the idly swinging shed door of Munson's Drug Store. He tried to sit up, and a cry of pain was forced from his lips. His head felt the size of a barrel, and at his first movement toward an erect position it had begun to throb and pound as if a ship's engine were inside it. He lay still for a moment, thinking. Then, very cautiously, he turned upon his side. Inch by inch he raised himself till he was sitting upright. His head seemed on the point of bursting, but he had not fainted.

"Arrah! The divil popped me over

the noddle with a blackjack!" the old man mumbled. "There was two of them! The dirty crooks—"

Throwing discretion to the wind, the chief scrambled angrily to his feet and stood swaying, his bloodshot blue eyes narrowed to slits of wrath. Next moment he was out of the shed, and five minutes later had routed out Doctor Carter.

It was afternoon before Copsy O'Shea entered the office of Sheriff Tom Meserve. The old man had been obliged to put in the morning in court.

Sheriff Tom stared at the casing of white bandages beneath the chief's service cap, but made no comment. He had heard of the affair of the previous night, and judged it unsafe to try to kid the old man about it just at present. Instead, he pointed out some bulky equipment he had brought in from a country trip—a dirty still, battered and coated with verdigris, and several kegs of bootleg whisky, stacked at one side of the room.

"What'll you have, chief—rye or Scotch?" he demanded with a grin. "There are the labels—Haig and Haig—Old Crow—whatever you say! And here's the stuff they put the Scotch mist in with!"

He pointed to a demijohn on his desk. Mechanically Copsy O'Shea drew the cork and sniffed at it. Then his eyes widened and seemed to flash fire.

"Sure! A few drops of creosote in the stuff, and it's Scotch whisky!" explained the sheriff. "And now what can I do for you?"

Copsy O'Shea's eyes were still gleaming as he proffered his request. "I want to borrow that spalpeen, Job!" he explained. "I'm on the trail of the bird that cracked me over the coco—"

Meserve broke in with a guffaw. "You want that false alarm that was sold to me for a bloodhound? I've got a better nose for a trail than the dog has, Copsy!"

The chief nodded. "I've no doubt of it!" he agreed. "So I'll be asking ye to come with us! And ye might bring a couple of deputies with riot guns!"

He was silent, and for a long moment the two men stood staring at each other. Sheriff Tom spoke slowly.

"You think you're going to land them and that four-flusher, Job, is going to help?"

"Come along and see!" suggested Cobby O'Shea.

IV.

The chase had led down an alley, from the rear of the drug store, and along a side street; then through a pasture at the edge of town. Now the little party—Cobby O'Shea, Sheriff Tom Meserve, and two deputies, armed, as the chief had stipulated, with riot guns—was climbing the gently inclined base of a hill. Above and beyond them it loomed, a rounded, globular crown, warmed along its upper margin by the ruddy sunlight of evening. Already a cool shadow lay in the valley below.

The four men had necessarily slowed to a labored trot, as they advanced up the hillside; but Job, his red tongue projecting from one side of his cavernous mouth, was jerking against the mule chain which bound him to his master. He had not hesitated a moment, after taking the trail in the shed adjoining the drug store—where Cobby O'Shea had found a soiled handkerchief dropped by one of the burglars.

They came out upon a road, cut into the face of the hill. The bloodhound took the upward turn, and again they were making what speed their human limitations would allow. Cobby O'Shea, his trim visored cap resting rakishly on top of his bandaged head, kept alongside the sheriff. The road wound gradually up, and presently came out on the flattened summit of the hill. Before them, at a turning whence it began to wind slowly down into the adjoining

valley, stood a rustic bench. The big black-and-tan hound galloped toward this, jerking Sheriff Tom briskly along over the level ground. He reached the bench, raised his big head, and next moment had jumped upon the seat and was standing looking about him, with drooping ears and slowly wagging tail. Obviously Job was more than satisfied with his afternoon's work.

There came a guffaw from one of the deputies. Tom Meserve swore and jerked at the mule chain but Cobby O'Shea gazed thoughtfully at the dog, standing with his broad chest bathed by the last ruddy sunlight of evening. Then he turned and looked out over the broad valley. Smoke was curling from a hundred Glenbrook chimneys. Somewhere a crowd of schoolboys were playing ball. The sound of their shrill young voices came tenuously through the magical hush of evening and brought the ghost of a smile to the old man's lips. A moment later he had turned and was staring reflectively at the dog.

A footpath led past the bench and toward this presently Cobby O'Shea directed his attention. Patting the bloodhound for a moment, he grasped the dog's collar and hauled him unceremoniously from the bench.

"Now, thin, my boy," said Cobby O'Shea, "don't try to kid us entirely! This amiable gentleman didn't walk this far and take wings. He must have gone up this path. Sick 'im, Job! Sick 'im!"

But Job merely snuffled apologetically at the path and waved his long, heavy tail without enthusiasm. Sheriff Tom and his deputies grinned.

Cobby O'Shea seemed disappointed. "Well, thin, if ye don't do it, I'll have to myself!" said he.

He paused for another long moment, during which he glanced under his lashes at the three men close to him. There was an evasive smile around the corners of his mouth. Then unexpectedly Cobby O'Shea dropped to his hands

and knees, and deliberately lowered his nose to the path. He sniffed long and critically, crept forward a dozen paces, and repeated the process. When he arose and turned toward his astounded companions, his eyes were dancing like the sea under a June sky.

"Come along, gintlemen!" the old man commanded. "He went this way!"

Along the sandy path went Copsy O'Shea, and after him came the three men and the dog. They reached a spot where the path forked, and the chief again dropped to his knees and sniffed at both branches.

"This way!" he announced, without hesitation. "Heading into the hills!"

"Look here, chief!" began Sheriff Tom Meserve, stopping with hands on hips to stare belligerently at the old man. "I don't know what your idea is, but if you think——"

"Come or stay!" snapped Copsy. "I'm going to land my man—to-night!"

He strode on, never hesitating or looking back; and after a moment of amazed scrutiny of one another's faces, the trio started on the run after him.

The open road was far behind. Copsy O'Shea had led them across an ancient pasture, dotted with live oaks and laurel; and now they had reached the summit of a backbone, and were staring down into the somber, wooded valley beyond. The brush was thick on this farther side of the ridge, a veritable chaparral, through which wound paths used by long-vanished herds of beef cattle. On three separate occasions the old man at the head of the party had got down and sniffed critically at the path. Now he repeated this process, before indicating a clearly marked trail some three feet in width. Along its upper border, which was cut into the side of the hill, was a coping of flat stones.

"He took the old Spanish trail," commented Copsy O'Shea. "Come on, boys! We're getting warmer!"

Something in the old man's face—a tension about mouth and nostrils, and a battle light that was like the glint of ice—was transmitted to the sheriff and his companions. Utterly mystified by Copsy O'Shea's actions, they were yet convinced that he knew what he was doing. Once he took a flash light from his pocket, for night had descended, and examined a fork in the old saddle road. The earth was moist and dark here on the shaded side of the ridge, and the three men, peering over his shoulder, saw plainly marked in the path the print of a hobnailed shoe.

Once more—and for the last time—the white mustache of Copsy O'Shea brushed the dirt. Then he was on his feet, his eyes blazing.

"We've got him, boys!" he cried. "He's headed for the old shack just beyond. Many's the time I've shlept there overnight, when I was out after the deer. Come on—and get your guns ready!"

A light twinkled through the scraggly branches of the chaparral. The little party was moving silently, now. The brush fell away on each side as they advanced toward the light, and presently they were in a clearing. Their eyes were fastened unwaveringly on the yellow flicker, which for another moment beamed serenely upon them. Then it was gone, and in its place came a fore-shortened streak—a red flash from the velvety darkness surrounding the old cabin. Simultaneously sounded the crack of smokeless powder and the whine of a bullet.

"Come and get 'em, boys!" roared Copsy O'Shea.

The flimsy door crashed before the impact of his sturdy shoulder. He was in the room. A rifle cracked, to be instantly followed by the roar of one of the riot guns. Job was baying.

Then it was all over, and Copsy O'Shea was looking down triumphantly at two dark-skinned men, pinioned hand

and foot, and laid out on the floor of the shack. Sheriff Tom and his deputies were all talking at once. They were ripping up sections of the floor and dragging out boxes and bags filled with loot.

The chief, his service cap set crookedly on top of his bandages, was poking about among the shadows of the long room. Suddenly he emitted a sound that was between a chuckle and a crow.

"The end of the trail!" he cried. "Come here, sheriff!"

He was standing above a long iron bread pan, in which Tom Meserve and his men caught the shimmer of some oily liquid. Also, two pairs of hobnailed shoes were soaking in the pan.

Sheriff Tom stared for a moment, then dipped the tip of his finger into the contents of the sheet-iron container, and sniffed at it. His color deepened.

"Creosote!" he cried. "They soaked their shoes in this stuff, to kill the scent and——"

"And left the shoes where they wanted the trail to end!" interrupted Copsy O'Shea. "The first time, on the minister's front steps; and the second on the porch behind Deacon Chandler's! Last night they left the brogans on the binch atop the hill, and after robbing the drug store and clouting me over the

head, they wint there and changed. That stopped the dog—but not an old sleuth like meself! I had noticed that these bums *always* left a handkercher—which made it look like they wanted ye to be able to put the noble anim'l on the trail. And then this afternoon when I shmelled the Scotch mist ye had in that demijohn, I had an idee the size of an elephant. Says I, 'If the dog can't follow thim to the ind of the trail, 'tis because they change their shmell! Arrah, if wan nose is not enough, mayhap two will be better!' And so it was!"

The sheriff looked disappointed, like a child who has listened to a gorgeous fairy story, only to be told in the end "and so they woke up, and found that they had been dreaming!"

"Then it wasn't really Black Tony and his pal you smelled!" said he. "It was just the creosote from their shoes that——"

But Copsy O'Shea broke in wrathfully. "What the devil do ye want for a pinny—a hummin' bird?" he demanded, his sea-blue eyes aflame. "I *shmelt* thim out, didn't I? And any time ye need the service of an up-to-date bloodhound to help put the county on the map, sheriff, just call on Copsy O'Shea! 'Tis him will set ye right, entirely!"



NEVER TOO OLD TO ESCAPE

FIVE prisoners, headed by John Hatfield, a seventy-year-old veteran of the Hatfield-McCoy feud, recently escaped into the Cumberland Mountains, after breaking their way to liberty from the Wise County Jail at Wise Court House, Virginia. A sheriff's posse was organized five minutes after the alarm was sounded by an inmate of the jail, as the five men slid down a fire hose from the fourth floor.

Hatfield is a cousin of "Devil Anse" Hatfield, and he is under sentence of twenty years for murder. He told the jailer earlier in the week that he intended to escape, but nothing was found to show that the delivery was actually planned. As the aged leader of the fugitives made his way down the rope, he is said to have yelled to the prisoners on the fourth floor: "Tell that jailer he told me a bare-faced lie when he said there was no chance for me to escape."

Pledged to the Dead

by Ernest M. Poate

Author of "A Fiend's Device," "The Lavender Limousine," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

BY the death of her rich old uncle, John Armitage, Evelyn Armitage inherits an estate worth more than a million dollars. His dissipated son, Stuart, is cut off with a dollar, and Lawyer Tupper is made Evelyn's virtual guardian. Armitage left a sealed letter of instructions for Evelyn, but no one knows what the letter contains. Doctor William Dunn, who is in love with Evelyn, and expects to marry her, could not be present at the reading of the will. The young district attorney, Don Powers, who is also an ardent admirer of Evelyn, is present and protests against the arrangement of the secret instructions. Stuart Armitage leaves in anger, promising Evelyn that she shall not live to enjoy the estate.

Later Dunn drops in to see Evelyn, and they separate in something like a tiff. Dunn goes home and is much disturbed over the misunderstanding with Evelyn. About eleven o'clock that night he phones the Armitage house, and Evelyn's maid, Marie, says she is not at home. Later on he hears a woman's scream and a pistol shot near his house. He investigates, but can find no explanation for either, except a motor car dashing down the street. "Joy riders," he concludes. Then he gets word from Perkins, the Armitage butler, that Evelyn cannot be found.

Dunn and Chief of Police Quinn search the country round about the town, and when Detective Donovan finds the missing girl's cape in the river, they drag the stream. A dancing pump is recovered. They conclude that Evelyn has been kidnaped and murdered. When Stuart's roadster is reported by Joe Miller to be at his garage, with its seat all stained with blood and ripped in several places, they decide that Stuart Armitage must be found and questioned.

CHAPTER XI.

NEW EVIDENCE.

AGAIN the trio left the old Armitage house together; this time to accompany Joe Miller to his garage, at the foot of the hill. Doctor Dunn climbed into his roadster, his face grimly white, the muscles of temple and jaw swelling and falling away rhythmically. Red lights glinted in his clear gray eyes, and their lids were congested, their whites bloodshot. Chief Quinn eyed him rather doubtfully. Here was a man near to the breaking point.

F. Rudolf Tupper was thoughtful and abstracted. His long, lean face wore an expression of calm benevolence, as always; but he nursed his chin in bony fingers, and about his tight-pressed lips was a look of secret satisfaction. As he climbed into the red police car, his pale eyes strayed toward Doctor Dunn's back, and he smiled faintly.

In front of his garage, Miller stopped and gestured to the others to pull up beside the curb. "No need to drive in," he explained. "I got this boat back in th' shop, so's nobody'd be rubberin'."

An overalled mechanic emerged from the garage office, to turn away at his employer's gesture of dismissal. Two or three young men in leather puttees and corduroy breeches, or in tight-waisted, rather flashy clothes, lounged in the entrance, smoking cigarettes just underneath the big sign which read "No Smoking." These typical garage loafers were deep in low-voiced talk; but at sight of the chief of police and his companions they stopped short to stare curiously.

Miller led the way down the great, dark, barnlike place, his footsteps ringing sharply on its concrete floor, echoing from the long lines of automobiles parked on either side. The loafers made a move to follow, but Joe turned upon them.

"On y'r way, you boys! Beat it now! This here's got nothin' t' do with you—see?"

One of them muttered some protest; but the garage man was adamant. "Nothin' doin'! An' you stay right away f'om th' shop, too; don't be nosin' 'round, or I might let Mr. Galloway know, f'r instance, how that big scratch come on his fender."

The other retired in confusion, and Miller went on for two hundred feet, perhaps, past an open space beneath a window, where a colored boy was washing a muddy limousine, to the closed double doors at the very rear of the huge room, which bore the legend: "Shop. No admittance."

Producing a key, the garage man unlocked these doors and slid one of them back a little. He slipped through this crack, and the other three followed him, stepping gingerly through little puddles of water, smears of oil and grease, stumbling over the loose bolts and parts with which the concrete floor was littered.

The shop was empty; its pulleys were still, and its belts hung loose and motionless. Lathe and bench were deserted, and on either side stood motor cars wearing that peculiarly maimed and helpless air of automobiles whose vitals have been removed.

"Puttin' a whole new rear end into that one," explained Miller, pointing. "Rush job, too; but I turned the boys out till I c'd show you this here boat, chief."

He slapped his hand affectionately upon the fender of the huge, new roadster which occupied the center of the big room, stroking it, as a horseman might caress a race horse.

"Ain't she a peach, though?"

Indeed, the car was beautiful; its clean, sweeping lines promised speed, and its long, high bonnet spoke of power. The great machine seemed to quiver where it stood, like some thor-

oughbred awaiting the starter's signal. But these visitors wasted no time in admiration.

"Huh!" said Chief Quinn, his brown eyes narrowed. "Belongs to young Armitage, you say? Feller musta got hold o' money, som'ers."

"His mother!" explained Tupper. "She had a fortune of her own and left it all to the boy when she died, five years ago."

"And he's spent it all, I s'pose; so he comes here t' murder his only relative and get more," finished Quinn resentfully. "Le's look inside." And he opened the roadster's door.

On the fine-grained leather cushion of the seat; on the rubber mat of the floor; on levers, pedals, even on the dials and knobs of the instrument board, were dark, ominous stains, thick and clotted.

Lawyer Tupper turned rather white and stepped back; Quinn rubbed his red nose furiously. Bill Dunn stood still, his face quite expressionless; but his eyes burned red and hot.

"My good gosh!" murmured Chief Quinn, perplexed and somewhat awed. "W'y, it's a butcher shop! Feller must be crazy t' send his auto into a garage like this. Any fool'd know——"

As he spoke, he touched the seat cushion here and there gingerly with the tip of a big, stubby finger. Now he broke off with a sudden, audible intake of breath.

"Scratches on th' seat, did you call 'em, Joe?" he inquired, turning to the garage man. "These ain't scratches, young feller. This here's a bullet hole—see?"

Leaning over his shoulder, the others looked close. The upholstery was scratched here and there, but almost in the center of the seat and in the cushioned back, on the right-hand side, were two small round holes whose edges were visibly scorched and blackened.

"Somebody's shot into these here

cushions," declared Quinn. "Shot twicet. And if anybody was sittin' there, beside the driver, both o' them bullets musta gone right through! I expect that's where all these here stains come from—huh?"

Miller lifted out the seat cushion and turned it over. At the underside, among coil springs and horse-hair padding, he worked for a moment, digging with penknife and pliers. And then a pistol bullet, flattened out of shape, tumbled out and fell to the floor. At the tiny, sharp-clicking sound of it, Rudolf Tupper started nervously.

"I—I'm not feeling well," he muttered, wiping his wet forehead with a silk handkerchief. "My head aches, and this sort of thing upsets me; I'm not used to it. Ha, ha!" His short, barking laugh was tremulous, uncertain. "I think I'd better get out into the air."

Quinn glanced at him pityingly; Bill Dunn ignored him completely. "Come along to th' office, judge," invited Miller. "I gotta drop or so of somepin good in there." He winked portentously.

"No use of us stayin' here any longer, anyhow," Quinn decided. "We've seen ever'thing they is to be seen. What I gotta do now is get after Stuart Armitage."

Bill Dunn broke his long silence. "Chief, I believe I know when it happened and where," he began abruptly. "Around midnight last night, just as the storm broke, I was out in front of my house. I heard a shot, and then a woman screamed. It was too dark to see anything; but a second later I heard an automobile going out Center Street, mighty fast, and then I saw the car lights go on. Somebody must have driven up Best Street, with the car dark, and the engine muffled, and turned onto Center. Then, after the shot, he cracked on all the speed he could." He paused, his face working oddly. "And

I never knew! What with all the tourists nowadays and the joy-riding up and down Center Street at night, I didn't think of it for more than a few seconds; and then Perkins called up to say Evie was missing, and I forgot it entirely. Chief, that shot was Stuart Armitage killing Evelyn. And that car was this car, being driven out Center and then up the hill road to the Chickalocka Creek bridge, so he could—could——" And his voice trailed away, as he wet dry lips and swallowed with an audible, clicking sound.

"I expect likely you're right, doc," agreed Quinn. His brown eyes were fixed anxiously upon the young physician's face. "But say, old man, you best go along home and lie down, hadn't you? You look as if you was all in."

Bill Dunn gestured impatiently. He passed an unsteady hand across burning, bloodshot eyes and swayed slightly, so that he touched the murder car for an instant. He jerked away from the contact as though stung.

"I—I'm all right," said he, thickly. "I want to see Stuart Armitage for a minute."

"Not if I see him first, you won't," muttered Chief Quinn shrewdly. His steady, dull brown eyes followed the doctor's every movement, between apprehension and affectionate anxiety. "You better leave this here to me, doc," he urged. "You can't do anything, you know."

Dunn made no reply. His mouth shut like a steel trap, his jaw muscles bulging, his gray eyes glinting with strange, reddish lights, as he marched toward the doors.

Rudolf Tupper stood there, his face averted from that stained roadster, nursing his chin absently in long, bony fingers. He had listened in silence to Dunn's long statement; but now he spoke.

"Really, you need rest, my boy," said

he smoothly. "You've been through too much; you must be exhausted. In fact, it is extraordinary how much you seem to have seen and heard last night!"

The last sentence came with such a peculiar intonation that Bill Dunn stopped short, for all his abstraction, and stared at the speaker. "What are you talking about?" he demanded rudely. Then he pushed contemptuously past and stalked away without waiting for the other's answer.

But Mr. Tupper spoke to his unheeding back, as he moved down the long storage room. "I mean," said he suavely, "that for a young gentleman who knew nothing whatever about last night's tragedy, you seem able to recall an astonishing number of details, almost at will!"

Nursing his chin with bony fingers, the attorney gazed over his glasses long and steadily at Chief Quinn. In his pale eyes the officer seemed to read a whole volume of insinuation, innuendo.

"Huh!" said Quinn thoughtfully. "I don't believe it. Still an' all, if Armitage *should* be able to explain——"

"You lookin' f'r that Stuart Armitage, chief?" It was the voice of the most persistent loafer, the one in the pinch-back, tight-trousered suit of shepherd's plaid. Despite Miller's rebuke, he had evidently been listening outside the closed doors of the shop.

Quinn stared into the man's sallow, pinched face, and the bold, black eyes met his steadily enough. "What do you know about young Armitage?" he demanded.

"Why, chief, I was out late las' night, ridin' around with my girl, an' we seen this here Armitage in that big Italian boat o' his. Had a kinda tow-headed frail with him, see? No, I couldn't say who she was, ner I wouldn't of known him on'y f'r th' boat; they ain't another like it in three counties; but she had yella hair. All wrapped up, she was, in a big cape or somepin. Huh?"

Why, 'bout hapas ten, I s'pose, or mebbe 'leven o'clock."

The chief of police struck his big, red hands together. "That oughta settle it," he decided. "Yes, sir! It was Armitage done it, right enough. I gotta get right after him."

"You ain't a-goin' t' find him, chief," put in a new voice. Another loafer had ventured to approach, the one in puttees, corduroy breeches, and an old army shirt. "W'en I was down to th' deepo, t' meet th' seven nine this mornin', I seen Armitage there. He hopped th' rattler an' beat it, see? Had a big valise with him, too."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CORPUS DELICTI.

WEDGING his massive form into the swivel chair behind his desk, James A. Quinn, police chief of the thriving little city of Chickalocka, looked approvingly about his tiny office at the rear of the city hall.

"Moriarty," said he to his assistant, "I feel pretty good about this here case. I ain't no Sherlock Holmes, I know darn' well—never pretended to be. But I c'n figure things out, oncet I get somepin t' go on, just about as good as most of the fellers. Huh?"

Moriarty agreed, as in duty bound. "That's right, chief! You'd oughta, with all th' experience you've had an' all."

Chief Quinn hooked thick thumbs into the armholes of his vest and expanded his massive front. "Here's this girl—darr. nice kid, too, that little Evie Armitage—here she turns up missin' around midnight, last night; an' here it is on'y ten o'clock, an' we know who killed her an' all about it. Course," he admitted judiciously, "course, we ain't got th' feller yet; but we will. Anyhow, I done my share; rest's up to th' sheriff an' th' police over to River City. I presume likely young

Armitage's stayin' right over there. He ain't had time to get far; ner he wouldn't beat it f'r good, don't seem like t' me, an' leave that big, 'xpensive roadster behind."

"I expect you're right about that, chief," murmured the clerk.

Quinn glanced at some papers on his desk. "They'd oughta be able to spot Stuart Armitage," he decided, "f'om that description. I expect we'll hear somepin before night. Sheriff Franklin's takin' th' two forty-five train to River City, himself. They's one thing bothers me, though," he went on, after a scowling pause. "An' that's Doc Dunn. Say, he's actin' awful queer. I'm most scared he'll try t' kill young Armitage when he sees him. Nice feller, doc is, too; but he's takin' this here murder mighty hard. Sore as a crab all this mornin'."

"He'll get over it," said Moriarty.

"I sure hope so! I'd hate——"

The telephone rang, and Chief Quinn broke off to answer it. "Hello? Yes, police headquarters; Quinn speaking. . . . *What?* . . . You have? Good work—that's fine. Just hold onto him, will you? Sheriff Franklin's comin' over there this afternoon, an' he'll fetch him back here. You fellers sure did work fast. Much obliged!"

He hung up and turned to Moriarty, his brown eyes bulging with excitement. "What d'yuh know about that, huh? They got Armitage over to River City; at th' Arlington, he was, big as life, with two rooms an' a bath an' his own name on th' register." The chief rubbed his nose, for the first time since the finding of that blood-stained roadster. "Either th' feller must be crazy, or else he's got some darn' good explanation f'r his car being all smeared up like it is. Or mebbe he counted on that chauffeur of hisn to wash her an' get her all cleaned up. We-ell, Franklin'll fetch him here presently, an' we'll find out, anyways."

Chief Quinn thought deeply for a moment. Then: "Moriarty," he began, "you skip over an' tell Sheriff Franklin they got Armitage. An' then—then I want you to fix it up f'r Doc Dunn to be away when they fetch him back here. See?" His dull brown eyes held an obscure warning. "Fake up a sick call, way out in th' country—or anything you like."

"I got yuh, chief." The other nodded in complete understanding. "He's got lots o' friends, the doc has, an' ever'body in town, 'most, was kinda fond of Miss Evie." Moriarty blew his nose. "Came to see my old mother," he explained awkwardly, "twicet a week, all th' while she was sick. God rest her soul! Used t' fetch flowers an' little fixin's an' like that. Say, if I wasn't a policeman, darned if I wouldn't kinda like to pull on th' rope, m'self!"

"None o' that now!" His superior rebuked him sternly. "Beat it outa here; an' mind you get Dunn outa town—an' see nobody knows about all this till we get Armitage locked up safe in th' county jail."

As soon as the other was gone, Quinn called the office of F. Rudolf Tupper. "Hello? Judge Tupper there? . . . Say, judge, they got Armitage over to River City. Sheriff's fetchin' him back this afternoon. We wanta have a session with' him over to th' jail, a third degree, kinda. Wisht you'd try an' be there, will you? 'Bout five o'clock? . . . Huh? Oh, yeah, we'll get Don Powers, too, o' course. But he ain't hardly more'n a kid, if he is district attorney; an' we don't want any slips in this here case. It's too darn' important ever' way. . . . You'll come? Good! Round five o'clock then. G'-by."

Afterward he notified Donald Powers. That young gentleman promised readily to attend the proposed conference; indeed, his evident purpose was to take

charge of it. As Quinn listened to his rather pompous voice, he grinned secretly, wondering what the youthful district attorney would have thought if he could have heard the earlier conversation with Tupper.

Matters being satisfactorily arranged, the chief of police devoted the rest of the day to routine business; and, as he left the office at four o'clock, to drive to the depot, he saw Doctor Dunn's big roadster moving eastward along Center Street.

The chief nodded, approving his own forethought. "Hope Moriarty fixed it so's he won't get back too early," he reflected. "I don't like th' way Doc Dunn's actin'. No, sir!" And he heaved his fat body into the red police car and drove to the station to meet the four fifteen train from River City.

The train was on time. Sheriff Franklin, tall, lean, sun-tanned and taciturn, descended from its smoker with Stuart Armitage beside him. The boy was not handcuffed; but the sheriff's keen blue eyes never left him, and he was evidently too much in fear of the officer to attempt escape.

A few station loafers stared and whispered together; but the secret had been well kept. The sheriff and his prisoner entered the police car with Chief Quinn, and they drove off toward the county jail without attracting any general notice.

As the big car stopped before the jail, Sheriff Franklin looked up with some satisfaction at the grim stone building with its heavily barred windows and its four corner turrets, loopholed for rifle fire. "Lots of folks kicked," he remarked mildly, "when th' county commissioners spent so much money on a stone jail. Fussed about those towers specially. But four or five men up yonder with rifles could keep a whole army from breakin' in; an' I notice we ain't had any lynchin's in Cheyenne County in twenty years."

He spoke with apparent irrelevance, without glancing at his prisoner. His lean, tanned face was impassive, and the thin lips below his cropped gray mustache did not twitch. But Stuart Armitage laughed with weak boisterousness.

"Aw, quit your kidding, sheriff! Lynchings! Ha, ha, ha! Why——"

The boy observed suddenly that both sheriff and police chief were quite serious. On neither stern face was there any flicker of a smile; but both looked at him in stern contempt and loathing. His unsteady laughter died away; he shivered visibly and wet his loose lips. "Lynchings," he whispered. "Oh, my Heaven!"

Nor did he recover his normal manner of bold assurance until he was inside the jail, and the gates of grilled steelwork and the massive oaken doors within them were closed and locked.

Sheriff Franklin led the way to a big room at the rear of the building's central hall. He threw open a door and ushered the others in, Stuart Armitage holding back reluctantly. A long table, on which stood several inkwells, flanked by pens and pads of paper, occupied the center of the room. About it were a dozen leather-backed chairs. A worn rug on the floor; on one wall a big map of Cheyenne County, on another a life-size painting of Alexander MacGregor, the "Father of Chickalocka," who, with John Armitage, the first, and Henry Powers had founded the settlement a century ago; these were all the furnishings. The two windows were barred.

At the head of the table sat the district attorney, Donald Powers, wearing an air of conscious dignity. He was very neatly dressed, as always, and, as always, wore a long-tailed coat and a flowing tie. A lock of dark hair fell down across his forehead, almost to the large, black eyes. He scowled formidably at the prisoner.

Beside him, F. Rudolf Tupper leaned forward in another chair, elbows on the table, nursing his chin in bony hands. The other lawyer wore clothes of old-fashioned cut; save that his white hair was trimmed closer than usual, he had reverted to his customary style of dress, after the sartorial experiment which had so amused little Evelyn Armitage the other day. He gazed benevolently at Stuart Armitage through rimless eyeglasses from which hung a broad black ribbon.

Armitage, short, fat, pasty and unwholesome, glared about the room with his dull, bulging eyes. He seemed to have recovered his usual impudence.

"Well," he inquired unpleasantly, "what's the idea? A bit of a third degree? Going to beat a confession out of me—choke it out of me—sweat it out of me? I'm flattered. I didn't realize I was so dangerous. Hadn't you better get some help? There are only four of you."

Don Powers flushed angrily, sweeping the lock of hair out of his eyes with a characteristic gesture. "Stuart Armitage," he began, "you are charged with a serious crime."

"Stick your fingers into the front of your vest. Patrick Henry," advised the prisoner impudently. "Or are you pretending you're Napoleon? In that case, you ought to fold your arms and drop your chin a little."

The district attorney choked back a furious reply, as he saw the older man exchange amused glances. He was making himself ridiculous, he realized. "Have you any statement to make?" he inquired.

"Statement? I don't know." Armitage seated himself nonchalantly and lit a cigarette. "I don't know anything about this affair," he went on, apparently quite at his ease. "You folks might tell me what grounds you've got for arresting me like this; then I'll decide whether to make a statement, or

whether to consult a lawyer first—or whether to sue you for false arrest."

"You murdering——" Powers began hotly; but F. Rudolf Tupper stopped his outburst.

"A moment, Don," said he. "The boy has a right to be told. You were heard to threaten the life of your cousin, Miss Evelyn Armitage," he went on, facing the prisoner, his lean hands tented, each finger tip exactly opposed to its mate of the other hand. "Moreover, as her only living relative, you were her next of kin, and therefore her heir, should she die intestate."

"You don't tell me!" cried Armitage insolently. "Her heir! Well, well! Then I'm a millionaire, aren't I? That is, provided Evelyn is dead."

"You ought to know!" sneered Don Powers. But the other lawyer went on amicably.

"You had a motive, therefore, and you made threats. Now, Miss Evelyn left her home at ten o'clock last night, and she has not been seen since. Her cape and shoe were found in Chickalocka Creek."

"Why did she leave home at ten o'clock at night?" asked Stuart with unexpected shrewdness.

"Somebody whistled outside," explained Chief Quinn, as the attorney hesitated, stroking his chin. "The maid heard it; thought it was Miss Evie's young man, Doctor Dunn."

"Go on," said Stuart, turning to Mr. Tupper.

But just then came the sound of heavy footsteps outside. The jail deputy's voice rose in angry protest; there was a scuffle; the door was flung violently back, and Doctor Bill Dunn stalked into the room.

His big shoulders were stooped a trifle; he leaned forward, swaying, long arms slightly bent, for the moment like some dangerous beast; like an angry gorilla, whose strength is fourteen times that of a man. In bulk, in strength,

in fury scarcely controlled, he seemed more than human—or less.

The doctor's usually pleasant, homely face was dead white now and distorted by a snarl; thin foam flecked his mouth corners, and his gray eyes were blood-shot, flaming with ugly red lights.

He stood at fault for an instant, searching the room with those hot, furious eyes; and then he saw Stuart Armitage, pasty white, cringing, and leaped in deadly silence.

"Here! Here! Quit it! Man, are you crazy?" And above the clamor, a screech of frenzied fear: "Help! Oh, help! He's ki—" choked into gurglings and then into silence.

For a few minutes the room was full of activity; a whirling knot of men, all swift-moving legs and arms. Chairs were overturned, broken; the great table swayed. Sheriff, chief of police, district attorney, all dragged unavailingly at the iron grip which Doctor Dunn had upon his victim's throat. Dunn, quite mad, ignored them, intent only upon murder; and Stuart Armitage's puffy face turned from white to red, then purple, then blue, as the life was choked out of him.

At last, and quite suddenly, Bill Dunn relaxed. Neither blows nor words had moved him; but some inner scruple, perhaps, withheld him from actual murder. At any rate, he dropped his victim's throat and rose, brushing a big, unsteady hand across his eyes. And then, and only then, he seemed to become aware of the others.

"I—I guess I must have been crazy for a minute," he muttered confusedly. "Why, I might have killed the fellow. Why didn't you stop me?"

"Stop you?" The sheriff laughed grimly, almost admiringly. "Man, the three of us beat you half to death, trying to stop you!"

"I—I didn't know. Could I have a drink of water?" Bill Dunn dropped into a chair, brushing a hand once more

across his eyes, whose whites were clearing now, so that that ugly, blood-red glint was gone. "I've been kind of upset," he murmured.

Sheriff Franklin gave him a drink. "Better get out of here," he advised, not unkindly. "We don't want any more trouble."

"I'll be good. I won't move; won't say a word. Don't you see, I've just got to know?" His haggard eyes, clear now and full of misery, pleaded with the officers. "I can't rest—can't sleep, until I know. If you hadn't tried to keep things from me, all this wouldn't have happened."

"We-ell." The sheriff drew his revolver and laid it on the table. "But you listen here, doc. Start anything more, and I'll have to shoot, much as I'd hate to!"

"Go ahead!"

And Rudolf Tupper, who had sat still all this while, nursing his chin and watching the conflict with remotely polite interest, like one watching an uninteresting play, turned back to the prisoner.

"As Mr. Quinn explained, some one whistled outside. We think Miss Evelyn heard and went out, expecting to meet Doctor Dunn, here."

"Probably she did," said Stuart venomously. He felt gingerly of his throat; his voice was hoarse, scarcely audible. "Why pick on me? I don't even know how he whistled." But for all his boldness he shrank away behind Quinn's burly shoulder, as Bill Dunn looked toward him.

"Why pick on me?" he repeated. "Ask Dunn who whistled!"

The doctor said nothing. Face buried in his hands, he did not seem to hear or understand. But F. Rudolf Tupper stared at him long and curiously; and Don Powers, the district attorney, looked also, sweeping that lock of hair from his eyes. His dramatic features wore an expression of doubt.

"You had threatened her. The girl disappears. You profit by her death. And this morning we find your automobile all stained with blood, with two bullet holes in its seat. We find you in River City, hiding, and we find Miss Evelyn's cape and shoe in Chickalocka Creek."

As Tupper finished his summing up, there was a brief silence. Then Stuart spoke sneeringly. "And is *that* all? You pinched me on *that*? You haven't one single thing against me. Why, you don't even know the girl's dead!"

Mr. Tupper nodded gravely. "True. I must admit that the corpus delicti has not yet been fully established. But there's no mortal doubt that——"

A knock upon the door. The jail deputy put in an apologetic head. "Excuse me, sheriff, but you're wanted on the long distance. Police headquarters, over at River City."

With a muttered apology the sheriff rose and went out; and the rest waited for him in a silence that seemed pregnant with ominous suggestions. Presently he returned, lips grimly tight beneath his clipped mustache.

"I expect we've established that corpus delicti you were talking about, Judge Tupper," said he slowly. "River City just telephoned that they've found the body of a young woman in the river below the city. Been shot through the body, they say. She's in kinda bad shape, but they think we c'n prob'ly make out to identify her, all right."

CHAPTER XIII.

A DEADLOCK.

THERE was a brief silence. About the long table the five men sat still, staring at the sheriff in the doorway, each absorbing this latest news in his own fashion.

Donald Powers, the young district attorney, produced a handkerchief and wiped his eyes carefully. "The poor,

poor little girl," he sighed. "Ah, me!" But, behind the sorrow rather dramatically expressed by his exclamation, a close observer might have read a certain secret gratification. Here would be an unusually interesting and important murder trial, full of "human interest," the opportunity of a lifetime for an ambitious prosecutor. Mr. Powers swept back his lock of dark hair and thrust two fingers into his vest front. His lips moved soundlessly, shaping an imaginary address to the jury.

Chief Quinn blew his nose sonorously. His honest brown eyes were wet. "She—she was like my Sally Ann, that died," he mumbled and shot a glance of hatred at young Armitage.

F. Rudolf Tupper blinked his pale eyes behind their rimless glasses. His lean, benevolent features expressed nothing but a decent grief; yet there seemed a hint of puzzlement in the speculative stare he turned, first upon the prisoner, then on Bill Dunn.

Stuart Armitage stared at the sheriff with bulging eyes. His puffy, pasty face paled; his loose lips trembled visibly; the impudence of his manner vanished. He almost cringed; his glance wavered and fell. For the first time he seemed to appreciate the seriousness of his position. "I didn't do it," he quavered shrilly. "Why, I haven't even seen the girl for two days!"

Of them all, Bill Dunn alone seemed unmoved by the announcement. He sat quite still, bent forward in his chair, face hidden in his hands, striving for self-control. Sheriff Franklin closed the door and returned to his seat, his leathery face stern and set; and still the young physician did not look up.

Rudolf Tupper eyed him significantly; even nudged the district attorney at his elbow. "Ahem! Did you understand, doctor?" he inquired suavely. "Mr. Franklin tells us that they have found Miss Evelyn's body in the river." The

attorney's manner was politely curious; he was like some experimenter, awaiting the reaction of an etherized guinea pig to a new poison.

"What?" Bill Dunn looked up dully. "What is it? Found Evie's body, you say?" A deep, quivering sigh. "Yes, I knew she was dead."

"Ahem!" Mr. Tupper seemed somewhat discomfited. He turned back to the prisoner. "Have you any statement to make now, Mr. Armitage?"

Stuart shook his head sullenly. "No! I shan't say a word—not one word! You're all trying to rope me in, to wring some sort of an admission out of me. I'm not going to be third-degreed, you hear?" His voice rose to a scream. "Get me a lawyer; I've got a right to see a lawyer; I won't say a thing until I do, either!"

He rose in his place, trembling, hysterical, his badly adjusted nerves shaking him to pieces. The officers exchanged a significant look; and the sheriff eyed Tupper, raising his eyebrows.

But the attorney shook his head. "No-o," said he reflectively. "I don't believe you'd better. What lawyer do you want, my boy?"

His tone was kindly, gentle; his lean face beamed upon the prisoner in fatherly fashion. Poor Stuart began to sob. "They—you're all picking on me," he mumbled. "Don't give me a show! I—I know I'm a rotter, but I haven't murdered anybody, I tell you. I'm a stranger here; everybody's against me; how do I know what lawyer to get? Oh, call Epstein. He'll do. After all"—and some secret memory seemed to reassure him—"after all, you can't hold me for long."

Tupper rose and beckoned the sheriff and chief of police into a corner. Young Powers joined them, jealous of his prerogative. He was district attorney, after all; he was not to be ignored.

"Why don't we get right after him

now?" grumbled Franklin. His lean, leathery face was disgusted. "He's mighty near ready to spill the whole thing. Give him time to settle down and talk to a lawyer, and it'll be too late."

"That's right," declared the district attorney. "I can't understand why you don't——"

Tupper laid a hand on his arm and nodded mysteriously. "Trust me," he whispered. "I can't explain just now, but I give you my word that this way is best. Have you thought——"

He did not finish his question, but glanced over his shoulder toward Bill Dunn, who still sat with his face in his hands, oblivious of all that went on about him. The two lawyers exchanged a long glance. Young Powers whistled silently. "Whe-e-ew! Do you mean—— Well, I never did like the fellow, anyhow. He's always——"

"Sssh! Don't put him on his guard!" And Mr. Tupper laid a long, bony finger across his lips.

They turned back to Armitage, who sat plucking at his loose lips, his bulging eyes watching them suspiciously. "Whisper all you're a mind to," he snarled. "I won't talk—that's flat!"

"You needn't, my dear boy—you needn't!" soothed Tupper. By common consent he continued to be spokesman. "We're sending for your lawyer right away. Quinn, step out and have them phone to Epstein, won't you? Tell him to come to the jail at once."

Quinn obeyed; and thereafter came a considerable wait, while Doctor Dunn sat in his corner, dully silent, his lack-luster eyes fixed upon vacancy. His face was gray with fatigue; yet he was evidently determined to remain. The two lawyers drew a little apart, whispering together significantly; and at times Don Powers cast an ugly glance at the unconscious Dunn. There had always been rivalry between these two, and especially during the last few

months they had been at sword's points—with little Evie Armitage demurely unconscious, to all seeming, yet secretly delighted, and egging them on to further antagonism, as young girls will.

The short autumn afternoon waned; the level sun glowed red in the western windows, then sank behind the low hills. The sheriff, glancing out, noticed with some disquietude that little knots of loiterers began to gather in the open space beside the jail. They came and went, gathered in small, whispering groups, separated again; but their numbers grew constantly, if slowly. The sheriff nibbled at his close-cropped white mustache and frowned.

At last Epstein came. They heard his catarrhal voice outside, and the door opened to admit his bent, undersized, untidy figure. He bowed, spreading his hands, palms up. "Gentlemen, my client, Mr. Stuart Armitage, he is here?" His beady black eyes flitted from one face to another; below his great, hooked nose, his thick lips pursed themselves dubiously.

Stuart leaped up. "Epstein," he began excitedly, "get me out of here! They're trying to claim I murdered my cousin—you hear? It's ridiculous! I'll sue 'em all for false arrest! Get me out!"

On the last words his voice broke, and he began to cry weakly. The shock of his arrest and return, the strain of waiting in this hostile atmosphere, had frayed his unstable nerves quite raw. Puffy pouches beneath his protruding eyes, and the unsteadiness of fat, cigarette-stained fingers proclaimed also recent excesses, whose effect had not yet worn off.

"Sure, sure!" agreed Epstein thickly, unctuously. "You don't need to worry one bit, mister; I see to all that. Sure—I get you off, right away quick! Nu, Mister Chief, Mister Quinn, what makes of this business, hey?"

Donald Powers replied. He was no

longer to be kept in the background. Tossing back that rebellious lock of hair, he spoke eloquently and at length, marshaling the evidence against young Armitage, as though addressing a jury, while little Epstein listened, hunched his shoulders, and murmured obsequious applause.

"Sure, sure!" said the untidy little man, as Powers finished. His beady eyes glinted with insincere admiration. "You make everything so clear, Mister District Attorney. I understand fine. I will talk a little with my client, gentlemen, please?"

Somewhat flattered, Donald Powers agreed magnanimously, despite the ungracious grumblings of the sheriff. Epstein plucked his client by the sleeve and led him into a corner, where they whispered together for some time.

The little lawyer's face, dubious at first, grew brighter and brighter; his thick lips widened into a smile of triumph. "Nu," he broke out, aloud. "Nu, for why don't you tell it to them, all of it? They can't——"

"Shut up!" warned Armitage imperatively. He cast a malicious glance at the officers. "No, sir! Let them——" and his voice sank to a whisper.

The argument continued for several moments, Epstein urging some course of action, his client refusing sullenly, then angrily. And at last the little lawyer shrugged, tossing up his hands in a gesture of surrender.

"It is your business," he agreed reluctantly. "It is not my worries; but such a foolishness!"

He returned to the long table and addressed the district attorney. "Mister Powers, sir, and you, gentlemen"—including sheriff and chief of police—"my client has a perfect alibi. He can prove——"

"None of that, Epstein!" Armitage cut in shrilly. "I told you not to say a word about that!"

"Nu, all right." With an expressive

shrug. "You have no evidence," he went on perfunctorily. "No evidence to speak of. Threats—bah! I heard what was said. I was there. Mere words—result of a natural irritation. As for the condition of my client's roadster—why, the nose bleed. A very simple and logical explanation. As for the bullet holes—why, an accident. It may have happened weeks—months—ago. What else have you?"

Powers looked rather crestfallen. "We've got enough," he blustered. "I'm not giving away the case for the prosecution like that!"

"Quite right. Sure, sure!" With a polite smile that proved Mr. Epstein was not so easily gulled. "But really, now, gentlemen, what have you got—only just that somebody whistled for Miss Evelyn Armitage, and she went out?"

Chief Quinn suddenly pushed back his chair and took Epstein and his client each by an arm. "Come here," said he quietly, leading them to the window. "Look out there. What do you see?"

The loiterers had increased in numbers, until now the open space beside the jail was crowded with quiet men who stood in close-pressed groups, with heads together, whispering. Through the dusk one saw white spots leap out here and there, as one after another turned to stare at the jail, showing faces that were paler blurs in the dark.

"What are they doing out there, do you think?" Quinn asked casually.

There was no need for an answer. For some one outside had seen the faces at the window. He touched his neighbor and pointed. Another looked up, and another, until the whole crowd of two or three hundred faced the window and stared in silence. A single voice cried out: "There he is, boys! That's young Armitage!—that's the murderer!"

"He murdered Evelyn Armitage!" shouted another.

From the whole crowd came a thick, ugly growl; a low-voiced mutter infinitely more menacing than the loudest shout. Stuart Armitage trembled visibly; and even Epstein was shaken. He dragged his client from the window.

"You saw them," Quinn went on coolly. "Notice they were men? All men—not a woman in the lot. Know what that means? If you've got any explanation to make; if you've got an alibi, you'd better spring it pretty quick, young feller, before they get any madder out yonder!"

"Speak up!" urged Epstein roughly. "Don't be a fool."

Stuart Armitage hesitated. He was obviously shaken; his pasty face was sickly white, his lips trembled, his protruding eyes darted about, as though searching for a way of escape.

Then he stiffened. His eyes steadied, and he faced his inquisitors coolly enough. His slack lips tightened, and the line of a tolerably square jaw showed beneath the puffiness of his fat cheek.

"I won't tell you a thing!" he declared.

Sheriff Franklin stroked his clipped mustache, eying his prisoner with an odd mixture of surprise, chagrin, and reluctant admiration. "More character than I gave him credit for," he muttered. "He's an Armitage, after all!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A QUESTION OF HONOR.

WITH an impatient exclamation Don Powers rose. They were at an impasse. "No use wasting any more time here," he grumbled. "I must say"—with a resentful glance at the unperturbed Tupper—"I must say that I think this has been badly mishandled."

Rudolf Tupper beamed at him through rimless eyeglasses. "Patience, my boy," he advised gently. And he

rubbed dry palms together with an audible, rasping sound; sure sign that he was pleased with events. "Patience; there are many matters to be cleared up before we shall understand the case. Every man has the right to be treated as innocent until his guilt is proved. We should gain nothing by violating this boy's constitutional rights."

"All very well," muttered the youthful district attorney. "You're not responsible to the voters!"

There was a general stir, as the men sitting about the long table rose and prepared to go. The sheriff beckoned to his prisoner, and young Armitage rose also, rather uncertainly.

"Going to lock me up, I suppose?" he hazarded, with a glance at his lawyer.

The sheriff nodded. "I've got to," said he and added, grimly enough: "Jail's the safest place in Chickalocka for *you* to-night, young fellow—no matter what the rights of this case are. Wouldn't be healthy for you outside, I'm afraid." And he gestured curtly at the crowd without that waited in ominous silence, pressing closer and closer to the windows, resolute and determined on vengeance.

Little Epstein stood on one foot, close-set black eyes running from one face to another, his slight, stooped figure fairly quivering with nervous tension. Then:

"Wait once," he urged. "It ain't so late. Give me ten minutes, please, Mister Sheriff, gentlemen? No," as his client began to protest, "no, my boy! I don't listen any more. I got mine own self to think about. I can't leave all this town be sore on me for nothing. I don't tell anybody; I will keep confidence. But just you wait!"

And he ran out, scarcely pausing to get a reluctant nod from the tired officials.

Sheriff Franklin looked at the chief of police, and the latter looked blankly

back. "What's he got up his sleeve now?" wondered Mr. Quinn.

"This is all irregular—highly irregular!" declared Powers rather petulantly. He felt that the district attorney was not being treated with the respect and deference due his office, to say nothing of his personal attainments. "Are we investigating a brutal murder—or is this a guessing contest?"

No one answered. Mr. Tupper was gazing serenely out of the window; and now the others looked that way, also. They saw little Epstein round the corner of the building, hesitate, then walk swiftly on, shoulders hunched, as though he expected an attack.

The crowd pressed about him, silent at first, antagonistic, but still peaceable. Epstein was questioned; one, then another, plucked him by the arm, demanding news. The little man shook himself loose; from the window he could be seen gesticulating, explaining.

"There he is!" shouted somebody in the rear of the crowd. "That's the fellow's lawyer. Tryin' to get him off; let's lynch the dirty shyster!"

A visible wave of emotion passed through the throng; arms were raised, fists shaken. Came an ugly mutter, deepening to a roar. Epstein was shaken, tossed back and forth. They heard him squeak, like a trapped rabbit.

Sheriff Franklin moved uneasily. "The boys're gettin' pretty rough," he muttered, stroking his white mustache. "I don't know but I'd oughta go out there an'——"

He stopped, sighing with relief. For the crowd without had fallen back. Epstein stood in the center of an irregular ring of hostile faces, talking vehemently, waving his hands. "Tellin' 'em somepin, looks like," Chief Quinn commented.

Whatever the little lawyer's explanation, it seemed efficacious. The crowd separated, leaving a wide lane, down which Attorney Epstein scuttled with

more speed than dignity. And so he crossed the square and disappeared, somewhat disheveled, but unhurt; and the crowd forgot him and returned to its sullenly patient vigil. In the gathering dark the sea of upturned faces showed as dim blurs of white, featureless. F. Rudolf Tupper shivered.

"One might fancy they were all one," he remarked, with a carelessness not quite spontaneous. "Like some huge, formless monster—an argus, say." And, indeed, those indistinct faces vaguely resembled eyes; great, blankly watchful eyes, alert for prey.

Mr. Tupper sat back in his chair, comfortably relaxed, like a man at ease in his own house. The two officers waited stolidly, with the patience which a policeman must learn. Bill Dunn huddled dully in his corner, sunk in an apathy of grief and fatigue. The district attorney walked the floor with quick, irregular steps, muttering irritably to himself. Of them all, the prisoner was, perhaps, most at ease; for the officers scowled, and even Mr. Tupper at times cast a wary, puzzled glance about.

But Stuart Armitage lolled insolently in his seat and smoked cigarettes, like one without a care in the world. All his earlier nervousness was gone; now that he had settled upon defiance, a certain elation buoyed him up—or, was it, that he counted upon the results of his attorney's secret mission?

The room grew very dark. Sheriff Franklin switched on the lights, first carefully drawing the shades against that silent, watchful throng without. It was a gloomy, chilly night; the raw air was heavy with fog, so that one must strain his eyes to make sure that those hundreds of sullen men kept up their vigil on the public square.

At last Mr. Tupper glanced at his watch. "Almost eight o'clock!" He rose, politely smothering a yawn. "I must go home at once. I'll be late for

dinner, as it is. I don't believe those boys outside will bother me." He spoke with humorous assurance, certain of the respect in which the community held him. "They must be pretty well stirred up, to hang around in weather like this. Hello!"

As he spoke, he sauntered to the nearer window and pulled its shade to one side, so that he might peer out. Now he turned back, his kindly face surprised, in his pale eyes an odd look of puzzlement, mixed with satisfaction. "They're gone!" declared Rudolf Tupper.

"Gone?" repeated Powers irritably. "Nonsense!" He spoke brusquely, like one defrauded. One might suspect that the district attorney had pictured himself heroically facing a lynching mob; single-handed cowering a hundred men bent upon murder and sending them away crestfallen and empty-handed. It was annoying, to say the least, to have them vanish thus, without awaiting his intervention.

"Gone," said the older lawyer. "At any rate, they're going. Only a few of them left. See for yourself." He stepped aside, his pale eyes going from the district attorney to Bill Dunn and back, an unreadable expression in their depths. And he rubbed bony hands together.

"That beats my time," declared Quinn, blinking out of the other window. "Got cold and tired, I expect. Or else——"

A tapping of high-heeled shoes sounded in the hall without; Mr. Epstein's catarrhal tones mingled with the deeper voice of the jail deputy, and an angry feminine voice, musical despite its shrillness, rose above them both.

"The very idea!" cried this invisible lady. "I never heard of such a thing. Men are so stupid! They'd better just——"

Stuart Armitage sat up very straight, and an eager light shone in his pro-

truding eyes. "Now!" said he triumphantly, a sneer twisting his thick lips. "Now!"

The door burst open. Those within caught a glimpse of little Epstein, bowing, ducking, gesturing obsequiously; and then a young lady appeared.

She was a tall girl, flamboyantly handsome, with reddish hair and big, pansy-colored eyes that flashed with regal rage. She wore a big wrap of costly furs over a dinner dress. Her head was bare, and jeweled rings glittered from her ungloved fingers.

"Oh, you men!" she flamed. "Where is he? Have you locked him into a cell? Have you, I say?" And she stamped her foot furiously. Then, as her eyes adjusted themselves to the bright lights: "Oh, Stuart! They haven't dared to h-hurt you, have they? The brutes! But it was all my fault, and you—why, you're a regular hero!"

She ran to young Armitage and caught his puffy hand in both of hers, then whirled upon the others. Her big eyes flashed; she drew herself up dramatically, like an actress in her biggest scene.

"You brutes!" Her voice was clear, controlled, incisive; her gestures were telling, even somewhat studied. She was patently enjoying herself immensely. "Let him go at once, I tell you! Do you hear, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Quinn? A murderer, indeed! You might have *known* better. Mr. Stuart Armitage took me for a drive last night in his roadster. We went out to Burland's road house near River City; we stayed until after midnight. And on the way home Mr. Armitage had the nose bleed—terribly. We had to stop for a while. He used up his handkerchief and mine; bled all over the car and my dress—and everything. It was terrible; I was frightened! But he was just as brave as brave. And——"

Chief Quinn managed at last to check

the dramatic outburst. "Now just hold on a minute, won't you, Miss Viola? Why didn't he tell us all this, huh? Instead of——"

"Why didn't he? Why didn't he? Because he's a *gentleman*; because he was afraid folks would think it wasn't just right, my going out with him so late, when——"

"Your dad didn't know then?" the sheriff asked shrewdly. "Mr. Cameron wouldn't let you go?"

The girl's high color rose higher; a crimson flood swept over her comely features. "No, he wouldn't, if you've got to know! Father's old-fashioned—too strict. He doesn't understand. And of course folks would talk—will talk now. The women'll whisper and whisper; they hate me already, the old cats!" She began to cry. "A girl hasn't any freedom; everybody watches her. I wasn't doing any harm; I only wanted a good time! And now, just because—because—— But I couldn't do anything else; I couldn't let you horrid men put Stuart in j-jail, when I *knew* he was innocent, even if he was brave enough to keep quiet for my sake!"

The men about the big table moved uneasily, illogically abashed. But Mr. Tupper smiled thinly.

"Come now, Viola," he began, "don't make too much of this. You're having a lovely time right now, pretending to be a heroine—aren't you?"

The girl stamped. "I h-hate you!" But her manner of high tragedy visibly diminished.

"Quite so." Mr. Tupper stroked his chin, his smile broadening benevolently. "Quite so. Of course, Mr. D. J. Cameron, president of the Chickalocka National, would be—ahem!—annoyed, to discover that his only daughter was visiting road houses, unchaperoned, late at night. But we won't tell him, my dear. And as for the rest, why, times have changed. You're not going to be ostracized, Viola, even if

all this comes out. You've done things just as bad before this, I'll venture. So don't talk as if your life was ruined. Don't try to play 'Bertha, the beautiful sewing girl'—but be sensible about it."

As this dry, matter-of-fact discourse went on, Miss Viola seemed to shrink, until from a tragedy queen she diminished into a pretty, rather immature, unschooled, impulsive, likable young girl.

"Well, it was just noble of him, anyhow," she faltered. "So there!"

Tupper coughed. "No doubt, though a good deal of it, I fancy, was just plain obstinacy. The boy knew he wasn't going to be electrocuted tonight. He wanted to make us all the trouble he could. However——"

He broke off, glancing at the others with a question in his pale eyes. Quinn nodded, and Franklin; and the district attorney nodded also, though with a very bad grace. "I suppose we'll have to," he grumbled. "But, hold on! How about these bullet holes? There were two bullet holes in that car, you said, Quinn."

Miss Viola turned scarlet again. "That was my fault," she confessed. "I found this pistol in the pocket on the car door. It was an automatic, and somehow I touched the trigger, and it shot twice before I could let go."

"It all sounds mighty unusual," muttered the district attorney. He was patently dissatisfied; reluctant to dismiss his suspicions. "Why didn't Armitage—why didn't you——"

Mr. Tupper tapped his shoulder peremptorily. "Hush, hush, man!" he whispered. "Can't you understand? This boy had a flask; both of them were a bit exhilarated, no doubt. Youth and high spirits—proof spirits, ha, ha! They've been responsible for stranger coincidences than this."

Her story told, the girl looked somewhat embarrassed and uneasy. She stood by the door, tapping neat-shod

toes against the floor. "Haven't I said enough yet?" she inquired wistfully. "Mayn't we go, please?"

The sheriff nodded, as did the chief of police. "Certainly, my dear, certainly," came Mr. Tupper's benign tones. "And you may set your mind quite at ease. None of us will mention what you have told us."

Viola tossed her head. "Oh, that! Why, I told all those men outside, myself, on the way here. I wasn't going to have them threaten Stuart, when he'd been so g-good." She carried it off bravely; but her red lip quivered a bit, none the less. "I d-don't know what my father will say, when he hears about it," she confessed.

"He'll think you a very brave, generous young lady, of course!" Tupper comforted. "I'll talk to him myself. And now, Mr. Armitage," he turned to Stuart, "let me congratulate you upon a loyal friend and upon having come out of this—ahem!—misunderstanding, so well."

He proffered a bony hand, which Armitage accepted gingerly. "Thanks," replied the boy carelessly. He had quite recovered his aplomb. "Of course, I couldn't say anything until Miss Cameron had spoken."

The lawyer coughed discreetly and said nothing. But his pale eyes were ironic, and he seemed to concur in the belief which young Powers blurted out, thus:

"You mean you were too stubborn and cantankerous to say anything. You knew you were safe and wanted to make us all the trouble you could!" And the district attorney, with a curt bow to Miss Cameron, turned his back.

Quinn and the sheriff came forward now, muttering embarrassed apologies, which their erstwhile prisoner accepted magnanimously enough. "It's all right, men," he declared, with a wide, careless gesture. "Don't mention it. Mistakes will happen."

Last of all Bill Dunn rose wearily from his corner. "Sorry, old man," said he, turning tragic, harassed eyes upon the smaller man. Noting the dark bruises already springing out upon Armitage's throat, he flushed dully. "I—I must have been crazy for a minute. Forgive me, won't you?"

Stuart Armitage put both fat, puffy hands behind his back. "No," he answered, with deliberate insolence, "no, I won't!"

CHAPTER XV.

AN ACCUSATION.

THE doctor looked at him silently for a long moment, and Stuart's protruding eyes wavered and fell beneath that haggard, pitying stare. Then the big man shrugged indifferently.

"As you like," said he. "I'm sorry, anyhow." And he turned away and sat down again, or rather, dropped into a seat, as though his weary limbs were no longer able to support him. "I know it was a rotten thing to do," he added, addressing the company at large. "But—well, I've had a hard day."

Armitage glared, his anger unappeased by the quiet pathos of those few words. His pasty cheeks flushed a dull, mottled red; his bulging eyes blinked furiously.

"I'd like to know what you meant by it," he blustered shrilly; "jumping onto me that way. You never gave me a chance; if I'd been ready for you, I'd have——"

"You'd have been worse off, I expect," put in Chief Quinn, dryly disgusted. "Bill would have torn you apart."

Tears of rage stood in the stout young man's dull eyes; his loose lips twitched; he glared at the stolid policeman. But, as he began to stutter some reply, Miss Viola plucked at his arm.

"Come along, Stuart," she whispered urgently, conscious that he

was doing his best to spoil the favorable impression his late silence had made. "Come along! I'm going home now; won't you take me, please?"

But he shook her off. "I can't do it," he answered ungraciously. "I'm ever so much obliged and all that; but I've got something important to say first. I'll tell you"—suddenly conscious of his own rudeness—"I'll tell you, Viola: just wait outside somewhere for a minute, won't you? There's a comfortable room just inside the front door. I've got something very, very important to say before I leave—honest!"

She went out reluctantly, with little, uneasy backward glances; but she went. And, as the door closed after her, Stuart Armitage turned to the sheriff, his bulging eyes alight with malicious triumph.

"Look here," he began. "It just struck me, after what he said. But all this stuff—all this evidence you people told me about a while ago, trying to make me out a murderer—why, every bit of it almost points toward Dunn a whole lot more than it did toward me."

He paused, favoring the weary doctor with a scowl of vindictive suspicion. The others stared at him, bewildered and unconvinced, all but Bill Dunn. He did not seem to hear.

"Can't you see?" Armitage went on impatiently. "Don't you get it yet? Listen! Dunn had a quarrel with my cousin, didn't he? One of the servants told my man Jacques——"

Chief Quinn rubbed his red nose dubiously. "Yeah," he grunted, "but the doc told us all about that."

"Did he now?" Stuart sneered. "Gave himself the worst of it, too, I suppose. Bah! Just you listen to me: They had a quarrel, and Evelyn told this big bruiser she was done with him. That's how I dope it out. He got sore and made up his mind to get back at her. So, last night, he came to her house and whistled. You told me your-

self, sheriff, the maid thought it was Doctor Dunn whistling; how on earth did you think *I'd* know how he whistled, so as to imitate it? Well, he whistled, and she came out; and he jollied her along until he got her into his car and drove off. And then he murdered her and chucked her body into the creek—and came home and called up the house to make the servants think he didn't know she was gone. How about that, you men?" And he turned upon Bill Dunn, his puffy face distorted with malice, a hateful, mottled flush upon his pasty cheeks. "You, Dunn, what have you got to say to *that*?"

Bill Dunn had listened to this tirade with weary indifference at first, then in blank amazement. His haggard gray eyes were puzzled, uncomprehending. But gradually, as the force of the accusation came home to him, the young doctor's tired face turned white, and that rythmical swelling and falling away of temple and jaw muscles began anew. The narrowed gray eyes glowed with dull red lights; the firm lips tightened.

Doctor Dunn came slowly to his feet, wide shoulders hunched, hands clawed, like some fierce animal about to spring. Armitage shivered and shrank hastily behind the bulk of the chief of police. "Keep him off!" he quavered. "Don't let him touch me!"

"You think—you say that I—I——" began Bill Dunn, in a queer, ragged voice. "You dare——" He stopped, swallowing convulsively, and passed an unsteady hand across his eyes. "Oh, well!"

The fierce light faded from his eyes; his tense muscles relaxed; his head drooped dispiritedly. His big, loose-jointed frame sagged in every line. "What's the use?" asked Bill Dunn thickly. "That's so absurd it's not even worth presenting. And it doesn't matter. Nothing matters now." He glanced heavily at the sheriff. "I'm done up. I've got to lie down. I've got to rest,

if I can. I don't care where. Here or at home; that's up to you. Only make up your minds as soon as you can, please." And he dropped back into his chair, like one without further interest in the proceedings.

Chief Quinn rubbed his nose furiously and looked at F. Rudolf Tupper for guidance. That gentleman was watching Doctor Dunn with a curious expression in which open sympathy seemed to struggle with secret elation. Presently he began to rub his hands softly together.

Donald Powers, turned from the window. "By Jove!" said he. "I almost believe the fellow's right." He exchanged a long, significant look with the older attorney; and then, as though some secret agreement had been reached, both scowled at Bill Dunn.

"Think it over, gentlemen," urged Armitage. "Somebody saw a roadster waiting near by cousin's house. Dunn drives a roadster. You looked into my car this morning; but has anybody searched his? And where was he last night, at ten o'clock? I can prove where I was!"

Both lawyers nodded gravely; and Chief Quinn rubbed his red nose harder than ever. "Huh!" said he. "Where were you, doc—if you don't mind me asking."

Doctor Dunn looked up indifferently. "In my own office, alone," he answered.

Armitage laughed. "Prove it!" he jeered.

"I can't. I said I was alone."

"His car's out in front now," Armitage persisted. "Why don't you fellows go out and search it? Of course he's had plenty of time to clean it up, but you can't be sure."

Sheriff Franklin stroked his clipped mustache. "I expect we might as well do that," he ventured, almost apologetically. "It won't do any harm."

He rose, and opened the door. Stuart Armitage cast one last ugly look at

the weary doctor, sagging stupidly in his corner, and swaggered out, laughing mirthlessly. "Try to strangle me, will you?" he tossed over his shoulder. "You murdering thug!"

He vanished, and with him went the sheriff and chief of police. The two lawyers, left alone with Bill Dunn, drew away into a corner, whispering busily, glancing at him furtively now and then. Dunn smiled a wry little smile.

"Bound you'll prosecute somebody, aren't you, Don?" he asked. "You've lost young Armitage; so you're going to try your hand on me next. Well," rather cynically, "I've no doubt you'd prefer me to almost any one else."

And the hard glare he got in return confessed the truth of that statement, beyond the shadow of a doubt.

Quinn and the sheriff returned in silence and stood in the doorway, looking awkwardly at nothing. Bill Dunn grinned at them rather forlornly. "How about it, chief?" he inquired. "Do I sleep at home—or here?"

The officer's honest brown eyes wavered and fell. His broad face flushed crimson; he moved his feet uneasily.

"I—I'm afraid, doc," he apologized, as shamefacedly as though he, himself, were the suspect. "I'm afraid you better stay here—just f'r to-night. I—you see——"

Donald Powers rose and came forward impatiently. "You've found something," he asked excitedly. "What is it?"

"You needn't act so darn' happy," grumbled Quinn. "Don't amount to nothin', anyhow." He extended a stubby, thick-fingered hand.

In its broad palm lay an imitation tortoise-shell hairpin and a bit of blood-stained gauze. The district attorney pounced upon them.

"Ha!" He gloated upon these trifles, seeing them, no doubt, as exhibits. "That's a light-colored hairpin—notice?

Evelyn wore them to match her hair. And this!"

Bill Dunn smiled wearily. "I expect you could find bits of gauze and cotton in my car most any time," said he. "As for that hairpin, it may have been there a week or a month. What does it amount to?"

Powers would have replied angrily, but there came another interruption. Some one came running down the hall and burst into the room, an anxious-faced man who panted audibly. He glanced about eagerly, and when his eyes lit upon Doctor Dunn, he exclaimed: "I been huntin' f'r you this last two hours, most. Hurry up! My wife——"

He caught the physician by a shoulder, as though to drag him away by force. "She's awful bad, doc. Heaven knows what's happened since I started out after you."

Bill Dunn came to his feet and shook himself like a big dog. His weary face set itself into new, determined lines; the gray eyes shone. "Come along, Ruggles," said he briskly. "My car's outside."

The district attorney sprang for the door, crying incoherently to the sheriff: "Don't let him go!"

Doctor Dunn brushed him aside, without even seeing him, and was gone, with Ruggles trotting after, babbling of symptoms.

"Well!" The district attorney turned angrily upon the others. "You're a fine pair of officers to let a prisoner walk out on you that way! You ought to be——"

Chief Quinn turned his back in disgust. "You make me tired, Powers. Looks to me, you're darn' anxious to get somepin on the doctor. Let him go; he ain't goin' to run away. I don't believe he done it, anyhow, even if you do!"

With which remark the chief of police stalked out.

CHAPTER XVI.

CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE.

DESCENDING from the smoking of the ten sixteen train from River City, Sheriff Franklin went forward to superintend the removal of a long, black box from the baggage car.

Donald Powers, the young district attorney, came eagerly toward him. "Well, sheriff?" he inquired.

"We-ell, I don't know," answered Franklin dubiously. "I brought her along. She's about the right size; got yellow hair and all that. Must have been in the creek quite a while, though. Nobody could make anything out of her face."

The district attorney scowled. "You don't mean—— But it *must* be Evelyn Armitage!" he protested.

"Huh? Anybody'd think you wanted it to be. Mebbe it is; but I kind of doubt it. This woman's feet are too big, looks to me; and her hands are rough, like she was used to hard work. Of course she's battered up pretty bad. I thought I'd best bring her along for somebody, that knew Miss Evie better'n I do, to decide."

Powers thought for a moment. "Try Doctor Ames, the dentist," he suggested. "He's looked after her teeth for years; he's got a chart of them in his office, I suppose. He can tell us."

Sheriff Franklin stroked his white mustache. "Sounds like a good idea," he approved. "You boys load this onto the wagon," turning to the baggage men who were lifting that long, narrow box. "Tell Jerry to drive it over to the city morgue."

He turned back to the district attorney. "Wish you'd call Doctor Ames up, will you? Ask him to come over to the morgue, soon as he can, and tell us whether we got the right one. If we have, I expect we'd best take Dunn over to the jail for a spell—huh?"

Powers nodded emphatically. He

wore the long-tailed coat and black-string tie he usually affected; in that rather old-fashioned garb he was undeniably an impressive figure. He brushed back the long lock of hair that had escaped from under his slouch hat.

"Personally," said he, with an obvious attempt at the impersonal, which fell just short of convincing, "personally, I felt it a mistake to let him go last night. He's not back yet, I hear; we may have to send out an alarm."

"Don't you worry about that," the sheriff consoled him. "Doctor Dunn'll be home before long. I don't know's we got enough to hold him, anyhow."

"Of course we have!" Powers seemed irritated by the other's doubt. "The evidence is clear. Circumstantial, of course; but convincing, none the less. And we'll get more; in fact," he added importantly, "I'm looking into this matter myself."

Sheriff Franklin eyed him rather quizzically, stroking a clipped mustache, but made no comment. Instead, he entered a waiting automobile and followed that long black box toward the Chickalocka morgue.

Mr. Powers stood with folded arms for a moment, chin pressed against his standing collar, a thoughtful scowl upon his dark, handsome face. A few passers-by glanced at him, thinking, "That's Donald James Powers, the district attorney. Isn't he good looking? Awfully brilliant, too, they say. I suppose he's working on that murder case." At least Mr. Powers hoped that such were their thoughts. He was not too modest.

Presently he turned, tucked that rebellious lock of hair back under his slouch hat, and stalked away, hands clasped behind his back, frowning thoughtfully at the pavement before him. His slow steps took him along Center Street, past the park with its marble monument, past the small white house at its eastern edge, in which Doctor William Dunn had his office.

Here the district attorney paused, glaring at the neat-lettered sign in the window, as though at some mortal enemy. After a moment's hesitation he went up the walk, mounted the steps of the little house, and tried its door.

It opened at once. Mr. Powers drew a deep breath, like a swimmer about to dive into cold water, and entered.

Half a dozen people sat in a small, plainly furnished room, obviously waiting, with varying degrees of impatience, for the doctor's return. They glanced up at Power's entry in the odd, half-resentful, half-sympathetic fashion of patients waiting for a doctor or a dentist. One old gentleman spoke.

"You might as well go on home, Don," said he irritably. "We been here, most of us, f'r two hours."

Donald Powers raised his eyebrows. The old man had spoken in that peculiarly galling manner which old men are wont to use toward people, however famous, whom they remember as babies. To one of the district attorney's sensitive vanity, this was almost unendurable. Ignoring the well-meant advice, he looked haughtily over the old gentleman's head.

There, on the mantel, stood one of those cards which drug houses supply for physicians' use. Below a clock face, with movable hands, were the words: "Doctor Is Out. Will Return." The clock hands had been set at nine thirty.

Quite unconscious that he was being rebuked, the old man followed Mr. Powers' glance. "Means nine thirty tonight, I expect," he supplied obligingly, "or else he set it that way last week an' forgot t' change. Out all night, too—so his housekeeper told me when I come in."

Out all night! Donald Powers scowled more formidably than ever. Bill Dunn had fled, he was convinced. His mind began to shape a poster: "One Hundred Dollars Reward. Wanted For Murder in Chickalocka." A tall, sham-

bling, sandy-haired man, rather uncouth. "Send all information to Donald James Powers, district attorney."

Without speaking, he nodded brusquely at the company and turned to go. A shrill, eager voice halted him.

"Mis-ter Powers! Wait just a minute, please."

A woman rose from her seat and came toward him, the upstanding feather on her hat quivering with importance. She was a tall woman and angular, with a long, narrow, sallow face and teeth that thrust out, like a chipmunk's, above an almost negligible chin. Her small, yellowish eyes glinted dully; she caught the young man's lapel with a veined, skinny hand.

Powers drew back with some distaste, knowing the woman for an inveterate gossip, a mean-minded, vindictive creature, such as one sometimes finds in small towns, who spent her days peering through her window curtains, listening in on party-line telephone conversations, or gadding the streets to disseminate the information thus obtained.

"Well, Mrs. Hawkins," said he coldly, "what can I do for you?"

She drew him out onto the porch and closed the door with exaggerated caution. "You're investigating Evie Armitage's murder, aren't you?" she began, quivering with curiosity, so that her flaring nostrils twitched. "No, you needn't shake your head. I know better! And I've got something"—she paused and cast a significant glance over her shoulder at Doctor Dunn's sign—"something about him!"

Mr. Powers folded his arms. From behind his thoughtful frown a gleam of eagerness shone for an instant, to be veiled at once. "I cannot discuss the secrets of my office," he replied with much dignity. "But if you have any information, it is your duty to offer it."

"Information!" Mrs. Hawkins tossed her head so that her feather

vibrated indignantly. "I should say I had some information! I never liked the fellow, anyhow; no more sympathy, no more interest in a woman that was suffering! Why, he said to me, 'Mrs. Hawkins, if you'd spend less time gadding——'"

The district attorney stopped her. "Yes, yes! No doubt Doctor Dunn—I suppose you mean Doctor Dunn—no doubt he was—as, crude, in his manner. But you spoke of some information?"

"I'm telling you as fast as I can. Night before last, along about ten o'clock, I heard him whistle right outside my door, almost. You know I live there on the hill, near the Armitage place, the next door but one."

Powers caught her arm. "Yes, yes. You heard Dunn whistle, you say? Are you sure it was Dunn? Did you see him?"

"Ouch! You hurt. Of course I'm sure. Haven't I heard him whistle like that, goodness only knows how many times? Why, for a year or more, I've heard him every day most, and Evie'd answer, and come running like—like an obedient puppy dog, poor little thing! I always did say the only way to make men respect you is to be distant and cool; don't let on you care anything about 'em. Why, if Hawkins'd ever whistled for me, I'd 've let him know straight off——"

"No doubt. But"—with scarcely veiled sarcasm—"I don't suppose Mr. Hawkins ever wanted to whistle to you. Did you *see* Doctor Dunn?"

"He'd better not! Did I see the doctor? We-ell, no-o, not exactly. But I knew it must be him. I remember I said the Hawkins, 'Nice carryings-on,' s'I, 'at ten o'clock at night, for a well-brought-up young lady to be running out bareheaded at some man's whistle,' I says. And Hawkins——"

"You didn't see him then?" The district attorney was evidently disappointed. "I think we'll get on faster,

Mrs. Hawkins, if you'll tell me exactly what you did see, from the beginning. Did you see an automobile?"

The lady sniffed aggrievedly. "Ain't I telling you, fast as I can? Only you keep picking me up so. 'Bout ten o'clock, as I say, an auto come slipping down the hill and stopped just above my house. A big roadster it was—Doctor Dunn's roadster."

"Sure? Could you swear to that?"

"Ain't I telling you? It was so dark, and me just happening to glance outa the window to see if it was coming on to rain. I'm not one to be poking and prying into other folks' affairs all the time; no, sir, not me. Well, it being so dark, and me just glancing once, like I did, I couldn't *swear* exactly; only I knew it must be him, 'specially when he whistled like he did."

Mr. Powers tossed up both hands in despair. "Did you see *anything* that you could swear to?" he inquired.

"Of course I did. An auto—a big roadster, like Dunn's, stopping right out in front of my house. And a man climbs out—a big tall fellow, with his coat collar turned up, and his cap pulled down like he was afraid somebody'd see him. He was all bundled up in a fur overcoat, so's a body couldn't say for sure if he was fat or thin; but I know he was tall, like Doctor Dunn. And when I heard him whistle that way, I knew it must be him."

The district attorney considered, a forefinger laid against his temple. Mrs. Hawkins watched him with avid eyes, waiting for some remark which she might add to her budget.

"You saw a car which looked like Dunn's, and a man who might have been Dunn; and you heard a whistle like Dunn's. Pretty conclusive, taken together. And you saw Miss Evelyn come out?"

"Indeed I did! Soon's he whistled, out she come, a-running, like as if she was his dog." As the woman repeated

this expressive simile, Don Powers winced visibly. The picture of Evelyn, running eagerly to meet Bill Dunn, did not please him. She had been a young woman of sense; while she had always been civil to Dunn, she had of course preferred him, Donald Fowers. It must be so! But an underlying doubt of this conclusion nagged at the district attorney persistently and made him righteously determined that Bill Dunn should suffer for this crime.

"Out she come, a-running; and I says to Hawkins, 'Nice going-on,' says I. What? I *am* going ahead. So she climbs into this roadster, and him after her, and off they went. And that's all I know."

"Thanks," said Powers. "All this may prove to be of importance later." He nodded curtly and started down the steps.

The woman called him back. "Do you s'pose he fetched her here?" she whispered, morbidly gratified. "I peeked into his office a while back, and there's a window broken in there, and"—her dull eyes glinted avidly—"and I saw blood on the floor! Maybe he killed her in there and carried the body away to throw into the creek?"

Powers shrugged. The callousness of this woman disgusted him. "I can't discuss that," said he and walked away.

Mrs. Hawkins hesitated, watching him for a minute or two, patently hoping that he might return. Then she re-entered Doctor Dunn's house; and Powers had an instant's vision of her waiting, buzzardlike, for his return, in the hope of wringing some admission from him.

But once she was out of sight, the district attorney's brisk steps slowed down. He hesitated, pondering her last words; and then, with a decided nod, turned up the walk toward the big brick house which stood to the east of Doctor Dunn's, at the corner of Center and Best Streets.

He rang the bell briskly. Now that his mind was made up, he would see it through. And when a mild-faced, be-whiskered old gentleman opened the door, the district attorney's manner was direct and unembarrassed.

"You know me, don't you, Mr. Chambers?" he began. "Donald Powers, the district attorney?"

"Why, bless my soul! Of course I know you, Don," replied the other, patting his curly white whiskers, that looked rather like wool. "Come in, my boy! Come right in. So you're district attorney now? Bless my soul, how time does fly! Why, it seems only the other day that your grandfather—a great friend of mine, your grandfather, Don, my boy—that he met me down on Center Street—Chickalocka wasn't much in those days; we were crude yet and new. Why, I often talked, as a boy, with Lon Somerville, the only survivor of the Chickalocka Massacre. Indeed, I was five years old at the time of that tragedy, only my people didn't come West until the following year. A terrible thing, that; terrible! Just think—twenty men and the women and children—young girls, babies in arms—slaughtered and scalped, Don, all of them, except the five they burned at the stake next day. Bless my soul, how I do ramble on! What was I saying, Don? Oh, yes! Only the other day, it seems, your grandfather bought me a cigar to celebrate the birth of your father, Donald Powers, senior. Ah, well! I'm an old man now."

All the while the old gentleman was leading his guest in through a wide, old-fashioned hall to a cozy sitting room, where a bright wood fire burned in the throat of a huge fireplace. He bustled about, drew up a chair, took Power's hat and coat, talking all the while. An amiable, hospitable old gentleman, kindly and genial; but in the wavering glance of his faded blue eyes,

in the uncertainty of gesture, the rambling irrelevancy of his speech, it was easy to read the signs of age and failing faculties.

"And now," he went on, when Powers was comfortably seated—all this while he had not ceased to talk—"and now, my boy, can I do anything for you, or did you just come to call on a lonely old man? Kind of you, Don; very kind. I appreciate it. The young are often careless, forgetful of us oldsters. No wonder—no wonder! Perfectly natural. As I often said to——"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Chambers," the young man interrupted. He had the grace to blush. "I beg your pardon, but I *did* come on business to-day. Another time, if you'll let me, I shall be glad to drop in just for a talk."

The old gentleman beamed. "Perfectly natural, my boy, of course! I'm an old man and prosy. My granddaughter says I talk too much, and no doubt I do. Even when I was young, they used to call me——"

"Excuse me, sir; but I must ask you a question or two." Powers was almost inclined to give up. This wandering old dotard could be no help. Yet since he was here, he might as well ask. "Did you hear or see anything unusual next door, night before last?"

Mr. Chambers pondered. "Night before last? Why, that was—— Of course, Doctor Dunn often has callers late at night, being a physician. Let me see! Oh, yes!" The wavering eyes brightened. "That was the night little Evie Armitage came. I haven't seen her for a long time. Bless my soul! Why, I used to hold her on my knee——"

Donald Powers sat up straight; his dark eyes snapped. For once he forgot to brush back that troublesome lock of hair. "You saw Evelyn Armitage go into Doctor Dunn's office night before last—late?" he asked slowly. His

face was rather pale; his jaw squared itself. After all, he had loved the girl—in his way.

"Yes, my boy." Mr. Chambers beamed amiably at him, obviously regarding the matter as unimportant. "It was very late. I'd stepped out to look at my flower beds—there near the walk; it looked like snow, I thought. Evie came toward Doctor Dunn's house, walking on the grass. I was going to speak to her, but she acted as if she was trying to be very quiet, so I didn't. I thought maybe she meant to surprise the doctor; I knew they were very fond of each other, those young people." And Mr. Chambers beamed genially.

The young man scowled. This was less pleasing. "She was alone, you say? Are you sure?"

"Why, of course! At least I only saw her for a moment. I stooped to look at my flowers, and when I glanced that way again she was out of sight. I heard the door open and saw Doctor Dunn on the steps, so I suppose she must have gone in. And I went in, too. It was lucky it didn't snow, because I didn't cover my flowers. Perhaps this cold rain will be almost——"

"So Miss Armitage went into Dunn's house? You didn't see her come out again?"

"Why, I didn't see her go in, either, Don. I just supposed——"

"Didn't you see or hear anything else unusual that night, sir? Think hard, now! Tuesday night. It's very important."

Old Mr. Chambers blinked benignly. "Bless my soul, Don, I'm a little forgetful at times, you see. Tuesday night! Let me see. Oh, yes! Why, it was that night the doctor dropped something." He beamed upon his guest, patently much pleased by this feat of memory. "It all comes back to me now. I heard quite a loud noise—sounded like a window, breaking, for I heard the tinkle of glass. And then

something dropped. I suppose Doctor Dunn must have knocked a chair or something over, and it broke a pane of glass. He's rather inclined to be awkward, you know; big men often are. I remembered my own uncle, George Lonagan. That would be before your time, Don. A very strong man, my Uncle George; he could lift——"

Donald Powers interrupted gently, eying this prospective witness with a lawyer's appraisal. "Then you heard the sounds of a struggle," he interpreted. "And some one fell; that was it, wasn't it? Sounded like two people fighting, and one knocked the other down? This first noise now: wasn't that a pistol shot?"

"A struggle?" asked the old man. "Did I say that, Don? Why, I don't believe it was like that, really; just something being knocked over. And I'm quite sure I didn't hear a pistol shot."

Powers waived the last point. "The sound of a blow, then. It sounded as if somebody hit somebody else and knocked him down. I understand now." He spoke positively, with assurance, as though repeating a statement just made to him.

Mr. Chambers blinked, but nodded uncertainly. "Is that what I said? I'm getting old, Don; my memory—— Well, well, as you say. Yes, that must have been it. Somebody knocked Doctor Dunn down, and I heard him fall. Bless my soul! I hope he wasn't hurt. Do you think it would be all right for me to run over and ask——"

"It was the other way round," Powers told him. "Doctor Dunn struck some one else. But let me get all this straight, just as you told it, before I go. First, you saw Miss Evelyn go into Doctor Dunn's house. He met her at the door; perhaps he brought her there. Probably he did, and you didn't notice. Anyway——speaking more rapidly, as the old man opened his lips——

"anyway, the pair of them went in. Soon after you heard Doctor Dunn strike some one, and that person fell; you heard the fall. That's correct, isn't it?"

Mr. Chambers worried his woolly white whiskers. "Why, if that's what I told you," said he slowly, blinking his uncertain eye. "Yes, I suppose it must have been about like that. But it almost seems to me I heard that noise before I went out——"

"That couldn't be," Powers told him promptly. "You see, Doctor Dunn came in with Miss Evelyn; he wasn't there until she came, so he couldn't have hit anybody before that——now, could he?"

"Nun-no. My memory isn't what it used to be. It's queer how different all this seemed, until you explained it. But, Don,"—as the implications of the affair came home to him—"but, Don, I do sincerely hope Doctor Dunn won't get into any trouble over this. If he knocked any one down that night, it must have been because that person insulted Evie Armitage, don't you think? I'd hate to think that anything I said might get Doctor Dunn into trouble, for he's a very fine young man, Don. I like him very much. He reminds me of my Uncle George Lonagan, who was——"

Powers stared at the old gentleman's simplicity. "Haven't you heard——" he began and stopped short, an odd glint in his eyes.

"Heard what? I don't get out much, my boy. Has anything happened that I ought to know? My granddaughter hasn't mentioned——"

"No, sir," Powers told him soothingly. "Nothing of any consequence. I only——ah, it's just a matter of evidence in——ah, a minor dispute. A technical matter——it's too complicated to bother you with. But let's go over this once more, because it might be of——ah, of great consequence to Doctor

Dunn, to be able to prove just what you saw and heard. Tuesday night, then—about what time was this, sir?"

"Why, bless my soul, Don, I don't believe I could tell you. My clock ran down; I'd forgotten to wind it; and so—I've always been forgetful about clocks; I remember my father gave me a silver watch almost seventy years ago, and then he whipped me because I——"

"It was half past ten or thereabout," Powers declared positively. "At half past ten then you saw Doctor Dunn and Miss Armitage enter Dunn's house. Soon after you heard a struggle, the sound of a blow, or of a pistol shot. Then some one fell. That was all?"

Mr. Chambers considered. "Seems to me I did hear a shot, Don; but that was later; and it sounded like it came from the street. I don't——"

"Good!" The lawyer's eyes snapped "I knew you'd remember presently. As

for the time—why, you know how long a minute will seem, when your clock isn't running. You heard a shot, the sound of a struggle; a shot; a scream; and some one fell down."

"It doesn't seem to me quite as if it—— But, come to think, I must have heard all those things, too. Only, the way you put it, I——"

"I'm simply repeating what you told me, Mr. Chambers." And the lawyer went patiently over it again and again, deftly enlarging, molding, directing, the aged man's vague recollection; fixing indelibly in his mind the story which he must one day tell upon the stand. Donald Powers' conscience was quite clear. Every attorney knows that witness must be coached; that their memories must be clarified and refreshed, if one is to get from them the truth of any matter. And Donald Powers was convinced that he knew the truth of this one.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, published weekly, at New York, N. Y., for April 1, 1924.

State of New York, County of New York (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Ormond G. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is President of the Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor*, Frank E. Blackwell, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; a corporation composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.;

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ORMOND G. SMITH, President,
of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 27th day of March, 1924. Francis S. Duff, Notary Public, No. 183, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1925.)

Crime as a Business

Its Penalties and Rewards

MINOR CONFIDENCE MEN

by Edward H. Smith

Author of "Mysteries of the District Attorney's Office," etc.

The purpose of this series of articles is purely informative. The writer assumes that the plain morality of the subject is too well understood to require further emphasis at his hands. On the other side, he realizes that there are between one and two million professional, chronic, occasional, single-offense, and other types of lawbreakers in the country. According to recent estimates of insurance experts, these men and women steal not less than three billion dollars in cash and goods annually. To police them, apprehend them, prosecute them, guard them, keep them while in prison, and support them elsewhere at intervals, costs another five billions. On the face of these figures alone crime is our greatest economic problem. If organized lawlessness can take three billions a year, obviously it must be recognized as a business. The author, after many years of close-hand study, is attempting simply to tell how that business is conducted, under what circumstances, and by whom.

THE great American confidence game costs our people at least two billion dollars a year. Enormous as the figure is, no man can call it fanciful or exaggerated. It bears the indorsement of the president of the New York Stock Exchange, who made his own investigations and estimated that the loss to crooked bucket-shop keepers in Wall Street and elsewhere in New York amounted to a billion dollars of itself. Mr. H. J. Kenner, head of the New York Better Business Bureau, Mr. William B. Joyce, chairman of the National Surety Company, and various officials of the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World, all organizations which are fighting frauds of this kind, have independently arrived at estimates of two billions or more.

Since, according to the best procurable estimates, the annual property loss to criminals of all classes in the United

States is about three billion dollars, the importance of the confidence man in any consideration of the crime business will be apparent. He gets two thirds of all the loot.

Broadly speaking, the modern confidence man divides himself into two rather loosely assorted clans, either of which contains many subtribes and special families. A glimpse of many of these will be got, as we proceed. For the present, however, it will be enough to recognize the two main orders as the minor and major ranks of con men. Both are familiar enough to the investing and speculating public. The reader, however, is more likely to be acquainted with the minor type, for his colorful adventures and cunning devices have been spread upon many an innocent white page for many a suffering year. His bigger and somewhat younger brother is a figure less generally understood. I shall consider the lesser

villain first and the greater at another time.

The minor order confidence man is the successor of the scoundrels who made the country ache from such burdens as the bunco game, the gold-brick swindle, and the green-goods cheat. These were the original American confidence games, the models after which all others have been made. One thinks of these rich old frauds, which originated about 1850, as long dead and buried. One is likely to believe, without either knowing or thinking, that no one could be snared to-day by such ancient devices. The truth, alas, is otherwise. These ancient games are still played, under various and handsome disguises, and many a sedate man of means has been made to pay tribute to the old extortioners.

Last year, in Boston, died an aged and choleric gentleman who had gone through life without wife or child. In spite of these handicaps, or, perhaps, because of them, he had accumulated a fat and tempting bank balance, plus various and handsome assortments of stocks and bonds, a fine house, some business properties, and other substantial attractions too numerous to mention. His will bequeathed these matters to a nephew, an amiable, a distant, and thunderstruck young man, who hastened from a small town in Maine to bury his uncle and confirm the excellent news.

An article appeared in each of the Boston papers, recounting the felicitous case of the gentleman from Maine. His name, according to best recollection, was Stack. His inheritance, when appraised, showed him to have been enriched to the extent of more than three hundred thousand dollars.

Young Mr. Stack had buried his munificent uncle, returned to his large house, bid adieu and good riddance to the last of the official mourners, and settled himself among his new posses-

sions, when the doorbell sounded, and a telegram was brought in. It was addressed to the dead man, and read:

Hit it at last. Expectations more than fulfilled. Richest strike in twenty-five years. All due to your generosity. Congratulations. Keep absolutely secret. Letter follows.

CULBERSON.

All this was Greek to Mr. Stack, to be sure. He stared and gaped and pondered. Then he put the telegram away and decided to wait for the letter. Should he consult the family lawyer? Yes and no. Evidently this was some confidential business of his uncle's. No need to say anything until he understood it better. Where had the thing come from, anyhow? Stack got the mysterious telegram from its hiding place to search out this detail and read "Globe, Ariz." as the point of dispatch. He raised his brows a little. Probably it was some mining venture. Well, he would keep his counsel.

At the end of the fourth day came the letter, written on several sheets of Western hotel stationery, in bold and reassuring characters. It read:

As I write this, you will already have had our telegram and the momentous news. On last Friday, on the middle ledge, where we have been working since spring, we came upon the long-expected vein. It turned out to be, as I wired, something beyond all our dreams. We have quietly traced the vein for more than a mile. There is a million dollars in gold in plain sight. The assay shows so high we'd rather show you than tell you. There's a fortune for each of us, and we owe all this to you. If you hadn't advanced the second twenty-five hundred, we would have had to quit work, and somebody else would have our claim. Please be sure that we are sensible of the debt.

How soon can you arrive in Globe? Your presence is absolutely necessary at once. There are matters concerning the adjacent property and the outcropping law which only you can handle. In order fully to protect ourselves we shall have to take up the neighboring pieces. Otherwise some one else will buy in and take the thing away from us.

For this reason the utmost secrecy is imperative. If the slightest rumor of our discovery gets about, the others will be on the

ground and take the thing over before we can protect ourselves. Say not a word to your own conscience even, but come at the earliest possible moment. Wire date and hour of your arrival.

YOURS FOR A MILLION.

Once more the mysterious Culber-son, herein further designated by the initials J. H., signed himself to the communication.

The young and inexperienced Mr. Stack sat down, with the letter in a trembling hand, and gasped for deeper breath. He was not a fool, this young man from Maine. He had the natural shrewdness of a notably canny ancestry. But, after all, he was young, and he had just seen a miracle. A man who has just had destiny deposit some three hundred thousand dollars in his unexpectant lap is in no mood for skepticism. He has been taught, by the thrice effective method of material and cash demonstration, that wonders do happen, and he is bereft of those inhibitions which might ordinarily restrain him from folly.

Mr. Stack slept upon that strange and provocative letter. In the night he dreamed of gold and grandeur. And in the morning he slipped down to the telegraph office and sent away a cryptic message which contained, among other things, the information that he would take train within the confines of that day. This done, Stack called on his lawyer, was assured that the formalities incident to the transfer of the inheritance to his control would soon be completed, and announced with a certain mysterious nonchalance that he thought he would start West at once—for his health.

Four days later young Stack lumbered off the train at Globe and fell into the arms of two stalwart persons who almost dislocated his spine and mascerated his fingers with their heartiness.

"So your uncle's dead, and you're his heir, eh?" said the grizzled veteran who bore the name of Culber-son. "Well, son, it's tough to think of the old man passing in his checks without ever hearin' of this thing. It'd added a couple of years to his life. Eh, Bill? Too bad. What did he die of, huh? All of a sudden, huh? Well, that's the way it happens. When you got some-thing' to live fer you die. A great old gentleman, your uncle. We'd be no-whar if it hadna been fer him. He owned a third interest in all this good luck of ours, and, since you're his heir, the third's yours. Lemme tell the story."

They sat down in Stack's room at the hotel, and Jim Culber-son and Bill Hanley did a tale unfold. Culber-son had been introduced to the dead uncle in Boston more than three years before. A friend had performed the introduction, inasmuch as Culber-son had his gold-mine idea, and the old uncle was known to have grubstaked a few fellows in his time. He put up twenty-five hundred for Jim and Bill. That was the beginning of the hunt. Then the money had run out, when hopes were highest. It had looked like a failure until the great old uncle had generously come to the rescue with a second contribution. He'd sent it in cash, too. Evidently didn't want his bank to know that he was staking any miners. Well, that was the end of the story except the trifling matter of finding the gold. Wasn't it awful to think of the old man dying the very day they made their first casting of the metal? Too darn bad! Still, the gold would be more use to a young man than an old. Away back there in those old gray mountains, caught in the time-broken rocks, was a hoard that would make the world all velvet before the young man's feet. And to-morrow he was going out there to take a look.

They were off at dawn to the end

of a rickety branch railroad. In the afternoon they set out from a squalid mining camp on horses. That night they camped on the mesa, and the tenderfoot from Maine heard the chilling note of the coyote, felt the first desert wind ripple along his spine, and watched the vast white torch of a mountain moon come floating up from the cañon. Late in the afternoon of the next day his horse, weary with constant climbing, turned the shoulder of a great wind-scarred rock and stopped at the entrance to a shallow natural grotto. Here was the claim.

Mr. Culberson and Mr. Hanley immediately took their charge over the property, showed him the boundaries of their present claim, picked up a few samples of iron pyrites from the loose ore deposits, showed the base yellow metal to Stack's inexperienced and unsuspecting eye, and finally led him up the mountain, a quarter of a mile, to a higher outcropping of the yellow vein. Here they sat down and explained something that was sad, but had to be faced.

In all the mountain States, where precious or valuable metals were found, said these worthies, there was an outcropping law. This statute said, in effect, that a vein of gold or silver or copper belonged to the highest claim where an outcropping could be found. In other words, this discovery of theirs amounted to nothing unless they could buy this claim above their own, where the gold cropped out at the highest point. Unless they did this, the fellow who owned the upper claim would prevent them from taking an ounce of ore. Yes, it was rather a strange law. It had been put on the statute books by the rich fellows and the big mining companies for two reasons: so that they could grab valuable veins by finding higher outcroppings, and so that a poor man couldn't cut in on their veins by staking out a claim lower down.

But, be that as it may, they would have to buy this higher claim and, for safety, several others in between. Only then could they be certain to keep their great find all to themselves. That was the reason for summoning Mr. Stack to Arizona. It would take money to acquire these claims. Fortunately they had it—in good red gold. They would show Mr. Stack in the morning.

When the young man from Maine had gorged himself on thick bacon, ponderous camp-oven biscuits, and strong coffee, his friends disappeared into the back of the cavern, where they had slept, and dragged forth two dirty wheat sacks, which they threw at his feet, with the invitation to "look at these."

"Dump the stuff out on the sand there and give yourself a treat," invited Culberson, and the man from Maine obeyed.

Stack picked up the larger sack by the bottom, lifted it with rather frail strength, and saw a yellow heap of great rough gold nuggets spill out at his feet—nuggets as big as potatoes, and bright as sunset.

Mr. Culberson picked up the second sack and added its burden to the pile. Then he sat down in the sand beside his hoard and began to fondle the bright slugs of metal and to explain. Young Mr. Stack and the amiable Hanley gathered, squatted, and listened, while their friend poured out his eloquent account. The man from Maine didn't quite understand most of it, still he had an idea.

Stack understood that the ore was so soft and so rich that it had been possible to stamp it by hand secretly, away up there in the mountains, refine it by some simple primitive process, which Culberson mentioned, but didn't explain, and then pour the liquid gold into molds roughly scooped out of the sand. All this had to be done circumspectly in the cave, which had a

natural chimney at the further end, through which the smoke of their smelting fire had been carried off.

"Why all the secrecy away up here?" demanded Stack, with a show of Western breeziness.

Culberson looked at him with well-disguised pity and pain.

"Well, son, if you'd been skinned out of as many gold claims as I have in my day, you wouldn't be askin' fool questions," he said. "A gold strike will leak fastern'n an old maid's secret. Why, boy, we been coverin' our tracks like hoss thieves fer the last year. And we gotta do some tall coverin' still. We can't be too careful."

Bill Hanley joined in with vehement confirmation.

"Why, Mr. Stack," he began, "if the least rumor got down to that mining camp below here, or into Globe, there'd be six million men, more or less, campin' out here to-morrow. If we even bought a new suit in Globe, or looked like we had a grain of gold dust on us, the fellows that own the claims around here, especially that top claim, wouldn't sell for all the money in the Denver mint. You know how we got our first ore assayed? Well, we sent the samples East to a friend in Pennsylvania and asked him to send the package unopened to another fellow in Colorado, where the assay was made. That's how careful we gotta be."

Stack looked impressed, and Culberson continued the attack. He picked up from the pile before him a nugget somewhat larger than a duck's egg and tossed it carelessly at the young Easterner.

"Looka that!" he commanded. "Try your knife an' your teeth on it. Pure soft gold. Say, if I took that little sample into Globe and let my best friend see it, there'd be a riot. Stuff like that turns men's brains to fire, boy. Now, listen what we gotta do."

Culberson explained that he had, by

careful and devious means, gone about and got prices on the various adjacent claims that were needed. It would take a little less than forty thousand dollars to buy them in now, while there was still no knowledge of the strike. That was why Stack had been called West. His job was to get hold of the forty thousand in short order.

The young man's natural caution rose.

"How much gold have you in that pile?" he demanded.

"About ninety thousand dollars, as close as we can estimate."

"Well, you ought to be able to raise the forty thousand on that," the Easterner countered.

"Well, we can't," Culberson retorted with a show of teeth. "If we could we wouldn't have got you here from Boston, would we? Use your brains. We can't show that gold anywhere. We can't even be seen with a speck of it. That's where you come in, and that's why you get a third of a million-dollar strike. Here's what's got to be done. You have to dig up the forty thousand quick from Boston, through the bank. To make you safe we turn over to you all this gold, more than twice as much as we ask you to put up. You take the gold East with you, turn it in to the mint, pay yourself back your forty thousand, deduct the expenses of your trip, and then send me and Bill our two thirds of what's left. After that you get one third of all the gold that comes out of the vein. Take it or leave it."

Mr. Stack quite naturally hemmed and hawed.

"I suppose you wonder if it's gold, or if it's really as much as I say, eh? Well, son, I tell you what we'll do. We'll take all this stuff back to Globe with us and stick it away where it's safe. Meantime you take a coupla samples an' have them tested. Take the one you got in your hand. Here's

another. Take any of 'em. How's that?"

Culberson picked up another nugget with elaborate casualness and forced it on the hesitant Stack, who stuffed the two lumps into his pocket.

"Keep them where you can lay hands on them. We'll have to pack up the rest of this stuff and keep it packed," said Culberson, beginning to drop the heavy castings back into the bags from which they had come.

Before afternoon the men had packed, loaded their gold on their horses, and started for Globe. Arrived there on the second day, the sacks were left in a safe-deposit vault, to which Stack held one key and Culberson the other, neither having access without the knowledge of both.

Before night fell, Stack took a train to Phoenix, with his two sample nuggets. Next day he visited a jeweler, said that these two pieces of metal had been offered him, and asked what it would cost to have them thoroughly tested. The jeweler, having been initiated into the outer mysteries of the gold-brick lodge, bored a hole through both nuggets and tested the cuttings. He sank other holes into various parts of both ingots. He scraped till his tools wore out.

"Pure gold," he said; "nearly twenty-four karats fine. Where'd it come from?"

Mr. Stack looked sharply at the questioner, lied briefly, and went hurriedly back to Globe. The perfunctory question of the jeweler had confirmed in his mind all that Culberson had told him. Indeed, every one was prying. The secret must be closely kept.

One question still troubled him when he saw his new-found partners again. How could he know the total worth of the gold? Culberson scratched his head, like a man in a quandary.

"We can't take it and have it weighed as gold," he pondered. "The sight of

that much yellow boy would set the mountains boiling. I'll tell you. We can get a rough idea by simply weighing the stuff on any butcher's scale and then translating the avoirdupois weight into troy. How'll that do? That way we won't have to take the stuff out of the bags, or tell what it is. It'll be safe."

Stack readily assented. The bags were taken from the bank vault, carried to a butcher shop not far away, and found to weigh about three hundred pounds. A bit of rough calculation showed that gold at twenty dollars a troy ounce would be worth close to three hundred dollars to the avoirdupois pound. Ergo, three hundred pounds were worth between eighty and ninety thousand dollars.

"At least twice what we're asking you to advance," commented Culberson. "You can't lose."

The same night Stack wrote to his attorney in Boston under the careful guidance of the astute Culberson. His letter recited that he had determined to make his residence in the West, and that he wished to acquire at once some property which could, at the moment, be bought at much less than its value. Accordingly he wanted his lawyer to make arrangements for an immediate advance of forty thousand dollars.

After several weeks of waiting and telegraphing the money arrived in a bank at Globe. A contract was drawn, by whose terms Stack was recognized as a one third partner. A clause provided that he was to sell the aforementioned gold, repay himself for the forty thousand dollars, remit two thirds of the balance to Culberson and Hanley, and participate according to the same ratio in future gold proceeds.

This formality concluded, a happy young man from Maine caught the train for Boston, with three hundred pounds of fine yellow metal in a trunk. In four days he was back in New Eng-

land. In five he was a bitterly disillusioned heir.

All the nuggets, except the two he had been given for sampling, proved to be very good brass.

Thus doth the ancient gold-brick game turn many a deposit of iron pyrites, the fool's gold of popular speech, into profits for the con man.

Truth compels me to record that the gentleman who played Culberson for Mr. Stack of Maine, was subsequently sent to Atlanta for a similar imposition on another Eastern gentleman who inherited means.

Similarly, several others of the old, true, and tried confidence games are still being put to profitable use by the minor confidence gamester of the day. The old next-of-kin game is a flattering example. This ancient dodge has done service in America for a full century. Its mechanics are very simple. For example:

There are many Drakes in America. Some have means and position; some have none. Most are just plain folk. All have the usual human weaknesses. Long ago a shyster lawyer in New York conceived the idea of working the egotism of the Drakes for his own enrichment. He wrote to all the Drakes he could find listed in the directories of fifty or more cities, towns, and counties, telling them all of the vast estate of Sir Francis Drake, which was being held in chancery in London for the appearance of the true heirs. He asked every Drake to send him as much as he knew of his or her genealogy. From this information and the richness of his own imagination, the attorney constructed a family tree which led back to the old Elizabethan freebooter and admiral. The Drakes were asked to contribute twenty-five dollars each to defray the expenses of prosecuting their claim. Later on the demands for money grew. Every Drake who could be got to take the bait was bled until

he was dry. Then all rumor of the great fortune subsided. First and last, according to figures made up by official investigators, several thousand Drakes are said to have spent half a million chasing a fortune that never existed.

To-day this game has been exported to Europe by American confidence men working with European allies. Instead of fortunes left in escrow in European lands, they now peddle claims to the heart of New York City, large acreages of Harlem property, claims to fabulous California gold mines, and false titles to the Loop District of Chicago to credulous Europeans. They have even gone to the length of sending misguided families to this country in quest of their non-existent billions, only to have them turned back at Ellis Island. One such case figured in the newspapers a few months ago.

The most persistently practiced of all the ancient games is the wire tap. This swindle originated in the plain tapping of wires to get the results of horse races in advance of the pool rooms, thus making it possible to place sure-thing bets at the last minute. The keepers of pool rooms soon beat this cheat, with the result that its originators and others turned the thing into a confidence game by hooking it up with simple people and a false pretense. The sucker was made to believe that the wire had been tapped. Believing that he had the result of a race, he rushed to the fake pool room conducted by his con men friends, bet a large sum on the supposed winner—and lost!

Well, the wire tap is very much alive to-day. It has simply been outfitted with a new regalia. Two of the most arresting reappearances of the swindle were noted at Long Branch, New Jersey, and at Denver, Colorado. At the former resort, during the summer season of 1922, well-known confidence men operated a combination brokerage

office and pool room, where the wire game was adapted to the stock market for those who cared nothing for the turf, or continued along the old lines for such simpletons as must wager their money on the ponies. At Denver a similar method was used, but the organization proved to be the greatest that has existed since the day of the Gondroffs and their contemporaries. One Lou Blonger, an aged politician and fixer, has recently been sent to State's prison, with more than a score of his assistants. It is said several millions were taken from victims before the thing was stopped.

From the estimates of total takings which begin this article and some of the figures I have lightly mentioned since, it must be apparent that even the lesser con men are among the most opulent of thieves.

For this reason, and because of the comparative gentility and safety of confidence work, every thief in the underworld, who possesses the least cleverness or imagination, aspires to become a con man. Thus our fraudulent gentry stand at the top of their kind. They are the real lords of crookdom—as the bank robbers used to be.

Last summer Mr. Isidor Kooch, a dry goods merchant of Wisconsin, started for Europe to enjoy himself. On the boat he soon glimpsed a very attractive young woman. She ignored him, but seemed, nevertheless, to cross his path much too often. The inevitable happened. Mr. Kooch and Miss Laverne met without formalities. Miss Laverne soon introduced Mr. Kooch to Mr. Van Bunk, a young confidence man masquerading as the scion of a New York family of the Four Hundred. Mr. Kooch, who had read about such persons in the papers, was quite beside himself with tickled vanity. He wrote enthusiastic letters home "to knock his friends and relatives dead."

Three days out, Mr. Van Bunk

called the attention of Mr. Kooch to a morose and opulent-looking man who seemed to avoid every one. This, Mr. Kooch was informed, was the famous Bill Blake, the richest and most successful race-track plunger in the world. Van Bunk permitted himself the observation that a man who could win Blake's confidence was a made man. How? Well, that was Blake's secret. Evidently, however, the plunger was able to fix the races anyway he wanted. Sure! He had stable boys and jockeys and owners all in his pay.

The palms of Mr. Kooch fairly wrinkled with itching. He slept ill. He was calculating. Presently he suggested that Miss Laverne might be used to approach the formidable Blake. The lady was enlisted and soon managed the trick. She introduced Van Bunk and Kooch. Blake was pleasant enough, as long as one did not try to get confidential. But Kooch was not to be put off. His greed was such that he determined to beard the plunger in his den and demand a chance to play the horses "right."

Blake threw the infatuated merchant out of his stateroom. Later in the day he suffered a change of heart, sought the bruised dry-goods seller, apologized for his rudeness, offered his hand, and started to go. Kooch refused to let such an opportunity slip. Once more he quite frankly demanded a chance to risk some money with the great Blake.

That evening the boat reached England. On the next day but one, Mr. Blake introduced Mr. Kooch and Mr. Van Bunk into a club where bets might be laid on the Newmarket races. Kooch made himself deeply at home. Three days later the expected tip came from the race course. Blake, Van Bunk, and Kooch all plunged heavily. Something happened; the wrong horse won. Kooch was out twenty-seven thousand dollars. The wire game had got him. Blake owned the club, to be sure.

Headquarters Chat

AS the wise are astonished by the stupidity of the stupid, and the stupid are astonished by the wisdom of the wise—which they think is stupid—we do not know whether we are wise or stupid in holding the very decided views that are ours about suicide.

We have been particularly confounded in this matter, because many persons whom we had considered wise differed with us, and on the other hand, as if to add to our confusion in the matter, many persons whom we considered stupid agreed completely with us.

Then will the wise readers of this magazine—we are sure there can be no stupid ones—kindly give us their views on this subject—a very important one—which is causing us so much trouble?

Here is the question: Is suicide ever justifiable—is it not always a cowardly act?

We contend that it is never justifiable—that it is always a cowardly act. We take the stand that having been born—drawn cards in this game of life—we have got to see the thing out to the finish the best we know how.

It is no argument, we feel, to say that we had nothing to do with being born—never asked to join this game of life, that the deck was stacked, and our life forced upon us. None of us knows anything about that part of it. That, surely, is too deep a subject for us to get into. But we do know that we all got elected, that we're all members, and that, having become members, our lives are so closely knit with certain other members and loosely woven—directly and indirectly—with all the other members, that we have no right to de-

stroy something—our life—which never was our own to dispose of as we saw fit.

In an argument on the murder of Captain White in 1830, the great Daniel Webster said: "There is no refuge from confession but suicide: and suicide is confession."

As all persons agree that Daniel Webster was wise, you may deduce that we are stupid when we say that we do not agree with Daniel Webster in the idea he implied when he said, "Suicide is confession." However, that is another point which we may take up at some other time. But, we do agree that suicide is confession, not necessarily of guilt, but necessarily of *cowardice*.

Often, we readily admit, there are tremendous provocations and many mitigating circumstances for displaying cowardice. But to display cowardice, under any circumstances is to display cowardice. There is no getting out of that. Any one who quits on the job, "lies down" on his family, his friends, his fellow man, is a coward.

Some say: "I have a ticket to the play of life. I have seen all of this play I wish to. I am going out, and I'm not coming back. I am going to commit suicide." Some say: "I have a frightful pain. I am going to stop it. I am going to commit suicide." Some say: "The beautiful lady at whose feet I cast my love of loves has scorned this priceless possession. I am so dismayed, disgusted at this display of poor taste and lack of sense on her part that I am going to commit suicide." Some say: "I did not pass my examinations. I am going to commit

suicide." And on and on with thousands and thousands of different reasons. But what's the answer to all of them? Why, simple enough. All of these persons are a bunch of quitters. They are afraid to face life—life the cruel, life the unjust, if you like—but they are afraid to face it, just the same;

and they choose and take the skulker's door of exit, regardless of the injuries wrought on others by their cowardly act of self-destruction.

Are we stupid or are we wise? But is that the point? It makes no difference whether we are stupid or wise, does it? *Are we right?*

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

Here is a poser, and we refuse to commit ourselves:

Should a Husband Tell?

By CHARLOTTE DOCKSTADER

Let Miss Dockstader answer this arresting question.

The mysterious malady of his patient turns a doctor
into a good detective.

**The Doctor Looks in
the Glass**

By VICTOR LAURISTON

To this Irishman all good things were Irish—even his
Polish fellow policeman.

The Irish in the Polish

By OSCAR SCHISGALL

AND OTHER INTERESTING STORIES

Be Sure to Order Your Copy in Advance

MISSING

This department 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 as 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 unfeasible.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those 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.

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," or others, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

QUINN, ERNEST.—He is six feet tall, and is twenty-five years old. He was last heard of in August, 1922, when he was working in the oil fields at Graham, Texas. Any information that will help to find him will be appreciated by his brother, Lloyd Quinn, 2925 Seward Street, Omaha, Nebraska.

MERRILL, ELIZABETH.—She was the granddaughter of Jerome Merrill, of Lynn, Massachusetts. She was last heard of in Framingham, Massachusetts, about twenty years ago. An old friend is anxious to hear from her. Parker Tolman, 1510 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

WATKINS, ERNEST RAYMOND.—He may be going under the name of Ray Wilson. He was last seen in Memphis, Tennessee, in December, 1921. He is five feet eleven inches in height, with blue eyes and light hair, and light complexion. His wife is very anxious to get news of him, and begs him to write to her. Any one who can give information will do a great kindness by writing to Mrs. Lily Watkins, 105 Fifth Avenue, North, Nashville, Tennessee.

CHARLES, HENRY.—Mother is very ill and can only live a short time. She cries for you and begs to see you. Please come home, or write before it is too late. Lois J., of California.

ARNOLD, CHARLEY and TOM.—Charley was last heard of in Oklahoma about eighteen years ago, while Tom lived in Kansas. Their relatives are very anxious to hear from them. Mrs. Maud Arnold Greathouse, 807 Kansas Street, Coffeyville, Kansas.

CUNNINGHAM, GEORGE.—He left home in November, 1923. His son is greatly worried about him and will appreciate any helpful information. H. E. Cunningham, Macomb, Illinois.

LEACH, PEARL, or GYLA.—Pearl is about forty years old, and is five feet seven inches in height, with brown hair and blue eyes. Her daughter Gyla is nineteen years of age. They were last heard of in Denver, Colorado. Any information as to their present whereabouts will be appreciated. H. L., care of this magazine.

B. W. B.—There is a very important letter being held for you at this office from "Boots," of Kansas City. Please send for it at once.

PECKHAM, or PETRIE, NEVA.—She formerly lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and it is believed that she is now living in New York City. She has played small parts in moving-picture plays. It is important she communicate with K. H., at once. Any helpful information will be appreciated by K. H., care of this magazine.

COSTELLO.—I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and my name was Foster Frazer Costello. I was taken to a home in Lewiston, Idaho, by a lady who later married Mr. McDonald. I was later adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Ira Harrison, of Pocatello, Idaho. I have been told that my mother is dead, but that my father is still living. Any information about my relatives will be appreciated. Foster Harrison, 325 East Gould Street, Pocatello, Idaho.

SHEPARD, HAROLD NORTH.—He is tall and slender, and served in the navy during the war. It was heard that he was sick in the Marine Hospital in 1920. I have very important information for him, so any news will be gratefully received. J. Canman, 68 West Ninth Street, Apartment 75, New York City.

SJOBLOM, LOUISA CECILIA.—She was born in Sweden in 1883, and married Robert Nelson on September 30, 1901. They had three children, and one daughter, Maggie, is believed to be living in San Francisco. Mrs. Nelson obtained a divorce from her husband, and was later heard of in France. Her present address is desired by A. Emanuel Sjoblom, Route 1, Box 170 B., Herrin, Illinois.

ATTENTION.—I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on April 9, 1896, and adopted by a Mrs. J. P. Murphy, of Omaha. When I was twenty years old Mrs. Murphy died, and I found out for the first time that she wasn't my mother. I have been told that I was in a home in Omaha about nine days before I was adopted. I am anxious to find my relatives, and any helpful information will be appreciated. Margaret Murphy, care of this magazine.

DUDLEY, JOHN.—He is fifty years old. He left home in March, 1908, and was last heard of in Pasadena, California, in 1910. His seventeen-year-old daughter is anxious to see her father for the first time. Any information will be gladly welcomed. Edith Dudley, 6304 Pennsylvania Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

MAHANAN, WALTER.—He is about twenty-one years of age, with blue eyes and a light complexion. He often went under the name of Glenn Ross, and was last heard of in California about two years ago, when he was working for a contractor. He served in the navy during the war. Any information about him will be greatly appreciated. Frank Ross, West Milford, West Virginia.

MOGOVERN, JOHN.—He was born in Ireland. He came to the United States and settled in Schaghticoke, New York, but left there in 1876. He was last heard of in 1882, when he was working for a railroad in Mexico. Any one who has seen him, or who can give any news of him, will do a great favor by writing to H. M., care of this magazine.

RINES, JOHN and GARRET.—John was last heard of in Montana, and Garret in Kentucky. They have four sisters. Any information as to their present whereabouts will be appreciated by Wiley James Rines, Brockway, Oregon.

ATTENTION.—I would like to hear from any one who served with the Eleventh Machine Gun Battalion, Company D., and knew H. H. Potts. I need affidavits to enter a government sanitarium, and would appreciate a prompt reply. H. H. Potts, 35 East Oak Street, Chicago, Illinois.

BURCH, JOHN H.—He is nearly six feet tall, with light hair and blue eyes, and was last heard of in Toyah, Texas. He is twenty-four years old. It has been three years since has was in Toyah. He works as a truck driver, or as a miner. His sister, Ruby, was crushed to death under a rack here in Winslow, and it is important that I get in touch with him at once. Please send any helpful information to a heart-broken mother. Mrs. T. L. Burch, Box 739, Winslow, Arizona.

WHITNEY, ARCHIE and CLAUDE.—Please write your sister Ena, care of this magazine.

FERREIRA, JOHN.—He served on the U. S. S. "Chester Valley." Please write your old shipmate, E. J. N., 126 West Ninety-sixth Street, Los Angeles, California.

KINCANNON, MAGG.—He served as a wireless operator in Europe during the war, and was last heard of in Los Angeles, California. He is asked to write his sister, Mrs. Mamie Mason, Route 3, Box 388, Henryetta, Oklahoma.

LANDIS, HATTIE CHILDRESS.—She was married in 1907. She is asked to write to V. A., care of this magazine, as there is important information for her.

MURPHY, ROBERT H.—He left Tecumseh, Nebraska, about thirty years ago. About six years ago he returned to Tecumseh, expecting to find some of his relatives, but they had all moved away. He called on an old friend and told him that he had been engaged in the sheep business in Montana, or Wyoming, and was on his way south to engage in the same business. He promised to write as soon as he was located, but failed to do so. His sister is anxious to find him, and asks old-timers and cowboys to try to remember where they saw him last. Y. T. Stone, 135 West Second Street, Casper, Wyoming.

COMSTOCK, HARRY.—Please write to Van Sallen, R. F. D. 4, Centerville, Iowa.

MONTGOMERY, HUGH, WILLIAM, and MINNIE.—They were born in Scotland, and were later heard from in Chicago and California. Please communicate with Violet Montgomery, 6012 Fifth Avenue, N. E., Seattle, Washington.

KESSLER, WILLIAM.—Parties in search of William Kessler, also known as "Tex," lost to the West since 1887, are requested to write to John F. W. Lange, 5 Lewis Street, Binghamton, New York. They will receive full information, free of charge.

EDGAR, HENRY HOWARD.—He is over sixty years of age, about six feet tall, with dark hair and eyes, hair probably gray by now. He owned two pieces of land in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He left there for Minot, North Dakota, but it was heard that he pushed on to Montana. His sister would gratefully appreciate any information that would help to find him, as she is greatly worried about him. Mrs. Sophie Scott, care of this magazine.

BRADLEY, RAYMOND.—My son has been away from home for eight years, and I have been unable to find any trace of him. Any one who can give any information whatever about this boy will do a great favor by writing to his father. R. T. Bradley, 12 South Third Street, St. Louis, Missouri.

DEFBOUGH, Mrs. MARY E.—She lived in Fremont, Virginia, in 1922. Her present address is desired by Mrs. Zella Chester, care of this magazine.

CANTRELL, JAMES, formerly of Cleveland, Tennessee.—He is over six feet in height, with red hair and light complexion and is about sixty years of age. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by William Roy, 446 Chestnut Street, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

WILKEY.—I would like to hear from the relatives of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Wilkey. Mrs. Wilkey died March 23, 1899, and her three small children were placed in a home. Mr. Wilkey was about sixty years of age. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by Ben Wilkey, 609 East Third Street, Austin, Texas.

KYLES, GEORGE.—He left Scotland in 1906, and was last heard of in St. Louis, Missouri. Information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated by his nephew, John Kyles, Alco Hall Hotel, Corryville, Ontario, Canada.

ATTENTION.—I was born in April, 1883, and a month later was left at the Hotel Norwood, on Oak Street, Boston, Massachusetts. I have never been able to find my parents. I shall be grateful for any information that will help me to find them. Mr. W. B., care of this magazine.

AHLER, CATHERINE.—She was last heard of in Columbus, Ohio, in 1914. She has a brother named Wilbur, and her father's name was Adam Ahler. Her aunt is lonely and longing to hear from her. Mrs. K. B. Talbot, Route 8, Box 68, Alhambra, California.

WEEKES, THOMAS.—He left Ireland in 1888, and was last heard of in St. Louis, Missouri. His sisters are anxious to hear from him, and any information will be appreciated. Teresa Weekes, 34 Geraldine Street, Berkeley Road, Dublin, Ireland.

QUINN, JOHN.—He left Ireland several years ago, and was last heard of in Louisiana about nine years ago. It is understood that this State has been making inquiries about the heirs of Mr. Quinn, and his relatives will be glad to receive authentic information. Annie Quinn, 34 Geraldine Street, Berkeley Road, Dublin, Ireland.

VANN, WILLIAM.—He formerly lived in California, but was on his way to New Mexico, with his brother David, when last heard from. He is about seventy-six years old. Their sister would be very happy to hear from them, or from any one who can tell where they are. Mrs. Mary Vann James, 1202 Alabama Avenue, Gadsden, Alabama.

THOMAS, J. L., and wife.—I was born March 2, 1900, and was adopted eighteen months later. I have been told that my father is about forty-five years old, with blue eyes and dark hair, and is about five feet five inches in height. Any information about my parents will be appreciated. Clarence Thomas, care of this magazine.

MACKAY, WILLIAM, formerly of New Mexico. Please write your uncle. Information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by Leroy P. Gray, Blaine, Oregon.

ATTENTION.—I would like to hear from the men that served with Company I, Eighth Regiment, United States Regular Army, in 1913 and 1914. Roy Roberts, 209 South Grant Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

FOULKES, J. S.—He is five feet tall, and has blue eyes and dark hair. He is a law-enforcement agent. His present address is wanted by a friend, who will appreciate any helpful information. Cornelius L. West, Sulphur, Oklahoma.

FORTNER, JAMES BUCK.—He was last heard of about four years ago in Colorado Springs, Colorado, but he left there for Seattle, Washington. His mother needs his help, and will appreciate information as to his present whereabouts. Send news in care of Miss Annie Seamons, General Delivery, Springfield, Massachusetts.

BATEMASS, FRANK.—He was taken from a home in Joplin, Missouri, about fifteen years ago, and has not been heard of since. He is about twenty-four years old and has dark hair and a dark complexion. Information about him would be gladly received by his brother, Joe Batemass, 440 South Fifth Street, Salina, Kansas.

THOMPSON, MONROE, and sister.—They were last heard of in Pelahatchee, Mississippi, with their father, George Thompson. Monroe is nineteen and his sister is seventeen. Any news will be gratefully received by W. W. Suggs, care of the City Water Works, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

HILLIARD, ROSCOE.—My son is twenty-four years old, and he attended West Point for three years. I heard from him regularly until three years ago, when he dropped out of sight. They have been unable to give me any helpful information at West Point, and I am very worried about him. I shall be very grateful for any information that will help me to find him. F. T. Hilliard, 1107 Pearl Street, Denver, Colorado.

DOZER, KATE.—She was last heard of in Salt Lake City, Utah. Any one who knows her present address will do great favor by sending it to Jim Haywood, 215 Spaulding Street, Lenoir, North Carolina.

ELLIOTT, ROBERT.—He is medium dark, rather heavy set, and when last heard of was working for a railroad in Pennsylvania. His mother would be very happy to hear from him, or from any one who can tell her where he is. Mrs. P. Elliott, 391 Noble Avenue, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

SULLIVAN, H. RUSSELL.—He is five feet eleven inches tall, and was born in Mitchell County, Georgia, thirty-four years ago. He is a brick builder and miner by trade. He was last heard of in Sparks, Nevada, in July, 1918. His brother would like very much to hear from him, and will appreciate any helpful information. O. C. Sullivan, 546 Planter Street, Bainbridge, Georgia.

RIGGEEAL, HENRY.—He is sometimes called Robert Hatfield. He was a brick builder and miner, by trade, about twenty years ago. He left there for the gold mines of Alaska, and has not been heard from since. His mother is anxious to know if he is well and happy. Mrs. Mary Riggieal, 1504 Mill Race Road, Baltimore, Maryland.

BROWN, JAMES OOR.—He is eleven years old, with light hair and blue eyes, and was last heard of in Des Moines, Iowa, about five years ago. Information about him will be greatly appreciated by his little sister, Mary Agnes Brown, and his grandmother, Mary Morris, 317 North Eighth Avenue, East Newton, Iowa.

WILLIAMS, E. W.—Please write to your sister, Mrs. J. W. Fallon, Lucy, Tennessee.

BLACKWELL, JOE.—He was last heard of in Texas in 1910. Any one who can give news of him will do a great kindness by writing to his sister, who hopes he may see this and write himself. Mrs. E. E. Ranly, Stock Yard Station, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

AHLERS, HARRY J.—He formerly lived at 200 West One Hundred and Twelfth Street, New York City. His present address is desired by S. D., care of this magazine.

BROWN, T. L.—He lived in California in September, 1923. He is asked to write to M. D., care of this magazine.

KING.—I am trying to find my mother's relatives. Her name was Eunice King before she married M. C. McClaugherty, and it is believed that she came from Hones County, South Carolina. When I was a baby I was adopted by Dave C. Church, who lived in Poor Valley, Virginia. This was twenty-seven years ago, and I am anxious to hear some word from my relatives. Mrs. C. E. Marris, B. F. D. 4, Box 9, Marion, Virginia.

DIKENS, JOHN.—He lived in Decorah, Iowa, for two years, but moved to Illinois. His present address is desired by S. O., care of this magazine.

DORPEMA, JACK.—He is twenty-seven years old, with light-brown hair and blue eyes. He is of light complexion and is very short. He was last heard of in northern California about ten years ago. Any news of him will be appreciated, as I have important information for him. X. Y. Z., care of this magazine.

TOLMAN, MINNIE.—She is forty-seven years old, and was last heard of in Portland, Maine, about twenty-six years ago. Her brother is anxious to hear from her, and any information will be appreciated. Parker Tolman, 1519 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio.

LEGGIE, JAMES and PHILIP.—My father's name was William Leggie, and he married Miss Demurry, of Newfoundland. I am anxious to locate my father's brothers, James and Philip Leggie, who are believed to be living in New Jersey. Information as to their correct address will be appreciated by Edward Leggie, 339 East One Hundred and Fortieth Street, Bronx, New York.

SINCLAIR, FRANK RAYMOND.—He married Katherine Elizabeth Morrow, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, about the year 1892, and was later divorced in Chicago. His married daughter would like to hear from him, and any information will be appreciated by E. K. W., care of this magazine.

PENDERGRAFT, ANNA, LUCY, and KATHLEEN.—Please write Mrs. J. H. Johnson, 908 East Lincoln Avenue, Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

"SHANGHAI".—I have not heard from you since you left Idaho. K. has moved to Boston, and I am in California. Please write to me in care of this magazine. F. P.

DIXON, EARL CLIFFORD.—He belonged to Company H, One Hundred and Sixty-eighth Infantry, Forty-second Division A. E. F. It was reported that he was killed in action on October 15, 1918. His comrades are asked to write to his mother, who is anxious to verify this report. Any information will be a great comfort to a worried mother. Mrs. Anna Dixon, 191 Ebenburg Road, Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

PENCE.—I was left in the Vine Street Orphans' Home in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1892. I was later adopted by Mr. J. S. Johnston, of Somerset, Kentucky. Any information about my parents or relatives will be appreciated by R. C. Johnston, Unity, Saskatchewan, Canada.

FINLEY, PINKNEY R.—If you see this please write me in care of this magazine. K. F.

BROWN, GERTRUDE.—She lived on First Street, Flint, Michigan, in August, 1920. Her present address is desired by Charlie Walker, 1401 Waterloo Street, Los Angeles, California.

MOTHER.—Please write to me. My heart is breaking for you and my babies. You must find some way to arrange it. Mayme D., Sapulpa, Oklahoma.

HALLIS, JOHN R.—He is five feet five inches in height, with dark eyes and dark hair. He was last heard of at Camp Jackson, South Carolina, but it is understood that he was discharged in 1921. His buddies would like to know how to reach him. Jesse Guss, 334 East Fourth Street, Burbank, California.

WHITAKER, SIDNEY LEROY.—He is slender, with blue eyes and light hair, and was born in New York City in April, 1901. He lived in Oklahoma City from 1908 to 1918. He left Oklahoma City in 1912 to go to Fort Worth, Texas. He was last heard of in 1919, when he was working in Topeka, Kansas. His wife would be happy to hear from him, and any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated. Mrs. Marie Whitaker, General Delivery, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

JOHNSON, ARLENA.—She has black hair and eyes, and is of medium height. She left her home in Walton, Kentucky, in 1898, and went to Nashville, Tennessee, where she married A. Douglas. She was last heard of in 1909, when she was on her way to Tampa, Florida. Her brother is anxious to hear from her, and any information will be gladly received. V. Carter, 241 Saratoga Street, Covington, Kentucky.

POPEJOY, JOHN H.—He is a veteran of the late war, having served with the Three Hundred and Fifty-Eighth Infantry, Company D. He is thirty years old, five feet six inches in height, with light-brown hair and blue eyes. He left Tulsa, Oklahoma, in January, 1920, and was later heard from at Walla Walla, Washington. He had been working on a sheep ranch in Idaho. His mother is very old and sick, and is anxious to hear from him. Please send any information to Catherine Monroy, P. O. Box 478, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

DICK, RAYMOND CHARLES.—He was born in 1899, and was last heard of in 1916, when he sent his suit case home. We expected him home, but he has not communicated with us since. His mother is worried about him, and any one who can give information regarding him will do a great kindness by writing to his sister, Agnes, care of this magazine.

MYERS, CALVIN.—He was last heard of in California. Please write your sister, Mrs. W. L. Norwood, Emmett, Idaho.

YOUNG, CLARA BULL STRICKLAND.—She formerly lived in Syracuse, New York, and was last heard of in New York City. Write your sister, Dorah Grant Mayfield, Route 2, Bloomington, Illinois.

LORRAINE.—My name is Bertell Lorraine. My father and mother were killed by Apache Indians near Rincon, New Mexico, in 1899, when I was one year old. Any information concerning my relatives, or those of W. S. Krenner, of New Mexico, will be greatly appreciated. B. Lorraine, 532 South Flower Street, Los Angeles, California.

NOON, CARRIE STEVENS.—She was last heard of in New Jersey. Please write your daughter, D. F. Mayfield, Route 2, Bloomington, Illinois.

MANNING, EDGAR.—He is about forty-four years old, with gray eyes and brown hair, and is five feet seven inches in height. He was in Chicago, Illinois, in 1914. Please send your address to Ernest Manning, 1420 Bremen Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri.

MUSKOTA, ISKOTA.—Write to me at once, for I need you. I haven't any home or money. If you love me you will come or write. Minnetuca.

BLUMENTHAL, LOUIS E.—He was last heard of in Chicago, Illinois, in 1922. His wife hopes he will see this notice, or be told of it, and will write to her. Any helpful information will be appreciated. M. B., care of this magazine.

LANE, G. J.—He left home over two years ago, and has not been heard from since. He is twenty-one years old, with blue eyes and black hair, and is six feet tall. His sister is worried about him, and any information will be gratefully received. Ruth Lane, Bridgeport, Illinois.

F. P. P.—If you wish to come home everything will be all right. There is nothing to fear. In any case write and let us know where you are. Your father, F. P. P., of Rhode Island.

HALE, ESTELLE. who was last heard of in Chicago, Illinois. Her brother is anxious to hear from her, and any information will be appreciated. Sig. Clskowski, 121 North Third Street, Jeannette, Pennsylvania.

POTTER, ERNEST.—He left his home in Toronto, Canada, about seven years ago. He is very tall, with red hair, and a scar on the left side of his neck. He is thirty years old, and was last heard of about two years ago, when he was working as a machinist in Detroit, Michigan. There is very important information for him, and his brother is anxious to get in touch with him at once. John Potter, 621 West Fourth Street, Los Angeles, California.

STANLEY, WILL J.—He is six feet in height, and weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds, and has brown hair and eyes. Please come back, for everything is all right, and the two years are near an end. R. is married and I am all alone, and worried about you. Write to me at the same address or in care of this magazine. Mother.

McDOWELL, CALVIN.—Please communicate with your sister, Sophia Gaskill, 311 Howard Street, Millville, New Jersey.

PIERSON, CLYDE.—Please write to me in care of this magazine. John W. Butler.

HAYES, ALBERT DELFAST.—He formerly lived in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and was last heard of in Covington, Kentucky. Any one who can give information about him will do a great kindness by writing to T. H. T., 16 Court Street, Brooklyn, New York.

PAYNE, JAMES H.—He was last heard of at Camp Morrison, Virginia, in 1919. He is six feet tall, with blue eyes and brown hair. Any one knowing his present whereabouts will confer a favor by writing to E. B., care of this magazine.

BARKER, LIONEL HENRY.—He was last heard of in Anchorage, Alaska. He is forty years of age, five feet ten inches in height, with blue eyes and a scar in the center of his forehead and goes by name of "Jack." He is a prospector and trapper, and probably will be located in the interior of Alaska. Write Reginald C. Barker, care of this magazine.

STUDARD, W. J.—When last heard from he was stationed at Norfolk, Virginia, where he was serving in the navy. His home is in Rome, Georgia. His brother would gratefully appreciate any information that would help to find him. Sergeant J. A. Studard, Company M. Thirty-fifth Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii.

MARIE.—I know what happened in New York City on New Year's Eve. I regret the past, and realize it was entirely my fault. Won't you please come back to me now? Your life will be one of happiness and luxury. Let me know at once. Same address. Hal.

MARY T.—Let me hear from you. My business and home address is the same. Mona B.

BECKER, ALFRED WILLIAM. formerly of Syracuse, New York.—He is nineteen years old, with blue eyes and fair hair, and one eye is slightly crossed. The initials A. W. B. are tattooed on his arm. He was last heard of in Utica, New York, in 1921. Any information that will help to find him will be greatly appreciated. R. D., care of this magazine.

D. D. F.—Your wife is having heart trouble and nearly died the other day. She is in the hospital and begs you to come, before it is too late. Do you realize what you are doing by staying away? You will regret it all your life if you don't write of come at once. She lives at the county seat of —, where you left her. Mother.

BROWN, EARL A.—When last heard from, in 1913, his address was Newcastle, Wyoming. Information as to his present address will be greatly appreciated by E. B., care of this magazine.

STOUT, T. K.—He was last heard of in Oakland, California, just after the earthquake. Any one knowing his present address will confer a favor by writing to C. N. Stout, 137 Grosvenor Avenue North, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

DONNELLY, MICHAEL.—Please write to V. A., care of this magazine.

BOWER, HAMILTON.—He is thirty-five years old, five feet eleven inches in height, with gray hair and eyes. He was heard from about two years ago in Jersey City. His father is dead, and his mother and sister long to see him. Send information to Mrs. Evelyn Judge, 434 Chestnut Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

PORTLOCK, GLENN.—I am waiting for you to return, and baby needs you. Please write or come at once. Your anxious and worried wife, C.

GLEN.—I beg you to write me. I am to blame, and there will be a change, if you will only let me hear from you. I will do anything you say. I think I will go on to Terre Haute. Please communicate with me, before it is too late, at Garrison's, 901 South Tenth Street, Mount V. Love, Mae R.

MONK.—We are well, but your wife is ill. Please go straight, and let us hear from you soon. Love, mother. Same address in Ind ana.

SHELL, ISAAC VONNO.—He is five feet ten inches in height, with light hair and dark-brown eyes, and weighs about one hundred and eighty pounds. He has a woman's head tattooed on his right shoulder, and is thirty years of age. He was last heard of in Elmira, New York, in 1923. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his mother, Mrs. M. E. Shell, Waynesville, North Carolina.

BAZLY, or BEESLY, RICHARD.—He was a slave trader in Virginia before and during the Civil War. His sister, Martha, married Sterling Wagstaff Smith, and they moved to Strawberry Plains, Tennessee, about 1828. Any one who knows anything about him, or any of his descendants, is asked to write to J. R. Smith, Waynesville, North Carolina.

ROGERS, HARRY.—He lived at the Park Hotel in Chehalis, Washington, in 1921. He will receive important information if he will write to C. D. Foose, Nunda, New York.

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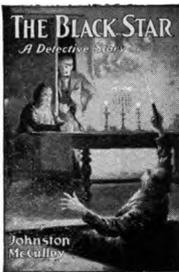
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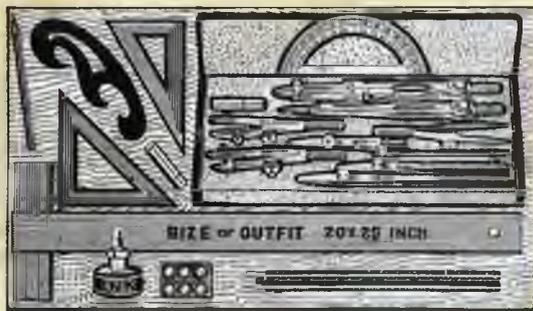
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