

WEEK

MAR. 29, 1934

# DETECTIVE

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## *The Unmasked Five*

*A Thorndyke  
Flint Adventure*

*By Douglas  
Grey*





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**79 Seventh Avenue**

**New York City**

# DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

E V E R Y W E E K

Vol LXV

Contents for March 29, 1924

No. 3

## TWO SERIALS

- A Seaside Mystery . . . . . *John Jay Chichester* . . . . . 3  
A Six-part Story—Part One  
The Trail of Smoke . . . . . *Herbert Twining* . . . . . 118  
A Three-part Story—Part Three

## NOVELETTE AND SHORT STORIES

- Among the Mourners . . . . . *Charlotte Dockstader* . . . . . 25  
The Unmasked Five . . . . . *Douglas Grey* . . . . . 36  
(Complete Novelette)  
The Thirty-thousand-dollar Mongrel . . . . . *Arthur Jamison* . . . . . 89  
One Sweet Crime . . . . . *John Baer* . . . . . 101

## ONE ARTICLE

- The Scientific Detective at Work . . . . . *Norman G. Meade* . . . . . 109  
No. IV

## DEPARTMENTS

- Headquarters Chat . . . . . *The Editor* . . . . . 140  
Missing . . . . . 142

That captivating pair, the Avenging Twins, who set out "to get" the six bosses, again take the field.

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By **JOHNSTON McCULLEY**

A two-part serial opening in next week's issue.

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**SINGLE COPIES, 15 CENTS**

# DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXV

March 29, 1924

No. 3

## *A Seaside Mystery*

*by John Jay Chichester*

*Author of "The Impostor in Blue," "The Porcelain Mask," etc.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### WHISPER OF SUSPICION.

**I**T'S been stolen!" declared Mrs. Hendershott, her voice rising to a shrill, hysterical pitch. "I left it here, hanging across the arm of this very chair, not ten minutes since. Some one's taken it—stolen it!" She struck her clenched hands together with an angry, fierce gesture, and her petulant lips quivered. "Mother, I am sure——"

"Tut, Lorna!" Mrs. Wills Livingston remonstrated soothingly, as she lowered her ample bulk into the adjoining porch rocker. She had walked to the country club from the village—long walks and a diet were her physician's orders—and she was gasping for breath. "You are always misplacing things and imagining that people have picked them up. Don't forget, my dear, the time you had your

maid arrested for stealing your bar pin and then found you'd left it pinned to your blouse, when you sent it to the cleaners. Nearly a thousand dollars is what it cost Dick to keep her from bringing a suit for false arrest. You will find the purse some place where you've left it. Probably at home."

Lorna Hendershott was not a person easily soothed, and her mother's effort only annoyed her. Her face, from which even chronic discontent had failed to destroy a certain attractiveness, became almost livid.

"Don't make silly suggestions," she flared. "I distinctly remember having the purse with me and hanging it over the arm of this chair when I went inside the clubhouse to answer the telephone. I clearly recall opening the clasp to get out a handkerchief at the moment when——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted her mother

with a sigh, "you have a way of always remembering so distinctly—even things that haven't happened, or you haven't done. For Heaven's sake, Lorna, don't make yourself ridiculous by having a scene and then apologizing afterward. Control yourself—please!"

"My month's allowance, every cent of it, in the purse—and you ask me not to get excited. I know I'm not mistaken; it's gone—stolen! I've a whopping big bridge debt to pay back in town, too, and"—her lips compressed more grimly—"I mean to get it back, if I have to turn the clubhouse inside out. I'd take my oath that the steward—"

"What's the stupid steward done now?" The question came with unannounced suddenness from behind them. Mother and daughter turned to face Mrs. Frisbee, tall, angular, and athletic, the best woman golfer of the select Seaside colony, who had come out onto the long, rambling, low-roofed porch. Knowing Mrs. Frisbee's reputation for repeating all gossip that came to her ears, Mrs. Wills Livingston gave her daughter a cautioning glance, which the latter ignored.

"My purse has been stolen," she said; "the steward called me to the telephone, and he remained on the porch after I went inside. I'm morally certain that it was the steward who—"

"Lorna, do qualify your remarks!" pleaded Mrs. Livingston and turned apologetically toward Mrs. Frisbee. "Lorna is overly excited, Mrs. Frisbee; she only *thinks* the purse has been stolen. She's so careless of speech that she's always having to retract afterward; I was only a moment ago reminding her of a somewhat similar incident when she—"

"Mother! *Will* you stop? One would think, to hear you, that I'm some irresponsible child!"

"So you are, my dear, in many ways."

"I am absolutely positive," insisted Mrs. Hendershott, stamping her foot,

"that I left it hanging from the arm of this chair, that I had it in my hand when the steward called me to the phone. Of course it was careless of me, but I didn't suppose—"

"You're right, Lorna," broke in Mrs. Frisbee, with a quick nod of her head; "at least about leaving the bag on that chair. I saw it. Cut-steel beads, isn't it?"

"You see, mother!" exclaimed Mrs. Hendershott triumphantly. "I knew I couldn't be mistaken."

"But you're wrong about the steward," pursued Mrs. Frisbee. "He was on his way down to the village, with a packet of letters for mailing, as I drove up in the car. Your purse was still there after he had gone away, and—please do not think I am accusing any one, or even hinting; just a statement of fact, you understand—Babs Lane had come in from the road and was sitting here. Mind you, I am not intimating; it would be ridiculous to suppose that Babs would—" She left the sentence eloquently unfinished, except for a gesture of her lean, muscular hands, and gave a short, half-nervous laugh.

"Certainly it is ridiculous!" Mrs. Wills Livingston exclaimed indignantly. "Utterly preposterous!" She gave Mrs. Frisbee a stare of withering scorn, knowing there was a deliberate animus behind the latter's words. Babs Lane was the only member of the colony who had endangered Mrs. Frisbee's golfing supremacy. "I think you would be ashamed of yourself to even intimate such a thing."

"Why, my dear, I have intimated nothing," Mrs. Frisbee said smugly and turned to Mrs. Hendershott. "I hope, Lorna, that it contained nothing of importance?"

"My month's allowance, that's all," Mrs. Hendershott answered bitterly. "Dick gave it to me yesterday, and I hadn't spent a cent of it. A few trifles of jewelry, besides. Oh, this does put

me in a fine pickle! Dick will be perfectly furious if I have to ask him for more money. The silk business has been terrible this year."

Mrs. Frisbee shook her head discouragingly. "I'm afraid there isn't much chance of your getting it back. None of the others have. Dear me, what a terrible state of affairs; I trust we're not to be plunged into some dreadful scandal."

"None of the others? What do you mean? That—that other things have been stolen?"

"You hadn't heard? But I forget that you only came out last Friday. You haven't had time to catch up on the news yet. Yes, we've been having almost an epidemic of these thefts. Most of them have been small, except Mrs. Vollmer's; she lost two hundred dollars and an emerald brooch."

"Really?" gasped Lorna. "I hadn't heard a thing."

"Mrs. Frisbee's always heard about *everything*," murmured Mrs. Livingston, with deadly sweetness; the other felt the sugared barb of it, flushed slightly beneath her tan, but held to her subject.

"It does seem strange," she pursued, "that this should be the first summer we have ever been subjected to such annoyances. We've always felt that anything left about the clubhouse was as safe as with members of our own families. Dear me, there are so many dishonest people in the world; the terrible part of it is that so often the person whom we would least suspect— Oh, I don't even want to think about such things."

Lorna Hendershott looked uncomfortable, and her mother appeared angry. Having deftly planted her seed of suspicion, Mrs. Frisbee shrugged, as she lifted the strap of her golf bag to her shoulder.

"We've always been such a respectable, harmonious little community out here. I do hope there's no dreadful

scandal hanging over us. Do you want to go round with me this morning, Lorna?"

Mrs. Hendershott dropped down into one of the chairs, a frown puckering her forehead.

"No," she replied absently, "I'm too much upset. Anyhow, I'm not at all up to your game."

Mother and daughter were silent for a moment, as Mrs. Frisbee cut across the lawn toward the first-tee.

"Cat!" exclaimed Mrs. Livingston. "Now that she thinks she's planted her poison in our minds, I suppose she's in her seventh heaven. It's quite clear what she meant."

"Quite!" agreed Lorna with a jerk of her head. "She meant that Babs Lane had taken my purse. I wonder——"

"Lorna! I am ashamed of you for even entertaining such a thought—even remotely. It's too utterly absurd!"

"Perhaps it is. I wonder. She *was* sitting here in this chair; she did have the opportunity, and——"

"Lorna, there are times when you almost convince me that you are unbalanced. A moment ago you were ready to accuse the steward. Be careful, daughter, or you'll be getting yourself into no end of trouble. Simply preposterous! Why should Babs take your purse? The Lane's are as well to do as any of us."

Mrs. Hendershott's eyes were narrowed into a meditative frown; slowly she shook her head.

"But the Lane's are not," she answered; "that's the one reason why I do entertain such a thought. Babs and her mother are dreadfully hard up. Mrs. Lane, according to the story I heard yesterday, let some one get her into some terribly bad investments that have turned out quite worthless. They haven't been able to keep their cottage this year."

"But they are keeping it; they're here, aren't they?"

"Mother, how hopelessly slow you are at picking up gossip. Mrs. Lane isn't here at all this season. Only Babs, and she isn't occupying the cottage; she's putting up at the Smedleys, as a guest. Babs has always been accustomed to so much spending money that I couldn't help but wonder——"

"If she wasn't stealing her pin money!" finished Mrs. Livingston with a snort. "You suggest that she's going about our clubhouse picking up such purses as she may find lying about. Lorna, I'd be ashamed of myself for harboring such low, mean suspicions."

"Well, my purse is gone, and three hundred dollars along with it. Some one took it, and you've got to admit that I've a right to suspect *somebody*. As Mrs. Frisbee says, this is the first summer we've had anything like this happen; this is the first summer that Babs Lane has been broke, and she *was* in this chair. That's good deduction isn't it?"

"Humph!" derided Mrs. Livingston. "Thinly circumstantial — very! I'd sooner suspect that Mrs. Frisbee herself took your purse, just to start unpleasant gossip about Babs. That woman simply can't forgive any one who gets the best of her at golf!"

"Mother, that's silly, just three times as silly as supposing Babs lifted it. Oh, I'll admit that Mrs. Frisbee is glad to take a dig at Babs, but she wouldn't go as far as you suggest."

"I warn you, Lorna——"

"Don't be alarmed; I'm not going to accuse her. But I do propose to keep my mouth shut and my eyes open—and play detective. I mean to make sure who took my purse. I'll have it solved in no time at all. Just you see if I don't. If Babs Lane——"

Mrs. Livingston's fingers pressed a firm, quick warning to her daughter's forearm.

"Sh!" she whispered. "Here she comes now. For Heaven's sake, Lorna, don't make a scene!"

"I won't," Mrs. Hendershott promised in a terse undertone and mustered a polite, almost normal smile of greeting for the girl who came from out of the clubhouse, stood for a moment indecisively, it seemed, and then came toward the edge of the porch and seated herself upon the steps.

"Hello!" she said. "Dandy morning for the links, isn't it? I was the first to tee up to-day, but I only got to the fourth green and quit. My game suddenly collapsed; guess it was seeing that strange woman clipping my favorite roses. One can see the front of our cottage from the fourth green, you know. Our new tenants moved in this week. I—I suppose having to give up the house has rather taken the starch out of me. Mother seems to bear up bravely enough, but then she's a born philosopher, and, besides, she's never loved it down here like I have. When I saw that strange woman clipping my roses——" Her voice trailed off, and she turned her head, possibly to conceal the hint of moisture which had gathered in her dark eyes.

Babs Lane—Babs so long that scarcely any one remembered that she had other than the nickname—was young, not more than twenty or twenty-one. Not a ravishing beauty, perhaps, but decidedly pretty, with vivid, wholesome coloring in her cheeks, and in her eyes was usually that dance and sparkle which can belong to only those who are very much alive, and who are getting a great deal of fun out of living. Full of personality was Babs—generally "the life of the party." While not exactly falling into the classification of "flapper," she certainly was not sedate. Moods exercised a good deal of influence over her; sometimes she was quiet and introspective, and at others she became a regular whirlwind.

Mrs. Wills Livingston, fearful that Lorna would blurt out some undiplomatic and embarrassing reference to the

purse, made haste to dip in her own conversational oar.

"Yes, Babs," she said, "I'd just heard that your mother had leased the cottage this year. Poor child, of course you miss it! You're staying with the Smedleys, Lorna says."

Babs Lane dug the toe of her sport shoe into the soft earth beneath the porch and stared out toward the first tee, where Mrs. Frisbee, alone upon the sodded mound, was whipping the air with her driver, preparatory to sending a white golf ball sailing, high, swift and true, toward the first green. Off in the distance faintly sounded the roar of the ocean against its long, white stretch of beach, for the country club was but a little way from the sea. The salty tang of it was in the air.

"Yes, mother leased our cottage this year," she nodded. "Had to. You know that, of course; every one does. What's the use trying to put up a cheap bluff, when every one knows about it, anyhow? We're stony broke. Mother's saving expenses by spending the summer down in New Jersey with Cousin Kate, and I'm sponging off the Smedleys until—well, until some one else takes pity on me and invites me to sponge off of them for a while. When invitations run out——" She finished the sentence with an expressive shrug of her sweater-clad shoulders.

Lorna Hendershott moved in her chair, and her mother, eager to sidetrack the subject of the missing purse, tried to keep the talk in other channels than that.

"Who has your cottage this year, Babs," she asked; "some one we know?"

"I hardly think so, Mrs. Livingston," answered Babs; "all the negotiations were with mother's agent in New York. The name is Newton, I've heard; brother and sister, I understand. I've never met either of them—only saw the woman this morning from the fourth green, as she was clipping my roses. I

walked toward the road a little way just to watch her.

"It gave me the queerest feeling to see her, as if she were decapitating them!—as if each bud was a head being chopped off. Snip! Snip! Like that. I suppose it sounds silly, but her face has such a tragic haunted look—as if she had suffered a great deal for a long time and a terrible bitterness constrained her. Maybe there was some one responsible for her suffering, and she was thinking of them when she——"

"Oh, such nonsense!" laughed Mrs. Livingston.

"I think I know the woman you mean," murmured Lorna Hendershott; "it must have been she whom I saw at the post office last evening. Tragic look? Yes, that—and something else; it haunted me for hours. But, despite that, it was a beautiful face—very beautiful. There was a man with her; he looked as if he had been ill. Her brother, I suppose."

"Oh, we'll probably see plenty of them before the summer is over and doubtless hear her sad story," sighed Mrs. Livingston. "Since our little golf club is a community affair, any one who rents a cottage will be entitled to full privileges of the links and the clubhouse."

"Oh, of course," agreed Babs, "but I suppose most of 'em are hoping that mother's agent hasn't let the good old bunch in for another social monstrosity like Mrs. Gallagher who's taken the Fitzgerald house. She's really the only refreshing and genuinely interesting person here this year, and I do like her, even if I do have to admit that she's rather—well, crude."

"Gallagher?" questioned Mrs. Livingston. "Not the Pittsburgh Gallaghers, those fabulously rich steel people?"

Babs threw back her head and laughed with something like her rollicking, old-time gayety.

"The Gallaghers whom we number

among us are perhaps fabulously rich, but not from steel. I refer to none other than Mrs. Stella Gallagher, the bootlegger's wife. Don't tell me you've escaped meeting *her*! But I'd forgotten you've just got here. That explains it."

Mrs. Wills Livingston gasped. "Babs, you're joking! Not a—a bootlegger's wife, really? A member of our colony? Impossible!"

"If you listen to some of our good friends," chuckled Babs, "it's far from being a joke. You can imagine how Mrs. Carter-Haynes is raving about outraged caste and all that sort of thing. But they can't freeze out the bootlegger's wife; she just thinks they're jealous over her jewels. And has she got them? You tell 'em, she has!"

"But, at that, she isn't a bad sort. And you've no idea how interesting; which is more than can be said for a great many 'proper' people. Awfully jolly and always inviting people over to have a drink. More of them go than you might expect, too. Isn't it remarkable what a social chasm can be bridged by a few free cocktails these prohibition days?"

"What!" almost shrieked Mrs. Wills Livingston. "You mean that our set has actually taken up this creature, this—this bootlegger's wife? Merciful Heaven, what are we coming to?"

Babs laughed again. "Well, perhaps no one has actually taken her up, but"—her nose wrinkling with a grin, as she cracked her little joke—"no one has been able to take her down. She's the kind that just naturally can't be squelched; when you meet her—"

"Heaven forbid!" Mrs. Livingston broke in fervently. "Not if I can help it."

Mrs. Hendershott seemed to have small interest in the bootlegger's wife; her thoughts had returned darkly to the matter of her disappeared purse, and she proposed to have at least the satisfaction of putting to Babs the point-

blank question of whether or not she had seen it. Of course she did not intend to openly accuse Babs, but she was eager for a steady look at the girl's face when the subject was brought up. Guilt is so often as clear in one's features as the type upon a printed page.

She fixed Babs' profile with a look of searching scrutiny.

"Enough of this bootlegger's wife," she said and, unconsciously a hard, stern note crept into her voice; "I've something a great deal more serious to think about just now. Babs, I want to ask you—"

Mrs. Livingston suppressed a groan; she just knew that Lorna was going to get her foot into it badly. But Babs apparently took no notice of Mrs. Hendershott's address; her interest was fixed upon a long-hooded, red-painted roadster sweeping swiftly up the sandy road, and which suddenly took the turn into the club driveway on two of its flashing white wire wheels, the nickled radiator and headlamps gleaming like freshly polished silver in the bright morning sunlight.

"A little loud, I admit," murmured Babs; "like the owner, one might say. Behold, in all her resplendent glory, the very subject of our conversation!"

"The bootlegger's wife, eh?" grunted Mrs. Wills Livingston and reached for her lorgnette, which she suddenly remembered that she had not brought along. It made little difference; she could see quite well without it, and she stared with a hostile and disapproving curiosity.

"Verily," affirmed Babs with a vigorous jerk of her head; "none other than the bootlegger's wife. Don't go away; any one who tries to snub her is just wasting time. Mrs. Gallagher will not, can not be snubbed."

However neither Mrs. Livingston nor her daughter had any intention of making a retreat; curiosity held them, if nothing else. The dazzling roadster

plunged on with such recklessly unabated haste that it looked as though the clubhouse porch might be demolished in making the final swerve, but the woman at the wheel clamped the brakes and came to a spectacular stop, so close to the steps that the front tire was but a matter of inches from Bab's foot. Babs had not moved; evidently she had an amazing faith in both Mrs. Gallagher's driving and the car's brakes.

The woman at the wheel drew off her roomy driving gauntlets, revealing fingers that fairly bristled with diamonds; then she opened her pongee duster, and more diamonds burst forth—a gorgeous sunburst pinned to her bodice and a diamond pendant swung about her full, plump neck. Beneath the edge of a fashionably rakish and unquestionably becoming sport hat could be seen the tip of one ear, to which was fastened a solitaire of not less than two carats.

"What a hideously vulgar display!" shuddered Mrs. Wills Livingston in an aside to Lorna. "But what else could be expected—in such a person?"

Mrs. Gallagher was a large, Junoesque woman, somewhere in her thirties and so vividly blond that one at once suspected peroxide; which did not happen to be true.

"Lo, Babsie!" she called in a baritone voice and leaning out, fixed Mrs. Livingston and Mrs. Hendershott with a stare of babylike interest from her wide blue eyes. Meeting new people was Mrs. Gallagher's most interesting occupation. "How's every little thing?"

"Oh, just so-so," answered Babs. "Mrs. Gallagher, here are two more of our summer family—Mrs. Wills Livingston and Mrs. Livingston's daughter, Mrs. Hendershott."

"Glad to meetcha," Mrs. Gallagher responded with a vigorous cordiality, as she extended a hand which neither of the other two women offered to take. Lorna muttered a coldly unintelligible something, and her mother inclined her

head with a grudging stiffness. It was, of course, a deliberate snub, but the bootlegger's wife merely dropped her hand without any embarrassed evidence that her feelings had been wounded. A snub more or less was nothing in her breezy life.

"There I go," she exclaimed, "with my old Western habits! I'm always forgetting that you Easterners don't go in for this 'mitt me' stuff. Out in Kansas City, where I come from, every one shakes hands with everybody. We ain't so—well, so reserved out in Kansas City."

"I have no doubt," murmured Mrs. Livingston, her voice below zero.

"It made me feel sort of queer at first," pursued Mrs. Gallagher, in that quick way she had of rushing out her words, "until I got used to the Eastern ways. Now I take you folks just as you are and let it go at that. It's like being in Omaha in January—you gotta expect it to be chilly."

"Isn't that a new bracelet you have?" spoke up Babs, who was enjoying herself immensely.

Mrs. Gallagher flushed with pleasure and fondled the circlet of diamonds and sapphires which hung about her left wrist.

"I was wondering if you'd notice it," she laughed. "It ain't good taste to call attention to one's jewelry, but if some one else notices it— Pretty swell, isn't it?" Her baritone voice lowered to a rich whisper. "There's always one sure way to tell when Pete has landed another cargo of the cheering fluid—it's when you see me wearing something new in the jewelry line. I just love diamonds, and, as Pete says, it's sort of an investment. If his business goes bad—there's always a big risk in his line, y'know—there'll be the jewelry to fall back on.

"By the way, Mrs. Livingston, which one of the bungalows are you in?"

Mrs. Livingston was on the verge of a

tart reply, and Babs took it upon herself to answer the question.

"In the same block with yours, Mrs. Gallagher; the one with the new awning," she explained.

"Really! Why, we're almost next-door neighbors. Now isn't that nice. You'll have to run in Thursday night. Ma Jong and cocktails—a new game and old Scotch. I'll expect you." She glanced at her wrist watch, which also was heavily incrustated with diamonds. "My Lord, look what time it is! I've got to scoot. Date with the dressmaker over at Hampton at eleven. Come along, Babsie! I came by just to get you."

"All right, I'll go," agreed Babs, jumping up from the steps. "I feel just reckless enough to ride with you this morning." She leaped into the roadster and settled herself against the red leather of the seat. Already Mrs. Gallagher had smoothed on her gauntlets and had one hand on the gear shift, as she waved a cheery farewell to the two women on the porch with the other as the car started forward.

"Don't forget Thursday night!" she called, and, before Lorna Hendershott could get in a detaining word to ask Babs the delayed question about the purse, the machine leaped forward, missed a flower bed by a margin of inches, and plunged around the circle of the driveway and out toward the public road.

"Next-door neighbors—almost—to such a person—a bootlegger's wife!" moaned Mrs. Wills Livingston. "Lorna, what on earth is the world coming to? I shall put up the cottage for sale; this is the last year that I shall spend at Seaside."

Mrs. Hendershott's lips were set grimly.

"Did you notice, mother, how eager Babs seemed to get away from us? I think she knew that I was about to question her concerning the purse. I am

quite satisfied that she took it! Her attitude is what I would call guilty."

This time her mother did not argue the point. "I suppose," she returned severely, "that a girl who has no more sense of propriety than to associate with a bootlegger's wife would not stop at anything. And poor Mrs. Lane such a lovely woman, too!"

## CHAPTER II.

### UNSATISFIED CURIOSITY.

THE village of Seaside had, so far, escaped popularity, remaining a quaint settlement, with no commercial life of any consequence; fashionable folk, with an inclination to make the summer months a season for social activities rather than for rest and quiet, come no further out on Long Island, although the railroad runs on, practically to the end of the jutting finger of land, with Montauk Point at the tapering tip.

In the village proper there are a scattering of boarding houses and private families taking in summer roomers, and these attract mostly vacationing transients, who must prune their holidaying budget within modest limits. There is, however, the little colony of cottagers who have settled between the village and the dunes. A few of these so-called "cottages" are little short of mansions, belonging to families of considerable means, who care for the sea and its moody solitude rather than board walks and the social whirl; the colony in the main consists of those who are in moderate circumstances, mostly New Yorkers; they had been coming down year after year, called each other by their first names, and got along together with a wonderful spirit of harmony. If there was any one particular agent of discord, it was Mrs. Frisbee.

Members of the colony had chipped in for the purchase of land, an abandoned farm almost abutting the sea, which they had converted into a golf

club; the old farmhouse, with some minor alterations, had been made to do satisfactory service as the clubhouse. It was plain, but comfortable, and the financing of the club had not proven a burden on any one.

The most pretentious of the summering places was that of Luther Smedley, who had accumulated a considerable fortune in the tea, coffee, and spice business. He was still the active head of his concern and spent most of his time in town, even during the hot months, and usually he came out only on Friday evenings for week-ends with his family. The distance was too far for convenient commuting into the city, for that meant practically six hours for the round trip. It was with Nan Smedley, her most intimate friend, that Babs was putting up for an indefinite stay.

During the war there was an army cantonment at Montauk, and, to facilitate the hauling of heavy supply wagons, big, lumbering motor lorries, the government had put down a concrete road connecting with the State highway; thus it was that from Seaside to Hampton, and even further, there was a ribbon-smooth thoroughfare which had only the disadvantage of being a trifle narrow.

Mrs. Gallagher, for all of her apparent recklessness, kept both eyes and mind upon the unwinding stretch of concrete, as she shot the red roadster forward; the speedometer vibrated between forty and fifty, frequently swung around to sixty for a brief moment, and then fell back again. Babs was getting the thrill which could always be expected when riding with the bootlegger's wife.

"Dandy little tub, ain't it?" said Mrs. Gallagher from the corner of her mouth. "Watch the way we take this hill!" Her foot trod hard upon the throttle, and the motor roared into gathering power, as the wheels climbed swiftly upward. Not once did the cylinders falter. On they rushed, hurtled over the suddenly

sharp peak of the hill, and, as the hood dipped down, and the car, aided by gravity, took an almost mad impetus, Mrs. Gallagher's face went white; bracing her body against the steering wheel she flung all her weight against the brake pedal. The hideous smell of scorched asbestos and the scream of the locked wheels mingled with a cry from Babs' throat.

The woman at the wheel had forgotten the sharp curve. Coming toward them at a merry little clip was a flivver. Collision seemed inevitable, with the roadster's speed so great, the road so narrow, and the space between the two cars so brief. Babs, paralyzed with terror, closed her eyes and waited for the crash.

But there was no crash. The man driving the flivver acted instantly; increasing, instead of decreasing the motion of his little machine, he gave the wheel a quick twist and headed for the ditch, leaving the road clear.

Babs heard the splinter of glass, the tearing of wood, and the snapping of metal, and she could not understand why there had been no jar—why she had not been wrenched out of the seat and flung through space. Sliding, skidding as friction melted the rubber tread of the tires, the roadster came to a wheel-locked halt. Mrs. Gallagher flopped weakly against the wheel.

"My Gawd!" she whispered in a sort of awe.

Babs dragged her eyes open and stared about in wild bewilderment. The flivver seemed to have utterly disappeared.

"D-didn't we hit it?" she quavered. "W-where—where did it go?"

Mrs. Gallagher lifted a shaking hand and pointed to the side of the road where, just above the top of the gully, the rear wheels were visible.

"There! He ditched the Lizzie to keep us from smashing. That—that was quick thinking for you; that guy was there with the head work, Babsie, but

I'm afraid that—that he saved us without saving himself."

From the almost invisible wreckage there was no movement; no cry; no sound but the sharp wheezing of Mrs. Gallagher's breath through her parted, bloodless lips.

"Do—do you suppose that he's—dead?" gulped Babs.

"It's all my fault!" groaned Mrs. Gallagher, fighting for composure. "Pete said I'd speed into trouble, and I have. Pete had my number—all right; I go batty when I get my foot on the gas."

"We—we ought to see if—if there is anything we can do. We can't sit here and do nothing."

Mrs. Gallagher nodded and forced her numbed muscles into movement, stumbled out over the step plate, and stood swaying on the concrete roadway. Babs followed her, and, clinging to each other's hands, they crept toward the top of the embankment, staring fearfully down at the wreckage.

"Look!" whispered Babs.

The driver of the flivver had been thrown clear of the machine and lay, face down, to one side, half concealed by the growth of water grass in the gully.

"He ain't moving or groaning or anything, Babsie; I'm afraid that he's dead. We gotta get down there. Come on!"

The embankment chopped down steeply, and, still clinging to Babs' fingers, Mrs. Gallagher went plunging down, dragging the girl along with her. She got tangled in her sport skirt, and both of them landed in a sprawling heap. The grass-matted ditch was spongy with recent rains, a circumstance which promised a chance for the motionless fellow in front of them. He was clad in brown knickers and ribbed golf hose, a tall, slender man, with heavy, dark hair. That is all they could see at the moment. Stella Gallagher shivered.

"I—I hate to touch him," she chattered, "but I gotta—I gotta!"

She seized the shoulder of the man's belted coat and found that his weight did not tax her strength. As gently as she could she turned him over, and Babs became suddenly faint at the sight of a sluggish crimson flow which seeped down along the side of the lean, pale face. It was a face upon which was written an indefinite age; he might be forty or perhaps only thirty, for upon his features there was the stamp of illness.

"Do—do you think that he is—is still alive?" whispered Babs.

Mrs. Gallagher had recovered sufficiently from the shock to use her head; jerking off her driving gloves, she began to loosen the unconscious man's collar.

"Can't you see him breathe? Sure, he's alive, but that's not saying how long he will be. Maybe his skull's fractured. Oh, Lord, me a bootlegger's wife, and not a drop of hooch when it's needed!"

The man stirred, muttered something unintelligible, and opened his eyes into a dazed stare. Mrs. Gallagher expelled a prodigious sigh of relief.

"He's come to, Babs; guess if the ground hadn't been so soft he'd have been a goner. Just like a feather bed." She dropped to her knees. "Where do you seem to be hurt, mister?"

"Just about all over by the way it feels," he answered and grinned feebly. "Jarred me considerably. Did it knock me out?" Babs had found a tiny square of handkerchief and was pressing it to his forehead. "Thanks! Don't worry about that little scratch; bit of flying glass did that most likely. Got out of your way just in time, didn't I?"

"It was all my fault," admitted Mrs. Gallagher. "Took the hill too fast; forgot about the curve, and I was going so fast I couldn't stop. Man, you sure used your noodle and used it quick. If we'd hit, I guess the whole three of us would sort of clubbed together to give the coroner a job. Do you think we ought to get you to a hospital?"

The man stood dizzily to his feet, staggered unsteadily, and shook his head. Then he stared at his wrecked flivver.

"No, I think that won't be necessary, but, hardly feeling up to legging it home, I will let you give me a lift."

"It's all my fault," Mrs. Gallagher said again. "I'll pay the doctor bills, buy you a new Lizzie, and——"

"Don't worry about that; it's insured. And I'm sure there won't be any doctor's bill."

"That's what I call the talk of a real, true sport!" Mrs. Gallagher exclaimed warmly. "Nine out of ten would be begging for an ambulance and raving about a big suit for damages. Gee, but you're wabbly; wish I had a nip of good stuff to help brace you up."

"A very thoughtful wish; I do rather need a bracer. You see, I haven't my normal strength; I've been a bit done up. Still somewhat of an invalid. If you will be so kind as to help me up the embankment——"

"All I want is your address, and there'll be a case of the best in your cellar before dark," promised Mrs. Gallagher. "Come on, Babsie, you grab his other arm, and we'll give him a lift back to the road."

With a good deal of effort the three of them strained up the steep incline of the gully wall.

"Here we are," panted Mrs. Gallagher. "And now the thing is to get you home. Which way?"

"I'm putting up at Seaside," he answered. "I've a cottage there; the Lane cottage, I believe it is. Perhaps you know where to find it?"

"What!" exclaimed Babs. "Then you must be Mr. Newton."

"Yes, that's right," he nodded, apparently wondering why she should be so startled by the discovery of his identity.

"Now ain't that the cat's whiskers!" gasped Mrs. Gallagher.

"I'm afraid that I do not understand just what is so startling about——"

"This is Babs Lane, that's all; it's her cottage that you've got for the summer. Ain't life just full of coincidences?"

Mr. Newton braced the unsteady sway of his body and bowed. "My sister and I, Miss Lane, have to thank you for a most charming residence. I suspect that many of the attractive touches are yours. The flowers are beautiful; both my sister and I are very fond of them."

"I, too, am very fond of them," said Babs. "It is a relief that they have come into the hands of some one who will not neglect them. I think we have both, Mrs. Gallagher and I, neglected to thank you for a very quick-witted and brave act; if the cars had crashed—I shudder to think of it."

"You can lay a little bet," declared Mrs. Gallagher, "that I'm cured of that disease called speeding. I could hear slow music and see the floral tributes for them few seconds. Look, Babsie, ain't my hair turned gray?"

"Not that I can notice," said Babs. "We'd better get Mr. Newton home; he does look very ill." She gave the man a lift and climbed in beside him, while Mrs. Gallagher took her place behind the wheel. The seat was wide enough to accommodate three with fair comfort. A moment later the roadster faced about and was returning to Seaside.

Newton relaxed and closed his eyes; undoubtedly the experience had severely taxed his small store of strength. Babs found herself studying his face and decided that with good health he was probably more than passably handsome; his features were strong and clean-cut; even with his eyelids closed and his face in repose, there was an expression of sadness, as if he might have lived close to a deep sorrow.

Presently he stirred.

"I understood, Miss Lane," he said, "that you were in the village, and I had intended looking you up to make sure

of my status. I understood from the agent from whom I rented your cottage that the lease included golf privileges, and I wanted to make sure, lest I place myself in the position of intruding."

Babs nodded. "Yes, use of the links is included, I think; it's not an incorporated club, but a mutual affair. They've never bothered about formal memberships."

"Sure," chimed in Mrs. Gallagher; "the clubhouse, too. I'm in a rented place, just like you are. Dandy little bunch—nice gang. Some of 'em may seem a little chilly, but that's just their way; it don't mean anything."

"Oh, I won't clutter up the clubhouse with my presence," said Newton, "but I would like to take a little exercise by putting on the green, if no one has any objection."

"Oh, I'm quite sure that no one would have," Babs told him; "besides, you have the right. As you were told by mother's agent, golf privileges go with the cottage."

The three lapsed into silence, which was unbroken until they neared the Lane property.

"Stop here, please," Newton requested; "I'll walk the rest of the way." As this seemed to call for an explanation, he added: "My sister is highly nervous and easily excited. I wouldn't wish to excite her by giving her any intimation of the accident. I shall merely tell her that my car stopped running."

"I'm afraid it has—permanently," said Babs with a smile; she thought more of him for this thoughtfulness, and, as Mrs. Gallagher stopped the machine, and he climbed down, she reached out impulsively and detained him for a moment with a touch of her fingers upon his sleeve.

"Mr. Newton, I know that your sister must be finding it lonesome out here, since you have come as strangers. Why don't both of you come over to the

clubhouse Wednesday evening? I'm sure that you'll find it quite pleasant. Do say that you'll come."

"And to my place Thursday night!" Mrs. Gallagher added with her hearty cordiality. "I'll drive by and pick you up at a quarter of eight. Gloom chasers and everything."

Newton gave her a startled look and quickly averted his face, as he stared off toward the ragged tops of the sand dunes, just visible at the end of the quiet, narrow little street. He seemed suddenly embarrassed and ill at ease.

"I am very grateful for your kindness," he answered, "but I shall have to decline. My sister's health, as well as mine, is not the best." His tone became rather brusque. "We came to Seaside to—er—get off to ourselves." With that he raised his cap and was gone.

"He's a queer bird, ain't he?" murmured Mrs. Gallagher, shaking her head. Babs nodded.

"Yes, he is," she agreed, "very queer. I've a notion to write mother's agent and find out what he knows about the Newtons. Nothing annoys me quite as much as unsatisfied curiosity."

The bootlegger's wife nodded vigorously, as she started the red roadster into motion again.

"Babsie," she affirmed, "you said a mouthful."

### CHAPTER III.

#### A STATE OF MIND.

**I**N the rush of things that followed, Babs Lane forgot her intention of writing for such information as her mother's New York agent might have concerning the new tenants of the cottage, for her own affairs pressed themselves upon her with an insistence which was not to be denied; until several days later the strange Mr. Newton was entirely missing from her thoughts. And then she wished that she had written.

"Guess I'll pass up the dressmaker

for to-day," said Mrs. Gallagher, as, after discharging Mr. Newton, she steered a course for home. "My nerves are too raw; I couldn't stand a fitting. We'll go to my place, and I'll shake up a couple of cocktails."

"Not me, thanks," refused Babs; "liquor always gives me a headache after the first kick wears off. No matter what other bitter fate Heaven has in store for me, I haven't got the makings of a rum hound. Just drop me off at the Smedleys, if you don't mind."

"I do mind, like the very deuce," grumbled Mrs. Gallagher, "but I suppose there's no helping it. Do me one favor, Babsie—don't tell Pete about that narrow shave we had."

"Tell him?" laughed Babs. "Why, I don't even know him; just judging from one remark and another, Pete is Mr. Gallagher. Sometimes I get the feeling that he's a myth."

"Myth?" exploded Mrs. Gallagher indignantly. "If Pete's a myth these diamonds are paste. Oh, I admit he's away a lot; got to be in *his* business. But he's home to-day. At least he was when I left. There's no telling about Pete; he gets one of them cipher cablegrams from Bermuda or Havana or some place, and that's the last I see of him for days and weeks. Not that I'm complaining; Pete's a swell fellow, a grand husband. We've been down, and we've been up, and it's always been fifty-fifty with both of us. When he's got it, I got it, and vice versa, as they say. Well, here you are, Babsie, so long as you won't come along home with me. Don't forget the party on Thursday night."

The roadster had come to a halt in front of the pretentious Smedley house, and Babs hopped out.

"All right, I'll be there," she promised and waved her hand. But many things intervened between then and Thursday, things that no one could foresee. The red car moved on at a sedate

pace, for Mrs. Gallagher had taken her lesson to heart, at least temporarily.

"She really isn't a bad sort," smiled Babs; "somehow I like her a good deal better than some of the others who've got culture smeared on 'em in thick coats. Far as that's concerned, I don't suppose, if one digs down into things, that being a bootlegger's wife is any worse than being a bootlegger's customer."

As she sped across the lawn and came to the wide, cool Smedley porch, a girl in knickers uncurled herself from the couch hammock.

"'Lo, Babs; I've just been over to the golf club looking for you and got there just in time to hear you being scandalized—and to save your reputation."

"Oh, it shocked 'em, did it, because I took a little spin with Mrs. Gallagher? I knew that Mrs. Wills Livingston would be horrified. Bosh, I don't care a rap, Nan. But I mighty nearly came to the end of my evil deeds. I'm quaking inside yet." Swiftly she recounted the morning's experience, not neglecting to voice her curiosity about the ill Mr. Newton.

"There's something queer and mysterious about the man, Nan," she finished. "The saddest of faces, and Mrs. Hendershott, who saw the sister at the post office, says that he's got the same kind of look—tragedy, suffering. The part of it that makes me the most curious is the strange way he acted when I suddenly felt sorry for him and asked him to bring his sister over to the club dance Wednesday night. It seemed almost to throw him into a panic; he looked half frightened. I wonder if they're afraid of—of meeting people?"

Nan Smedley had listened attentively enough, but she brushed aside the subject of the Newton's with a wave of her nut-brown hand. She might have recited that, looking for Babs, she had got to the clubhouse just in time to hear Mrs. Hendershott resuming the subject

of the missing purse, and how she had saved Babs from further suspicion by fibbing loyally and declaring that she had herself been keeping Babs in funds. But she didn't tell this. What was the use of stirring up a nasty mess and breaking her chum's heart in the bargain.

"Babs," said Nan, "you and I are going to have a heart-to-heart talk."

"Are we? You're going to lecture me about running around with Mrs. Gallagher. Isn't that it?"

"About borrowing money from Mrs. Gallagher," Nan said severely.

Babs flushed angrily. "Has she been going around telling that?"

"No, I guessed it. Just put two and two together. I knew that you were flat, and suddenly you seemed to have plenty of pin money."

"Oh, I see; you just guessed it. Well, what if I did?" Her voice sounded queer.

"Come, Babs, we mustn't quarrel, but I've got some things on my chest, and I propose to get them off. I know it's pretty tough on you, having the financial props knocked from under you, but what is, just is, and you've got to face things. I didn't expect you to get your bearings right away, and that's why I had you down here with me—to give you time to get your breath. If you wanted money, Babs, you could have come to me; you don't have to go borrowing from that terrible woman."

"She isn't a terrible woman, Nan; she's a brick. Of course she's impossible socially, but——"

"Let's drop Mrs. Gallagher. What I'm trying to say is that you just make yourself cheap borrowing money from people like that, and it's a bad habit to get into."

"You talk as if I didn't intend to pay it back!" flared Babs.

"Now we're getting to the point. Where are you going to get the money to pay it back with?"

Babs looked startled. "Why, mother

says the company that she put her money in will probably turn out all right, sooner or later, and that we'll be back on our feet this winter—perhaps."

"No, Babs, not even perhaps. You know how fond dad is of your mother and you. He's been trying to help save something out of the wreck, and he says there's no salvage."

"Well?" Babs, knowing Nan pretty well, realized that all this was leading up to something.

"Don't you see, dear, that it puts you square up against the question: What are you going to do?"

"I guess I hadn't thought much about it."

"There are just two things you can do—go to work or get married."

"And I'm not keen about either; between the two I guess I'd prefer work. How does a girl go about getting a job, anyhow, Nan?"

"Poor Babs! I'm afraid that girls like us, who've never done a lick of work in our lives, have an awfully tough time going about it. Can you think of anything you could do to earn your salt?"

"I've heard of typewriting or being a secretary," Babs answered vaguely.

"You'd get about eight or ten dollars a week to start."

"Good Lord! Eight dollars a week? Why my hats cost me—— Nan, what on earth *are* you driving at? Why all this sudden talk about my getting a job?"

Nan Smedley shrugged. "Just helping get you into a frame of mind, dear. After you've thought it over you may decide that getting married is a little more attractive. What I really went to the club for was to tell you that Grant Curwood will be down on the afternoon train."

A look of dislike flitted across Babs' face, and she shot Nan a look of accusing indignation.

"Nan, I believe you're responsible; I

actually believe that you—that you sent for him. Oh, how dare you?" Her voice trembled angrily.

Nan Smedley admitted it calmly. "Yes, I did—diplomatically, of course. Just dropped him a brief note, and he wrote right back, asking me if he might come. The mention that you were here was all the encouragement he needed. Please stop looking daggers at me; I'm doing you a good turn, if you only realized it. Grant's wild about you; he's been in love with you for two seasons."

"But I'm *not* in love with him!" flared Babs. Her voice became edged with bitterness. "But that, of course, is of no consequence; I'm broke and dependent upon the hospitality of my friends. Therefore I must fall into the arms of any man who has enough money to support me—properly."

"You're much too romantic," sighed Nan. "Life, dear, is a very practical proposition. I can't understand why you take such a dislike to Grant Curwood; he's rich, handsome——"

"Forty, and has a past that sounds like the adventures of Don Juan," finished Babs. "His reputation is positively *notorious!* His name has even been in the newspaper headlines, and—oh, it's too hideous."

"I'm afraid, Babs, that there's small chance of a woman getting a husband that isn't a little tarnished these days. They're not all unlucky enough to get their names in the newspapers; that's the only difference. Didn't my own brother have a perfectly terrible affair with an actress? There was a threatened suit for damaged affections, but dad bought her off and kept it quiet.

"As I remember it, Grant got into a harmless flirtation with that Mrs.—I forget her name—and she took it seriously and tried to take poison."

"That's what *he* says; I expect the poor woman could tell an entirely different story." She stamped her foot. "It makes me perfectly furious with

you, Nan, that you've done this! I hate Grant Curwood—absolutely hate him!"

Nan nodded complacently. "That's a good deal better than being just indifferent," she declared. "Think it over, anyhow. Now run along and dress; it isn't long until the afternoon train will be coming down."

Babs became rebelliously silent, as she watched Nan get up from the couch hammock and disappear within the house. Presently, succumbing to a crushed sort of listlessness, she followed and climbed the stairs to the guest room which she occupied. It was a big, cheerful room, with gray furniture, a bright-colored rug, and summery draperies at the two large windows, which looked out toward the sea. The Smedley house was built upon a high rise of ground, and the elevation cleared the tops of the intervening cottages and gave view of the drably beautiful sand dunes and the ocean beyond.

Feeling overwhelmed, dazed, helpless, Babs stared out, her fingers absently crushing the creton hangings. The sash was open a little ways, and faintly there came the screech of a locomotive whistle. That would be the down train, bringing Grant Curwood. Another ten minutes, perhaps fifteen, and he would be here at the house, eager to resume a courtship which had always been so distasteful to her. She struggled with an impulse to run away, but at the moment she could think of no haven except Cousin Kate's, and there was no train into New York until late that evening.

Perhaps her frantic desire to escape was inspired by fear—fear of herself. Nan Smedley had indeed painted a gloomy picture of the future, and, thinking of things from Nan's viewpoint, it all did seem hopeless.

"I can't go on sponging and sponging forever," Babs said under her breath. "That's got to stop somewhere. It did seem rather a lark at first, being broke, but, as Nan says, it's either got to be

work or marriage. I don't know how to work at anything; that leaves the other."

She stood there at the window for some time, so much longer than she realized, that she was presently startled to see Grant Curwood swinging along outside the hedge and turning in at the wide path which led up to the house. Parting the curtains, she stared down.

There could be no question of Grant Curwood's good looks; a certain well-bred dignity, too, went with his handsomeness. He was tall, erect; perhaps it was not so surprising that women had become infatuated with him. He paused to shift the weight of the hand bag from one arm to the other. It had been warm walking from the station—not exactly thoughtful of Nan not to have sent the car to meet him—and, as he removed his straw hat to dabble at his perspiring forehead with his handkerchief, his hair was revealed gray at the temples. Most people thought that this but served to give him an additionally distinguished look, but to Babs it had been a constant reminder that he was nearly as old as her father would have been, were he still alive.

Yet somehow the sight of Grant Curwood at this moment did not fill her with her usual feeling of contempt.

"Perhaps," she told herself bitterly, "Nan *has* got me into a state of mind. Perhaps it will end up by—by my being—sensible." Abruptly she turned away from the window and, throwing herself across the bed, buried her face against the cool linen of the pillow, her shoulders shaking with dry, wracking sobs.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### BABS SCREAMS.

**N**OT until dinner was announced did Babs go downstairs, and then she went with sluggish, unwilling feet. Nan and Curwood were waiting for her in the library, and the man, for all of his

habitual reserve, rushed eagerly to his feet, his eyes making no secret of his open admiration. Babs was no less cool with him than she had always been, and perfunctorily she gave him the tips of limp fingers.

"How's the headache, Babs?" he asked with genuine solicitude. "Hope it isn't I who have that effect on you?"

Nan frowned, and Babs knew that she had been using the old, stock excuse to account for her long delay in coming down.

"I've had no headache," she answered with spiteful veracity. "Nan was just saying the polite thing; I didn't come down because I preferred not to."

Grant Curwood was more amused than offended; he laughed with well-poised good nature, although a vexed flush crept into Nan Smedley's cheeks.

"You're delightfully and refreshingly frank, Babs," he said, "and I consider that one of your outstanding virtues. You'd rather I hadn't come. Isn't that about the size of it?"

"Yes, exactly the size of it," Babs admitted. "That's rude, of course, but it's true. But we mustn't spoil Nan's dinner by having the same old row. You're here, and I'll make the best of it."

They went out to dinner. Mr. Smedley was in New York, Nan's brother in Maine; and there were just the three of them. The meal got along pleasantly enough, although Babs was moodily silent. Curwood carried the largest burden of the conversation, which, Babs had to admit, he did in a most engaging manner. His polish was faultless; a gentleman by breeding and custom, and Babs knew that Nan was wondering how any sane woman could pass up such a matrimonial prize. Nan, she more than half suspected, was quite a little in love with Grant Curwood, herself; sometimes it was almost obvious. Why didn't Curwood solve the whole business by marrying Nan?

After dinner the three went out onto the wide, cool porch, where it was dusk and shadow. Nan, after a little while tried to make some sort of an excuse to leave them alone, and, just as it was on the tip of Babs' tongue to protest, Curwood's quiet voice saved her the trouble.

"Please stay, Nan," he said; "there's a lot of town gossip that you'll want to hear." Babs thought more of him for that bit of thoughtfulness; he was, of course, thinking of her when he had said that. Off went another brick from the wall calculated to keep Curwood out of her future.

Tuesday passed, and Wednesday came. Grant Curwood had made no sentimental overtures; in fact, his attitude was almost impersonal, yet Babs had the feeling of watching a very seasoned poker veteran carefully playing his cards—with her for the pot. Her own emotions were in a much unsettled state, her mind a helpless confusion; she knew what to expect, but, after hours and hours with her problem, she had not the least idea what her answer would be.

Some girls, no doubt, would have fled to their mothers with this, woman's gravest problem of life, but Babs already knew what her mother's answer would be. Mrs. Lane had already broadly hinted that she considered Grant Curwood "a good catch," and in her quiet, resigned way had shown evidence of considerable impatience that her daughter gave him no more encouragement. He had wealth, social position, charming manners, and—what more could be asked? As to that terrible newspaper scandal—well, Mrs. Lane shared with Nan Smedley the idea that the woman in the case had made a fool of herself, and that all men must be expected to have an affair or two in their lives. Regrettable, but inevitable.

So, alone, Babs struggled to reach her decision. In those long, dark, sleepless

hours of mental debate she tried to piece together the pictures; she realized the bitter struggle it would be to make her own way; neither mind nor hands trained to any sort of usefulness that would earn her a living wage. Certainly to a girl reared in affluent comfort it was not an alluring prospect; thus, by comparison, thoughts of Grant Curwood became less and less tinged with distaste.

The golf club gave two dances a week, on Wednesday and Saturday nights. Most members of the little summer colony attended, so about eight o'clock Wednesday evening one of the Wittwer twins came by for Nan, and the four walked it from the Smedley house. Early as they were, the modest little orchestra was playing a lively dance number. Music always had a way of getting into Babs' blood, and her mood underwent a quick change; with a laugh, her body swaying gracefully to the rhythm, she crossed the porch.

"Now that's more like it!" exclaimed Curwood with a chuckle. "I claim the first dance, Miss Happiness."

Babs nodded and floated into his arms; the next moment they were whirling gayly across the big living room of the club, which had been cleared of all furniture. Curwood did dance superbly.

As the music stopped, Babs felt a touch on her arm, and she turned to see Mrs. Gallagher, who had added a diamond hair band to her already overwhelming collection of jewelry. Her evening dress was, like the woman herself, somewhat startling.

"'Lo, Babsie! My, ain't this the life? Take a look! Pete's a myth, eh? Here's the proof that he's real. Pete, meet Babsie Lane that I'm always talking about."

Babs had not immediately seen Mr. Pete Gallagher, for the reason that he was almost totally hidden from view by the statuesque figure of his blond wife. He stood almost a head shorter, was

lean, hatchet-faced, with shrewd, beady eyes and looking most miserable.

"Poor devil!" thought Babs, sizing him up with a quickly appraising glance. "He knows that he's a fish who's got into the wrong brook, but he don't want to hurt her feelings by telling her so."

"Would you believe it!" exclaimed Mrs. Gallagher, her baritone voice rising high above the hum of other conversation. "I hadda just drag 'im to this shindig to-night, and him simply *crazy* about all the new steps." While she spoke, her babylike stare was fixed upon Grant Curwood; leaning toward Babs she whispered, "My, but you're some picker! Ain't he handsome?"

Babs greatly surprised Mr. Gallagher by shaking hands with him; then she introduced Curwood, who concealed his amusement with his never-failing courtesy. It almost failed him, however, as Babs, for the moment her old wild self, indulged in a fit of good-natured mischief. The orchestra was starting the encore.

"Do finish this dance with Mrs. Gallagher, Mr. Curwood; I'm going to get acquainted with—with Pete." Mrs. Gallagher couldn't have looked more pleased if she had suddenly received the honor of dancing with a crown prince, which could hardly be said for Curwood; but there was no graceful way for him to get out of it. Babs, too, thought she saw a flicker of displeasure in Mr. Gallagher's eyes, as he saw his wife sailing away from him. Babs had almost to drag him into motion. Of course she would scandalize every one by dancing with the bootlegger; she didn't care.

"Do you like Seaside, Mr. Gallagher?"

"No," he grunted and missed step, as he twisted his head for another look at his wife. "She got me into it. Huh, I guess you know, all right, that this is too society for me and Stella. She's ambitious, Stella is. Say, who is that fellow? Movie actor?"

"Gracious, no, Mr. Gallagher! What put the notion into your head that Mr. Curwood's a movie actor?"

"Looks like one; thought he might be." His face darkened. "She's dippy about movie actors."

"And you're not."

"Them he vamps!" he snorted and missed step again. "Grant Curwood, you said? I've heard that name somewhere, but I don't just remember where."

"Mr. Gallagher! Don't tell me that—that you're jealous?"

"Aw!" grunted Mr. Gallagher and lapsed into a silence which remained unbroken until the encore came briefly to its end, and then he dashed off promptly to rescue his wife. A little later they disappeared entirely; it was to be suspected that, for all his physical inferiority, Pete was the real boss of the Gallagher household.

Babs had been left standing near the door, and she strolled out onto the porch. Suddenly another mood seized her, a return of that feeling of crushed helplessness; her gayety had died with the last crashing strains of the music. It left her limp and dejected.

There was a white moon lifting out there above the sea, such a moon as loves to smile mellowly upon lovers; such a night as this, with the rushing whisper of the gently breaking tide, as it caresses the sand with a touch as gentle as a woman's fingers stroking the back of her sweetheart's hand, was made for romance. Babs fell beneath the spell of it, and her lips quivered with the throbbing ache of a hungry heart.

She did not hear the quiet step on the porch boards until Grant Curwood was beside her. He did not reproach her for her bit of fun in forcing him to dance with Mrs. Gallagher; for a moment he did not speak at all, just stood there, looking down at her profile and the moonlight in her hair.

"The night is very beautiful," he said gently.

"Yes, very, very beautiful."

"And you, too, are beautiful, Babs." His voice was soft and soothing, pitched so low that, in the sweet hypnotism of the night, it seemed to the girl more the voice of a dream. He lost personality, became just a voice—the voice of romance. She was silent.

"Babs, dear, I love you. Don't you know by this time that I love you better than all else in the world?"

"Yes?" she whispered dreamily.

"Babs, you've kept me waiting long enough; I did not know that any woman could dangle me at her finger tips, as you have, but I knew that in the end I would have you for my own, and now——" His voice took on a hoarse, jarring note, and his arms went about her, drew her toward him, tightened about her in an embrace of fierce triumph, and his face bent down to hers.

For a moment Babs was passive, unresisting; but there was no warm, tingling surge of blood through her body. Instead, her veins had the chill of ice water. The night was warm, but she was cold—cold. Not for all the wealth of Christendom could she have made her lips answer his. And then her cheeks flooded hot with anger.

"You—you tricked me into that!" she panted, struggling to break the locking hold of his arms. "I—I didn't realize what you were saying. Let me go—let me go."

Drunk with the touch of her lips, Curwood tried to keep her prisoner, crushed his face against hers. Wildly she fought to escape him; her nails tore into the flesh of his hands.

"Let me go. or—or I'll—kill you!"

With frantic strength she did free herself. Her hair had come tumbling down about her shoulders, and in some way the shoulder strap of her dance frock had become torn. It was, of course, out of the question for her to return to the clubhouse, had she thought of doing so.

"Babs," his voice was thick and shaking, "I've got to have you. Please listen to me; I want to make you understand——"

She leaped from the porch to the lawn and went running through the moonlight. In her excitement her brain played her a trick; she forgot that the cottage across from the fourth green was no longer hers. In former days she often took a short cut across the links, and this is what she was doing now. Grant Curwood hesitated a moment and plunged after her.

He did not catch up with her until she had passed the fourth green and came to the road.

"Babs," he pleaded, "I frightened you. Forgive me. You—you do not understand——"

But Babs thought she did understand.

"I know your kind," she said bitterly; "always wanting the thing or the woman out of reach. Once you got me——"

"Babs, let's talk this thing over calmly," he urged. "I lost my head and I apologize. I do love you, child, and you need some one to look after you now."

"Meaning financially. I've been thinking of it from that viewpoint. Sometimes I made myself think that I could care for you a little, but back there on the porch I realized how hideous it would be. No! No!"

She stumbled a little on the rough ground, and Curwood caught her arm; the touch of her made him forget himself again. Roughly he dragged her toward him.

"You beast! Oh, you beast!" And, now thoroughly frightened, she screamed.

The response was sudden and unexpected; from the porch of the Lane cottage, a few yards ahead, a slim figure leaped into action and, grabbing up a stout cane from beside the chair where he had been sitting, made swiftly for the street. Unobserved by either Babs

or Curwood, until he was practically upon them, he approached, grasping the stick by its end, ready to use it as a weapon.

"Stop it!" he ordered, his words snapping like the crack of a whip.

"Mr. Newton!" gasped Babs, staggering back, as Curwood's arms released her. The latter turned, and the two men faced each other in the moonlight. Babs heard a startled exclamation from Curwood, and he lifted his arms, as if to ward off a blow from the cane that he expected to fall. But Newton did not strike; the stick lifted, remained poised for a moment and then lowered slowly. Babs saw his face; it was white, set, grim.

"Great Heaven!" he cried hoarsely. "You!"

Grant Curwood, Babs thought, seemed in the grip of a sudden terror.

"Up to your usual tricks, I see," said Newton, his voice none too steady. "Come, Miss Lane, I shall see you home."

"T-thanks," stammered Babs. Curwood, hatless, disheveled, remained standing where he was, having spoken no word, as the other two moved away. The girl and Newton walked slowly along the quiet little street. He asked no questions, offered no explanation.

"You—you and Mr. Curwood seem—seem to have met before," she murmured faintly. Newton walked on for several yards before he gave any sign of having heard her. She thought his body winced.

"Yes," he answered shortly, his voice hard and harsh, "we have met before."

## CHAPTER V.

### AT THE FOURTH GREEN.

**T**HURSDAY morning came with a murky haze hanging like a filmy curtain between shore and sky line. Babs did not come down until long after eleven. Nan Smedley had caught an

early train for New York, to put in a day of shopping, and there was no sign of Grant Curwood; Babs rather suspected that he, too, had gone into the city. Certainly it was the one thing he could do, and it didn't occur to her to make inquiries of the servants; had she done so, they would have told her that Curwood, after pacing restlessly through the house for most of the forenoon, had borrowed Bob Smedley's golf kit and had gone toward the club.

Had Babs known that, she would not, of course, have decided upon the links that afternoon. Not that she was particularly eager for golf; it was just something to do, a relaxation for her taut nerves.

In a way she was glad that it had happened, for she realized, in a sort of vague way, that had Grant Curwood appealed to her mind rather than to her heart, she might have escaped that revulsion of feeling which had furnished her with an answer to her problem. Until then she had merely disliked him; now she loathed him!

About two o'clock she struck out for the club, got her golf bag from the locker room, and looked in vain for the Stubbins boy who generally did her caddying, unless some one had already secured him. Such seemed to be the case this afternoon. She liked Alvin Stubbins better than any of the other village boys who picked up their summer pocket money by carrying clubs and keeping their eyes upon the ball; he was such a cheerful, alert little fellow, and, besides, it was not just pocket money to Alvin; he had a shiftless father and an invalid mother.

"I'll caddy for you, Miss Lane," offered a diminutive youngster. "Alvin's gone with Mr. and Mrs. Gallagher. They just teed off."

Babs laughed, as she imagined how unwillingly Pete Gallagher must have been persuaded to try a hand at the game. In her present mood Mrs. Gal-

lagger's breezy cheerfulness was just the tonic she needed, and she decided that she'd try to overtake them. It promised no end of good fun.

"All right," she nodded and handed her bag to the boy. "What's your name, sonny?"

"Paul, Miss Lane—Paul Greer. But most of 'em calls me 'Peewee.'"

"I couldn't think of calling you Peewee, Paul. Well, let's get started."

But Babs did not overtake the Gallaghers; even as she teed off, a long, graceful sweep of the driver, that lifted the ball from its diminutive pedestal of sand and sent it winging in a true, beautiful arc toward the first green, the curtain of mist hanging out to sea thickened into fog and began to press landward, a gray, damp blanket which might suddenly vanish, or that would possibly remain for hours. There had been a great deal of fog that summer.

Babs hardly noticed the low visibility, as she played on until she had holed into the cup at the third green, with a good promise of bogie, and had made her drive toward the fourth. The ball soared and seemed suddenly swallowed up by the oncoming wall of gray mist. The next instant it enveloped her in a moist, swirling mass. Peewee had raced on ahead to watch where her ball might fall, and he was, of course, invisible.

"Paul!" she shouted, but the fog muffled her voice, so that it fell flat and dull upon her own ears. The driver in her hand, she plunged toward what she thought must be the fourth green; the fog might lift very shortly, and she was anxious to complete what promised to be a top score.

Minutes trickled past, perhaps five. There were some six persons on the links when the fog drifted in. Those who had worked their way around to the ninth hole—it was only a nine-hole course—went to the clubhouse, but the others found themselves pretty well lost in the gray, wet maze, for it is a great

deal easier to find one's way in the dark than in the fog.

Mr. and Mrs. Gallagher had, like Babs, found their caddy gone to nowhere and, presently, floundering helplessly about, they themselves became separated. Mrs. Gallagher had been in the lead, striding swiftly in what she had been certain must be the direction of the clubhouse, but which it was not. Turning, she saw that Pete was no longer trailing behind her.

"Hey, Pete!" she boomed in that baritone voice of hers. "Pete!"

If Mr. Gallagher heard her, he made no response; possibly he was too disgusted with this his first try at golf. He considered that it was the silliest game ever invented, and he wondered how apparently sensible men, like bankers and brokers, could get any fun out of it. Mrs. Gallagher plunged ahead, but she was wandering in a circle, instead of making a beeline, as she was very positive she was doing. Suddenly she stopped, a chill sensation darting along her spine; there had come to her ears, directly to her right, a scream that, muffled as it was by the fog, contained a note of shrill terror.

"Hello!" she shouted. "Hello, there! What's the matter?" Not waiting for a reply, she hurried forward, guided only by that terrible scream. An instant later, startlingly close, a mist-blurred form leaped at her.

"Babsie! Was that you screaming? What—what's happened?"

Babs staggered toward her and clung limply to her arm, a hysterical sob in her throat. "Look!" she shuddered, pointing to the ground. "He's—dead!"

"Dead? Who's dead?" gasped Mrs. Gallagher. There was a break in the gray swirl, and she saw the man stretched out on the turf, his face beaded with the dampness.

"It—it ain't—Mr. Curwood?" she cried in a hushed whisper, hardly able to recognize in the hideously contorted

face the handsome man with whom she had danced only the night before.

Babs nodded dully. "Y-yes, it's—Curwood, Stella, he's dead; I know that he's dead."

"My word!" shrieked Mrs. Gallagher, as she bent forward.

Babs clung hysterically to the other woman and moaned; frightful as it was,

she seemed unable to tear her gaze from the grimly distorted face. Fascinated horror held her in a sort of paralysis; suddenly she screamed with fresh terror and staggered back, as if some one had struck at her. By an uncanny freak of *rigor mortis*, the dead man's closed eyes flew open, and their ghastly, sightless stare were fixed upon her.

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



## FEDERAL PRISONS FOR WOMEN

A FEDERAL prison for women, a Federal reformatory for young men who are first offenders, and the establishment of regularly paid work in every Federal penal institution, are the special reforms under consideration by the department of justice. Mrs. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, assistant attorney general of the United States, set forth a plea for these reforms at a recent meeting of the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor.

She declared that women cannot adequately be accommodated under present conditions at the existing Federal prisons. They are sent to any institution able to take them in. Frequently they must be transferred before their arrival, for an influx of new prisoners may have taken all available room.

Fifty per cent of women prisoners are narcotic addicts, she said, and many of the buildings in which women are confined have facilities for temporary use only. Moreover the increased numbers of women Federal prisoners seems to demand a separate institution for them. She explained the growth in the number of women prisoners to the fact that many crimes which formerly fell under the jurisdiction of the States are now Federal crimes. She declared that, with the spread of women's rights, there is less sentimentality about women offenders.

A bill is also being drafted to establish a reformatory for young men first offenders. It is proposed to place the new institution in some farming district, as farm work is considered to be the most satisfactory in the rehabilitation of young men. First offenders from other institutions will be placed in the new prison, if the bill is passed. As for giving prisoners paid work, the intention is to devise a system by which products from penal institutions could be sold to the Federal government. At present in the Atlanta Penitentiary five hundred of the twenty-five hundred prisoners are employed at making canvas bought by the post office department for mail sacks.

The fight against the exploitation of prison labor for financial profit can be counted as now over, according to George Gordon Battle. "Five years from now," he said, "every New York State prisoner should be employed at work adapted to his capabilities, and for which he is paid an adequate wage, the balance above the cost of his keep being his own and available for his dependents."

# Among the Mourners

by *Charlotte Dockstader*

Author of "Lo Sun Stands at the Door," etc.

**U**NLIKE most deaf people, Jane Flynn walked noisily. Father Jordan was often glad of that. Now her thudding feet gave him plenty of time to slip the book he was reading between the cushions of his chair before the portly figure of his housekeeper loomed up in the living-room doorway. Jane was plump and gray and middle-aged. Her snapping bright eyes made up for her defective hearing.

Father Jordan wondered, as she stood smiling at him, if, even across the width of the room, she could not see that the suspicious bulge in the velvet cushions was made by a copy of Arnold Barclay's "Creeping Footfalls." Jane could not understand her employer's fondness for detective tales. To her they were works of the devil. Accordingly, her maidenly sensibilities were so shocked, whenever she found him immersed in one, that he learned it was easier for both of them if she were spared the sight. It saved her the shock and him the argument. Jane, being sixty, and everlastingly single, could appreciate the mystery in romance, but never the romance in mystery.

"It's bedtime, and you have much to do to-morrow," she announced shortly.

Father Jordan was older than Jane—eight years older. He was portly of build, also, and possibly a scant three inches taller than she, who was considered short for a woman. And she bossed him disgracefully. What was more, he enjoyed it. His deep-set blue eyes always twinkled merrily when she did it;

and sometimes he minded her, oftener he did not.

"All right, Jane," he replied slowly. "I'll go to bed in a little while."

He did not answer loudly, so it was either by reading his lips, or from years of experience, that she caught what he said. She snorted and turned away. But she did not go upstairs immediately. Puttering and muttering, she fussed about the other rooms. It was a cold night, and the old-fashioned range, that she clung to so lovingly, only heated the kitchen by day. There were no steam pipes running through, and often the water froze in the sink. It wouldn't do to leave the plants out there. They would be dead by morning. That clump of geraniums, that Mrs. Kelly had sent over, and the pink primrose, that old man McClain had brought in, were coming along finely. Gruntingly she pulled them down from the high shelf, with its scalloped paper draperies, and carried them into the pleasant dining room. She turned on the faucets, so that the water would drip and keep the pipes from freezing. With her foot she worked the rag rug against the bottom of the kitchen door to shut out the draft.

Father Jordan could hear her poking about, and he sat with a tolerant smile waiting for her to be through. He knew he wasn't safe until she ascended the stairs. Once up, she would not come down again until morning, but, while she was still down, there was ever the danger of her dropping in on him. "Creeping Footfalls" was a thrilling story, and he wanted to return to it.

"For goodness sake, Jane, what are you doing?" he shouted loudly. "Moving the house?"

She sniffed audibly. "I'm settlin' some o' these presents your lovin' p'rish'ners is always showerin' on you," she retorted acidly.

As she spoke, Hercules, the blue-and-green-and-red parrot that Guy Marmon had lugged from South America to Father Jordan, gave a raucous caw and stirred restlessly. Jane grasped the new chance for lingering. Leisurely she unhooked his cage, dropped a blinding towel over it, and carried it out into the front hall. There was a hook beneath the portière that fell in thick folds from the living-room door, and she hung it up there, pulling the heavy curtain about it to hide the cage. Father Jordan objected to Hercules. He talked like a gentleman in his cups, and that kind of language was not becoming the sanctity of a priest's rooms. He was all right in the kitchen. In fact, that was the best place for him. The good Lord had so dulled Jane's maidenly ears that she rarely caught the man-sized words that Hercules could send in an unblushing volley from his fluttering throat. That done, Jane looked about for something else to occupy her.

Father Jordan got her little game. She was matching her patience with his. Trying to tire him out and drive him up to bed, where he knew he really ought to be. Jane was right, as usual. He did have a hard day ahead, and he needed his rest. But there were only six chapters left of "Creeping Footfalls," and he was very, very curious.

"If some o' your p'rish'ners don't stop bringin' you presents, I'm goin' to move out, so's to make room for 'em," Jane grumbled, as she stumblingly tripped over the head of a bear on a rug that had come as a gift from a doting worshipsper a Christmas ago.

The priest smiled benignly and with a slipped toe patted the footstool that

had been a present from Jane on his birthday, the week previous.

"It's the charm of me that coaxes them generous, Jane," he teased.

Again Jane snorted, though a smile crept into the unbending sternness of her features. But she would not capitulate easily. Her final "good night" held a snap of tartness, and her back was set in ramrod disapproval, as she lumbered stiffly up the stairs.

Father Jordan sighed, as he watched her disappear. Jane was a good woman—a sterling one—he reflected, but he could never remember her disporting herself very gracefully. He listened until her steps died away in the upstairs hall. Then, like a guilty little boy, he drew "Creeping Footfalls" from its hiding place.

One hour ticked past, and two. The logs in the open fireplace crackled, flamed, and dropped into a ruby-jeweled white ash. And Father Jordan read on.

John Marsh reached the corner. There was not a soul, not a sound in the quiet street. In a sudden flare of wind the street lamp flickered and went out. A flurry of withered leaves whipped rustlingly along the gutter. Then, above the gentle swishing of scurrying leaves, rose another sound—of stealthy footfalls, creeping closer and closer upon him in the darkness.

A footfall, stealthy and creeping, scraped across the porch. The book shot from the priest's startled fingers and rolled with a crash to the floor. Imagination! It was a good story. It flecked to the raw nerves he was not aware he possessed. He laughed, a merry ringing laugh, at himself and groaned, as he stooped to gather up the tale. A plumpish man cannot bend as soundly as a supple willow tree. Just as his reaching hand closed over the fallen book, another movement rustled across the stillness of the sleeping night—of fingers groping feelingly across an unknown door. The knob creaked protestingly, as unfamiliar hands fumbled and turned it. It re-

fused to yield its barred seclusion, and a sharp tap scratched along the heavy panels.

Father Jordan was not a timid man. The pitch the story had keyed him to was no indication of a cowardly heart. And people often came to see him at all hours of the night. He placed the book upon the mantel and strode across to the hall door. He did not walk quietly. There was no need. Once asleep, nothing less than an earthquake could waken Jane Flynn. A blast of stinging wind struck him, as the door swung wide. Basking in the late summer setting of the story that enthralled him, he had forgotten that winter was about him. The tingling frost hurled him shiveringly into the present. A man was loitering in the shadows, away from the stream of rosy light that flowed from the open door. With a little cry he darted in past the blinking priest and threw the door shut after him. He caught Father Jordan's arm in a frantic clutch and peered anxiously up into his face.

"Oh, father, Pierre must come in. Pierre must talk, father. He no sleep—no eat." The words poured in a flood from his trembling lips.

"You are not of my flock?" the priest queried curiously, his eyes resting with benevolent sympathy upon the man groveling before him. "Do I know you?"

"Pierre le Brun my name," he informed in a hoarse whisper. "Eet matters not that I belong to your flock, no?"

"That it does not, Pierre le Brun, if you need me," the other agreed gently. "What matters most is that you are cold and maybe hungry. We can talk when you are rested and warmed."

He led the way to the big fireplace, pulled out his own comfortable chair for the shivering man, and tossed some wood upon the gleaming ash.

"I will brew you some tea, Pierre," he offered hospitably.

Le Brun made as if to check him, then, changing his mind, he sank wordlessly back into the soft cushions and spread his stiff fingers out to the slowly smoldering pine logs. It took Father Jordan but a moment to fill the little copper kettle at the kitchen sink. The tea bags and the cups and cakes he brought from the buffet in the dining room. And, while he waited for the kettle to boil upon the tiny grill, he settled himself opposite his strange caller.

A Frenchman; that was evident from his name and accent. He was a small, wiry man of forty-five or so, with hair graying about the temples and a heavy growth of beard crusting his gaunt cheeks. He squirmed restlessly beneath Father Jordan's friendly scrutiny. His dark eyes were staring into the fire, and they glowed with a mad brightness. Unexpectedly he wheeled about, and his flaming glance shot sharply into the priest's kindly one. He looked, as he said, as if he had neither slept nor eaten. His manner was wild.

"Pierre no wait, father," he cried madly. "He no want tea. He want talk an' absolution."

Perhaps it would be best to let the man talk and cool his burning conscience.

"All right, Pierre," the priest said comfortingly. "You tell me, and then perhaps peace will come."

The Frenchman's crafty glance darted about the rooms and to the stairs, showing plainly between the parted curtains.

"You leeve wit' whom, father?" he asked cunningly. "Some one who lis'n to Pierre an' tel' on heem, maybe?"

"Only my good housekeeper, Jane Flynn. Unless one shouts within her very ears, she is deaf as the floor upon which you stand, Pierre. She sleeps soundly and always undisturbed. The secret that you give me will be safe," the priest reassured him.

"An' you can never tel', father?"

Father Jordan's head inclined in sol-

emn promise. "I can never tell, Pierre," he repeated.

A second longer Le Brun gazed into the glowing fire. His lips were working spasmodically, and his bony hand closed and unclosed nervously upon his trembling knee. In a sudden sweeping tide of fright his self-restraint whirled away.

"Pierre keel a man, father—t'ree week ago, an' no one know. But Pierre afraid he come back an' tel' on heem. He want absolution an' peace, father." Pleadingly his burning eyes clung to the priest's.

The confession had been worse than Father Jordan was prepared for, and his shocked surprise showed in the seriousness that clouded his face.

"You killed a fellow being, Pierre le Brun? And the police do not know?"

"No, they not know," the Frenchman fairly screamed. "An' you no let them know?"

The priest shook his head slowly. "It is not for me to decide. My hands are tied. But I cannot promise you peace, Pierre. I can intercede for you, but peace can only come from the cleansing of your own heart."

"Pierre no un'erstan', father." The cunning fear that spread its shadow over his pinched features belied his words.

"You do understand, Pierre le Brun," Father Jordan retorted levelly. "How and why did you kill this man?"

"Pierre keel heem in a boat at sea. An' no one know he ees wit' heem. We are alone. Two of us. Piere strike heem many times an' t'row heem into water."

"Who was he? And why did you kill him?"

"I keel heem because he say Pierre steal. He say in boat Pierre breeng heem out to rob."

"Did you?"

The man shook a vigorously negative head; pressing his shaking lips tightly together, as if they might let drip a different story. The good priest read the lie.

"Then you have also stolen as well as killed," he remarked sadly. "Who was this man?"

"An' ol' man. An'rew Loux he call heem."

"How did he come to go out in your boat? Or was it your boat?"

The other nodded dumbly. Then, after a minute, he spoke.

"Pierre ask heem," he admitted reluctantly.

He was not the first to find it difficult to be untruthful beneath Father Jordan's keen probing. The flames were lapping the crackling logs in hungry warmth, and the copper kettle began to sing its humming song.

"We will have tea, Pierre le Brun. Tea and cakes to rest and warm you, and then you will go back to the beginning and tell me all."

With a steady hand Father Jordan poured the water upon the tiny muslin bags, and an amber pool broadened in each fragile cup. Calmly he passed the dainty cakes and then, his duties as a gracious host done, he leaned back and, with dreamy eyes, sat studying the dancing fire. To all intents the white-faced, trembling man had faded from the peaceful room.

Not so with Pierre le Brun. He gulped the hot tea thirstily and stuffed the frosted anise-seed cakes starvingly untasted into his mouth. While he greedily swallowed, his eyes watched the benign face of the kindly priest, with a sly speculation that deepened into craftiness, as the steaming drink lulled to quiet his trembling limbs. With a harsh clatter he set his cup upon the table and rose. Father Jordan glanced questioningly up at him.

"You are ready, Pierre, to have our little talk?" he queried.

The Frenchman laughed shortly. A queer combination of bravado, scoffing, and fear. It grated upon the priest's ears.

"Me talk?" jeered Le Brun. "I got

not'ing to say. Father no believe what Pierre already tell heem? Eet no so? Pierre drunk, an' heem fool kin' father."

The look that Father Jordan flashed at him was like the cutting swish of a steel rapier in its swift intensity.

"So that is what my tea and comfort have done to you—made you gird your cowardice for a firmer stand. Can you never be truthful, man—even in the agony of your own soul? It is now that you are lying. Pierre le Brun, as a Christian, I ask you to get down on your knees and confess your sins to Almighty God. And, as a man, I ask you to give yourself up to the police. For the peace of your suffering soul, I ask you to."

"No! No! Father no un'erstand. Pierre do not'ing!"

The mad fright of his refutation stamped it an untruth. Patiently silent, Father Jordan waited for the storm to lull. Perspiration rained in a glistening shower down the man's pallid face. His eyes turned guiltily away. One hand fumbled searchingly in a pocket of his baggy coat. He pulled it out and from the dirty palm dropped a small carved ivory elephant before the priest.

"Pierre geeve heem to kin' father. Eet ees a presen'. An' he breeng good luck. Eet ees wort' five, ten dollar, maybe."

"If it brings good luck you need it yourself, Pierre," the priest responded coldly. "Why offer it to me? Bribery is not a penance that can purchase release from your sins."

"Pierre has no sins, father. Eet not trut' what he once say. An' he not keep dat charm. An'rew Loux tell heem it breeng bad, bad luck." His cheeks went white at the inadvertent admission.

"From where did this come?" Father Jordan asked sternly, picking up the lovely ornament and turning it over in his fingers. "It is hand-carved, and those eyes are emeralds. It is worth many dollars, Pierre le Brun."

"Many, many," the man assented eagerly. "An' father take eet?"

"From where did this come?"

"Does the good father theenk Pierre steal eet?"

"The good father is not thinking. He knows. And with your own lips you make the admission." He spoke low, his tone as unbending as iron in a child's hands.

A wild look, like the strained terror of a trapped animal, flashed through the Frenchman's eyes. His glance met the priest's and wavered, but, before it fell, Father Jordan read the change that was coming over the other. Suspicion and a scorching hate were welling up within him.

"You could not hate nor fear me when I would only help you," the priest told him quietly.

"Help? Wit' dose p'leece what father ask Pierre to geeve heem to?" He laughed nastily.

"I have not threatened you with the police. I cannot hand you over to them unless you will. And this trinket that you would leave with me—why is it good luck to me and bad to you?"

In the warmth of the room the man shivered before the licking flames of the bright fire.

"Eet ees dose eyes—what stare an' stare like question at Pierre. Green eyes, like An'rew Loux, he have."

"Then this belonged to Andrew Loux? Are you ready to speak the truth now—from the beginning, Pierre?"

Stubbornly the man shook his head.

"Pierre made no confession, father. He sorry he come. An' he say good night." His fingers worked nervously about the band of his shabby fur cap, as he began backing precipitately toward the hall.

Slowly Father Jordan stepped nearer. His usually mild blue eyes held the hard light of unyielding pity.

"Pierre le Brun," he said with solemn crispness, his eyes boring into the man,

with an hypnotic steadiness that forced the other's glance to meet his, "you are giving me this because it is a reminder of what you have done, and you dare not keep it. Neither do you dare throw it away, for fear it will find its way again to you."

With a quick motion he reached out and dropped it into the grimy cup of Pierre's hand. The effect was startling. A hoarse cry tore from Le Brun's throat, as the cold image struck his palm. He recoiled, as from a scorching thing, and it rolled, with the hollow rattle of cast dice, across the floor.

"You see, Pierre," the priest spoke earnestly, "you cannot smother the crime you have committed. Until you cleanse your soul by confession and retribution it will haunt you as an evil nightmare. It is the eyes of Andrew Loux that stare back at you through your own conscience, not the tiny green jewels of this precious bauble. You cannot hide this crime you have committed. It will come out."

"Eet will not come out!" There was unbridled terror in the whimpering wail.

Father Jordan did not speak again. Silently he waited, while the silver clock on the mantel rhythmically ticked the night away. He could do no more than wait for quiet and bitter reflection to soften the shell of selfish fear that wrapped the man before him. The logs in the fire tumbled with a showering rain of ash. A spark flickered, wound itself in the spiral of blue smoke curling from a half-charred end, and burst into a snapping pinwheel of flame. It darted its golden light over the soft rug and into the green jewels that studded the head of the toy that lay upon it. They throbbed in answer to the warm kiss and shot gleaming barbs of light across the room, like eyes dancing in malevolent accusation. The glinting rays flitted across Le Brun's face and brought his glance sharply to the spot. He threw up one frayed sleeve to shut out the

sight, and he gurgled chokingly, as if the stabbing darts had burned his guilty breath.

"You lie!" he screamed madly. "Eet *ees* An'rew Loux's eyes what stare at——" He broke off impotently. "You theenk you make Pierre talk more wit' quiet, an' you watch heem, like a cat, but he fool you."

Swiftly he cleared the room, wrenched the outer door open, and disappeared into the darkness. It took but a second for the priest to reach the door, but Pierre le Brun had vanished with the swiftness of a falling star.

Father Jordan came thoughtfully back into the room. There was nothing he could do; nothing different he could have done. Yet a deep crease of worry wrinkled his smooth brow. His heart ached for the man, tearing through the freezing night, with only his chilling conscience for company. He would break down eventually, for he was but a craven coward; but in the meanwhile he was traveling such a tortuously lonely path. If he could have made him see the futility of it! If he had instilled into him an understanding of what crime always did to the man who perpetrated it—either broke him at the start, or led him on and on, to hurl him in the end, a crushed thing, against the wall of final reckoning. Pierre would commit no second crime, Father Jordan reflected consolingly. He was bending too easily beneath the weight of the first.

Absently the priest took down his book and settled himself in his chair. But the zest was gone from the story. The printed words were ashes in the face of the tragic bit of reality that had interrupted him. Some other time its spell might recapture him, but not to-night. He would say a prayer for the man and go to bed. First, though, he would clear away the remains of the tea. Jane was apt to be sarcastic about late lunching.

He washed the cups and emptied the water that remained in the kettle. Care-

fully he brushed the crumbs from the table and the floor, and tossed them into the grate. Not until he was sure the room wore its customary dress of old-maidish orderliness did he snap off the light above his head. The dying embers cast a rosy glow, so that he could find his way unstumblingly into the hall. The light there could be switched off from upstairs.

Father Jordan's foot just touched the bottom step, when a stealthy footfall brushed again across the porch. This time he did not tingle nervously. A smile of glad relief broke over his face, and he had the door welcomingly wide before the stranger's hand could reach the panel.

"You have come back, Pierre le Brun," he cried, his voice ringing with happiness. "You have come back to confess and take the punishment that should be yours."

As before, Pierre flitted noiselessly into the house and closed the heavy door. His face, as he raised it to the exultant face of the priest, was as glistening white as the frost that ringed the window panes; and in his eyes lay the madness of hate.

"I have come back, father," he said, and the words whistled through his chattering teeth. "Pierre heem fool an' talk too much. Pierre no beleeve father keep steell. Heem 'fraid he tel', so he come back to choke heem steell."

"Pierre le Brun, you are crazy. You cannot kill again." There was amazement, but no cowardly alarm, in the priest's firm tone.

"No?" The man's laugh rippled with an insane silkiness.

"I say not, Pierre. As Andrew Loux's eyes follow you, so would my voice come back saying always in your ear: 'Pierre must not kill.'"

"My ears would be deaf, father, as you say thees housekeeper what you have. You go first an' tel' the good God about Pierre, eef you want."

He gave a quick lunge, his bony hand caught the priest's throat, and his fingers buried themselves, with the tenacious clutch of tiger claws, into the soft flesh. The struggle lasted but a moment. The unexpectedness of it sent Father Jordan crashing to the floor, Le Brun on top of him, clawing into his neck with fingers that were steel bands of hate. When the writhing figure straightened into ghastly stillness, he pulled himself up. Dragging the body over the sill into the living room, he dropped it in the black shadow that had been flickering firelight a while before. And, as it fell from his hands, a shaft of light, flowing in through the curtains he had pulled apart with the dragging body, flecked an answering spark, that flashed with the wickedness of a spying eye from the thickness of the rug. The emerald eyes of the ivory elephant were accusing him.

Limp with panic, Le Brun threw himself upon the floor and tried to push the priest aside. It was hard work. Death had brought an added weight to Father Jordan's generous build, and the fury which had given a demon strength to Pierre le Brun was spent. At last his fingers pried the ivory elephant out of the carpet. He grunted in satisfaction, but, as he would have dropped it again into his pocket to await safer disposal, perhaps, it fell once more from his nerveless grasp and rattled away across the room.

A step crunched creakingly outside. Le Brun got quietly to his feet and, creeping to the window, drew the shade the merest crack. A man was striding boldly through the yard, cutting over to the church next door. Only old John Ryan to shake the fire, so that the church would be warm for early mass. But Le Brun could not know that. He worked his way into the kitchen and felt around until he found the outer door. He let himself out noiselessly and slipped, like a wraith, into the graying darkness. A few feet from the house he paused and

looked back. Maybe regretting his hasty retreat, with the telltale trinket left behind; maybe recalled by the beckoning glint of its glittering eyes. For, as the wind from the closing door blew over the floor, it swayed the curtain in the farther room, and the light lay for an instant in the corner, where the ivory bauble gleamed. Were Andrew Loux's eyes following him still into the coming day?

The light was burning in the lower hall when Jane Flynn came down the next morning. That did not surprise her, for Father Jordan was apt to be forgetful, especially when he was hurried. The bell was tolling for the five o'clock mass, and, warmly cloaked and bonneted, Jane slipped out and joined the other early worshippers. She liked to go to first mass. It gave her a virtuous feeling and a long free day. Primly she went along the gravel path to the sidewalk and turned a square corner to the church. Others were tramping with crunching steps over the frozen grass, but not so with Jane. Short cuts never appealed to her.

There were not many people out. It was a morning to turn over and snuggle beneath the toasty comfort of the woolen blankets. The sky was turning pink along the horizon, but the stars still twinkled frostily in the blue-gray light of dawn. Many nodded pleasantly to Jane, and Jane nodded back, with the aloof dignity becoming her station in life. She made her genuflection and sank with a devout head resting upon the pew in front of her. Leisurely she said her prayer and then sat back restfully on her bench. There were jonquils in the silver vases on the marble altar, the yellow blossoms fluttering in the gentle breeze of the blowing candle. This was Jane's moment of moments—this breathless pause of peacefulness that waited her good priest's step.

But to-day the step was long in coming. The congregation began stirring in their seats, and questioning glances

winged to where Jane sat in contented oblivion. Old John Ryan tiptoed squeakily down the wide aisle and entered the pew. He slid a piece of paper along the prayer book Jane was religiously clutching in her hand. "Come outside," was scrawled upon it. It would never do to attempt to address Jane verbally in the sacred portals of the church. She darted him a questioning look, but rose without speaking. John waited until they were safely out of earshot, and then shouted:

"Where's Father Jordan?"

"Father Jordan?" Jane's face wrinkled with consternation. "You mean he ain't come into the church yet?"

"That he ain't. An', though I've all but knocked the house down, he don't answer me there, neither."

Jane pursed her lips grimly. Her idol was becoming common clay.

"I know what happened, John Ryan," she whispered vehemently. "What I al'ays perdidcked. That he'd stay up a bit too late some time readin', an' oversleep fer church. You come in with me an' help get him off."

She took the short cut this time, John running close at her heels. It had been many minutes since the bell had sent its tolling call over the morning air. Jane let them in with her key.

"You go in the living room, John," she ordered tersely, "an' I'll skip up and pound on his door."

She moved with lightning rapidity, yet she was but halfway up when the sexton's scream of horror stopped her rushing steps. White-faced, clinging to the banister for support, she dragged herself back down the stairs. Master of himself after the first shock, Ryan met her outside the velvet curtain he was pulling fast behind him.

"Father Jordan is dead, Jane," he said simply. "An' 'tis not a sight for woman's eyes. You go tell them at the church an' I'll call the police."

"P'leece?"

"He has been murdered."

"Murdered?" Jane shrilled the word in horror-stricken disbelief. "You're crazy, John Ryan!"

"Would to the good God that I were," he replied soberly. Tears were already coursing through the furrows of his cheeks. "He would not want us to grieve or fuss, Jane. Just have some un tell the congregation there'll be no service, an' then come back yourself. I don't know much, but I do know that the curious should be kept out until the police get here."

With stunned dispatch Jane performed her errand and returned alone to the parish house. The curtains were close together over the living-room door. She could hear John Ryan pacing up and down, but she made no attempt to enter. Death in any guise appalled Jane, and death when it brushed her heart was unbearable. Mechanically she took off her coat and her bonnet and sank down on the steps, leaning her head against the hard railing. John came out and joined her. As he crossed the threshold of the room, his toe stubbed a small white object upon the floor near the door and sent it hurtling lightly into the hall. It fell at Jane's feet, and she picked it up, with scarcely a glance, and dropped it into her pocket.

"A bit of a trinket that somebody gave to father, I suppose," she remarked.

She had no eye for such trash. Jane Flynn was a serious and level-headed woman. No one had ever seen her cry, but just now her chin was not as steady as it might have been.

"You say he was killed?" she asked.

"Yes, Jane. But who could have killed him?"

She was reading his lips.

"I don't know. Everybody was al'ays bringin' him things an' carin' fer him. If they could on'y o' brought me ears to hear sounds when they wasn't close. Maybe he called me, John. an' I never heard him. How was he killed?"

John raised his hand significantly to his throat. "Chocked," he said.

A drop of blood, where the teeth bit sharply in, flecked Jane's mouth.

"He was alive when I went up to bed about eleven o'clock. An' alone," she informed fiercely. "We gotta find out who come after that, John."

"The police will," he promised in blind faith. "It ain't Christian, Jane, but if I had him between my two hands I'd crush the life out'n his body."

"Sh. Father wouldn't want us to talk that way. But"—her tone dropped unconsciously—"I would, too, John. I'd tear him to pieces with my hands. The p'leece are comin' now." She raised her head at the sound of many rushing feet upon the porch.

They came with firm tread, keen eyes, and buttons of glittering brass. With poking fingers and endless questions that seemed to touch everything and lead nowhere. The tragic news spread, and people who loved the priest filled the house, like clouds of swarming bees. The bell in the old stone tower next door was hushed; as hushed and still as the figure that tender arms had carried up and laid upon his bed. Noon warmed under the bright kiss of the sun, and the secret of the fiend who had last seen the good father alive remained safe. There were no clues. The room showed no signs of a nocturnal visitor; no indication of a struggle. It was as if the thing in "Creeping Footfalls" had stolen out, committed the repulsive deed, and then slipped safely back between the covers of the book.

"But some one had to come in," John Ryan insisted.

He was sitting beside Jane in the kitchen. They clung together, these two who had been first across the borderland of tragedy.

"Some one had to, John," she repeated dully. "An', if the good Lord had on'y of gaven me ears, I could have heard him."

"Don't you worry, Jane. He'll take care of that. The police'll get 'im."

A man was shuffling in through the crowd that thronged the little back porch. He was a Frenchman, with hair graying about the temples and the black of a long, unshaven beard crusting his gaunt cheeks. His fingers worked nervously with the band of the shabby fur cap he held in his hands.

"I come a long way to see father," he said, choosing John Ryan from all the others to address. "An' dey tel' me he die." He jerked an indicating shoulder toward the yard.

"He is gone where he cannot see you," John told him commiseratingly. "He has been killed—murdered," he added bluntly.

"Keel heem? The good father? Who keel heem?"

"Somebody—last night—in the dead of the night. Choked him."

"But dose p'leece get heem an' breeng heem back?"

John's head moved slowly, regretfully. "There is none of them things they call clews," he informed.

The man lowered his head, and Ryan could not get the look that narrowed his snapping eyes.

"No theeng what dey call clew," the stranger said after a pause, raising his head. "He leeve not'ing behin'?"

"Nothing," the sexton reiterated. "But they'll get 'im," he went on, firm in his faith. "You can't bury a crime like that. If Jane wasn't so deaf, I'll bet he wouldn't be far away now."

The Frenchman moved back against the wall and studied Jane with his burning eyes. He did not attract attention. There were many people with pallid cheeks in the crowded room. And Jane's glance, when it rested upon him, held a silent sympathy. He was a stranger, and he had come a long way to see her beloved priest, who was gone. Her chin quivered, and she got up and walked over to the stove. She raised a lid and

poked among the coals to make a bed for the wood she gathered in her hand. Tears trembled perilously upon her lashes, and she dropped the poker and hastily pulled a handkerchief from the pocket of her old-fashioned skirt. A small white object whipped out with it and fell into the red coals. Jane did not see it; the handkerchief was pressed blindingly against her face.

With a tense jerk the man by the wall leaned out and peered into the glowing bed at the ivory elephant curling to a withered brown in the scorching blast. He smiled, as the woman crammed the logs on top of it and snapped the iron lid shut. After a few moments he began shouldering his way toward the door. People and more people were pouring into the yard, and at the foot of the steps the brass-buttoned coat of a policeman loomed up.

The stranger changed his mind. He drifted, with the others, into the front rooms. But policemen strolled among the throng and kept sentinel vigil outside the living-room doors. The Frenchman paced steadily forward, his head bowed, apparently as other heads, with the weight of his great grief. The sunlight from the front windows lay over the red carpet in the hall, flooding it into a path as crimson as blood. The man shivered almost imperceptibly, and his hand touched the knob of the front door.

A blue-uniformed officer, a young man who was of Father Jordan's parish, guarded it.

"There have been many hearts scarred to-day," he remarked, mainly to offer consolation to the man whose suffering seemed as deep as his own. And because he was of the law, and instructions were to get the names of every one, he said: "You do not belong to the parish?"

Dumbly the Frenchman shook his head.

"And your name?" the other persisted kindly.

The man hesitated and then, bravely loud, he spoke: "Pierre le Brun."

A gentle rustle, like the unfolding of wings, stirred behind the heavy portières, and a voice sighed through the sunshine of the hall.

"Pierre le Brun," it called, "you have come back. Pierre must not kill—kill."

With a wild shriek Pierre threw himself upon the officer. His body was trembling; his working lips could scarcely mold the words that tore in screaming terror from his throat.

"He has come back to tell on Pierre! To say Pierre keel heem, too!"

A firm grip closed over Pierre le Brun's arm. There was a rush of running feet, and the hall surged with a sea of startled, accusing faces; Jane's among them.

The policeman tightened his grip on Pierre and swung his stick toward the swaying curtains.

"What's behind there," he snapped sharply to Jane. He had to repeat the question before she understood.

"On'y a presen' to the kind father," she replied, swinging the drapery aside and disclosing to their astonished eyes the forgotten cage of Hercules.



## THE HOVE MURDER MYSTERY

**T**HE town of Hove, England, has been made famous by the murder mystery which occurred there last December. Mystery lies just around a street corner in the town, because there Norman Bailey, an ex-major in the British army, disappeared one morning, after he had killed his young wife, according to the British police. He was seen to pass that corner, neatly groomed for business, and then he dropped out of sight, as if the pavement had swallowed him up.

Scotland Yard, with all its connections with the police of other countries, has not been able to find him. His description has been wired all over the world, and several men resembling him have been detained in various places. But Bailey's disappearance and his motive for the crime continue to constitute one of the most sensational mysteries with which the English police have ever been confronted.

Bailey, who is a handsome young fellow of twenty-eight, had been happily married for two and a half years. On the night of December sixth, he and his wife gave a quiet little party in their flat. All the guests left at ten o'clock, except a Miss Morgan, who lives in the flat above. She remained and chatted until midnight with the two young people.

The next morning about eight o'clock, Mrs. Frost, the caretaker of the building, saw Bailey leave for business. He was sprucely dressed and shaved as usual. A few minutes later, Grace Bishop, the Bailey maid, cried out that something was wrong in the Bailey flat. The police were summoned at once and on arrival discovered that Mrs. Bailey had been murdered. There was a bullet hole in her head, and a French knife was buried to the hilt in her breast. On the bed was a note: "I did not do it for jealousy or cowardice, but just for love."

A few days later a series of letters began to arrive which showed that the man who was wanted so badly by the police, was still under their very noses. The letters were postmarked "London," and were addressed to the maid, the chief constable at Hove, and to the editor of a paper. Hove is just a short distance from London. In spite of all the efforts of the authorities, Bailey has never been found.

# The Unmasked Five

*by* Douglas Grey

Author of the "Thorndyke Flint" Stories.

## CHAPTER I.

### THAT JOB AT THORLEIGH'S.

**M**ANY of the cross streets from Fifth avenue to Broadway above Greeley Square seem to furnish a rear outlet for the palatial stores which face on the more frequented shopping thoroughfares parallel to them. On this wet, foggy night this particular back street was not only darker than usual, but, so far as could be made out, deserted of humanity.

The driving sleet blotted out everything, and, if a policeman really were tramping his post, you could tell it only by his muffled footfalls. When he turned the corner, as he soon did, the whole block became a void of tempest-riven blackness, with not a suggestion of any kind of life, either in sight or hearing.

Not a night to be out, if one could possibly stay indoors. Yet the fifty-odd theaters in and around Times Square were comfortably filled; numerous taxis were darting about in the slush, and plenty of people dotted the sidewalks in the brightly lighted reaches of Broadway.

As a matter of fact, even this forbiddingly desolate backwash of a street was not utterly forsaken. Hardly had the echoes of the policeman's heavy footsteps died away, when, ghostlike, out of the fog loomed two raincoated figures, those of a man and a girl.

The man closed the large umbrella he had been holding over both, and they slipped into the deep doorway of a mas-

sive stone building which evidently was the back premises of one of the great business establishments numerous in the neighborhood. The lower windows were blinded by sheet-iron shutters, while strong iron grills protected those above. To the left of the square vestibule, in which the newcomers found themselves, a jaillike gate, reaching from floor to ceiling, prevented their going any farther. Behind the ponderous grating was a closed door.

"Look at this, Marie!" grumbled the man. "All locked up tight till morning. You can't see him to-night. Let's go right home."

"I've just got to see him!" insisted the girl. "Here's a bell."

A pressure on the electric button brought quick response in the swinging open of the stout inner door. A flood of light from within brought into sharp relief the outline of a young man, who stepped briskly forward, obviously much on his guard.

Peering keenly through the grating from beneath his down-drawn cap, not only at the belated callers, but also into the black mystery of the night behind them, his right hand, impelled by a habit of caution, slid into the side pocket of his coat. The next instant he had recognized them and sent a cheery greeting through the gate:

"Hello, Dave! Why, Marie!"

"Yes, Tom!" she answered demurely. "I hope you're not angry at our coming, but——"

"Angry!" interrupted the young man impetuously. "I'm tickled to death!"

Let it be explained here that Tom Gilmore was one of the salesmen in the wholesale and retail fur house of Thorleigh & Co., who had volunteered to do night duty for a short time, to supplement the regular watchman, Larry Kehoe, in maintaining guard over the exceptionally valuable stock of made-up furs then on the premises.

The house of Thorleigh & Co. made a specialty of Russian sables, sealskins and other expensive goods. The fact that a consignment of Russian sable coats and Alaska sealskins would be in the building for a week or so, had made Saul Thorleigh, president of the company, only too glad to accept Tom Gilmore's offer to act as an additional guard for a few nights.

"I'll tell you how it is, Tom," broke in the girl's companion. "We've been to the movies. Marie was crazy to see that new film at the Endymion. This was its last night, and I, as her brother, being the nearest victim, she sandbagged me into taking her."

"I offered to pay for the tickets, didn't I?" interrupted the girl laughingly.

"Oh, sure!" Her brother grinned. "The sister's usual bluff—eh, Tom? Well, we've just come out of the theater. She's been saying all evening that she has a date with you for to-morrow afternoon to go to a piano recital that she won't be able to keep. They were going to let her off at the store, but now the manager says it can't be done—they are too busy. When she found that he really meant it, nothing would do her but to come over here to tell you."

Tom Gilmore's disappointment could be seen in the quick flash of his eyes of Irish blue and the droop at the corners of an usually smiling mouth.

Her timid suggestion that he might go without her was manifestly absurd. What did he care for piano recitals in themselves? She was sure he swore to himself.

You see, he expected to be married to Marie Lloyd within a month. Impulsively he thrust his hand toward her through the bars of the grating. There was swift response. Standing her rolled-up umbrella in a corner of the lobby, she laid her daintily gloved hand in that of her fiancé.

Fave Lloyd said nothing, but it was easy to see that he approved of his future brother-in-law.

"I wish I could ask you and Dave to come in," said Tom, after a pause, as reluctantly he let her hand go. "But we are not supposed to open this gate until the day watchman comes in the morning."

"I've a good mind to reach through the bars and shoot back the bolt myself," challenged Marie playfully.

"You couldn't," was his sober reply. "That would be too easy for burglars. The bolts are worked from inside the building, twenty feet away from the gate. We are not taking any more chances on robbery than we have to."

"That's so," corroborated Dave Lloyd. "The Safeguard Burglar Insurance Company considers the Thorleigh Building one of its best risks. I am a Safeguard employee, and I know. Well, it's time we were moving on. Come, Marie! Rotten night, Tom, isn't it?"

Dave Lloyd was a considerate brother. Besides, he had a sweetheart of his own. So he went outside and trudged up and down in the sleet alone for several minutes.

"Now, Marie!" he called softly at last. "It's cold out here. Coming?"

"Here I am, Dave!"

She ran down the two steps from the entry and seized her big brother's arm to snuggle under his umbrella. Sister and brother were at once swallowed up in the gloom of what Dave Lloyd had truthfully enough stigmatized as a "rotten night."

Tom Gilmore, one hand gripping a

bar of the iron-grated door, followed the girl with wistful eyes till she disappeared. As he turned to go inside, he had a momentary glimpse of a masked man in a long overcoat, with a soft hat pulled down over his brow. Then a blackjack came down on Gilmore's head, and he crumpled in a heap on the floor.

The man in the overcoat bent over the unconscious form and satisfied himself that his murderous work had been well done. He pocketed the weapon he had used—an inch-thick club of woven black leather covering a supple steel core, and nobbed at the end with lead—and waited.

"Get him?"

The brief query came from another man, also masked, who slipped into the doorway from the street and stared through the grating at Tom Gilmore huddled on the floor just inside.

"Yes, he won't cut any ice," was the whispered reply.

"Croaked?"

"I dunno," indifferently. "I laid out the other watchman, too—the old one. He's upstairs. That's where the stuff is we want. Got your flash ready?"

"Yes."

"Look out then!"

The light was switched off, so that a casual passer-by would not know the inner door was open. In the darkness there was the clank of metal. The inside man was opening the grated iron gate.

Without a sound the other one slipped in, flashing his electric light for an instant on the floor, to make sure he wouldn't stumble over the prostrate man just inside. Then, laying a hand on the arm of his pal, he whispered:

"Number Three is in the auto. We've got to work quick. The cop will be back here in less than fifteen minutes."

"We can get what we want in less than ten," growled the other. "Help me move this out of the way, and we'll get busy."

"All right! Grab his head. I'll take his feet."

The two cracksmen lifted the inert form of Tom Gilmore to one side, behind the inner door. Then, guided by a single incandescent, which they knew to be at the top of the first staircase, they were soon in the great showroom on the second floor.

It was a well-planned job. The man who had blackjacked Gilmore had been hidden in the building. He seemed to be familiar with all its arrangements. How he had got in was his own secret. Blackjack in hand, he had fallen upon the watchman, Larry Kehoe, and, taking him unawares from behind, had left him senseless. Then he had expertly cut the master wire of the burglar alarm connected with the Safeguard Company's detective department, and he had gone downstairs to deal with Tom Gilmore.

There was no uncertainty in the movements of the two robbers. They went straight up to two steel-lined cases in the second-story showroom and swiftly jimmed them open. They had already been partly forced. In one of the cases hung six splendidly made coats of Russian sable, and in the other were several women's coats of Alaska seal.

"The sables first!" whispered the man who had come from the outside. "We'll take three each."

They hurried down the dark staircase to the street.

"All right!" mumbled the man who had spoken before. "In with 'em!"

A large limousine had silently drawn up to the curb, and the man in a chauffeur's cap, at the steering wheel, had kept his engine running. The coats were inside, and the door was noiselessly closed in a minute.

"Listen, Number Three!" whispered one of the men to the chauffeur. "Be ready to beat it as soon as you get the word."

"Don't worry!" murmured the chauffeur.

feur. "Bring down the stuff. I'll land the get-away.

The two raiders went up to the second floor for more loot. They brought down two bundles of seal coats. As they threw them into the car, they gave the driver the signal to go. He flashed on the interior and side lights full.

In much less than ten minutes from the moment when the loaded "billy" had felled Tom Gilmore, the limousine, its lights on, with the two robbers and their booty inside, had glided away, to mingle with the other motor cars on Broadway that were taking home or to hotel supper rooms the thousands who had just come from the theaters. In general appearance the bandits' limousine differed not a whit from many of the luxurious cars which crowded it on all sides.

For perhaps ninety seconds after the departure of the limousine no one passed the dark rear entrance to Thorleigh & Co.'s. The sleet was sweeping the street harder than before. Then a man and girl in raincoats, under a wide umbrella, blew around the corner. The girl dived into Thorleigh's.

"Here it is, Dave!" she cried exultantly a moment later. "I told you so. Just where I left it—in the corner."

In her grasp was the rolled-up umbrella she had put down, so that she could give her hand to Tom Gilmore through the iron grating.

"I'll take your word for it," grunted her brother. "I can't see a thing."

Marie had already reached the street to join Dave, who was holding up his own umbrella, when she hesitated and ran back into the dark lobby. She turned to Dave with an apologetic little laugh.

"I'm just going to rap on the portcullis to see whether Tom will come out. There ought to be a trumpet, as in the days of knighthood."

She laughed again at her fancy, but

her brother, who wanted to go home, did not join in her mirth.

"Aw, what's the use of this bunk?" he grumbled. "Come on! Girls have the funniest notions——"

"Dave!" Marie's voice from the entry was raised in a shriek.

"By the Lord!" he ejaculated. "There's something wrong!"

He dashed into the entry and seized his sister's arm, as they both stumbled through the opening which should have been guarded by the iron grating.

Dave Lloyd was one of the operatives in the detective bureau of the Safeguard Company, and Marie had so often heard him tell of the ways of thieves and the slips they made which led to their detection, that she had known instinctively there was something sinister in the grating giving way before her light pressure, as she was about to tap one of the bars with her umbrella handle.

Girllike, her first thought was of her sweetheart.

"Somebody has been here, Dave!" she panted. "Thieves! And of course Tom would fight them, and they may have killed——"

"Bunk!" he snapped reassuringly. "Women always get the wrong idea. Everything's O. K., I tell you."

As a Safeguard Company private detective, Dave Lloyd was armed. So, even as he sought to quiet his sister's apprehensions, he drew out his pocket flash, as well as his automatic, and sent a shaft of white light behind the door. One glance, and hurriedly he shut off his light.

"Look here, Marie!" he said in cool, official tones. "It looks as if some one has cracked through this gate. Tom and Kehoe are chasing them through the building."

"How do you know?" she demanded with sharp suspicion.

"I heard Tom's voice just now." Dave could lie easily on occasion. "He and Larry have the yeggs on the run.

I'll have to stay here in case they try to get out this way. You know where the Safeguard offices are—only three blocks away. Have you nerve enough to go around there and tell the boss to come? He's always there till midnight."

"Why don't you telephone?"

"Wires cut! Sure to be!" was his laconic reply. "Go on, will you?"

"But, Tom——"

"Tom's all right, I tell you!" he interrupted. "Hurry, won't you?"

But she pushed past him and peeped behind the door. So that's how it was that a wild-eyed pretty girl, in a dripping raincoat, her light hair hopelessly out of curl and straggling across her pale cheeks, burst into the Safeguard offices, pushed past the clerk who would have stopped her, and, confronting Kenneth Martin, head of the company, in his comfortable private office, gasped out "*Thorleigh's! Thieves!*" and dropped to the floor in a dead faint.

## CHAPTER II.

### FLINT LOOKS IT OVER.

THE eminent criminologist, Thorndyke Flint, sat in the library of the exclusive Aristophanes Club, of which he had long been a member, looking through the pages of a rare first edition of which the club possessed one of the very few copies in existence.

It was only when there came something resembling a lull in his generally pressing professional engagements that he indulged himself thus. Never, save at long intervals, did he pass the sacredly guarded portals of the Aristophanes, and seldom was he permitted to spend more than an hour or two in its quiet, cultured atmosphere without disturbance.

So now, as he changed his position, throwing one knee over the other and leaning back in his leather-covered chair, to enjoy more comfortably the precious volume in his hand, it did not surprise

him when one of the grave-faced, well-trained club servants bent over him to whisper:

"Mr. Flint, Mr. Frank Judson is here to see you."

The shadow of a frown ran across the detective's brow, for he knew a call by his principal assistant, Judson, meant that something important demanded his attention.

"In the reception room, Simms?" he asked, as he got up to return his volume to the bookcase.

"Yes, sir."

Thorndyke Flint went down to the basement room, adjoining the secretary's office, where visitors were held in cold storage until the club member they sought, saw, or declined to see, them. He found a young man, of quick manner and slim, athletic build, walking impatiently up and down. Frank Judson was the detective's confidential assistant.

"What is it, Jud?"

"Kenneth Martin telephoned," replied Judson. "There's a big robbery and murder at Thorleigh's fur house."

"Murder?"

"The watchman—man named Kehoe," was the answer. "But that doesn't worry Martin so much as the loss to his concern, the Safeguard Burglar Insurance Company. He says every firm, where there has been a big robbery of late, is insured with him. But, of course, that may be a mere coincidence."

"It may be," admitted Thorndyke Flint. "But I think not."

His overcoat was on by this time, and, taking his hat from the attendant, he went out and stepped into the taxi which had brought Judson to the club, followed by that always efficient young man.

The policeman on duty at the back door of Thorleigh's saluted and stood back to let Flint and Judson pass in. He knew them both.

A tall, bulky, dark-haired man, ap-

parently in his middle forties, appeared at the head of the staircase, when they were inside, and roared to them to come up. He was in a high state of excitement and swore aimlessly, as Thorn-dyke Flint and Frank Judson went up the stairs.

This was Kenneth Martin, president and manager of the Safeguard Com-pany. It was his boast that he never had possessed an intimate friend in his life, and the habitual expression in his aggressive black eyes seemed to say to every one he met for the first time: "I'm Kenneth Martin, of the Safe-guard. Who the devil are you?"

He never smoked, but in one corner of his hard mouth was always an un-lighted black cigar, on which he champed perpetually. When it was bit-ten to pulp, he replaced it with another.

As Thorndyke Flint entered the spa-cious showroom, Martin dashed over to two steel-lined cases against the wall and shouted furiously:

"Look here, Flint! All those Russian sables I told you about are gone! And a lot of sealskins! Hundreds of thou-sands of dollars' worth altogether, and every garment insured in my company. Curse the luck! They were protected by a special policy and in two days would have been taken away. Looks as if the thieves knew. But, of course, they did. It was an inside job. By the Eternal, maybe Thorleigh himself was in it, for all I know. In these days you can't trust any one. If I find out it was a conspiracy, and Thorleigh was in it, I'll—I'll——"

In his frenzy he bit in half the thick black cigar in his mouth and mechani-cally drew another from his waistcoat pocket.

"I wouldn't talk like that," chided Thorndyke Flint. "It's dangerous. Have the police found anything?"

"Hell's bells! They were here nearly an hour, but all they could say when they went away was that it was the

work of professionals, and they believe they can lay their hands on the parties inside of twelve hours. And Thorleigh is out of town."

Flint made no comment on this.

"Dave Lloyd discovered the robbery, I understand," he said. "I'll get him to give me the particulars."

But all Dave could tell was that he and his sister had been talking through the iron grating a few minutes before the robbery had taken place. They had left Thorleigh's, but came back shortly afterward for a forgotten umbrella. Then they found the grated gate open, and Tom Gilmore was lying senseless behind the inner door. Afterward it was discovered that the two steel-lined cases in the showroom had been looted, and that Kehoe was dead, apparently from a blow with some heavy weapon like a blackjack.

"Did any one see the robbers, or any of them?" asked the detective.

"Tom Gilmore had a glimpse of one before he was struck down," replied Dave. "He says the man wore a——"

"Never mind," interrupted Thorn-dyke Flint. "I'll hear Gilmore's story from his own lips."

He walked over to the young man, deathly white, sitting in a chair away from the others, toward whom Dave Lloyd pointed, and in a kindly voice asked him what he knew about the ap-pearance of the robbers.

Tom could only tell that the man he had seen—too late to defend himself from the loaded weapon—was fairly tall, wore a long overcoat and soft hat, and was masked. Then he was knocked unconscious and did not recover till he found himself looking into the face of Kenneth Martin, bending over him, waiting for him to come to.

"The iron gate was closed when the man struck you?" remarked Flint, his half-questioning tone assuming that the answer would be in the affirmative.

"Yes," was the reply.

"What time did you come on duty as a watchman?"

"Six o'clock. But I'd been in Mr. Thorleigh's office for an hour before that. You see," he explained, "I'm regularly a salesman here, and it was in connection with some work I'd done in that capacity that I was in conference with him. Then he took the night train for Chicago."

"When you and Kehoe came on as watchmen, did you not search the whole house from top to bottom to make sure no strangers were concealed anywhere?"

"Why—er——" Tom Gilmore hesitated.

"Such a precaution is customary, isn't it?" demanded the detective sharply.

"Yes, everywhere," was the response. "I was trying to recollect whether we were quite as thorough in our search as we should have been."

"Which means, of course, that you were not," shot in Thorndyke Flint.

"Kehoe and I looked on every floor, including the cellar, and we moved things about to search behind them, and so forth."

"But Kehoe had looked through the building so many times in the evening for months without finding anybody, that his search was a trifle perfunctory? And yours, too? That is proved by the fact that a thief had been able to conceal himself, ready to come out to rob the place when a suitable time arrived." Thorndyke Flint regarded Tom Gilmore thoughtfully in silence for a few moments. Then he remarked casually: "You were talking at the back entrance of Thorleigh's to a young lady, Miss Marie Lloyd, a short time before the robbery. Was the iron gate open then?"

"No, we talked through the bars."

"Was her brother, Dave Lloyd, there?"

"Part of the time. He went outside while I said a few words to Miss Lloyd

—bidding her good night," replied Tom Gilmore hesitatingly.

"I understand," was the detective's half-smiling murmur. A slight acidity came into his voice, as he asked. "Was the gate closed all the time?"

"Yes."

Thorndyke Flint walked up and down, his eyes on the floor, as if considering whether he would ask Tom Gilmore anything more just then. He chanced to walk across the heavy rug on which had lain the form of the slain watchman, Larry Kehoe, before the police had removed it. Mechanically he stopped to straighten out one corner of the rug that was rumped and turned up.

Tom Gilmore, anxiously watching him and trying to recall anything he might tell, in the event of further questioning, rather thought he saw him pick up something from beneath the turned-up corner of the rug and slip it into his pocket.

But if Thorndyke Flint really had done a thing, his movements had been so swift and nimble that Tom Gilmore quickly decided he was mistaken, especially as the detective turned to him quite calmly and said he had nothing more to ask just now.

"That young lady sitting over there behind the screen in Miss Marie Lloyd, I suppose," he went on. "She saw that iron gate was open even before her brother, although he was the first to perceive that a burglary really had been committed. She may be able to help."

Tom Gilmore—still weak from the savage blow on the head, as well as from the strain of a relentless "third degree" by police-headquarters men—started up from his chair in alarm.

"But, Mr. Flint, she doesn't know any more than I have told you," he protested. "And the police have questioned her so that she is on the verge of a nervous collapse. Is it necessary to ask her anything more?"

"I am afraid it cannot be avoided," answered the detective unemotionally. "But I have only a few simple questions to ask. I do not see why they should increase her nervousness."

Before Gilmore could speak, a querulous voice, thin almost to squeaking, sounded in the detective's ear:

"I beg your pardon! Mr. Flint?"

Thorndyke Flint turned, and, after one rapid, comprehensive survey, decided that the speaker's appearance was what one might have expected from his voice.

He was a rather attenuated, stooped young man, with the general aspect of a student who sat up nights reading, when he should have been abed. His eyes blinked behind amber-tinted glasses and seemed to be weak, he had a wide, loose mouth, with a burned-out cigarette hanging to a corner of the lower lip, and he needed a shave.

His coat and trousers of blue serge, under a shabby overcoat, were shiny from wear, but his knitted "sport" vest of gray wool, edged with yellow, was new, and his gaudy necktie was agonizingly up to date, while his derby might have been of any age. One hand was encased in a yellow glove, the mate of which the man carried in the other hand. His shoes were rubber-heeled.

"I am Mr. Martin's secretary," he said, in response to Thorndyke Flint's inquiring look. "My name is Baxter Rand."

"Ah, yes! I've heard Mr. Martin speak of you," was the detective's response, as Kenneth Martin came over to them.

### CHAPTER III.

#### LOOKING FOR CLEWS.

"I'M glad Rand is here," said Martin. "I called him up at his home in Brooklyn, and he hustled over as fast as the subway would bring him. I've told him about this stuff the thieves got away with."

"I shall be glad to help Mr. Flint in

any way I can," squeaked Baxter Rand, throwing the end of his cigarette into the drip pan of a water cooler and lighting another.

"Thanks!" said Thorndyke Flint dryly. He beckoned to Frank Judson. "Jud, this is Mr. Baxter Rand of the Safeguard. He can give you a full description of the sables and sealskins stolen."

"I can give you that," broke in Kenneth Martin truculently. "You don't need to ask Rand. There were six sable coats and the same number of Alaska seal. But that isn't the main thing."

"No," interrupted Flint, with a frown. "The main thing is to find the men who killed Larry Kehoe."

"Why, what do you mean?" demanded Martin, grinding the black cigar in his teeth to a pulp. "That killing is the police's business."

"It is our business, too. When we find the murderer of that watchman, we cannot fail to get the thieves," the detective reminded him sternly. "Moreover, in the eyes of the law, as well as of humanity, a man's life is worth more than a few fur coats."

Kenneth Martin gave vent to a mirthless chuckle, as he rolled his tongue around another cigar, preparatory to planting it in his mouth.

"Depends a whole lot on who's bumped off," he said. "I've seen plenty of guys I wouldn't give any kind of a fur coat for."

"Mr. Martin once killed his man," put in Baxter Rand, with a pale grin. "I've heard him tell it."

"Sure I have," roared Martin. "And I'm proud of it. I stood my trial and was acquitted. Everybody said I did right. It was this way——"

"One moment!" interposed Flint. "I believe you leave this case in my hands, do you not?"

"Why, yes," was Martin's growling reply. "You know that this is the sixth big robbery in succession of busi-

ness houses that are insured in my company, and I expected you to begin to look into the conspiracy—for I'm sure there is one—to-morrow. Now that we have this two-hundred-thousand job in addition to all the others, of course I am only the more anxious to nail the gang that's doing it all. I can't stand any more of these big losses."

"It'll be a strain to finance this one," said Baxter Rand, with smug sympathy. "You know, I told you yesterday that the books of the Safeguard showed the company was in a bad way, if its creditors happened to get wise."

"It's your business to make sure they *don't* get wise," snarled Kenneth Martin. "I'm leaving everything to you, ain't I?"

"I know that, Mr. Martin," was the humble response. "I'm doing my best."

"You have made all the investigation here that you want to, have you not, Martin?" asked Thorndyke Flint, evidently disinclined to listen to bickerings between the Safeguard president and his confidential secretary.

"Why, yes. I——"

"Examined the cases, satisfied yourself that none of the employees of Thorleigh's were in the building, except Gilmore and Kehoe?"

"That's what the police say," was the grudging answer. "But they may be wrong." Then, in a lower tone: "I asked them why they didn't take Gilmore to headquarters, but they said they could keep watch over him, in case he should be needed, without locking him up. The same about the girl."

"Do you suspect Lloyd?" insinuated Baxter Rand, in a soft whisper.

"No, I do not," grunted Martin emphatically. "He *might* have been in it, and his sister, too. But Dave's been with me a long time—longer than you have—and I would no more suspect him than I would you."

"I agree with you in that," returned Baxter Rand. "Still——"

Again Thorndyke Flint interrupted this desultory talk that seemed to lead nowhere.

"What I was going to say is that I should like to be left alone here, if you don't mind, Mr. Martin. If you and Mr. Rand will go away, it will be easier for me to work. I will report to you at the Safeguard offices as soon as I have something to tell."

"I should be pleased to stay and give any help I could," put in Rand.

"Thanks! I can do better with just my own assistant, Judson. You can tell the policeman at the door I will be the last to leave the building, and I'll let him know when I'm through."

Kenneth Martin moved his cigar about between his tight lips and chewed it meditatively. Obviously he wanted to stay and watch each move of the famous detective in probing what to his own rather dull wits seemed a probably unsolvable crime mystery.

A certain cold light in Thorndyke Flint's dark eyes warned him that he had no choice in the matter, however, and that the detective would issue an ultimatum if he were opposed any longer.

"All right, Flint!" he answered in a surly mutter. "Come on, Rand."

"You're sure you could not use me in any way?" pressed Baxter Rand, rubbing his hands together nervously. "Wouldn't it be a little more regular if the Safeguard Company were represented, while you make your investigation? Of course we all have perfect confidence in you," he added hastily, as if he feared to offend, "but——"

"Unless Mr. Kenneth Martin and you are out of this building in two minutes, I throw up the case!" broke in Thorndyke Flint, with more exasperation than he often showed. "Judson, see these gentlemen out, will you?"

"All right, chief!" was Frank Judson's cheerful response. "Now, Mr. Martin!"

Kenneth Martin and Baxter Rand stared for a moment, as if they hardly realized what was happening to them. Then they went to the door of the show-room and, each uttering a surly "Good night," descended the stairs and passed out to the street.

When Judson got back to the show-room to report that he had told the policeman at the door not to admit any one without an order from his chief, Thorndyke Flint signed to him to keep an eye on Dave Lloyd, who was examining the marks of the jimmy on the cases that had been forced open, and he went over to Marie Lloyd, sitting, limp and dry-eyed, behind her screen.

He drew up a chair close to her and told her, in a sympathetic voice, that her brother would take her home in a few minutes.

"There are one or two things I am not quite clear about," he continued, "and I dare say you can explain them, if you will be quite frank and open."

"I will tell you whatever I know," she faltered in a frightened whisper. "But I don't think there is anything more than I have told the police."

"What have you told them?"

"That I had been to the movies with Dave, my brother, and we came to the door downstairs to speak to Tom. Then we went away and came back about ten minutes afterward for my umbrella. That was when we found the heavy iron gate open, and—and—Tom lying behind the door. I thought he was dead, but Dave made me go around to the Safe-guard offices. When I got back, with Mr. Martin, in a taxi—I was too weak to walk—Tom was standing at the gate with a policeman. I was so thankful to see that Tom was alive that I nearly fainted again. They brought me up stairs, and soon the officers came from police headquarters, and they made a lot of bustle and asked me all kinds of questions."

"What questions?"

"Whether I had seen the man who killed Larry Kehoe, and if I knew any more than I have just told you. I didn't, and after a while they left me and went over to Tom. Poor Tom! They kept at him for half an hour, and I saw he was going whiter and whiter, and——"

Thorndyke Flint waited till she had recovered from a paroxysm of weeping. Then he said quietly:

"When Tom Gilmore opened that heavy grating at the doorway, did he close it again before you left?"

"You mean the big gate like a port-cullis?"

It was quite clear to Thorndyke Flint that she was sparring for time, but he replied in an even tone, as if unaware of her hesitation:

"Yes. That is the gate I mean."

"It was not open when the thieves came. Tom has told me that, and I know he would not tell an untruth." There was indignation in her tone.

"I'm afraid you did not understand my question," said the detective patiently. "I asked whether he closed the gate before you left the entry, after you had said good night to him."

"Dave can tell you that Tom didn't open the gate," she answered at last, after a long pause.

"Your brother went out before you did, leaving you for a few minutes alone with Gilmore." His steady eyes seemed to burn into her own.

"I know that, but——"

"It was then that he threw back the bolts and opened the gate," continued Flint. "You are engaged to be married to him, I am told."

"Yes," very softly.

"It is his custom to kiss you when he bids you good night?" His voice was down to a whisper, and the gaze he bent upon her was full of sympathy and understanding.

She did not answer at once. Her flushed face was covered with her two

hands. Suddenly she dropped her hands, looked into the masterful, unrevealing countenance of the detective, and burst out, in a low voice, but with the words tumbling over each other tumultuously:

"Yes, Mr. Flint, he *did* open the gate. It was because I asked him to. We had been talking about it before, and in fun I had said that I would reach through the bars and shoot back the bolts. He told me I couldn't, because they were worked from a hidden place inside, twenty feet away."

"Well?"

"When I gave him my hand to say good-by, I laughed and said 'I can't kiss you, because I'm barred out.' He looked at me a moment. Then he said 'We'll soon fix that.'"

"Then what?" asked Flint, as she stopped.

"He went inside out of my sight for a minute. Then I heard a clank and a rattle, and he came back and pulled the gate open far enough for me to step through the opening."

"Yes?"

"I had hardly gone through when Dave called to me from the street to hurry. I was afraid he might come in and see the gate open, so I said good night to Tom and ran out."

"The gate was open when you went away?"

"Yes; but I know Tom meant to close it right away."

"But you did not see it closed?"

"No, there wasn't time. Dave was calling me. I know if I'd stayed another minute I'd have seen it shut and bolted."

"Well," remarked the detective, as he arose, "I'm glad you have told me the truth. It is better for everybody. Now I'll tell your brother to take you home."

"But, Mr. Flint, you don't think"—there was amazed terror in her eyes—"Tom could have had anything to do with this robbery? Why, poor Kehoe was *killed*! If Tom had let the thieves

in he would have been responsible for *that*, too. I tell you the gate was closed and bolted. I know it! I could swear to it!"

She had risen from her chair and clasped one of Thorndyke Flint's arms convulsively with both hands.

"That's what Tom Gilmore says," he told her. "I see no reason at present to doubt the word of either of you." He signaled to Dave Lloyd. "Lloyd, take your sister home."

He waved a good night to both and made no comment when Tom Gilmore went down the stairs with them, saying he would be right back. But a moment later he directed Judson to go down and tell Tom to stay down there with the policeman on guard.

"Tell him I'll send down for him when I want him," he added.

When Judson returned to the showroom, Thorndyke Flint instructed him to close and lock the door leading to the staircase.

## CHAPTER IV.

### EXHIBITS IN THE CASE.

FOR nearly half an hour Thorndyke Flint and his lieutenant, Frank Judson, made a minute examination of the showroom and everything in it, except the furs that were locked in the plate-glass fronted cases, and which they could not have touched without breaking in.

They hunted for finger prints, but there were so many of them that nothing could be learned from them until the fingers of all the employees of the room, as well as of sundry customers, could be compared with the light impressions on tables, chairs, cases, and other furniture. There were some large foot-prints to be made out on the heavy rugs, as well as on the polished hardwood floor, and Flint decided that they were most likely those of the robbers.

But large-soled, rough shoes are worn

by thousands of men in New York, and he did not trouble himself much about them. In the end he was constrained to admit that the headquarters men had made a pretty thorough job of examining the room, and, if there had been any loose clews, had taken those clews away with them. That is, most of them. In one of Thorndyke Flint's pockets was an article he had picked up from beneath the rumpled corner of the rug, where Larry Kehoe had lain, and which he hoped would in due time be useful.

Before giving special attention to this, however, there was something else to be looked into. At one end of the large showroom an open door disclosed a small room, in which was a rack, where hung two men's coats on "shapes." The detective had seen something there that attracted his attention, although it might easily have been overlooked by one of less keenness of observation.

The coats belonged to the manager of the showroom. He was the only masculine salesman on the floor. He always changed his coat when he came on and went off duty.

What Thorndyke Flint had noticed was that from the side pocket of one of the coats a handkerchief hung loosely and untidily, and that it was not so clean as might have been expected. Thorleigh's customers were mostly of an extremely wealthy and fastidious class, to whom the sight of a soiled handkerchief on the person of a clerk might well give exquisite pain. The handkerchief, whose corner showed in the upper pocket of the other coat, was immaculate.

Twitching the rather dirty handkerchief from the side pocket, the detective held it up by one corner. He saw that it was creased, as if it had been wound tightly around something, losing much of its pristine purity in the process.

"Found something, chief?" asked Judson interestedly.

"What do you make of this, Jud?"

was the response. "It was in this coat, which, you see, is new or nearly so. Look at the lining."

"Expensive toggery!" opined Judson sagely. "Fifth Avenue firm! I see the tag."

"You wouldn't expect to find a handkerchief like this in the pocket?"

"Hardly. I'd hate to carry a dirty-looking wipe like that, myself, I know," returned Judson, with a grimace of distaste. "Looks as if he'd dusted off his shoes with it and then made a rope of it to hang himself."

Thorndyke Flint did not reply. He walked over to one of the large highly polished tables on which furs could be spread out for the inspection of customers, but which was empty now, and laid the handkerchief gingerly upon it.

"Call Gilmore!" he ordered briefly.

When Judson had brought Tom Gilmore into the room, closing and locking the door again, Thorndyke Flint signed to the still white-faced young man to come over to the table and sit down. Gilmore looked worried, and his tones were uneven, as he asked:

"Have you found out anything, Mr. Flint?"

"When you saw the man who knocked you down before you could draw your pistol," said the detective, ignoring the question, "did you observe anything distinctive about him besides the fact that he was masked?"

Gilmore slowly shook his head, as he struggled with a confused memory.

"How was he dressed?" pressed Flint.

"In a long overcoat and a soft hat pulled down to meet the mask which covered all his face."

"Did you see his hands?"

"Why—er—let me see," murmured Gilmore reflectively. "Yes, I remember that he wore dark kid gloves—brown, I think."

"Sure they were kid?"

"Pretty sure! I saw the back of his hand shining in the light."

"Both hands were gloved?"

Tom Gilmore gazed at his interlocutor distressfully, as he tried to recall what he had observed in that one strenuous moment before the blackjack came down upon his head.

"I—I—don't know," he faltered at last. Then he brightened suddenly. "Why, yes—I recollect now. He had a glove on his left hand. I did not see the other till it was in the air close to my eyes, with the black club in it. It was tied up in a white handkerchief. I remember seeing one end of it flapping, just as I lost my senses."

"You don't know whether that hand was gloved or not?"

"No. I think the handkerchief covered it completely."

Thorndyke Flint pointed to the dirty, crumpled handkerchief at the other end of the table.

"Was this the handkerchief?"

"It may have been. But"—he smiled feebly—"it was all so quick."

"There is a monogram on the corner of this handkerchief," observed Flint, as he held it out to Gilmore. "It looks like 'G. L. M.' intertwined. Do you recognize it?"

"Why, yes," returned the young man confidently. "I've seen that monogram many times. It is George Larrimore Moss. That is the manager of this department. It looks like one of his handkerchiefs."

"It is," said the detective. "That's his coat in that room, is it not?"

"Yes, sir. Both of them. But why do you suppose the thief would go and get that handkerchief to wrap around his hand?" asked Gilmore, puzzled. "To hide his finger prints?"

"A glove would do that," the detective reminded him. "Well, that is all I want to ask you to-night. The police will be on watch here till morning. I think you'd better go home. You may be wanted at headquarters early in the morning, you know."

"That's what the police told me. I live at the Hotel Rankoka, in West Forty-eighth Street, Mr. Flint."

"Yes, I have your address," was the quiet reply. "Good night."

Thorndyke Flint looked up, as Frank Judson closed the door after Tom Gilmore, made sure they were alone, and drew from an inside pocket the article he had found under the rug on which Larry Kehoe had fallen when beaten down by the blackjack. He laid it on the table. It was a brown kid glove.

Judson came over from the door and looked curiously at the glove, as it lay directly beneath an electric light.

"A clew, chief?" was Judson's low-voiced query.

"We'll examine it and see," replied Thorndyke Flint.

He spread it out on the table and pointed out that, while the glove had evidently been worn considerably, the middle finger was flat and seemed never to have been used. It looked as new as when it came from the factory.

"The fellow who owned that glove must have lost his middle finger," remarked Judson.

"That seems clear," assented Flint, as he turned the glove over in his hands. "Looks as if it belonged to a man accustomed to rough work. The palm is scuffed and creased. But men don't usually wear kid gloves while handling packing-cases or heavy tools."

"Funny about that dangling middle finger," was Jud's thoughtful comment. "Why didn't he cut it off out of the way, if he couldn't use it." He picked up the handkerchief. "By George, chief! I see it now," he added with sudden enthusiasm.

"I'm glad of it," returned Flint coldly. "What do you see?"

"The crook who killed Larry Kehoe and nearly did for Gilmore wore this glove to hide his finger prints—the regular thing these days. Then, before he went for Kehoe, it occurred to him that

he would be easily recognized by his missing finger—for I don't suppose he meant actually to kill either of them—and he snatched the handkerchief from the coat pocket and wrapped it around his hand. He must have dropped the glove accidentally. He put the handkerchief back where he found it, to cover up his tracks."

"Very good, Jud!" said his chief. "A quite reasonable deduction. We'll look up that three-fingered person in our records at home. I'm pretty sure we have him. Well, that's all up here. I want to look in the street outside. There is no doubt the thieves used a motor car. There is just a possibility of our finding something in the wheel marks in the snow and mud that may help."

"Not much chance," was Judson's dubious negative.

"But still a chance," rejoined Thorn-dyke Flint. "At least we may find what make of tire was on the machine. Cars have sometimes been traced that way, especially when the tire happens to be of an uncommon make. Not often—but it has been done."

It was the habit of the master detective to follow up every possible clew, even those most unlikely. Judson knew this, and he made no demur when, after bidding good night to the policeman, as he let them out and closed the iron grating, they went to the curb, and Thorn-dyke Flint sent a light along the gutter from his electric flash.

The sleet and snow had stopped for some time, and the tracks of a heavy automobile were clearly defined. But they were of a very popular make of tire, and obviously no help could be expected from them.

"As I said before, Jud, it was only a chance," remarked Flint. "So we'll — Wait a moment!"

He stopped and dug out of the snowy slush a small scrap of card that lay half buried out of sight. It was not much more than an inch square and was cov-

ered with printed matter in red and black.

"What have you, chief?" asked Judson eagerly.

"It's a theater stub," was the answer. "For an orchestra seat at the Eurydice night before last. Let's get around to Broadway and find a taxi."

## CHAPTER V.

### A CHALLENGE FROM THE ENEMY.

"GOING home, chief?" asked Judson, as the driver of a night-cruising taxicab drew up at the curb.

"Go to the Hotel Supremacy!" said Flint shortly to the driver. "Get in, Jud!" Then, as the taxi slipped away from the sidewalk, he answered his assistant's question: "I want to see Lauriston, manager of the Eurydice theater. He lives at the Supremacy, and he is not likely to be in bed yet."

"You want to find out who used that ticket? Rather a slim chance that the manager will know, isn't it, chief?"

"This stub was issued with a pass, Jud. The punch hole shows that. Surely you know that every theater manager keeps a close watch on his free list, particularly when he has a big success, as the Eurydice has now."

Thorndyke Flint spoke absently, for he was wondering whether he would find Lauriston at his hotel.

But he was lucky in that respect, for Jacob Lauriston was in his room and sent down word that he would be pleased to see Mr. Thorndyke Flint.

"Stay here in the lobby," directed Flint, as he stepped into the elevator. "I won't be long. Tell the taxi man to wait."

Jacob Lauriston, a well-fed man of middle age, whose clothes were brilliantly up to date, and who somehow appeared to exude prosperity, as he held out a white hand to the detective, seemed really glad to see his visitor, as he asked cheerily:

"What can I do for you, Mr. Flint?"

"Tell me who sat in the orchestra seat 2 H on Tuesday evening—night before last."

"My dear boy!" protested Lauriston. "How can I tell? If there is any record at all—as there *may* be, if the seats were ordered by mail or telephone—it is locked up in the box office, and the theater has been shut up for two hours or more. Unless——"

"Unless they were complimentary, you mean?" interposed Flint. "Well, that is just what they were. See!"

Lauriston took the stub and regarded it thoughtfully. Then he took a small gilt-edged notebook from his pocket and thumbed through the pages.

"By Jupiter!" he burst out. "Here it is. I issued that pass myself. I had a half recollection of it when I saw where the seats were in the house. I picked them out."

"And who got them?" asked Thorn-dyke Flint impatiently.

"Mr. Saul Thorleigh, head of the Thorleigh Fur Company," was the reply.

"Did Mr. Thorleigh attend the performance, do you know?"

"Certainly he did—with Mrs. Thorleigh. I spoke to Thorleigh in the lobby between the acts. I remember it perfectly. He said he enjoyed the show. You see, his firm supplied those white fur costumes for the 'Ice-bound' number, and it is one of the big hits of the performance. Of course we paid for the furs, but Thorleigh is an old friend of mine, and I was pleased to have him as my guest. By the way, let me tell you that I believe I have the best musical show on Broadway this season. When will you come and see it? Pick out a night, and I'll send the tickets to your home. Come on, Flint! I want you to see it. When will it be?"

"I'll have to write and tell you," declared Flint to stem the flood of Lauriston's hospitality. "By the way, did

you see Mr. and Mrs. Thorleigh arrive or go away? Do you know what kind of car they used?"

"Their limousine. I was out in front when they went, and I saw them drive away. It's a fine car. I wouldn't mind living away out there at the other end of Flatbush, myself, if I had their limousine."

"And it was 2 H Mr. Thorleigh used night before last?" Thorndyke Flint did not want to get away from the business that had taken him to Lauriston.

"Yes, 2 H and 4 H," replied the manager. Then, as the detective held out his hand: "Not going yet, are you? I'm just going to order supper, and I thought you'd join me. They're very good in this hotel. You can depend on the food, no matter at what ungodly hour you ask for it."

"I'm sorry, but I have to hurry," returned Flint. "Got an important case on. You know how it is in my business."

"Well, yes—I suppose so," assented Jacob Lauriston. "The theatrical game is bad enough, but we do get a breathing spell sometimes, when we are lucky enough to have a hit. But crime is breaking out all the time, and of course you are always on the jump."

They shook hands and parted. Flint had not thought it necessary to tell Lauriston it was his friend Thorleigh who had been robbed and his watchman killed. It would have delayed him indefinitely to talk over the particulars, and he was anxious to get home.

Thorndyke Flint stretched and threw back his shoulders, with an ejaculation of relief, when, less than half an hour afterward, he found himself in his own library and consulting room in his quiet home near Washington Square.

"Anything to report, Ray?"

In response to the detective's curt question, there stepped forward a stocky young fellow, several years the junior of Frank Judson, whose brisk move-

ments, alert eyes, and humorous mouth indicated wide-awake qualities which would make him valuable in Thorndyke Flint's business establishment.

As a matter of fact, the young fellow was Ray Norton, who had begun his outlook on active life as a denizen of the Bowery, but for a number of years had been second assistant to the distinguished detective. He held out a letter in a sealed envelope.

"This letter was dropped through the slit into the box at the front door about half an hour ago. The bell rang, and I hustled down the stairs. But when I opened the door there was no one in sight on the street. So I took the letter out and carried it up. The bird who brought it must have been a sprinter and had mighty important business some other place."

"Anything else?"

"A party called up on the phone a little while before the letter came—a gink with a voice like a tin whistle. Wanted to know whether you'd come home yet. I asked him who wanted to know, and he said he was Baxter Rand, at the Safeguard Burglary Insurance Company. I remembered I'd heard the name, so I told him you weren't in, but I could take a message. He said it didn't matter, and he'd call again. Then he hung up."

As Ray Norton retired to his own small desk at the other end of the room, in silent token that he had nothing more to tell, Thorndyke Flint calmly cut open the envelope of the furtively delivered letter. The superscription as well as the message within were in typewriting, signature and all. The letter ran:

**THORNDYKE FLINT:** Be wise, take a friend's advice, and let Kenneth Martin fry his own eggs. We intended to let this Thorleigh affair be our last job, because we were satisfied it would settle the hash of the man we are after. To make quite sure, we will put over one more. It will be the biggest thing we have done yet. Catch us if you can. To give you a sporting chance,

we left a pretty wide trail at Thorleigh's, but we are not afraid that even you can make anything of it. Sorry that watchman got the works. We are not a killing organization; but accidents will happen. We repeat our advice: Drop this thing and save your professional reputation. Then sit back and watch us work. **THE FIVE CLAN.**

Not by a quiver of an eyelid did Thorndyke Flint indicate that he was affected in the slightest by this insulting epistle. But Frank Judson, who, from his desk at some little distance, happened to be closely regarding his chief, saw a momentary gleam in the dark, inscrutable eyes which told him there was action ahead.

What was in the note Frank Judson did not know, and if he had not been so familiar with every expression of the man with whom he was associated, he might have supposed it of no particular importance. For Thorndyke Flint calmly folded up the letter, replaced it in its envelope, dropped it into the drawer of his table, took out a cigar, lighted it carefully and unhurriedly, and, relocking the drawer, smoked imperturbably in silence until the cigar was half consumed. Then Judson spoke to him.

The fact that it was nearly two o'clock in the morning meant nothing to Thorndyke Flint and his two confidential aids, when there was work to be done.

Judson, without waiting for specific orders, had gone through a certain index and found out something that his chief had indirectly suggested when they were together in the Thorleigh showroom.

"Here it is, chief," he said, as he placed a memorandum on the table before his employer. "James Dugan, bank robber and boxman, age forty, five feet nine, hundred and sixty-five pounds, middle finger of right hand missing, claims to be going straight since he came out of pen in 1921. Works in his brother's second-hand clothing store in Crownell Street, East Side."

"Said to be going straight," remarked

the detective meditatively and enjoying the fragrance of his cigar. "Well, have you heard anything to the contrary, Jud?"

"No, except that he spends his time in a thieves' resort every night," returned Judson dryly.

"Hm! Norton!"

Ray was by the side of his chief's table in three swift strides.

"Go down to Crownell Street, to McManus' pool room and find out whether Dugan was there last night. The object is to find out where he was during the holdup at Thorleigh's—about eleven o'clock."

"I get you, chief," was Ray Norton's prompt reply. "He hangs out there every night, and McManus doesn't close up till two or three o'clock as a rule. They say Dugan is going straight, but he does it in a durned crooked joint, when he stays around McManus'."

"Never mind about that," sharply reproved Flint. "We are not concerned with Dugan's morals in a general way. We want to know whether he was concerned in this Thorleigh holdup. Remember there was murder done there, and a man with only three fingers on his right hand was in it."

"Gee! That's Dugan! He's lost his middle finger!" interrupted Ray Norton, his eagerness rather tripping up his habitual respect for his employer. "I'll get him!"

"Not so fast! Whatever you learn at McManus', confirm it," warned Thorndyke Flint. "Dugan lives with his brother over the store. Find out whether he was in bed, if he was not at the poolroom. But don't let Dugan suspect anything. Then make other inquiries until you have an air-tight alibi for him—if he is innocent. It will take you some hours. Report to me at eight in the morning, if I am here. If I am out, you can lie down and rest till I come."

The commission was one which might

well have dismayed a young man of less courage and energy than Ray Norton, or one who was not so thoroughly acquainted with the neighborhood in which he was to pursue his delicate inquiries. But in Ray the spirit of adventure always ran high, and he was as delighted as a war horse is supposed to be on going into battle.

"Innocent!" muttered Ray Norton, as he stepped into the street from the front door. "A guy who loafes at McManus'! Innocent my eye!"

"Now, Jud," said Thorndyke Flint, dropping his deliberate manner and throwing the stump of his cigar into the ash receiver, "we have some work to do, too." He got briskly to his feet.

"Where?" asked Judson carelessly.

"In Brooklyn," was the unexpected reply.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE STOLEN LIMOUSINE.

OF the several wide, tree-shadowed avenues which run more or less directly from Prospect Park, Brooklyn, to the sea, there are two that are noted for the many stately mansions, each in its own parklike grounds, which line the way on either side.

Despite the gruesome fact that the speculative builder, with his big unpromising brick tenements, is encroaching more and more every year, there still remain in the Flatbush district many of the handsome homes of the ancient régime, hidden from the road by fine old elms, where the occupants can live their own quiet lives, and complete rest can be found by the man of affairs who does not like to take his business home with him.

Saul Thorleigh's house, set back some distance from the public thoroughfare, was one of the most notable of these old-time residences. Thorleigh liked to be within smell of the ocean, and he also craved retirement when away from his bustling place of business.

It was very dark under the trees when Thorndyke Flint and Frank Judson having walked from the nearest subway station, stood at the wide wooden gate of the Thorleigh home. They had gone in only a few yards along the winding pathway, when the detective halted his companion with a hand on his arm.

"Wait a moment, Jud," he whispered. "There is a light moving about in the lower part of the house. We'll find out what that means before going to the garage."

Without hesitation, Flint went up the broad white steps of the house and rang the electric bell.

Considering that it was nearly three o'clock in the morning, and that this was a lonely neighborhood not unacquainted with burglarious visits at intervals, it did not surprise Thorndyke Flint when, as the door opened suddenly, an automatic pistol pointed simultaneously to his chest and face.

"Wha-what do you want?" came stammering in a man's voice from behind the door. "I have a big dog here. Who are you?"

"Police!" said Thorndyke Flint, using the word that would be most likely to allay the fears of the shaking butler quicker than anything else. "Is Mrs. Thorleigh up, or any of the family?"

"You—you are not in police uniform," objected the butler suspiciously.

"Detectives never are," put in Judson, rather scandalized that his distinguished chief should be catechized in this way. "You'd better put that pistol in your pocket. You are liable to hurt yourself."

Reassured somewhat by the confident manner of the two visitors, but still holding his automatic ready for action, the man informed them that Mrs. Thorleigh was up, having been disturbed by a message when she was about to retire. He also remarked that the whole staff of men belonging to the establishment were on duty, none of them having gone to bed.

"Tell her Mr. Flint—Thorndyke Flint—would like to speak to her for a few moments," interrupted the detective.

The butler carefully closed the door, and they could hear bolts shooting into sockets. In a very short space of time, however, he laboriously opened the door again and stood aside to let Flint and Judson enter.

"Mrs. Thorleigh will be pleased to see Mr. Flint," he said and led the way to a luxuriously furnished drawing-room. "What about the other gentleman?" he murmured doubtfully. "I didn't announce him."

"You needn't," said Flint shortly. "He is Mr. Judson, my associate."

They entered, and Thorndyke Flint, bowing to the stately, middle-aged Mrs. Thorleigh, who came forward to greet them, observed that they had interrupted her in conversation with another visitor, a man, who was slumped down in a large upholstered rocker by a table, where the tinted shade of the reading lamp made his features indistinct.

Shadowed as the face was, Thorndyke Flint recognized him instantly.

The man was Baxter Rand!

"Have you come to tell me anything about the robbery, Mr. Flint?" asked Mrs. Thorleigh, when she had bowed to Judson, and the butler had placed chairs for them. Then she went on rapidly, with few stops: "Isn't it awful? And Mr. Thorleigh on the train to Chicago! I've tried to telegraph him, but it is always uncertain whether a message will be delivered en route. Poor Kehoe! My husband has often spoken of him as such a good, faithful man! The police telephoned me about midnight, and they said more than two hundred thousand dollars' worth of goods had been stolen. They are Russian sables, and I know my husband had them for a special order. That is what makes it so annoying. Of course Thorleigh & Company won't have to

stand the money loss. That falls upon the Safeguard Burglary Insurance Company—unless they find the thieves and property. This is Mr. Rand!"

Baxter Rand got up and bowed, blinking meekly through his amber glasses.

"I have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Flint," he piped. "I have no doubt he will catch the robbers and get back the furs."

Thorndyke Flint listened respectfully to the garrulous Mrs. Thorleigh, as she explained that Mr. Rand had come to say that the Safeguard Company were practically sure they would get back the stolen sables and sealskins and catch the men who killed poor Kehoe.

"And I have had other troubles to-night," she continued aggrievedly. "Our limousine was stolen. Somebody in the neighborhood must have known that Mr. Thorleigh was away, and that Jennison, our chauffeur, and his wife are spending the night at her sister's in the Bronx. That's what Jennison told me when I gave him permission to go. They live upstairs in the garage, and of course it was easy for any one to force the lock and take the car when no one was in the building."

"Any idea who were the thieves?" asked Flint.

"No, but evidently they were some young people who wanted the car for a joy ride," she returned in a tone of disgust. "It has come back again. Mr. Rand found it."

"There is no credit to me in that," interposed Baxter Rand in modest depreciation. "When I came here to seek an interview with Mrs. Thorleigh, I saw the limousine standing outside the garage. It was such a curious thing, to find a valuable car out there, exposed to the weather all night, with no one to look after it, that I reported it to Mrs. Thorleigh at once. Then I learned that it had been stolen earlier in the evening and I returned it to the garage."

"Most likely the thieves saw Mr. Rand coming and ran away without stopping to put the car up. I can't be too grateful to Mr. Rand," declared Mrs. Thorleigh effusively.

Baxter Rand seemed to shrink further into his shabby blue-serge coat, as if overcome by her gratitude. Then he rubbed his hands together with an apologetic sliminess that made Judson secretly clench his fists, and, as that indignant young man afterward described it, in a voice like a sick kitten, said:

"I will not occupy any more of your time, Mrs. Thorleigh. My colleague, Mr. Flint, wants to talk to you, I know. Thank you for the information you have given me. I think I may safely assure you for Mr. Flint and myself, that the whole matter will soon be cleared up. With your permission I will bid you good morning."

He dispensed a bow which took in all three and vanished. A minute later they heard the street door close behind him with a slam.

There was silence in the drawing-room for some minutes after the closing of the front door. Then Thorndyke Flint asked abruptly:

"How long was the limousine away from your garage, Mrs. Thorleigh?"

"Fortunately, I can tell you that," was her reply. "Jennison came to speak to me—he is an old employee, and is always anxious to do what I desire—and made me assure him that I would not want to use the car last night."

"Why? Did he want to use it himself—take his wife in it to the Bronx?"

Mrs. Thorleigh raised hands and eyes, as at a most preposterous suggestion.

"Jennison would not *think* of such a thing," she declared; "I've never known him to drive one of our cars, save in our service. No, he merely was anxious to make sure I could spare him for the night. I told him I did not want to go out, and I asked him if everything

was all safe in the garage. He said he had the garage locked up, and that our three cars—we have a touring car and a coupé, besides the limousine—were in their places, all secure.”

“That was at half past nine?” asked Flint.

“Yes. But it was twenty minutes afterward when Bloss, my butler, came to tell me that Jennison had just gone and had left the key of the garage with him.”

“Making it ten minutes to ten?”

“Yes.”

“When did you find the limousine was stolen?”

“At eleven, when Bloss was going around the house to lock up. The back doors, from the kitchen and scullery, are not far from the garage, and Bloss opened one of them to see that it looked all right. He knew Jennison was away, and very bravely, he went over to see that the doors were locked. Bloss is very courageous.”

“No doubt,” responded Flint. “What did he find at the garage?”

“He shouted aloud for help. The lock of the garage had been forced, and the limousine was gone. It was easy for any one to drive the car away. Jennison always keeps them ready for instant use.”

“Did you call up the police?”

“No. I did not want them to come asking useless questions and prowling about the place. But I sent Bloss and the other men to make inquiries in the neighborhood. No one had seen the car, and while I was still troubled about that, the telephone message came about the robbery and the killing of Kehoe, the watchman. Of course I couldn't go to bed—with Mr. Thorleigh away and all—and I was pleased, indeed, when Mr. Rand came to tell me that he felt sure the thieves would be found, and the property recovered.” She looked eagerly at Thorndyke Flint. “*You* think they will, don't you, Mr. Flint?”

“Yes, I think the thieves and murderers—will be found,” he answered gravely. “And, I hope, the property, also. We will go now, Mrs. Thorleigh,” he added, “and, if you will permit me to offer advice, it is that you retire to your room for sleep and stay there a long time.”

“But I am so anxious to know——”

“I promise that you shall know as soon as we have something definite to tell,” he interrupted. “Good morning, Mrs. Thorleigh.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### A BIT OF YELLOW PAPER.

**N**OW, Jud, the first thing to be done is to make sure that the Thorleigh limousine was actually used to carry away the loot from the Thorleigh building in Manhattan,” remarked Thorndyke Flint as he and his assistant descended the steps from the Thorleigh home. “We'll get around to the garage.”

The wide doors with their broken lock, through which the cars were taken in and out, had been temporarily secured with strong steel wire. But there was a narrow door at the side, which was fastened with a spring lock.

The skillful application of the point of a penknife soon gave them admission. They bolted the door inside, and Flint moved swiftly over to the limousine, which filled so large a space in the roomy garage.

“You'll notice that this car has been very wet lately, Jud,” he whispered to his assistant. “But the sleet and rain we had in Manhattan was only a local squall and all uptown. You observed that the roads in Brooklyn—or this part of it—when we came out of the subway, were quite dry. There has been no rain or snow in Brooklyn for several days.”

“I know that,” was the answer. “It was remarked on in the papers. I see

what you're driving at, chief. This limousine was in Manhattan in the storm. Still, that doesn't prove it was used in the robbery. If it was taken by joy riders, they might have gone over there."

"Not likely," returned Flint. "And, anyway, the wet limousine is merely contributory evidence, which in itself would hardly be worth consideration. As it happens, we have more than that in the theater stub."

"Well, yes. And now that we know the car was away, without Mrs. Thorleigh knowing where, it looks to me as if the case is complete," said Judson.

"Or this part of it, relating to the limousine."

Thorndyke Flint did not answer. He had opened the door of the car and was making a minute inspection of every part of the interior. He took up the mat from the floor and made sure nothing was underneath. Then he replaced the mat and gave attention to the cushions. There was nothing on them.

Still he was not satisfied. Something, he felt, he ought to find in confirmation of the conclusions to which he already had arrived. At last he seized one of the big cushions and pulled it off the seat. Nothing there! Then he removed the cushion on the other side and uttered an involuntary gasp of satisfaction. In a chink at the end of the seat, where it could not be seen until the cushion was removed, was a theater stub.

A swift glance revealed it as a duplicate of the stub Thorndyke Flint had found in the gutter outside the fur house, and which he had shown to Jacob Lauriston, except that the number on this stub was H 4.

"This is what I wanted," he said. "It completes the pair of tickets used at the theater, and which Thorleigh no doubt had discarded on going home. Later the stub, H 2, was accidentally dragged out of the car by the thieves."

He turned his flash on the inside of the car doors and on the rug on the floor. "I don't see the big footprints; a magnifying glass would probably show them up. But I have something better here."

From the handle of one of the doors he had taken several dark hairs that were undoubtedly Russian sable.

"You see, Jud, the fur of one of the coats was caught by the handle, as it was taken out of the car. I'll put this bit of fur with our other evidence."

He took out a letter and carefully placed the few hairs in the envelope. Then, with a satisfied nod, he compared the two theater stubs and put them also in the envelope before he returned it to his pocket.

"Doesn't it seem a little peculiar that the gang should have taken the trouble to bring this car all the way home after doing their job?"

Judson put this rather doubtfully. He knew that professional cracksmen, such as would undertake a big robbery like this Thorleigh job, were generally shrewd enough to have a good reason for everything they did.

"What else could they do with it?" rejoined Flint. "If the furs were taken to a hiding place downtown, they would fear to abandon the car, even within a radius of two or three miles on that side of the river. It might afford a clew. Besides, it would not be easy to leave it in the street anywhere, except in the suburbs, without making some policeman suspicious. The cunning of these men who call themselves The Five Clan, would lead them to avoid doing the unexpected, remember, Jud. From their point of view, I am inclined to regard the taking of Thorleigh's own car to rob his place as something like a master stroke."

"Then our next move is to go down town and hunt for the furs among the fence joints there?" suggested Judson.

"Not until Ray Norton reports what

he finds out about Jim Dugan," was Flint's answer, as he switched off his flash and moved toward the narrow side door. "To much haste in a case of this kind might ruin everything. I know this Five Clan."

"You do?" exclaimed Jud, startled. "Who are they, chief?"

"When I said I knew the clan, I meant that I had heard of the rascally organization. Who the individual members are we have yet to find out. It has been my conviction all along that the Five Clan was responsible for all these big robberies, but I am grateful to my anonymous correspondent for his corroboration."

"You mean that letter dropped through the door into our box at home? You did not show it to me, you know. Wasn't it rather foolish of them to give themselves away like that?"

"Jud, if people of the underworld weren't prone to do foolish things, it would be much harder to catch them," returned Flint. "Bravado and lack of foresight supply at least half the population of our prisons." Then, his voice hardening: "We are going to avenge Larry Kehoe's death, whatever else we may fail to do. Incidentally we have to get the individual who works the wires—the hidden mainspring of this murder machine—which evidently has for one of its objects the crushing of Kenneth Martin."

"You know there is such an individual?" broke in Jud. "What's the name?"

"Number Five," was the laconic answer. "Open the door, Jud!"

In the darkness Judson threw back the bolt and spring lock—and tumbled into the arms of a man who had had his face pressed against the door outside. Judson spluttered out an angry surprise, and Thorndyke Flint seized the coat collar of the eavesdropper, swung him around, and threw the glow of the flash in his face.

"Baxter Rand!" exclaimed the detective. "I thought you'd gone home."

"Well, no," whined Rand, his loose mouth distended in a weak grin, with the inevitable cigarette pasted on the lower lip. "You see, Mr. Flint, we are competitors, and it would not have been the act of a wide-awake detective to go away and leave you on the battlefield, as it were, without trying to see what you were after. We are both aiming for the same end—to find out what has become of the stolen furs. I thought you might have learned something through Mrs. Thorleigh which would put you on the right scent. I don't mind saying that I suspect *everybody*."

"You mean you think Mrs. Thorleigh and her husband may have robbed themselves?" demanded Judson in a tone of scorn.

"I do not say that," rejoined Baxter Rand more humbly than ever. "I only repeat that I suspect *everybody*. So, when I saw you and Mr. Flint come out of the house and force your way into this garage, I felt it my duty to find out what you were after."

"Why, you half-witted——" exploded Judson wrathfully.

"Quiet, Jud!" ordered his employer sharply. "Mr. Rand was quite within his rights to use all methods that might lead to success. But, according to his own admission, we are competitors, and he could not expect me to tell him what we have found out, even if we had found out anything. Do you take the subway to go home, Rand?"

"Yes. Do you?"

Thorndyke Flint answered in the affirmative, and all three walked the few blocks to the lonely subway station, and after a long wait—for there was little traffic at that hour of the morning—got on the same train.

"I wonder where this bird lives?" whispered Judson to his chief, as the train plunged into the tunnel under the

river. Baxter Rand, on the other side of Thorndyke Flint, seemed to be dozing.

But Baxter Rand was not asleep. Moreover, he seemed to have abnormally keen hearing, unless it was by sheer coincidence that he volunteered:

"I am not going home now. I guess I'll run up to the Safeguard offices to see if they have found out anything."

So they left Rand on the train when they got out at Astor Place, and they saw him through the window, dozing comfortably in a corner, as it went on its way uptown.

A taxi soon carried Thorndyke Flint and Judson the remainder of their journey, and when they sat down in the library, there was nothing in their manner or appearance to suggest that they had even been away since they had talked over the Thorleigh case there nearly two hours before.

"Ray hasn't come back," remarked Judson.

"I don't expect him for an hour or two," replied Thorndyke Flint calmly.

He unlocked his drawer and, first selecting a cigar and lighting it, took from the drawer the kid glove with the missing finger and spread it out on the table before him. Then he beckoned Judson to come over.

"Jud, you seemed to be surprised when I told you the leader of the Five Clan was known as Number Five," he remarked, with a faint smile. "Wondered how I knew it, perhaps. You remember that letter dropped in the slit? The member of the Clan who wrote that note to me—no doubt Number Five—told me he had left a pretty wide trail. I am inclined to think it is a little wider than he intended."

The detective was smoking comfortably, while he fumbled with the glove on the table.

"Look here, Jud!" He turned one of the glove fingers—not the one that had never been used—inside out. As he did

so, a ball of yellow paper fell upon the table.

"What's that, chief?" asked Judson, mystified.

"I have examined this already," returned Flint easily. "I looked it over in the showroom, but only cursorily. Now let's see what we make of it."

Opening the crumpled ball and spreading it out, he showed that it was part of a square of cheap paper, such as is sometimes used in dry goods or haberdashery stores for wrapping small packages. It was a mere scrap torn from a corner. A few printed letters—a fragment of the name and address of the store—was on one side. On the other was written faintly in pencil: "II—V."

Frank Judson stared at the figures and "V" for at least a minute. Then he shook his head. Obviously they had no meaning for him.

"I give it up, chief!" he breathed at last. "Is it a cryptogram?"

"Certainly not," smiled Thorndyke Flint. "Just a straightforward order from a chief executive to a subordinate. At least, that is my reading of it. You must take into consideration where I found this scrap of paper—in that glove—and all the circumstances surrounding my finding it. With that in mind, and by employing a simple process of deduction, we interpret the figures and single capital letter to mean—"

But at this moment there was the rumble of quick, heavy footsteps on the stairs, followed by a short rap at the door, and Ray Norton came tumultuously into the room. Clicking his heels, he tendered a smart military salute to his chief.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN UNDERWORLD KEYNOTE.

WE got the goods on Dugan, chief!" cried Ray excitedly, when Thorndyke Flint had signed to him to speak.

"In what way?" asked the master detective quietly. "Was he in the Thorleigh job?"

"Sure as you live," returned Ray. "Or, if he isn't, he'll need the air-tight alibi you said he must get."

"Tell me the story, Ray," ordered Flint, "without any fireworks. Sit down a minute and compose yourself. Then let me have it in as few words as possible."

"Gee!" ejaculated Ray, sitting down for an instant, in obedience to the order, but immediately bouncing up again. "It won't take long to tell, though it sure did mean a busy time for yours truly. I went to McManus' first. Dugan had been there, playing whisky pool and chewing the rag up to about ten o'clock. Then he blew——"

"You mean he left McManus' at ten," interposed Thorndyke Flint. "Where did he go? I suppose you found out."

"Yes; McManus told me he had gone home to his brother's secondhand clothing store to go to bed. So I hikes around there and made 'Slug' Dugan, his brother, come down. He was sore at being disturbed, but I didn't take any account of that. When he opened the door I shoved my foot in and told Slug I had to see Jim on particular business. Well, Slug knows me, but he doesn't know I work for you, chief."

"I should hope not," remarked Thorndyke Flint coldly.

"He said if I had any business with Jim I could tell him in the morning. He wouldn't wake Jim up for nobody at that time in the night. Then he told me to beat it, or he'd hand me a poke in the face. That bluff didn't get him anywhere, and I asked if Jim was in bed. Slug says 'Of course he is. Where would he be?' And I asked if I could go up and see him. Well, Slug wouldn't listen to that, and after we'd had quite a session of cross talk, I came away."

"There is more of it, of course?"

"Sure!" assented Ray. "I figured that if Jim Dugan was in the Thorleigh stick-up, the stuff might be planted in his brother's place, and there would be some sign of life, because they would have to stow the furs away in secret places, and they wouldn't keep them all in the same place. Then, again, Slug had come to the door so soon after I'd knocked. You see, chief," explained Ray, with a grin, "I know some of the gang signals, and I tried one of 'em on the door. I believe I hit it right, for Slug was there before I got my hand down. He couldn't have been in bed unless he slept with all his clothes on, and even at that he'd hardly have had time to get downstairs."

"He was right in the store, you think?" put in Judson, who had been listening in deep interest.

"Looked like it," returned Ray carelessly. "Anyway, I wasn't coming away till I knew more. So I crossed the street and stood in a dark doorway to keep tabs. I didn't have to stand there long, when I made a guy slinking along in the shadow of the houses, and he slipped into the Dugan store without having to knock or use a key. Somebody had been looking out for him inside. I couldn't be sure the man who went in was Jim Dugan, but I didn't doubt it."

"I don't see what you've got that's of any value," declared Judson somewhat disgustedly.

"Hold your horses, Jud!" was Ray's indignant admonition. "I kept in the doorway after Dugan went in, and soon I saw a light in an upper window. Then it opened, and Jim Dugan looked out. I knew the shape of his head. Gee! You couldn't make any mistake about that block, if you'd once seen it. It was as plain as a close-up in a movie. Soon he put out the light. It was a gas jet, and when he turned it off he let the light shine full in his face for a second. That clinched it. He stood there in the dark for a while, staring down into the

street. I stayed in my doorway till he left the window, and I waited for about five minutes after I knew he had gone in. Then I came home."

"Then you don't *know* he was in that Thorleigh job," said Thorndyke Flint.

"Well, chief," answered Ray protestingly, "he surely hasn't any air-tight ailbi. He will have to account for his time from ten o'clock till past two to prove he wasn't in it. It looks to me like a cinch."

"Go to bed, Ray," directed Flint, after a pause. "I'll call you when I have to. Good night!"

"Good night, chief," responded Ray. "Gee! I'll be glad to hit the hay."

"Now, Jud," said Thorndyke Flint, seemingly as wakeful as ever, "we'll look at our scrap of yellow paper again. Lock the door, will you?"

The detective had quietly slipped the paper into his drawer when Ray came in and interrupted his interpretation of the curious figure and letter combination. He had it out and spread on the table, as Judson came from the door.

"What I was going to say, Jud, just as Ray came in," said Flint evenly, "was that the number II signifies eleven o'clock, and it probably was to tell the gang the time that would be propitious for making the attack on the two watchmen and carrying off the furs."

"Maybe," said Judson, only half convinced. "But what about the 'V'? Doesn't seem to be any sense in that, unless the man who gave the order has a name that begins with that letter."

Thorndyke Flint smiled.

"You've partly hit it," he answered; "only, instead of 'V' being the initial letter, it is the whole name. The Five Clan has five members. I found that out some time ago, each known by a number. It was Number Three who drove that limousine last night. Another of the men there was Number One. The head of the Clan never takes an active part in the robberies. There-

fore Number One is a subordinate. The head—the directing spirit—would naturally be the highest or lowest number."

"I believe I begin to see it," broke in Judson eagerly. "Go on, chief!"

"Not being Number One, naturally he would be Number Five," continued Thorndyke Flint imperturbably. "Another thing: A man of his cautious cunning would take all precautions to prevent his identity being known. Therefore, instead of signing himself Number Five in his instruction to his men, or even Five, what more likely than that he would adopt the Roman numeral? There you have it, Jud."

"Of course!" agreed Judson heartily. "The 'V' merely stands for Five, and the message as a whole signifies: 'Eleven o'clock—Number Five.' But even if we know that the man behind the organization, who secretly directs its operations, is called Number Five, we are no nearer finding out who he really is," he added in a more sober tone.

"Don't jump to conclusions too hastily, Jud," was Thornton Flint's admonition. "Be sure of your ground, as you go along. Look on the other side of that yellow paper, and you will find something that ought to lead to the identity of this arch rogue we are looking for. Because, Judson, just as sure as we sit here, it would be useless to hunt for the separate members of that little group of holdups who robbed Thorleigh's store, with any idea of proving their guilt, until we have the master mind who directs them."

Judson shrugged a little incredulously.

"How about Jim Dugan, the man who has lost his middle finger?" he said. "When we have put him on the grill, won't we have the man who killed Kehoe and nearly did the same for Tom Gilmore? And won't that lead easily to the capture of the other two, even without finding the master mind?"

"You have decided that Dugan really is the man who had the handkerchief

around his hand?" observed Flint, without looking up from the bit of yellow paper. "Well, never mind about that just now. Look at this, Jud."

He was staring down at the paper in a contemplative way, and his lieutenant detected a peculiar glint in the dark eyes that was only to be seen there when he was particularly pleased.

"A piece of wrapping paper," remarked Judson.

"True. But do you observe anything about it different from the wrapping paper you see in New York dry goods stores?"

"There are hundreds of different kinds of paper used, especially counting the big department stores," declared Judson.

"True enough," conceded Flint. "But this paper was never used in an American store. It is as distinctively foreign as a Chinese tea chest. What is more, it comes from England—from London, and I believe I can say what particular part of London."

"Drive on, chief," was all Judson said in a low voice. He knew his astute employer would not make such an assertion unless he were sure.

"You see these printed letters. They are part of the address of the store, of course. What do you make of them?"

Judson stared hard at the three printed letters. That was all there were. They ran thus: "—rt R—"

"Port something or other," guessed Judson, after concentrating on the letters for more than a minute.

"You are wrong, Jud," said his chief quietly. "Unless all signs fail, the 'rt' are the last two letters of the word Court, and the 'R' begins Road. The words spelled out would be Tottenham Court Road."

"Taking a chance on that guess, aren't you, chief?" smiled Judson.

"Not much of a chance," was the reply. "I happen to know that this particular kind of wrapping paper is used

in a large department store or drapery in Tottenham Court Road. It is one of the oldest establishments of its kind in London. Whether Number Five, of the Five Clan, bought something at this particular store and chanced to bring a piece of the wrapper to New York with him, I cannot say positively. But I do know that he was operating in London before Scotland Yard made it too hot for him, and that he came over here about six weeks ago."

"Then he is an Englishman?"

"No, American. He did some crooked jobs in Chicago before going to Europe," said Thorndyke Flint, as he placed the yellow paper in his drawer and locked it up. "But he always contrived to keep himself in the background, and the Chicago police don't know what he looks like, any more than do the men of the Yard in London."

"Why did the fellow who got the message from Number Five stick it in that glove?" asked Judson.

"Where could have been a better hiding place?" rejoined Flint. "But I doubt whether Number Five knew it would be there when he gave the order for the glove to be dropped under the corner of the rug in the showroom, to put us on a wrong scent," he added musingly.

"I don't quite follow you, chief," confessed Judson. "When you say a 'wrong scent,' you don't mean that Jim Dugan is innocent, do you?"

"I have not arrived at a conclusion on that point yet," returned Flint. "We shall know that when we have Number Five."

"I can't think of any one on our records who might be this party," observed Judson thoughtfully. "Yet you are going to get him, I'm sure of that."

"I am going to try," answered Thorndyke Flint, stretching and glancing at the window. "Say, Jud, we'll have to go to bed for a few hours. It's getting daylight."

"I'm not sorry to hear you say that, chief," responded Judson, with a wan grin. "But I'd made up my mind that we'd have to keep right on. Those Five Clan people are pretty slick."

"Yes, Jud, they are. That is the reason they won't make any decided move until nightfall, in my opinion. Nevertheless, you'd better make up your mind not to sleep longer than noon. Good night!"

Thorndyke Flint did not go to bed himself just then. When Frank Judson had departed, the famous crime investigator leaned back in his chair to think over the Thorleigh fur robbery and its relation to the crushing of Kenneth Martin through the mysterious Five Clan.

That Thorndyke Flint had mapped out a campaign of his own, no one could doubt who knew him. The fact that he had not taken any one into his confidence—not even his two tried lieutenants—was characteristic of his methods. There was a contented smile curling his firm lips, as he closed his eyes and dropped into a light slumber in his chair. He had resolved to wait for the morning newspaper before going to his bedroom.

For an hour he dozed comfortably—for the master detective had long accustomed himself to snatching a little sleep anywhere. Then he heard the rattling of milk wagons, the clink of bottles, and he knew the papers ought to be delivered about the same time.

He looked out of the window—broad daylight now. Abruptly he opened his library door and rushed downstairs to the street.

Copies of all the New York morning newspapers were piled neatly on the doorstep, and a rather flashily dressed young man was smoothing them with his hands. Thorndyke Flint held out his hands for the papers, and the flashy young man picked them up with his left hand.

As he did so, the detective looked sharply at him.

"You're not the paper man!" It was an assertion rather than a query.

"Er—no, sir," admitted the other in some embarrassment. "I'm not. I wanted to see Mr. Flint."

"Come upstairs," was the brief response. "You know I am Thorndyke Flint?"

"I thought so. I'd never seen you before," he answered.

Once inside the library, Thorndyke Flint motioned to his visitor to stand in the middle of the room and, placing his back against the door, asked coolly:

"Now what do you want, Jim Dugan?"

## CHAPTER IX.

### UNDERWORLD WAYS.

THE flashily attired young man started, and there was a hunted look in his shifty eyes, as he turned them toward the door. Had not Thorndyke Flint been standing there, beyond doubt he would have made a dash to get away.

"Who says I'm Jim Dugan?" he demanded sullenly.

"Take your right hand out of your coat pocket," ordered the detective sternly.

"What for?" whined the young man. "I ain't holding a gun nor nothing like that." But he kept his hand concealed.

"If I didn't know that, you'd never have come upstairs with your hand hidden," Thorndyke Flint assured him. "Out with it now—quick!"

Slowly the young man withdrew his right hand from the side coat pocket, but tried to hide it behind him.

"That will do," said Flint. "I see the middle finger has been cut off. How did that happen?"

"Gun!" was the surly reply. "Went off in my hand one night. Celebrating Fourth of July."

Thorndyke Flint shook his head sadly.

"Dugan, do you think you could tell the truth even if your life depended on it? Could you?"

"I'm telling the honest truth now," rejoined Dugan, with a show of righteous indignation. "It *was* a gun took that finger off."

"Quite likely," assented Flint. "But it wasn't a Fourth of July celebration. Sit down there and let me hear what you have to say."

The detective locked the door and placed the key in his pocket. Then, with Jim Dugan sitting a few feet away from the big table, Thorndyke Flint dropped into his chair and surveyed the furtive-eyed, uneasy young man in silence.

"Where are those furs stolen from the Thorleigh place?" suddenly demanded the detective.

"How should I know?" The furtive eyes gleamed in terror. "I wasn't in that job."

The detective regarded him steadily, as if he were rather a curiosity. Jim Dugan returned the stare in truculent defiance for a few seconds. Then his gaze dropped.

Thorndyke Flint reached into his drawer and brought forth the kid glove he had found in Thorleigh's showroom. He spread it out on the table.

"This your glove, Dugan?"

Jim Dugan picked it up from the table and examined it inside and out. During the process Thorndyke Flint scanned the front page of one of his newspapers. But Dugan was not deceived by this seeming languid interest in himself. He knew the lynx-eyed detective noted his every expression.

"I don't know that this glove belongs to me," declared Dugan at last. "Where did you get it?"

"In the room at Thorleigh's, where the Russian sables and Alaska sealskins were pinched," replied Flint coolly.

"The man who had that glove at Thorleigh's last night killed the watchman." He took the glove from the shaking Dugan and held it up before his eyes. "Lying won't help you, Dugan. This is your glove, and you know it. It will pay you to come clean. I know all about you, and that you were away from home for some hours last night and early this morning, just at the time the Thorleigh job was done."

Thorndyke Flint laid his hand, apparently by accident, on the telephone instrument on his table. Jim Dugan, with an incoherent howl, leaped from his chair and convulsively seized the detective's wrist.

"No, no!" he shrieked. "Don't do that! If the headquarters men come, I won't have a chance. They know me, and they'll railroad me to the chair on suspicion!"

"You know better than that," interrupted the detective. "Men are not sent to the chair merely on suspicion. But you have a bad record, and of course that would be against you. You can't blame the police for that. Well, we will drop that for the present. What did you want to see me about? You came of your own free will, remember."

"Yes, because I'm going straight."

"And you came to tell me where those stolen furs are?"

"No, that wasn't it," denied Dugan nervously. "How should I know where they are?"

"You knew this Thorleigh raid was to be made last night?"

There was a long silence. Then, in a low, faltering mumble: "Yes."

"There was a three-fingered man in it. He was called Number Two."

"Look here, Mr. Flint!" blurted out Dugan desperately. "I've told you I wasn't there. If you won't believe anything I say, how *can* I come clean?"

Thorndyke Flint pointed to the glove with its one flattened finger which never had been filled.

"How do you account for that?" he asked coldly.

"It's a frame-up!" spat out Dugan.

"That's your glove?"

Dugan swallowed hard. "It may be," he confessed. "But I wasn't in that Thorleigh crack. If I had been, is it likely I'd leave my glove for the police to find? Wouldn't I have more sense than that? What do you think I am—a rube? No, sir; that glove was planted to get me in wrong. I knew some job was to be put up on me. That's why I came here. We all know you are ready to help a guy who wants to be honest. You'll see he gets at least a fifty-fifty deal when it comes to a show-down. That's all I want now, and I'm risking my life to get it."

He looked hopefully at Thorndyke Flint. The detective's face was impassive.

"You know this Thorleigh job was done by the Five Clan?" Flint asked.

"Yes." The reply was in a whisper.

"Who told you?"

"I heard it."

"From some of the clan?"

"No," declared Dugan emphatically.

"I don't know one of them. They don't know each other. The big boss has fixed that, so there can't be any squealing."

"You seem to be well informed as to the methods of the clan," remarked Flint. Then, with a slight touch of impatience: "Now, Dugan, we've had enough of this fooling. You were to be in the Thorleigh job, weren't you? You got your orders in the regular way."

"How d'you mean, the regular way?" returned Dugan suspiciously. "I don't get you."

"Yes, you do," was the stern rejoinder. "When a job is planned each member of the Five Clan gets a written order in code on a scrap of paper. He doesn't know who gives it to him. It is shoved into his hand in a crowded street, or perhaps in a subway crush at

the rush hour, and he never sees any one he knows near him. But he always obeys. He goes, masked, to the place he is told, and finds the others there, in masks. They know each other by numbers and do their work as a team. The big man at the head, who knows them all, but who is a stranger to them, is known as Number Five."

"I don't know how you found out all this," breathed Dugan almost inaudibly, "but it's so. I got the order, but I am going straight, and I didn't show up with the others. Now I'm scared. Number Five is going to get me."

"In what way? Has he anything on you?" asked the detective.

"Yes, if he dares to come out in the open, he could have me put away for twenty years." Dugan trembled. "Perhaps sent to the chair. But it isn't that I'm leery of. Number Five brags that he never croaked a man in his life, I've been told. That don't say he wouldn't hire some one else to stick a knife in my back or plug me with a bullet. But, Mr. Flint!"—Dugan's whine changed into a snarl—"I mean to get him first. Only I'll have to do it quick. The Five Clan is getting ready to do a bigger job than they done at Thorleigh's. It's to be their last. When that's pulled off, *there'll be no more Five Clan*. It'll melt away. Each one of the clan will be handed his, cut from the final blow-off, and if them guys was to meet on the street the next day, none of 'em would know each other. They was strangers while they was in the clan, and they'll be the same when they're out of it. Oh, this here Number Five is a wizard, take it from me. But I'm going to get him—if you'll help, Mr. Flint!"

"Doesn't any one know at all what he looks like—tall or short, young or old or middle-aged—light or dark?"

"They ain't a guy in New York can say what he looks like," interrupted Dugan positively. "He's one of these awful birds what is always around, but is

never seen. That's how it is he keeps a strangle hold on the Five Clan and has every crook in New York jumping when he whistles."

"You know where this final big job is to be done?" asked Flint. Suddenly he thrust an admonitory forefinger at the frightened Dugan. "Don't try to hold it back. Perhaps I know and am trying you out to decide whether I can trust you."

The flashy young man, in his gaudy, cheap-looking clothes, made as if he would drop to his knees, but Thorndyke Flint caught him up sharply.

"No movie melodrama, Dugan!" he warned. "Keep on your feet and tell me what I ask. You'd just as soon lie on your knees, you know. Where is this big robbery to take place? What business house is to be robbed this time?"

"I don't know, Mr. Flint!" roared Dugan, in agonized earnestness. "If I had the least idea, I'd tell you, s'help me! All I know is that some joint is to be cleaned out. It won't be just a few fur coats, like at Thorleigh's. The clan aims to put the guy what runs this new place right out of business. It's to be the biggest thing the clan has ever done."

Thorndyke Flint was convinced that Jim Dugan was speaking the truth, and he did not press him further. Changing his tone to a matter-of-fact evenness, he said:

"Do you want to go to your home in Crownell Street, or would you rather stay in my house, out of sight of Number Five?"

"You know where I live, don't you, Mr. Flint?" muttered Dugan. "There wouldn't be no use trying to get away from you, even if I wanted to. If I could lay low in your house till night comes, I'd feel safer. Besides, I'd want to see you then, anyhow." His voice sharpened, as he went on. "You *are* going to help me, Mr. Flint?"

"Get down to the kitchen in the basement," said the detective coolly. "You'll find Mrs. Prine, my housekeeper, there. Tell her to give you your breakfast. After that, you will find a sofa in the little sitting room off the kitchen. Lie down and get some sleep. Tell Mrs. Prine I said so. I may want to use you to-night, and if I do I shall require you to be wide awake."

Thorndyke Flint unlocked the door and watched the rather bewildered Dugan shuffle down the stairs. When he had seen the young man descend the second flight to the kitchen and heard the high voice of his housekeeper demanding explanations of her unexpected visitor, he went back into his library.

He sat in thoughtful silence in his large chair for ten minutes or so. Then he got up and went into the bathroom for a cold shower, followed by a brisk rub-down. He had decided there would be no bed for him for some hours.

He drank a cup of coffee prepared in Mrs. Prine's best style, left a short note for Frank Judson, placed on that efficient young man's own desk, and went out.

## CHAPTER X.

### A HALF-REMEMBERED FACE.

**B**Y way of the subway Thorndyke Flint slipped rapidly over to Brooklyn and stepped into the lobby of an apartment house in one of the highly respectable residence streets off Flatbush Avenue. It had an elevator and uniformed West Indian hallboys. It was the home of Baxter Rand.

In answer to his inquiry, the attendant told the detective that Mr. Rand had gone out a few minutes before in his auto.

"Which way?" asked Flint casually.

The lad swung his arm toward the east, and in another three minutes Thorndyke Flint was on a trolley car traveling in the same direction. He knew Baxter Rand was the possessor

of a motor car of the flivver type, and that he was inclined to get all the speed his engine would yield, when there were not too many traffic officers about. But Thorndyke Flint was in no hurry to catch up with the Safeguard secretary. Rand couldn't go many miles without tumbling into the sea if he kept straight on. They would be pretty sure to meet somewhere eventually in the outskirts of Flatbush, and if they didn't, no matter!

Of course Rand *might* have stumbled on some useful clew in the hunt for the Thorleigh furs and the men of the Five Clan. But Flint had not much faith in the flaccid, vacant-eyed secretary in the rôle of a detective.

"Means well, perhaps," he murmured, "but——"

A slight smile curled Thorndyke Flint's lip and shot a gleam into the dark eyes. But whether the smile was one of amusement at a passing thought, or a tribute to the fine morning, which was clear and sunny, after the disagreeable weather of the night before, only he could have told. It was the hour when thousands of Brooklynites are on the way to business. Most of those who passed him had enjoyed a quiet night's sleep and a comfortable breakfast. But few looked so thoroughly "fit" as this hard-working student of life who had been up all night.

It was to the stately home of Mrs. Thorleigh that Thorndyke Flint went first, after leaving the trolley car. His glance swept along the avenue on the chance of catching a glimpse of Baxter Rand and his flivver. He was not to be seen. Only two motor cars were in sight. Both were bound cityward.

As for the sidewalks, they were alive with serious-faced office workers rushing for the subway or to make a street car which might get them to business on time. It is the daily battle of the masses in Brooklyn with which every one is familiar.

The front door of the Thorleigh man-

sion was closed, and the blinds were down at nearly all the windows. Nothing else was to be expected at this early hour, remembering that the whole household had been kept up nearly all night.

As he approached the Thorleigh residence, one bare possibility had occurred to Thorndyke Flint—that Baxter Rand might be about the premises searching for clews which would be easier found in daylight than at night. He had not told Rand about his tracing of the limousine in the robbery. But if the snickering secretary were the astute detective he professed to be, he might have found it out.

The fact that the garage was securely closed, with the iron wire still twisted about the lock of the wide doors, and the door at the side held by its spring lock, satisfied him that Rand was not there now. Flint meant to look again at the limousine. He was relieved of any difficulty about getting into the garage, when he saw a man, who acted as gardener, coming around from the back of the big house. It was not necessary to offer any explanation when he asked the gardener to open the garage for him. The detective's distinguished appearance was a potent "open sesame" in itself.

"Jennison isn't home yet?" he asked carelessly.

"No, sir," answered the gardener in a respectful tone. "Jennison telephoned a while ago that his wife had been taken ill at her sister's in the Bronx, and he wanted to know whether Mrs. Thorleigh would object to his staying there till tomorrow, as Mr. Thorleigh was not at home."

"I suppose Mrs. Thorleigh did not get the message?" remarked the detective. "She is still in her room, isn't she?"

"Yes, sir. But I woke Mr. Bloss, the butler, and he answered over the wire. He said he guessed it would be all right. You see, sir, Jennison often has a night

off like that, when he isn't wanted for the opera or theater. He loves dancing, Jennison does. He goes to a slew of balls in the season."

"His wife go with him?"

"Well, no; she doesn't dance, but she likes Jennison to enjoy himself."

Thorndyke Flint did not pursue the conversation. He was looking sharply about the garage, as well as inside the limousine. As the gardener went out to attend to his work, the detective, who had been surveying the repair bench along one wall, with its two powerful vises and litter of greasy tools, caught sight of a card partly hidden beneath a monkey wrench. Evidently a business card, the printed inscription was almost obliterated by oil, but Flint contrived to read it.

He appeared to be interested, for, having wiped the oil from the card as well as he could with clean cotton waste, he slipped it into his waistcoat pocket. Then he came out of the garage, closing the door behind him and snapping the spring lock.

"Tell the butler to inform Mrs. Thorleigh that Mr. Thorndyke Flint was here, will you?" he said to the gardener, as he went out from the grounds.

The detective did not turn toward the city, but, with long, swift strides, swung along the avenue in the direction of Sheepshead Bay. There were not many people on the sidewalk, now that the morning rush was about over. The scent of the sea brine came to him invigoratingly, and, though his thoughts were busy on this curious Thorleigh case, which had developed so many angles, he was conscious of keen pleasure in his walk.

For more than two miles he kept on. By that time the handsome residences had become fewer, and the new apartment houses had dwindled to only one now and then, at long intervals. Flat dwellers are chary of going too far from the business section, even in Brooklyn.

Stretches of farmland, devoted mainly to truck gardening, reminded Flint of the old-fashioned Long Island farms which now were fast becoming a memory, and he gazed with curious interest at an occasional decaying old road house which had done a roaring trade in the forever-departed days, when the Sheepshead Bay race track flourished so gayly.

It was at one of these superannuated road houses that he stopped and gazed seemingly in idle curiosity. The ancient frame house, with its long veranda, was occupied evidently, for the door in the center was open, and at one of the windows on the lower floor Flint could make out a face behind the sash curtain.

A painted signboard, with the words "Armistice Hotel," indicated that a new modern name had been adopted, while a further announcement on the board that "Sandwiches and all kinds of soft drinks" could be obtained, suggested that it might do a thriving trade in summer, when holiday motor-car parties to and from the seashore were frequent.

The detective noticed a garage partly hidden by the house, and he was moving in that direction, when the owner of the face that had been behind the sash curtain appeared in the doorway.

It was a middle-aged woman, whose height was about two inches short of six feet, with broad shoulders and powerful bare arms. Her black hair, neatly arranged, was shot with gray, and her rather large features were not unprepossessing. She wore a freshly ironed gingham gown and a clean white apron. Evidently she was a professional hostess who respected herself and was likely to be popular with her patrons. Just now her visage wore a look of forwearing inquiry.

"Anything I can do?" she asked, in a deep contralto. "Looking for somebody?"

"I see you have sandwiches," an-

answered the detective. "Could you serve me with one and a cup of coffee?"

"Sure! That's what we're here for," was the prompt response. "Come into the dining room." She stepped inside to show the way. "We have ham, tongue, and cheese sandwiches, and I've just made fresh coffee."

It was a large bare room into which he was ushered, with three tables and a number of wooden chairs. It did not differ much in general from any dining room in a hotel or boarding house of its type. Flint noted all this in one swift glance, but what really seemed to interest him was the woman herself. At her first appearance a puzzled look had crept into his eyes.

Where and when had he seen her before? He decided that it was a long time ago, and that he never had known her very well. But that this was not the first time he had gazed on that tall, blocky figure and heard her deep voice, he was certain.

"Did you say ham?" she asked, as she moved toward a long hall which led to the other end of the building, where was the kitchen behind whose sash curtain he had seen her looking at him. "Or was it cheese?"

"Ham and a cup of coffee," was his response. "While you are getting it, I'll go out to the garage. I'm something of a bug on motor cars, and I always talk to garage men when I can."

He walked to the end of the room opposite the hall, where she stood, and seized the handle of a door in a rather dark corner. The door did not yield, and he gave it a second tug. There was a key in the lock, and he was about to turn it, when it was violently snatched away, and the woman, her large face strangely hardened, said sharply:

"That's not the door. It's my bedroom." She pointed to another door. "That's the way out to the yard. But my nephew is busy, and I don't know whether he'll want to talk."

"Your nephew?" Thorndyke Flint's voice expressed only polite curiosity. "I didn't know you were Joe Claxton's aunt. Well, of course, Mrs. Claxton, I won't annoy him. I'm only out for an idle stroll, and——"

"My name is not Claxton," she interrupted, "I'm Mrs. Hayes." She marched away in some dignity and was lost to view in the long hall.

Thorndyke Flint waited only until his keen hearing assured him she was moving about the distant kitchen, and that she could not see the interior of the dining room. Then he darted over to the door in the dark corner, which she had told him was the door of her bedroom. A skillful use of one of the small emergency tools he carried in the handle of his hunter's pocketknife, and the lock slid back. As the door opened, a rush of damp, earthy air struck him in the face.

It was *not* a bedroom. He was looking down a long steep flight of stone steps that led away into the recesses of a very dark cellar.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A WARM SCENT.

"BEDROOM, eh?" muttered the detective, as carefully he closed the door and pushed the bolt back into its socket. "I've no doubt that cellar was full of beer, wine and whisky in the old days. Probably extends under the whole house."

He reseated himself at his table, trying harder than ever to recall where he had seen Mrs. Hayes before. He did not wonder why the good lady had tied to him as to what was the other side of that door. He believed he knew.

"Here's the sandwich, sir." Her voice broke in on his reflections, as she placed the food before him, together with a cup of fragrant hot coffee. "Anything else?"

A fleeting expression in her face al-

most provoked an ejaculation of annoyance from him. Where *had* he seen her before?

"No, thank you," he said quietly, as he handed her a bill, apparently interested only in his luncheon. "You think I'd better not trouble your nephew, Joe Claxton, then?"

"I don't think he'd thank you." She gave him his change. "He doesn't know you, does he?"

"I don't think so. I know his name because it's on his business card. I picked it up down the avenue, as I came along," he added, forestalling the question that he felt was coming. "He calls his place the Armistice Garage. So, when I saw this hotel was the Armistice why——"

"Sure!" she interrupted. "I see."

She stalked away without further parley. Thorndyke Flint turned to his sandwich and coffee.

He settled down to eating and drinking, as if absorbed in that strictly personal occupation, but his eyes never turned away from a side window through which he could see a corner of Joe Claxton's garage. Standing outside the garage was a flivver that the detective recognized. He was speculating coolly as to the whereabouts of its owner.

Flint had not quite finished his coffee when his unspoken query was answered. From the garage slouched a round-shouldered man whose derby hat was pulled down against his ears, who wore amber-colored glasses, and on whose lower lip hung a half-smoked cigarette—Baxter Rand to wit.

The Safeguard secretary looked fur- tively about. Then he spoke to an ordinary-looking garage mechanic, in the oil-smudged habiliments of his calling, who had come out with him. His grimy face suggested that he had lately been in the depths of an automobile. The two of them lifted the hood of the car and talked earnestly.

Thorndyke Flint understood the pantomime perfectly. The garage man had just been working on the car, and he was showing the owner how well the job had been done.

At last Claxton—for the garage man was he, of course—cranked up the engine. Then Baxter Rand took his seat behind the wheel, and the next moment he was on his way back to town. Thorn- dyke Flint deliberately disposed of the remainder of his coffee and was look- ing through the front window, which commanded a long stretch of the avenue, to make sure of catching the next trolley car for the city, when a door behind him was banged open, and a hoarse voice bellowed:

"Ahoy! Mrs. Hayes!"

The nautical flavor of the hail was carried out in the person of the in- dividual who had flung it forth.

A big man of about forty-five, in a loose-fitting suit of blue, with a white waistcoat, not overclean, a wide collar, and long loose black tie. His hair hung in a tangle over his forehead nearly down to his bushy eyebrows. His face was red from sea winds and tropical suns, and his small eyes were watery from much straining in heavy weather. In one gnarled hand he held a canvas dun- nage bag, which looked like a very tight and exceedingly large roly-poly pudding, and on which the detective caught a glimpse, in small black letters, of the words: "Capt. W. Hugg, Lady Mary."

The big man in sailor blue had come lurching into the dining room and sent forth his call to Mrs. Hayes before per- ceiving that the room was not empty. Obviously he was taken aback when he saw the well-dressed man who surveyed him so coolly.

"Say, shipmate," he stammered, "I begs yer pardon. I didn't know you was here. 'Scuse me, won't yer?"

"Don't mention it," returned Thorn- dyke Flint easily. "Mrs. Hayes is down the hall there."

"What do you want, captain?"

It was Mrs. Hayes herself who asked this. The detective might have marveled that she had come so swiftly, if it had not been for that disquieting half-recollection of knowing her at some other time and place. As it was, he was not surprised to find her between himself and the big seafaring man on the instant, and the sly care with which she turned the canvas bag over, so that the inscription should not show, seemed quite natural.

"There's my car!" exclaimed Flint. "Good morning!"

He was out of the house and hailing the trolley car before she could respond. But on his way out he bent another searching look on the somewhat flustered lady's face, and, as he took his seat in the car, he recalled where and when he had seen Mrs. Hayes before.

It was to the Safeguard Burglar Insurance Company's office that Thorn-dyke Flint went first on getting back to Manhattan. He found Kenneth Martin champing on his unlighted big black cigar, as usual, and in a state of fury because the police had not been able to give him any comforting news as to their hunt for the men who had robbed Thorleigh's and killed the watchman.

He was in the midst of a fierce denunciation of everybody at headquarters, and he had just declared loudly and profanely that he would run the rascals down himself, when Flint entered. The person to whom all this was addressed was Baxter Rand! The meek-mannered secretary sat there—amber glasses, cigarette, and all—as if he had not been out of the office since the night before. It was difficult to reconcile his composed, settled-down attitude with the long trip toward Sheeps-head Bay and back in his automobile, to say nothing of the time Flint knew he had spent at Claxton's garage. Yet, considering that he must have taken time

to put his car away before taking the subway, he could not have been seated in the Safeguard offices for more than ten or fifteen minutes.

"He may be a better detective than I think," mused Flint, as he sat in a taxi on his way home. "At all events, he knows how to hide his movements."

But Thorndyke Flint had some important work of his own to do on the Thorleigh case without loss of time, and before he reached Washington Square, he had dismissed Baxter Rand almost entirely from his mind. He found both of his assistants at their respective desks in the library as he entered. There was always a certain amount of routine to be attended to, and it was the rule for Judson and Norton to fill in their time in this way, when they were not under the immediate orders of their chief.

"Any mail, Jud?"

"Nothing important," was the businesslike reply. "I've attended to what there was."

"Call up 'Ship News' office and find out whether there is a vessel called the *Lady Mary* in port, and what she is," directed Flint, as he left the room to go down to the kitchen regions.

It was seldom that the detective went below the level of the ground floor in his house, but he had his reasons for doing so now. He wanted to see what Jim Dugan was doing, without giving notice of his visit. He found that that tired young man had been sleeping up to half an hour before, and he was now disposing of a hearty breakfast served by Mrs. Prine in her kitchen. He got up respectfully, as Thorndyke Flint appeared in the doorway. The detective beckoned him in silence into the adjoining room, where Dugan had been sleeping on the sofa, and closed the door. Then he said sharply, in a low voice:

"Those Thorleigh furs were taken to your brother's place in Crownell Street. You know that."

Jim Dugan's ratlike countenance con-

torted in sudden terror, and he raised his hands in protest.

"I don't know it, boss," he pleaded earnestly. "I ain't never seen none of that Thorleigh stuff. I told you I wasn't in the job, and——"

"Never mind about that. You are too ready with your denials for a strictly honest man. If you don't actually know by the evidence of your eyes, you are pretty sure, aren't you?"

"Look here, boss! How could I be pretty sure when I ain't seen nothing?" he whined.

"You and your brother have done a lot of that kind of business," replied the detective.

"The police ain't never had nothing like that on us," declared Dugan, with a feeble effort at defiance.

"Very well," said Flint calmly. "I'll call up headquarters, tell what I know, and you can argue it out with them."

He had his hand on the handle of the door, when Dugan clawed at his coat. The detective brushed him away with a quick movement of repulsion.

"Hold on, boss! Hold on for just a minute!" begged Dugan piteously. "I come here to ask you to help me, and I'm willing to do all I can to pay for it. Listen! My brother Slug don't tell me everything. The store down there is his—not mine. I work for him, but that don't say I'm in on any of his graft. Slug is only my stepbrother, anyway, and he wouldn't give me no partnership. As for this Thorleigh stuff——"

"That will do," interrupted Flint. "You will stay here till evening. Then we'll go there together. And don't try to get out of this house till I tell you. You are being watched." He strode to the door again, but stopped to ask carelessly: "You know Captain Bill Hugg?"

But the blank look in Jim Dugan's unwholesome pimpled face convinced him even before the bewildered denial came: "I never heard of him. Who is he?"

"It's of no consequence," answered the detective indifferently. "If you should happen to meet him, let me know."

He went out of the room without another look at the thoroughly cowed gangster and walked upstairs, with the faintest indication of a satisfied smile on his unrevealing countenance.

Frank Judson had finished telephoning "Ship News" and reported, as soon as his chief entered: "No such craft as the *Lady Mary* has been in port at any time."

"That all you found out, Jud?" asked Thorndyke Flint, with a slight lift of his brows.

"No, I got something else, chief. A revenue cutter man I had on the wire said there is a British tramp steamer, *Lady Mary*, in the rum fleet off Sandy Hook. Been there some days. She carries sail as well as steam—schooner-rigged. The man on the wire said he didn't think she'd landed any booze yet, but they were watching her."

Thorndyke Flint nodded unemotionally and, as Judson turned away, called Ray Norton over.

"Ray, go to the Hotel Rankoka, in West Forty-eighth Street. Tom Gilmore lives there. Give him these instructions from me and tell him they are important."

He whispered the rest of it so that only Ray Norton could hear.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FIVE CLAN SPEAKS AGAIN.

FOR two hours after the departure of Ray Norton to convey the confidential message to Tom Gilmore, there was almost complete silence in Thorndyke Flint's library. An occasional shuffle of papers on Frank Judson's desk hardly disturbed the stillness, for Jud was careful not to make any noise more than he could help. The deep and regular breathing of the master detective, as

he sat back in his capacious chair, with eyes closed, told that he was sleeping.

Knowing that there was nothing to be done in the Thorleigh case until night fell, Thorndyke Flint followed the example of many great soldiers and obtained rest for further efforts, when the opportunity came. He had long trained himself to relax and fall asleep in any position and in almost any circumstances at will, and he slumbered as easily as if he had been stretched at full length.

Deep as appeared to be his sleep, however, he suddenly sat upright, with all his faculties on the alert, when the rumble of a man's voice came faintly from the front entrance of the house and made itself barely audible in the almost sound-proof library. Beyond doubt the man was angrily excited, if not worse.

"Kenneth Martin!" exclaimed the detective, after a moment or two of listening. "Bring him up, Jud. No, never mind! Here's Williams!"

The sedate, imperturbable man who had long acted as butler in Thorndyke Flint's small, but well-ordered household, knocked perfunctorily and stepped inside.

"Mr. Kenneth Martin!" he announced stonily. "In the reception room!"

It was not much more than a minute after Williams' disappearance when the head of the Safeguard Burglar Insurance Company hurled himself into the library.

Kenneth Martin's large face was purple with impotent rage, his protuberant eyes goggled, and he had ground the black cigar between his teeth until it had become merely a fragment. Planting himself in front of the detective's table, he flung upon it a half sheet of letter paper on which were a few lines of typewriting.

"Read that, Flint!" he bellowed, while he fumbled in a pocket for another of his black cigars. "That cursed Five Clan is after me again. Don't leave

time for one job to cool off before they spring another. By the great eternal, if they do what they say this time, I'll be wiped out—ruined—bankrupt. I'll be lucky if I keep out of jail. Read it!"

The detective picked up the paper, regarded Kenneth Martin steadily for a moment, and, leaning back in his chair, read aloud in even tones:

"KENNETH MARTIN: You think we don't know of that last insurance policy you wrote—bigger than all the others. But you can't hide anything from us. We are going after you in twenty-four hours, and we'll get you. No one can save you—not Baxter Rand, nor Thorndyke Flint, nor any of them. That will be our last shot. The Thorleigh job probably was enough, but we'll jarr you with this last extra big one, just for luck. We are giving you warning, but it won't help you.  
THE FIVE CLAN."

As the detective unhurriedly laid the paper on the table, he looked up at Martin and said:

"Of course this refers to the art collection at the home of Mrs. Morlin Leicester in Westchester, valued at more than a million. But is the risk so great? Aren't there armed guards and all kinds of modern mechanical protection there?"

Kenneth Martin's eyes opened wide. "Great Scott!" he blurted out. "How in blazes do you find out things? The arrival of the collection was supposed to be a dead secret."

"If I were not familiar with a great many such 'dead secrets,' I should not get far," returned Thorndyke Flint. "As for the Five Clan, you have had proof that they are not easily stopped, and you might expect that they would have full information about this valuable importation. This is the job you think the Five Clan threatens?"

"Yes," growled Kenneth Martin. "What would you do about it?"

"Obviously the course for you is to see that the guard is rendered impregnable," was the detective's quiet answer. "I cannot see that it was necessary for you to come to me for that advice."

"I thought perhaps you would go to Mrs. Morlin Leicester's house with me," said Martin hesitatingly.

"I might—to-morrow," returned Flint. "The note gives you twenty-four hours."

"Suppose they don't give me as long as that? They may be lying."

"True! Then you'd better go there now. Why not take Rand with you?"

"I will, if I go. Good man, that! Live wire—though he does not look it. He's out just now. This note came to me half an hour ago. A boy gave it to the elevator man. If I could only trace that boy! But of course I can't. The elevator man had never seen him before, and he couldn't say what he looked like."

"It's not likely it would help you to trace the man who wrote it, if you did find the boy," remarked the detective coolly. "For a quarter any boy would deliver a note a block or two away, and hardly look at the man who gave him the job. Well, is there anything else, Mr. Martin?"

The hint was unmistakable, but Kenneth Martin did not go till he had received assurance that Thorndyke Flint was not only working hard on the Thorleigh case, but that he might have something to tell about it before very long. Kenneth Martin was so pleased with even this cautiously offered encouragement that he thrust out a large, puffy paw to shake hands.

Ignoring the outstretched hand, Thorndyke Flint said: "What arrangements have been made for that watchman's funeral—Larry Kehoe? He hasn't any family or close friends."

"I don't know anything about it," was Martin's careless reply. "That will be up to Thorleigh when he gets back from Chicago to-morrow, I should think." Then, leaning over the table, with both large hands on it, he bade the detective an almost affectionate farewell: "Good afternoon, Mr. Flint. I

know you're my friend. I'll call you up to-morrow. I have a hunch we'll beat this Five Clan yet, now that you are after them." He grabbed one of Thorndyke Flint's hands and wrung it vigorously.

"Good day," said the detective coldly, regaining possession of his hand with a jerk. He had a constitutional dislike for the Kenneth Martin brand of effusiveness.

"Look out of the window and see that he goes away, Jud," directed Flint, when Martin had left the room.

"Gone in a taxi," reported Judson briefly, "toward Fifth Avenue."

Thorndyke Flint looked at his watch. "It will be dark in less than an hour. We have just time for dinner, and then we'll go."

The detective was a firm believer in regular meals and regular sleep—when there was time for them. He foresaw a busy night for his assistant and himself, and they would be all the better able to do what was before them if fortified by a bountiful and well-served dinner.

Mrs. Prine and Williams supplied just such a dinner, during which Thorndyke Flint explained to his lieutenant the course he had laid out for that night, and which, he believed, would lead to the recovery of the furs, and perhaps the capture of the elusive head of the Five Clan, before the sun rose again:

"It looks good to me, chief," was Frank Judson's delighted exclamation, as Flint arose from the table and went to an adjacent wardrobe. "I believe Gilmore is straight. We can depend on him."

"I feel sure of that," was the quiet answer. "Anyhow, Ray will attend to that. Hurry with your change, Jud."

In a few minutes both were arrayed in old suits of clothes, with plenty of handy pockets, and each had slipped into a long raincoat. Then, with caps pulled low over their foreheads, they looked

so much like dock laborers in working rig that it would have been hard to identify them as the clean-cut business men they were ordinarily.

"Got everything, Jud—automatic, flash, blackjack?" asked Flint, as he examined his own pistol to make sure it was fully charged.

"All right, chief!"

"Feel in good shape for a scrap?"

"Bully!" was the smiling reply. "Think we may go 'over the top' to-night?"

"Shouldn't wonder! Go out and call a taxi, while I round up our amiable three-fingered friend in the kitchen."

They went down the stairs together. Then, while Judson went around the corner to pick up a taxi—for his chief did not care to attract attention by sending Williams—Flint went down and spoke to Dugan. The gangster came forward eagerly in the little sitting room, as the detective appeared in the doorway.

"I was thinking it was near time for you to come," he whined. "I'm awful scared to go, but I want to get it over with. If I'm going to get mine from the clan to-night, the sooner it's over with the better. What do you want me to do, boss?"

"Get us into your brother's place without any one seeing us," replied Flint shortly.

"That's going to be hard to do," protested Dugan, shrinking like a whipped cur, now that he realized the time for action had arrived.

"There is nothing very hard about it," rejoined Flint in a tone of disgust. "I could do without you, if I did not feel inclined to give you a chance to keep out of jail. If I let you show the way for us, instead of doing it ourselves, it may save a few minutes of time—that's all."

"I know that, boss," assented Dugan humbly. "I want to do whatever you say, just to show you I'm going straight.

But if the gang ever get on to me, they'll say I snitched, and——"

"That will do. Come on!"

Thorndyke Flint had caught the swish of a taxi drawing up to the curb, followed by the quick step of Frank Judson, as he came to the front door.

"You ain't going to drive up to Slug's door in that cab, are you?" panted Dugan, under his breath, as he came out with the detective. "If the gang was to see me——"

"Say another word, and I'll hand you over to the first policeman we meet," came the whispered threat. Then, as Jud pushed the disgruntled gangster into the cab, Flint told the driver to go to the corner of Chambers and Broadway.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A SUBCELLAR SURPRISE.

THE ostensible business done by Slug Dugan was the innocent buying and selling of secondhand furniture, clothing and antiques. He had a large trade, not only in the neighborhood—which was mostly in men's garments of the flashy style affected by Jim Dugan—but uptown and even out of the city.

He bought furniture, old-fashioned enough to possess an antiquarian value, from country districts all over the East, and it was understood that his stock, if it could be suddenly turned into money, would be of enormous worth. Jewelry, silverplate, pictures, statuary—anything that the owners felt compelled to sell because they needed ready cash—would be considered by Slug Dugan, and always he drove a hard bargain. His parents had named him John, but no one in his neighborhood remembered that now.

He had a capacious store, gloomy and mysterious, and it was said that he had secret warerooms in which were stored family jewels and heirlooms of fabulous value, pledged for money loaned. What other business, shady or otherwise, was

transacted on these premises, was his own affair.

When the cab stopped at Broadway and Chambers, it was black night, with sleet blowing spitefully in the faces of the few pedestrians abroad. Thorndyke Flint paid the chauffeur and led the way down Chambers Street, through the Municipal Building to Park Row.

"Take us in the back way," was his brief order to Jim Dugan. "Through the cellar. We'll keep out of Crownell Street."

A fleeting twitch of surprise passed over the cunning features of the gangster, for the entrance by the cellar was known only to a very few. But he made no remark. His eyes leaned a little closer together, and his loose chin dropped—that was all.

There are many labyrinthine byways in the purlieus of Park Row. Through them Dugan threaded his way, with Thorndyke Flint and Judson, who were as familiar with them as he, close by his side. He stopped at last in a narrow, noisome thoroughfare of dilapidated tenements which were fashionable homes in a long past age. There still remained spacious areas and imposing basement entrances, with high steps guarded by rusty iron railings that once had beauty.

A well-lighted Chinese laundry in one of the basements was the only bright spot in the street. Even the shop next door, with some dark cakes and a few loaves of bread in the window, with a placard announcing it as a "Bakery," was in deep gloom. The hall door of every house was wide open.

"What are you waiting for, Dugan?" demanded Flint, as that worthy stood blinking hesitatingly at the two Chinese laundrymen busily ironing, while they chattered in their native tongue. "This is the place. You can open the inner door?"

"Yes," Dugan answered, with trembling lips. "But, Lord, Mr. Flint, I'm

liable to be plugged with a bullet as soon as I do it."

"That, Dugan, is a chance you will have to take," answered Thorndyke Flint inexorably. "Go ahead!"

In desperation, since he saw no escape, Jim Dugan went up the crazy stone steps over the laundry and walked on tiptoe down the foul-smelling hallway. His two companions kept close to him. There was a door opening on a small yard at the other end of the hall. Several wooden steps led down to the stone flags. So far as could be seen, the yard was surrounded by a high stone wall, except on the side by which they had reached it. High overhead could be made out fluttering garments on clotheslines stretched from the house to high poles, but it appeared as if the yard were not used at all.

"No, Dugan," urged Flint. "Quick! There is a door in that wall somewhere. Don't force me to open it."

Growling inarticulately, Jim Dugan fumbled about the wall until he found a hidden spring. A section swung back, revealing an opening not much more than five feet high, by three wide. It had been so cunningly contrived that, even if it had been light, the outline of the door could not be distinguished from the crevices where the stones joined. In the darkness it would have been absolutely impossible to find it without the secret of its operation.

Thorndyke Flint stooped and went through, followed by the others. There was a passage of a dozen feet or so, and then another door appeared. Dugan opened this also by the aid of a secret spring; then he seized Flint warningly by the arm.

"There is a long flight of steps here, boss!" he whispered hoarsely.

Flint took out his flash and saw that they were standing at the head of a steep staircase of rotting wood, with a broken handrail at one side. At the foot of the stairs he made out a con-

fusion of packing cases, bundles in burlap, chairs, tables, bedsteads, and other furniture, all wrapped in brown paper and burlap and revealing itself at once to the detective's experienced eye as antique furniture.

He did not take up much time in looking at the cellar from the top of the stairs, but went down rapidly, though cautiously, on account of the crazy condition of the staircase. Joined by Judson and Dugan, he walked forward among the piles of furniture. Suddenly with a low word of warning to the others, he stopped on the edge of a square hole in the floor, into which he might have pitched headlong, had he not been keeping the strong light of his flash just ahead, stepping forward only when sure it would be safe.

"The entrance to the subcellar," he said. "What's the trap open for, Dugan?"

"How should I know?" complained Jim Dugan. "I don't never go down there. Slug wouldn't let me. Maybe he's down there himself now. If he is, he'll have the goods on me bringing you here, and——"

"Shut up!" interposed Judson angrily. "You're annoying the chief." Then to his employer: "Want me to go down, chief?"

"I'll go," answered Thorndyke Flint. "If I want you I'll call. Stay and watch this man. If you see any sign of treachery—well, you know what to do," he added grimly.

Jim Dugan winced.

The detective had noted that a steep flight of steps led into the subcellar, although they would not have been of any use to him if he had stepped off inadvertently. He swung down the steps rapidly, holding his flash in his left hand. In his right-hand pocket was his automatic, and he fully realized that he might desire to use it at any moment. Who was below, lying in wait, he did not know. But there was no interfer-

ence with his progress, and soon he was on the lower floor, casting his powerful light around him on all sides. Suddenly he stifled in his throat an ejaculation that suggested a discovery of some kind. He was looking at three vaultlike little rooms—each about the size of an ordinary closet—whose heavy iron doors, of safelike construction, were all wide open.

To rush over and examine the interior of these strong rooms was the work of a very few moments. There were shelves of iron and steel, but all were empty. There were also a number of empty clothes hooks. He saw that the walls were lined with asbestos and were as nearly fireproof as walls can be made.

He examined the doors and found that each was fitted with a combination lock. They had not been forced, but had been opened by means of their combinations.

A card lying on the floor in front of the middle vault seemed to invite examination. On it were figures and the letters "R" and "L"—evidently the combination numbers. Thorndyke Flint decided that the card had been left in a spirit of taunting defiance.

Flint recalled reports he had had that somewhere on Slug Dugan's premises were burglar-proof and fire-proof vaults in which were stored jewelry and other valuables amounting to a princely fortune, most of which had been left in pledge to secure large sums of money lent by Dugan to their owners.

"Come down here, Jud!" he called. "Bring Dugan with you. Let him come first."

Instant obedience followed. Dugan came slipping and stumbling down the steps, sniffing protest all the way that he was coming down to be "croaked," while the more active Judson, just above him, impatiently commanded him to hurry.

"Holy smoke!" was Frank Judson's first remark, when he looked at the empty vaults. "Pretty slick job! But,

say, chief, what about the Thorleigh furs? Do you reckon they were in those vaults? There was plenty of room for them."

But Thorndyke Flint did not reply. His attention had been attracted to a heap of burlap partly hidden behind the three vaults. The burlap was moving, and there came from it inarticulate sounds, as if a human being were trying to speak.

With his pocketknife the detective quickly cut sundry strong cords, threw aside swathings of burlap, and removed a gag from the mouth of the man who had been lying helpless on the floor. The man was Kenneth Martin!

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THORNDYKE FLINT TAKES CHARGE.

"WHERE are they?" roared Martin, as soon as he could get his speech, while from sheer force of habit he fumbled in a waistcoat pocket for a cigar. "Where is that devilish Five Clan? They got me as easily as if I'd been a five-year-old kid! Now they've got away with not less than a million dollars' worth of diamonds and other stuff, and I'm responsible for every nickel."

"Yes, I suppose you are," remarked Thorndyke Flint coolly. "You are the real owner of this Slug Dugan concern. I've known it for some time. Now that this big safe-cracking job has been done, the secret will be out."

"Of course you knew!" snarled Martin, taking his first bite at a fresh cigar. "You get on to everything. Well, if I am at the back of Slug Dugan, what of it? It's a legitimate business, isn't it? All the stock in the place isn't a drop in the bucket compared with what was in those safes."

"You were inveigled down here, of course," said Thorndyke Flint, disregarding the lamentations of the maddened Martin. "Did Slug Dugan come

with you? Who was it brought you down?"

"How do I know? I was in the store talkin to Dugan, when there came a crash. I didn't know anything more till I found myself behind these vaults, gagged and not able to move, while three or four men, with masks on, cleaned out the whole row. I heard them talking and laughing, as they took the stuff out. When they'd finished they laid that card on the floor."

"Where had they got it?" asked Judson.

"Out of my pocket," was the angry reply. "I was the only one who had the combinations. I couldn't keep 'em all in my head, so I wrote them out. There was nothing to show what they belonged to, and I thought, since no one knew I was connected with the Slug Dugan concern, they were safe. How did you fellows get down here?"

"Never mind about that!" interrupted Thorndyke Flint. He turned the powerful light of his flash upon Martin's working face. "The Russian sables taken from Thorleigh's weren't in these vaults, were they?"

Kenneth Martin relieved himself of an outburst of scornful rage.

"What kind of bluff is that you are handing me?" he roared. "Those furs are insured in my company. Is it likely this Five Clan would bring them to me? And do you think for a minute, if I knew where they were, I wouldn't be taking them back to Thorleigh's? You're not trying to make out I'm in the Five Clan, are you?"

"Dugan has done business of that kind," returned the detective coldly. "There have been more peculiar things than for a man, who pretended to be a loser by a robbery, playing a double game."

"Well, you can take it from me I ain't framing up any double game in this case!" growled Martin. "I wouldn't take a chance of being slugged and

gagged in this cellar, for all the furs ever in Thorleigh's. And I want to tell you, if you say Dugan's ain't square, I'll make you prove it. No one can say anything like that about me—not even Thorndyke Flint!"

"What do you estimate was the value of the jewelry taken from these vaults?" asked the detective, ignoring the other's ravings.

"Not less than five hundred thousand—perhaps more. I can't tell without looking at my books," replied Martin, champing nervously on his cigar. "And I've got to get them back!" He moved toward the steep flight of steps. "I'll have to find Dugan. Then I'm going after the Five Clan."

"Wait a moment, Martin," interposed Flint. "We'll go together."

Frank Judson, seemingly without special motive, stepped between Martin and the steps.

At this moment Kenneth Martin perceived Jim Dugan, who had been keeping out of his sight in the shadows. He tried to seize Dugan by the coat collar. Thorndyke Flint, without apparent effort, thrust the irate Safeguard president aside.

"Hands off, Martin!"

"Why, why!" sputtered Kenneth Martin. "What's that sneaking cur doing here? I believe he was in that Thorleigh job. He's a crook. He's—he's—worse than that!"

"You mean he's a squealer!" remarked Flint coolly. "Well, you're mistaken, if you think he has told me that Slug Dugan's place is a fence. I knew that already. You'll please let this man alone. We're going up to find Slug. Come with me, Dugan! Jud, you follow with Martin. See that he doesn't get away."

"Doesn't get away?" bellowed Martin. "What does that mean? Why should I try to get away? I'm the man who's been robbed, and you talk——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Judson.

He fastened a grip on Martin's biceps that stopped his vituperative flow, with disconcerting abruptness.

Pushing Dugan ahead, Thorndyke Flint swung himself up the steps to the cellar above. Thence, going to the other end from the doorway by which they had entered, they ascended a flight of stairs, went through two dingy rooms full of lumber of various kinds, up another short flight, and along a dark hall. They at last found themselves in the rear of the store which faced on Crownell Street.

Three or four electric bulbs cast a dim light between rows of women's gowns hanging on shapes, and on piles of men's suits on tables. The front of the store was closely shuttered. No one could see in from the street. A thumping noise, which became louder and more insistent, as Thorndyke Flint and Dugan walked along the bare floor between the tables and the hanging gowns, led the detective to a door on the right, which was secured by an outside bolt. Shooting back the bolt, he pulled open the door of a small closet, and Slug Dugan, wet with perspiration and half smothered, came tumbling out.

Slug only had time to raise his hands and emit a raucous wail of agony and despair, when Thorndyke Flint seized him by one of his lean shoulders and curtly told him to keep quiet.

"You stay here and open the store at the usual time," he ordered. "Don't answer any questions. The place has been robbed. But we will get the stolen goods back and catch the robbers. You must do your part by keeping the business here going as usual and not allowing it to be known that anything out of the ordinary has happened."

Slug Dugan involuntarily accepted the authoritative attitude of the detective, but cast a look of interrogation at Kenneth Martin. He did not understand.

"This is Thorndyke Flint," explained Martin gruffly. "I need not tell you who

he is. You know. Well, do as he has told you. He says he will get the stolen goods back, if you stay here and mind the store. If you spoil it by any bone-head play, I'll kill you, and I'll send this miserable stepbrother of yours to the pen for life. Now, Mr. Flint, I'm ready to go."

"Shall I stay here, Mr. Flint," asked Jim Dugan timidly, "or do you want me?"

"You'll go with us," was the detective's brief order. "Where's your telephone, Dugan?"

"In the little office at the very back of the store," replied Slug. "Want me to call up somebody for you?"

"No. I'll do it myself."

Thorndyke Flint, by the merest raising of an eyelid, gave a signal to Frank Judson to keep the others with him, and Flint went into the cramped office, where Slug Dugan was accustomed to transact private business with furtive customers who had goods to sell for cash, on a strictly confidential basis. When the door was closed, nobody outside could hear voices within, unless they were much louder than that of the detective now, as he spoke over the wire. In a minute or two he came out and announced that they would get to Broadway at Chambers Street and walk uptown.

"Where are we going?" asked Kenneth Martin, grinding on his cigar.

"To Brooklyn," replied Thorndyke Flint, and walked on.

Martin was inclined to ask whether they were to walk all the way there, but something in the detective's manner warned him that silence would serve best just then.

They had not reached Canal Street, when a long, low-hung roadster—whose rakish build, as well as the ease with which it swung around and stopped, suggested almost unlimited possibilities of speed in its purring engine—drew up to the sidewalk.

"I'll drive, Joe!" said Thorndyke Flint briefly to the chauffeur. "Let down the emergency seat."

Joe Doyle, who had been chauffeur for the detective for years, was on the ground by this time. With a swift, dexterous movement he opened up the extra seat for two persons, with which many cars of this kind are equipped.

Thorndyke Flint was behind the steering wheel. He gave a curt direction to Judson, who shoved Jim Dugan into the front seat and got in himself, with Dugan in the middle. Joe Doyle had seen what he was to do, and he had Kenneth Martin in the emergency seat. Joe had hardly taken his own seat by the side of the Safeguard President, when the car got under way. As it went slipping up Broadway at the speed limit and turned into Canal Street to get to Manhattan Bridge, Thorndyke Flint told Judson to put Dugan on the outside.

"I want to talk to you, Jud," was the brief explanation.

## CHAPTER XV.

### SLIPPED AWAY.

**R**AIN and sleet, which had been useful to the men who stole the furs from Thorleigh's the night before, had found its way over to Brooklyn now, and when Thorndyke Flint, after a swift run across the bridge and into Flatbush, found himself nearing the palatial home of Saul Thorleigh, the atmosphere was so thick, and the night so dark, that the big car must have appeared like a gigantic phantom with flaming eyes, to any one on the sidewalks.

All was quiet in the Thorleigh home, so far as Thorndyke Flint could discern. He had slowed down, so that Judson, as well as himself, could take a deliberate survey.

"Did you see a light in the garage—I mean, in the chauffeur's living rooms above?" asked Flint, letting out the engine a few notches.

"It seemed all dark," was Judson's reply.

"That's the way it appeared to me," observed his chief. "I didn't expect Jen-nison had come back yet. He has permission to stay till morning, wherever he is. Now, you undersand what is to be done?"

The master detective had been talking steadily in a low tone, ever since Judson and Dugan had changed seats.

"We'll leave the car somewhere off the road and go on to this Armistice Hotel," returned Judson. "What about Martin and this Dugan person?"

The roar of the engine prevented Jim Dugan hearing what was said, but his attitude of strained attention told that he was trying hard to get at the purport of the whispered conversation.

"We'll leave Martin in charge of Joe Doyle," said Flint. "Dugan we may be able to use."

Thorndyke Flint stepped on the accelerator, and the big machine surged forward at greater speed. On this good road, with so few houses, it was the custom of motorists to let out to fifty miles an hour, and he knew nothing would be thought of his rushing car, even if anybody were abroad to see it.

Before many minutes had passed, the detective slowed down and swung into a grove of elms and poplars he had noticed before, at a considerable distance from any house. At the same time he shut off all the lights.

"Doyle, you and Mr. Martin stay here for a few minutes, until we come back," he ordered briefly.

"Stay where?" asked Kenneth Martin, as the detective, Judson, and Dugan dropped off the car. "What are you going to do? I'll go with you!"

Thorndyke Flint and Judson, with Jim Dugan between them, slipped away from the trees and walked swiftly on, leaving Joe Doyle to quiet down the excited Safeguard president.

All was dark about the Armistice

Hotel, and the garage was tightly closed up. So far as could be seen, by the feeble light of a moon struggling with the flying clouds—for the fall of rain and snow had ceased—no one was awake about the building, and it might not have been inhabited at all, judging by its outward aspect.

"Have your gun and blackjack ready, Jud!" whispered Flint, as they approached the long antiquated veranda in front of the house. "Don't shoot unless absolutely necessary. Use your billy if you are obliged to do anything."

"I get you, chief!"

"And step softly."

"Aye, aye!"

But soft steps were of little avail on the crazy boards of the old veranda. They creaked complainingly, as Flint and his lieutenant went up the few steps toward the front door in the middle. The detective tried the door. Then he knocked sharply. There was no response, and he placed his knee and hand against the door to burst it open.

It shook and gave way slightly under his first pressure, but held fast. He shifted his position a little to give another and stronger shove, when the sound of a rattling chain, followed by the turning of a key and the shooting back of bolts, told him the door was about to be opened from within.

He stepped back and prepared to meet an attack. But none came. The door swung back, and there, holding a lamp, stood the landlady, Mrs. Hayes. She was neatly dressed, as he had seen her when at the house in the morning, and her general appearance, now, at midnight, was as fresh and clean as it had been in the early daylight. There was no surprise to be noted in her keen eyes, but she looked past the detective, as if to see how many companions he had with him.

Again that curious feeling came to Thorndyke Flint that he had seen this quiet, neatly dressed woman somewhere,

long before he had met her at the Armistice Hotel.

"I wanted to see your nephew," he said. "Is he here?"

"No. He is away to-night," she answered evenly, but with suspicion in her tone. "What's the matter? Had a break-down?"

The detective stepped inside the door, compelling her to move back. Judson came in by the side of his chief.

"Isn't there any man here who could do some work for me?" asked Flint.

Without waiting for a reply, he strode into the large dining room, where on a previous occasion he had disposed of his coffee and sandwich, and, before the woman divined his purpose, flung open the door by which Captain Bill Hugg, of the *Lady Mary*, had come upon him so unexpectedly.

Captain Bill Hugg was not there this time. But somebody else was—a man who seemed as if he had just been about to open the door, for his hand was on the knob. He greeted the detective with a delighted grin that seemed to the closely watching Frank Judson decidedly forced. It was Baxter Rand, the confidential secretary of the Safeguard Company.

"Why, Mr. Flint!" he squeaked. "This is a pleasant surprise!"

"Is it?" asked the detective dryly.

"Indeed it is! I have been lucky enough to get on the trail of the Thorleigh robbers, I believe, thanks to Mrs. Hayes. She's a friend of mine, and she has helped me before in detective work. This isn't the first time holdup men have tried to make use of her hotel, and of course she let me know at once. Have you met Mrs. Hayes? Let me introduce you."

"It isn't necessary, Mr. Rand," interrupted Flint. "I have been at this hotel before."

"You have?"

The eyes behind the amber glasses seemed to show uncertainty, and the

cigarette that had gone out in the loose mouth dropped to the floor, as he came forward into the dining room, closing the door behind him.

"Now, Rand," said Flint coldly, "let's get to business. I know that those Russian sables were brought here—and some other loot. You know it, too, I judge by your manner."

For a moment Baxter Rand hesitated, and the wide mouth tightened obstinately. He seemed half inclined to deny that he had found out anything. Then, with a smile and a gesture of candor, as he threw his hands out far apart, he said:

"You are too smart for me, Mr. Flint! I was hoping I could gather in this gang by myself. I confess to a little professional pride, Mr. Flint. But it's too late now. Anyhow, I'm not sure I could do it alone. They are slippery cusses. They got away from me just when I thought I had 'em."

"They were in this house to-night?" broke in Thorndyke Flint. "I'll look through the place. You can show me where they put the stuff. Jud, open that door!"

He pointed to the door which concealed the stairs leading down to the cellar, the door which he had opened in the morning, and which Mrs. Hayes had so quickly closed.

"It isn't there now," declared Baxter Rand. "It was, but it's gone now."

Judson had the door open by this time, however, and, taking a flash from his pocket, was about to descend, when Thorndyke Flint caught the sound of a motor starting somewhere close by. He turned quickly to the open front door, and, as Baxter Rand darted out, sprang forward to follow.

As he did so, Mrs. Hayes banged the door shut and, putting the lamp on a table, placed her broad back against the door, smiling tantalizingly at the detective.

"Don't worry!" she taunted, putting

out her two large hands to keep him away. "There ain't one chance in a thousand of catching those slick holdups, but, if there is a chance at all, Rand is entitled to it. He has been working on this case for twenty-four hours, and I don't propose to see another man come in and skim the cream by making the arrest at the last moment. There'll be a big reward, and Baxter Rand is going to have it. If those men *are* landed, it will be through his good work."

"Come away from that door!" ordered Flint.

"I won't!" She planted herself more firmly and shook her fist in his face.

For a moment he hesitated. He could have dragged her away, but it would have involved the employment of violence that he did not care to use against a woman.

"Jud!"

"Here I am, chief."

"Don't bother about the cellar. Here!"

Before Mrs. Hayes could anticipate his intention, Thorndyke Flint had leaped to the side door which led to the outside, shot back the bolts, and darted out, closely followed by Judson. They were just in time to see a large motor truck get under way some two hundred yards away and go skimming up the road at a speed which made pursuing it on foot out of the question.

"Those men have the Thorleigh furs," said Thorndyke Flint, "and most likely the loot from Dugan's as well."

"I'm pretty sure of that," put in a voice behind them, and Jim Dugan stepped out of the shadow of a tree. "You left me out here when you went in, and I supposed that was what you wanted. So I just snooped around to see what that motor truck was standing there for. I heard some one ask 'Is that stuff from Slug's in these bags?' Then another guy says 'Every bit of it, bo! The Thorleigh junk,' he says, 'is already aboard the ship, he says.'"

"Who were the men?" asked Judson.

"I don't know. They were in the truck, and right after that they started."

"Who was the man who came out of the house and climbed on, just as the truck got away?" asked Flint quietly.

"Yes, there *was* a guy did that. I'd almost forgot," answered Dugan. "I don't know who he was. I don't think he was one of the gang. Looked like somebody chasing 'em. At first I thought it might be your man." He nodded toward Frank Judson.

"That will do," interposed Flint. "Jud, you hustle back to our car and tell Doyle to drive as fast as he can till he picks me up. I will press on toward Sheepshead Bay with Dugan."

"All right!" was the ready response of Judson, as he started on the back trail at a swift walk.

If Mrs. Hayes saw anything of all this, she kept her own counsel.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "NUMBER FIVE."

IT was less than half an hour later when Thorndyke Flint's powerful roadster pulled up at a garage in Sheepshead Bay and was turned over by the detective to Joe Doyle, with instructions to keep it there till further orders. Then, with Judson, Kenneth Martin—chewing a black cigar and confessedly in a state of bewilderment—and Jim Dugan, at his heels, Thorndyke Flint went to one of the many shaky piers that line both shores of the curious inland stretch of water known as Sheepshead Bay and unceremoniously opened the door of a rickety old boathouse.

It was not a handsome edifice, this boathouse. It seemed to have been pieced together with odd bits of driftwood and then painted a brilliant blue to hide its defects in construction. There was a door at either end and two windows in the side walls. A small rusty stove, with a roaring fire, stood in the middle of the floor, and there was so

much tobacco smoke that the whole interior was in an impenetrable fog. It might have been untenanted for anything Flint and his companions could see for the first few moments.

"Ray!" called out the detective tentatively.

"Here I am, chief!"

Out of the haze stepped Ray Norton. With him was Tom Gilmore, the salesman and temporary watchman at Thorleigh's.

"Everything ready, Ray?" was Flint's brief question.

"Up to the handle, chief! Jack Robins has one of these new speed boats. It can run rings around any fishing boat in New York harbor."

A mahogany-faced elderly man, in a knitted wool cap and heavy sweater, finished off with rubber boots above the knee, came out of the smoke to say "Howdy, cap!" and went back to finish his pipe. Captain Robins was a man of thrifty speech, but a wizard when it came to managing a boat in any kind of sea. Some folk said Robins' Reef was named for him. But probably that was mere tradition.

"The other boat has gone, I suppose?" observed the detective, drawing Ray aside.

"Ten minutes ago," was the reply. "I saw three men take some bags from a motor truck, and I heard them jingle, as they were let down into the boat. It was too dark to make out who the men were. I didn't want to go too near."

"That was right. Now you and Gilmore get aboard Robins' boat. Here you are, Martin! Lead the way, Robins!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded the old mariner, slouching out of the door nearest the sea end of the pier. "Here she is, sir."

It takes but a very short time for a large modern motor boat to get under way. Captain Jack Robins had his new boat, the *Victor*, in open water and scurrying out to sea, at forty-five miles

an hour, almost before his passengers had settled down in their seats. Like most of this type of craft, built specially for speed, the *Victor* was equipped with an airplane engine of not less than five hundred horse power, which might develop even more under pressure.

"Where does the *Lady Mary* lie, Ray? Did you hear?" asked Thorndyke Flint, when they were far enough from shore to feel the sweep of the long rollers, and when, in a thick mist that seemed to press upon them on every side, they were practically alone in a dead world which had become merely a waste of water. "Is she beyond the three-mile limit?"

"I think she's inside that, chief," was the reply.

Robins said nothing. Kenneth Martin, champing nervously on his cigar, was equally reticent, while Dugan and Gilmore, feeling a little seasick, kept a solemn silence.

Suddenly without warning, Robins roared: "*Lady Mary* ahoy!"

Out of the darkness came a hoarse response: "What do you want?"

"Got some money to spend. Want to come aboard!" bellowed Captain Jack, bringing his boat skillfully around, so that it ran alongside of a black hull which seemed to the dazed Dugan to spring right out of the water at that moment. "Throw us a line!"

It may be stated briefly that Captain Bill Hugg of the *Lady Mary* was not above making a few dollars by selling contraband liquors, although that was not the main business of his vessel. Satisfied that his visitors were not revenue officers, he soon had the whole six of them on his deck, while Robins, in accordance with a previous understanding, sheered off out of sight, but kept near enough to answer a hail, when there should be one.

Captain Hugg's weather-beaten visage shone in the glow of a ship's lantern, brought aft by one of half a dozen of

the lounging crew. He scanned the faces of each of the six men, as they came over the side. All were strange to him except the last to climb aboard. It was Thorndyke Flint!

"I've seen you before, haven't I?" growled Hugg, his attitude that of a man prepared for anything.

"Certainly," returned Flint carelessly. "Saw you at the Armistice Hotel yesterday morning. Had an idea I might do business with you there, but decided I'd better come out to your ship. Can't be too careful these days!"

The easy explanation seemed to satisfy Captain Hugg. It was all in the regular line of bootlegging procedure.

"I'm waiting for a boat with cabin stores that can't be far off," he said. "I've sold out everything except a few cases. I'll give them to you cheap. Then I'm sailing for the Bahamas right away. Ahoy! Boat ahoy!" he bellowed suddenly. "There she is! Easy! Line forrard there!" he called to some of the crew. "Made fast? All right! Haul away!"

In another minute or two three large bags were hauled out of the bobbing little fishing boat and dropped on the deck.

The jingle they made caused Kenneth Martin to start forward with a subdued oath. Thorndyke Flint seized his arm and sternly whispered: "Keep still!"

"But, Flint," returned Martin, in incoherent excitement below his breath, "that's the stuff from my safes at Dugan's. Let's grab it while we can. Half a million dollars——"

"Silence!" admonished Flint. "We want the Thorleigh furs as well, don't we? They are on this ship, remember."

Kenneth Martin chewed at his cigar, and Thorndyke Flint, having recognized in the light of the lantern one of the men who had brought the bags aboard, as Claxton, the garage man, was looking curiously at the other, when Hugg seized one of the bags and dragged it toward the companionway.

"This is personal stuff," he explained carelessly to Flint. "Some things I use for my own table and silverware I'm taking home to my wife. Bring those other two bags," he said to Claxton and the other man from the fishing boat. "Come down to my cabin."

It was just as Captain Bill Hugg and the other two men disappeared down the companionway leading to the skipper's cabin, that Thorndyke Flint noticed a man, seemingly one of the crew, creeping toward them in the darkness, which was made blacker by the shadow of the rigging.

It will be remembered that the *Lady Mary* carried sail, besides using steam. Ropes pertaining to the sails extended to the afterpart of the vessel, and they were made fast with heavy belaying pins of wood and iron.

"Look out, Martin!"

The warning shout from Thorndyke Flint doubtless saved Kenneth Martin's life at that moment. The man who had been creeping along had a pistol in his left hand. But he did not use it. Instead, he suddenly grabbed a belaying pin from its socket and, with a muttered oath, aimed a murderous blow at the head of the unsuspecting Safeguard president.

Only by a fraction of an inch did Thorndyke Flint swing Martin out of the way at the critical moment. The heavy implement caught him on the ear, but missed his head. Kenneth Martin, sent sprawling to the deck by the force of the detective's twisting shove, lay there, half dazed, holding a handkerchief to his injured ear. But Thorndyke Flint took no notice of him. The man with the belaying pin had raised his pistol, obviously to shoot any one who might interfere with him, and, as the detective drove a right hook to his cheek bone, he pulled the trigger. But the pistol—an automatic—jammed, and there was no report. Thorndyke Flint knocked it from his hand and, wrenching away the

belaying pin, dexterously thrust it under both elbows across his back.

"Give me that line, Jud!"

There was a coil of half-inch rope hanging to a belaying pin close by. A few turns around the pin behind the man's back secured him for the time being. By the light of the lantern, which had been used to get the bags aboard, the detective looked over his prisoner. He saw a tall, soldier-looking man, whose bold eyes flashed scornful defiance. One sharp look into the sullen countenance, and Thorndyke Flint smiled grimly.

"Just what I suspected!" he exclaimed. "George Gordon, from Tottenham Court Road—otherwise, Number Five of the Five Clan!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HIS "KID" BROTHER.

**T**HE prisoner opened his mouth, as if to hurl forth an indignant denial.

"Don't take the trouble to lie, Gordon!" coolly advised Flint. "In the first place, I knew you were on this side. Even if I hadn't already had the information, I have friends at Scotland Yard who would have told me. Then you left a wider trail than you thought, when you wrote that insolent letter to me. You shouldn't give orders to your clan on paper that comes from London and has part of a Tottenham Court Road address on it."

"I don't know what all this means," drawled the man whom the detective had identified as George Gordon, international swindler and thief. "You'll find very soon that I am an enforcement officer, and that your bootlegging expedition to this ship is the reason for my being here. I——"

"Such idle talk isn't worthy of your reputation for shrewdness," interrupted Thorndyke Flint contemptuously. "Jud, call the *Victor*."

Frank Judson blew a loud, shrill

whistle twice. Soon it was answered by a distant blast on a deeper-toned whistle somewhere out in the misty darkness.

"Now, Gordon, we'll step into the light and show Kenneth Martin who you really are," said Flint.

"I'll tell him who I am," shouted the prisoner, suddenly losing his self-control. "I'd have killed him just now, if you hadn't stopped me. Anyhow, I've ruined him, as I came to this country to do. I don't say I've balanced the account—nothing can do that—but I've made him pay something for what he did long ago, when his name was Dennis Moran."

"Who the devil are you?" blurted out Kenneth Martin, who had risen to his feet. "I never saw you before."

The prisoner drew himself up, and he fumbled mechanically at the front of his buttoned-up coat, as if to find a monacle. About the man was the indescribable stamp of one accustomed to leisure and to maintaining an attitude of hauteur toward most of those he encountered. It was the Piccadilly manner and it was quite familiar to Thorndyke Flint.

"Did you ever see Arthur Stanhope?" he asked with sudden energy, stooping to look into Martin's face.

"Why—er—yes," answered Martin hesitatingly. "He's been dead nearly twenty years."

"Partner of yours, wasn't he?"

"In a way he was," was the reply. "We were in a business deal together, and he tried to defraud me of my share of the profits. Then he pulled a gun, and I had to use a knife. It didn't hurt him much. He died later in State prison—Joliet. What has that to do with you?"

"Arthur Stanhope was my brother," thundered the prisoner, as he endeavored to break loose from the rope that held him. "He was only a kid, less than twenty-one, when he met you in Chicago. You got him into a safe-cracking job,

threw the blame all on him, and refused to give him the share you'd pledged to him. He could have got a good lawyer and kept out of prison, if he'd had that money."

"Absurd!" snarled Martin. His cigar had been chewed to a stump.

"I have been in the United States at different times since then," went on Gordon—or Stanhope. "But most of the time I've remained in Europe. Three months ago I heard the truth about Arthur—he'd always been a baby brother to me—and I came over to have it out with Martin."

"Was that all you had against him?" asked Thorndyke Flint.

"Not all!" Gordon's voice broke. "Arthur had a wife—a poor little helpless thing—and this beast, Martin——"

"How did you ruin him?" The detective was watching the companionway up which Captain Hugg might come at any moment. "Just explain that—if you like."

"Of course I'll explain. I'm not denying that I am the head of the Five Clan. I couldn't tell this without admitting it. I found out that Kenneth Martin, the head and sole owner of the Safeguard Company, had insured for large amounts a number of big firms in New York. I had been wanting to pull off a big job and then retire. Here was my chance. I'd stick up each of these firms for a good big haul—using different men for each job—and Martin would have to make good. So I'd get the loot and avenge my brother as well."

"Pretty neat idea," remarked Frank Judson.

"This Thorleigh job was to have been the last. But I happened to hear that Kenneth Martin was the real owner of Slug Dugan's business, and that he had a lot of jewelry in pledge. Well, you know about that."

"How did you find out all about my business?" roared Kenneth Martin, hardly knowing what he was saying.

"Jud!" cried the detective suddenly. "Now!"

With a swift movement, Thorndyke Flint pulled open the buttoned coat of George Gordon, while Judson snatched the derby from Dugan's head, and, knocking off the soft hat worn by Gordon, jammed the derby down on his ears. Then Flint felt inside the dazed prisoner's coat pocket and pulled out a pair of amber spectacles which he clapped on his face.

"Lantern, Ray!" shouted Flint.

The light was turned full on the man who had just before stood boldly upright, with the aggressiveness of one used to command, plus the distinguished aristocratic calmness of the Piccadilly swell, born to wealth and pleasant surroundings. Now all that was gone. The metamorphosis was marvelous—tragic!

In resisting the personal liberties taken with him, the man had bent forward and twisted himself, so that one shoulder was higher than the other, and his mouth had dropped open in a doglike snarl. In tearing open the coat, Thorndyke Flint had brought into view a waistcoat of varicolored wool, surmounted by a cheap, loud-pattern necktie. With the amber glasses adjusted and the derby hat spreading his ears, he had a sneaking, furtive aspect that could belong to only one man.

George Stanhope, alias George Gordon, the international crook, self-confessed as the mysterious Number Five, of the Five Clan, was none other than Baxter Rand, confidential secretary of the Safeguard Burglar Insurance Company.

For a moment there was silence. Then Baxter Rand, still bent over in the round-shouldered attitude he had always assumed in the presence of Kenneth Martin, grinned mirthlessly at his late employer.

"It was so easy that I was almost ashamed," he snarled. "You needn't try to find out who was in the Five Clan, for

I used different men, and none of them ever knew each other, or me. Only one person knew, and he won't tell. I sent word by him, with enough pay to make it worth while, and the jobs were easily done. The gang was always masked, and so was I. You'll never know who did that Thorleigh job."

"Wrong!" cried Thorndyke Flint sternly. "I do know it. So does Jim Dugan here. You yourself were Number Two, who killed Larry Kehoe. The man you'd hired, Dugan, failed you at the last moment, and you couldn't get anybody else quickly. So you did it yourself. You wore a handkerchief around your hand to hide the fact that you were short a finger. But you made a slip, as most of your kind do at some time or other. You stole a handkerchief, but you accidentally left your own in that dressing closet in Thorleigh's show-room. Here it is."

He held up a handkerchief with a starling border.

"That's his handkerchief!" shouted Kenneth Martin. "I've seen it in his hand a dozen times. I——"

What more he might have said was cut by Baxter Rand suddenly breaking loose from the cord that bound him and leaping upon Martin with the fury of a wild animal. There was the smashing report of an automatic, followed by a shriek of pain.

Baxter Rand—Number Five, of the Five Clan—pitched forward on his face, and Kenneth Martin, clutching at his breast convulsively, fell across him. In Martin's right hand was his still smoking automatic, but the long knife that had reached his heart lay on the deck, where it had fallen from the stiffening fingers of the man who, after long years, had avenged his kid brother, Arthur Stanhope.

"So there was no Five Clan, after all, chief!" remarked Judson, as, thirty-six hours later, Thorndyke Flint and his two

assistants sat in his library compiling the records of the great Thorleigh fur robbery. "It's about the most curious case we ever had."

"One of the most curious," returned the famous criminologist. "This man, known as George Gordon in Europe, and as Baxter Rand in New York, but whose real name seems to have been Stanhope—had a unique system so far as I know. He simply hired criminals who were experts in their particular lines, masked them, gave them numbers, and allowed them to carry out big robberies he had planned to the last detail. When they had turned over their loot to him, he paid them, through an agent who did not know his identity, sent them on their separate ways, and allowed the crime to be charged up by the police to this mythical Five Clan. If he had not undertaken this work of avenging his brother, he might not have been found out even now."

"Or if Jim Dugan hadn't been scared," put in Ray Norton.

"You let Captain Hugg sail away with his ship, after we got the Thorleigh furs and the loot from Dugan's aboard Robins' boat," observed Judson thoughtfully. "Don't you think you had a case against him?"

"Possibly," returned Flint. "Receiving stolen property, bootlegging, and so on. That double murder, too, was bad and might have given him trouble. But, with Rand and Martin both dead, what was the use of holding Hugg? The police will thank me for letting him go and saving them bother. That's about the way it stands now."

"Say, chief," broke in Ray Norton, "how did you come to suspect one of those two fellows in the fishing boat was Jennison?"

"Gasoline and oil," smiled Flint. "Chauffeurs always carry the odor, even when they've changed their clothing. Besides, there were his frequent absences from home at night; the fact that

he handled that limousine better than any man could, who was not used to that particular car. Then I found he'd changed his uniform cap for a hat when he brought the car back to Thorleigh's and had no time to run her into the garage. I was pretty sure Jennison was Number Three, long before I saw him on the *Lady Mary*. Another thing: There was that card of Claxton's I picked up in the garage. It proved Jennison did not keep good company."

"You knew Claxton was a crook?" asked Judson.

"Not at first. But I was sure Mrs. Hayes wasn't quite right, though for

some time I could not tell why I thought so. Afterward I remembered where I'd seen her before."

"Where was it?"

"In a Chicago courtroom some years ago. She was known to the police there as 'Canada Jane.' She was charged with shoplifting. I hope she has reformed."

"Think she has?" asked Judson incredulously.

Thorndyke Flint shrugged.

"What about Jim Dugan? Think he's been scared into keeping straight?"

There was no answer. The master detective continued to smoke thoughtfully.



## WILLIAM PINKERTON, DETECTIVE

**R**ECENTLY there passed away at the Hotel Biltmore in Los Angeles, California, one of the most noted detectives in this country, William Pinkerton, son of Alan Pinkerton, another famous detective. Mr. Pinkerton was one of the first noted American criminologists to advocate and practice humanitarian methods with felons. Although head of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency, he was credited with reforming more safe blowers and bank thieves than any other man in the country.

He was primarily a thief taker and spent more than fifty years of his life running down criminals of all classes; but if a malefactor exhibited any signs of genuine repentance, and his desire to reform was sincere, Mr. Pinkerton always stood ready to offer a helping hand.

In 1894, he and his brother succeeded to the detective agency founded by their father. This was before the days of armor-plated safes and time clocks, when safe blowers were in the heyday of their profession. Determined to specialize in bank protection, Pinkerton enlisted the support of leading banking interests of the country and then made a study of the men who were preying upon them. He warned noted bank robbers as they were arrested: "You leave my people alone, and I'll leave you alone. If you don't, I'll follow you to the ends of the earth."

This warning made a deep impression upon many of the most dangerous thieves, and after a few convictions had been obtained, there was a noticeable decline in the number of bank robberies. Some scoffed at the detective's warning, but most of them were caught in time.

Thanks to the advice of his wealthy friends and to his business, William Pinkerton died a millionaire. He was a great criminologist, but would stop to pet and feed a stray yellow dog. Scotland Yard, the Prefecture of Police in Paris, and almost every police center in Europe and South America consulted him.

# The Thirty-thousand-dollar Mongrel

by Arthur Jamison

Author of "The Luckless Five," etc.

**T**O this day it is a mystery how Scraggs got into the prison. At the main entrance were two well-guarded doors, one of solid sheet iron, save for a peephole, the size of a silver dollar at the height of a man's eye. At the rear entrance, where vehicles entered and departed, there was a "trap," similar to a canal lock, the first gate having to be closed and secured before the other could be opened, and between these gates every wagon and automobile was thoroughly searched and the contents checked up.

He couldn't have come in through the sewers because, following the escape of eleven convicts by that noisome route several years before, the sewers were heavily grated every few feet. A twenty-foot wall surrounded the prison, and "Scraggs" couldn't have scaled that. He was not small enough to have been smuggled through in a guard's coat pocket, nor large enough to have been mistaken for an automobile lap rope.

To cap all, he made his appearance at the most propitious—or unpropitious—moment of the prison routine. The convicts were fighting out the weekly game of baseball on their abbreviated field, when he trotted out to the pitcher's box and pliantly introduced himself to "Skinny, the Fly," star twirler for the "Eatemalives."

At first Skinny couldn't credit his senses. It was the first close-up he had

had of a dog for nearly nine years. Canaries, linnets, parrots, cats, white mice, and one owl comprised the official list of convict pets. Dogs were barred and had been since Rover, a huge Newfoundland, whose entire lifetime "rovings" had been limited to the prison enclosure, had succumbed to "canine gout" twenty years before. Practically every man in the prison was dog hungry, and Skinny, by natural aptitude, was perhaps hungriest of all. He dropped the ball and clucked encouragement. The intruder instantly darted in, picked the ball up in his mouth, and began careening in mad circles about the pitcher's box.

Infielders, catcher, and even the dignified "screw" umpire, immediately attempted to retrieve the ball, that the game might go on. Prison rules were unyielding; when the whistle blew at four thirty the game would be stopped, tie score, or no tie score. It was now four fifteen, and another inning was imperative. Nearly a thousand rations of tobacco were secretly wagered on the outcome. But, despite the best efforts of his would-be captors, Scraggs evaded them all and remained in possession of the ball. Cries of "Throw him out!" "Kick him in the slats!" "Put salt on his tail!" "Get a bat and knock his dome off!" came from the horde of gray-clad spectators on the side lines. These inelegant and unrefined sugges-

tions, however, did not reflect the general sentiment; for most of the convicts, notwithstanding the tied score and the wagers, forgot the game in the novel pleasure of looking at a dog, a very much alive dog, whose mischievousness augmented rather than detracted from the unexpectedness of his advent. At last some one's brain came home—as some one's brain usually does in an emergency of this kind—and it was suggested that they get another ball. This was done, the players quickly resumed their places, and the batter faced Skinny. The first pitch resulted in a long foul that came within inches of being a home run, and, when the ball was returned to him, Skinny handed it to the umpire.

"It's no use," he declared. "I can't pitch with this dog popcornin' around me. I've got to nail him and corral him somewhere until the game's over."

Scraggs had dropped the stolen ball halfway to the home plate and was standing guard over it, barking his challenge for Skinny to come and get it.

Skinny took a step forward, his eyes fixed sternly on the alert canine.

"Come here!" he commanded threateningly. "Come on—I mean it!"

The dog's stub tail stopped issuing its invitation. He lifted a forepaw in aggrieved supplication, hesitated a moment, and then sidled forward, half defiant, half fearful, until Skinny reached out and got him gently by the scruff of the neck. At that moment a blue-clad figure emerged from the crowd back of the catcher and walked briskly out on the diamond.

"How'd that mongrel get in here?" he demanded. "Take him out! Here, Collins," he called to the nearest guard, "take this dog outside the gates—and shoot it, if you want to."

It was the warden, and he had approached to within a few feet of Skinny, as he finished speaking.

"Then let some one else pitch the rest of this game, if you do," said Skinny

hotly. "I want this dog. He came right up to me when no one else could get their hands on him. I've only got nine months more to do. I want to keep him."

The warden was a baseball fan, and he liked Skinny.

"He's a scraggly looking beast," he commented reluctantly. "Skye terrier, Airedale, and hound all mixed up." He tossed away his half-consumed cigar, and "Shrimp," the shortstop, unhesitatingly accepted the chance. "Tell you what I'll do, Collins—John Collins was the name that adorned Skinny's mittimus—if you win the game, the dog's yours. Let's see, this is the middle of August and the days are still pretty long. I'll have the whistle postponed, if necessary. Win the game, and he's yours. If you lose, the 'All Stars' get him—if they want him. Come on now, let's see your stuff."

"You're on!" declared Skinny. "And what's more, since you say he's scraggly, I'll name him Scraggs."

"Yes, if you win him," rejoined the warden. "Play ball!"

The warden's unique proposition was swiftly communicated through the crowd, and interest in the contest became more intense than before. The dog, protesting, was carried from the field and locked in a convenient cell, where he could be heard, but not seen.

Skinny retired the batter on the first pitched ball, and his side went in. Two men struck out, and it was Skinny's turn at the plate. Like nearly every pitcher, he was weak with the bat, and the opposing twirler eyed him disdainfully, while the fielders automatically relaxed. Three strikes or an accidental pop fly comprised Skinny's batting repertoire, and they all knew it.

"Ball one!" shouted the umpire. "Ball two!" "Strike one!" And then Scraggs, rebellious at being locked in a cell for nothing and without trial, added a new plaint of protest to those he had

been voicing—a forlorn, despairful note that went straight to the starved heart of the scrawny convict at the home plate.

"You poor pup," gulped Skinny. "I know how you feel. Here's where I make them All Stars look like tallow candles—I've got to!"

It was a perfect strike, coming straight and true for the center of the plate, and Skinny shut both eyes, as he swung viciously. Then he heard cheering and shouting, with the coacher yelling at him: "Run, you dumb-bell—run!" He had no idea where the ball was, but kept on going, past first, second, third, and then, in response to a shrieked "Slide, Skinny, s-l-i—i-d-e!" he arrived in a dusty heap at the home plate, safe by an eyelash. He did not learn until later that the ball had gone past the relaxed shortstop, like a bullet, taken a no-you-don't bound, as the left fielder reached confidently for it, and gone merrily on to carom off the boiler-house wall and fool the center fielder.

"A fluke home run," they called it, but the All Stars went down, one—two—three—before Skinny's terrific delivery in their half, and the game was won.

Skinny, the Fly, convict on the tail end of a nine years' sentence, had acquired a dog.

Skinny's nickname had been given to him by virtue of his six-by-one anatomy, and because he had all the perseverance and resourcefulness of the domestic fly in getting into places where he was neither expected nor wanted. An orphan and a finished product of the reform school, he had for many years applied himself assiduously to worming through transoms, half transoms, even quarter transoms, in quest of other people's valuables.

As a "kid" he had been all but indispensable to the self-styled "Prowler Kings," a band of metropolitan burglars who pestered the police for years before

being broken up. Possessed with the sure-footedness of a mountain goat and the agility of a monkey, combined with a scorn for danger that enabled him to leap across eight-and-ten-story chasms between buildings, or from a roof gutter to an opposite window ledge, Skinny had been a star performer when it came to getting into seemingly impregnable fur or silk lofts and other well-secured places, where valuable loot might be had. And once in, it was as easy matter, as a rule, to let the "heavies" in. But the gang, stupidly unappreciative of Skinny's golden-egg competency, took advantage of his youth and repeatedly "gave him the hooks" in the division of spoils. Eventually he got tired of it and joined the single-handed class, rapidly developing into a dangerous house burglar. He had been caught several times, and he had served three short "bits" before drawing his nine-year sentence. In all his checkered career he had never encountered human love nor found any creature upon which to bestow his natural, but dormant, tendency to serve rather than be served.

That night in his cell Skinny placed Scraggs on the bunk, drew up his stool, and proceeded to give his new acquisition a thorough inspection.

"Regulation dog eyes, full of intelligence, old sport," he colloquized, while Scraggs' abbreviated tail made heroic attempts at wagging. "You may be what they call a mongrel, but you suit me, and I believe I can make the best four-footed assistant burglar out of you that ever gnawed a bone." From lock-up until the lights went out at nine thirty, Skinny continued in confidential confab with his new partner, telling him among other things that "they" had only nine months to do, and that he must "watch his step." "The main thing, Scraggs," he admonished, "is to be a good prisoner, for that's the quickest way out, where you can be a good burglar."

After gulping down the piece of bologna sausage that Skinny had saved for him from the convicts' Saturday night supper, Scraggs curled up beside his partner on the narrow bunk, when the order was given to put out the lights, his nose sticking out from under the blankets, and dreamed deliciously. It was the most luxurious night's sleep he had ever had, and he gave evidence of his appreciation in a veritable orgy of turbulence next morning, drawing upon himself and his master a torrent of ob-jurgations from the surrounding cells—the precursor of other troubles that were to descend upon Skinny in his new rôle of dog owner.

On several occasions during the months that followed he was obliged to "talk like a Dutch uncle," as he expressed it, to save the dog from being banished to the outer world, especially the day that Scraggs came dashing into their cell with the tail feathers of "Evergreen," the head barber's pet parrot, in his mouth.

Secretly Skinny was thrilled at the sight, for he hated Evergreen like poison, as did most of the convicts. Evergreen was a tyrant and made life miserable for every other pet in the prison. He reveled in tearing fur from the sleek backs of pampered pussies, or in killing patiently trained white mice. In Scraggs he had struck a rival, and Skinny knew there would be trouble. Gilroy, the head barber, was a lifer who stood "aces up" with the prison officials, and he thought more of his parrot than he did of his "eats," which is saying a lot, where a husky lifetime convict is concerned.

Skinny promptly burned the telltale feathers until only a little scattering of ashes remained on the stone floor of the cell. Then he gave Scraggs a couple of cold "hot dogs" and covered him with the blanket. "Here's hoping no one saw the deed committed," he confided to the little, pulsating black nose that peeped

out. "There's a chance that the fracas took place back of one of the shops, and that nobody saw it. But Gilroy, once he lumps that green scarecrow and sees the tail feathers gone, will never stop. He'll disrupt the entire prison to find out who did it."

The curtailment of Evergreen's feathers had occurred behind the boiler house, and it had been delectably witnessed by one "Jimmy, the Rat," an unfortunate, undersized product of a wretchedly managed orphanage, who would "squeal on the angels of heaven, if he ever got there," according to the consensus of convict opinion, as voiced by "Rebel George," expert safe cracker. Jimmy lost no time in seeking out Gilroy, leaving Evergreen wallowing helplessly about on the ash heap, where the crime had been perpetrated.

"When did you see Evergreen last?" he demanded, bursting into the barber shop with breathless importance.

"Half an hour ago," replied Gilroy quickly. "He went out the window for his afternoon fly-around." And then, in quick apprehension, "Why? What's happened? Where is he?" The pick-pocket in Gilroy's chair slid down, for Gilroy was unconsciously waving the razor in single-track concern for his pet.

"Oh, he's still breathing, all right," vouchsafed The Rat tantalizingly. "I saw the whole thing, and it was rich. He tangled up with Skinny's kiyoodle, and, say, you ought to have seen th' feathers fly. I saved him. I threw a chunk of coal when I seen that Evergreen was going to take th' count in th' first round, and I scared th' mutt off. You'll find him down on the ash heap, back of th' boiler house. I think one of his wing's broke, for he's floppin' around sideways and squawkin' his head off, with a lot o' mixed-up guff about 'Pretty Polly,' 'Hop Along, Sister Mary.' He's game, all right, an' he can't be hurt much, for he's makin' as

much noise as a whole bunch o' birds in a cage, what I seen once in a park."

Investigation proved the accuracy of The Rat's report, and Evergreen, crooning plaintively against his master's shoulder, was carried in haste to the office of the assistant deputy warden and laid as bleeding evidence upon that worthy's desk. Ten minutes later Skinny and Scraggs were ushered in, and the investigation began. Jimmy, the Rat, told his story with gaudy embellishments.

"But who struck the first blow—that's what I want to know?" asked the assistant deputy warden, cleaving to the stereotype line of questioning that went with "fight" inquiries.

The Rat began to scent trouble for himself. If he lay the blame on Scraggs, he would have to reckon with Skinny later. If he should make it appear that Evergreen was the assailant, he would incur the inimity of Gilroy, and Gilroy had sufficient pull with the officials to let him out of his easy job of runner for the engine room and boiler house.

"Well, I don't know as you could exactly call it a blow," he temporized. "In fact, I think they was jus' playin' at first, until Evergreen's feathers started leavin' him."

This was prevarication. The Rat knew that Evergreen had swooped down upon the unsuspecting back of Scraggs, with the intention of emulating the one-by-one stunt of the three black crows. Only a lightninglike twist on Scraggs' part had saved his right eye. A second twist had put Evergreen where he found himself wishing with all his might that Gilroy had never told him the three-black-crow yarn at all. But The Rat had determined to steer a cautious middle course, and repeated questioning failed to change his assertion that "they jus' started to play, an' then got mad at each other."

"Of course I can send them both to the hole," observed the assistant deputy

warden, tardily beginning to realize that there was humor in the situation; "but we haven't got a jacket to fit either of them. I guess we'll have to call it off." He turned to Skinny. "You better keep that mongrel of yours locked up. This is about the tenth time he's been reported. Next time he gets thrown out—understand?"

Skinny made no response, but stalked from the office with Scraggs under his arm. Mentally, however, he consigned the deputy warden to the nether regions.

Twice after that Scraggs was responsible for getting Skinny "on the carpet," the last time for purloining a string of sausages from the officers' mess and incidentally plunging "Hold-over" Kelly, the booze-fighting guard, into a three-days' attack of delirium tremens. Scraggs, with the infuriated steward of the mess in regulation carving-knife pursuit, had dashed between Kelly's unsteady shoes and tangled the sausages there. One frantic look had convinced Kelly that the long-expected anaconda had come right up through from the antipodes, and he had inaugurated his three days of padded retirement with a whoop that would have sent an Apache of General Crook's day to trading his mustang for a megaphone. It took seven screws, assisted by sarcastic suggestions from as many cons, to convey the writhing Kelly to the cushioned chamber in the prison hospital. This unhappy habitat was vulgarly known as the "padded cell," when used to curb the universe-destroying ardor of a locoed con, but became the "cushioned chamber" when a screw's brains got scrambled.

It was by sheer nerve and brazen defiance only that Skinny managed to save Scraggs from ostracism for this offense. The warden, outwardly outraged, but inwardly amused, played obdurate and twice closed the "interview" by peremptorily ordering the dog's immediate and unconditional "pardon."

"Yes, that's it," he declared, "we'll pardon him. Surely you can't kick at that, Collins—an unconditional pardon? He can go out and chase railroad trains and stop automobiles to his heart's content. It's too confining for him here. He needs a wider field for his activities. Yes, we'll give him a pardon."

"And make yourself out a liar," retorted Skinny boldly. "All the cons stack on your word, for you're never been known to break it—good or bad. You told me if I skinned the All Stars that day that I could keep the dog, and——"

"Oh, go ahead, keep him," snapped the warden. "But, if he causes any more trouble, I'll have you both sloughed tight until your time is up. Understand?"

By dint of unrelaxed vigilance Skinny succeeded in keeping Scraggs from further depredations, and the day finally arrived when they went over to the clothing room together for Skinny's outgoing garb of near-burlap "glad rags."

Skinny left the prison with a definite purpose in mind. A former cellmate, who had later been mangled to death in one of the jute-mill breaking carders, had told him of an old-fashioned family, living in an old-fashioned dwelling near a city of an adjoining State, which didn't believe in banks and kept a valuable collection of old-fashioned jewelry right in the house, in an old-fashioned bureau that a one-inch jimmy would make look like a cracker box. According to the estimate of the deceased, there were at least ten thousand dollars to be had "like rolling off a log," and Skinny had decided to do the rolling.

When the train pulled in at the railroad station of the prison town, Skinny met his first free-life rebuff. The conductor would not let him get on. He must check his dog in the baggage car. No, he wouldn't have time now. He would have to wait for the next train.

Skinny sat on the edge of the platform and watched the rear end of the train recede until it became a speck in the distance. Here was a complication that was a poser. All during the nine months that he and Scraggs had celled together, he had pictured their life outside without the remotest idea that the rules of civilization would ever require separation, temporary or otherwise. The thought of Scraggs tied up in a baggage car for a journey of two hundred miles was more than Skinny could bear. "I won't stand for it," he asserted, "and yet, old sport, we've got to get to Woodhaven and pull that trick. If we can get them stones we'll be fixed. We'll head for some medium-sized burg somewhere and settle down. Ten thousand, 'Big Casino,' said. That'll be enough to start us in some little business and let the rest of the world go by, eh, Scraggs?"

Scraggs jumped into Skinny's lap and applied his tongue to his master's freshly shaved chin in affirmation.

"All right, that settles it," said Skinny. "Feet were made before railroads, and we've got six of 'em between us. If one of mine peters out, you can lend me one of yours, eh, Scraggums? So we'll just say ta-ta to this burg and walk."

He fastened his prison-made hair chain to the dog's abalone-inlaid collar—also prison-made—to keep Scraggs safe until they should go beyond the village streets, and they were off, down the railroad track in the wake of the vanished train.

The two had many new and strange experiences during the days that followed. Freedom was more immense than Skinny had thought. On previous similar occasions he had gone straight from prison to his old city haunts, regarding the intervening country as a place strictly limited to the bucolic needs of "hicks," heifers, and hoboes. It was no place for a pavement-bred burglar.

But this time it was different, and Skinny, without knowing or caring why, found himself enjoying it. It was the middle of May, and nature was preening busily. Skinny had never in his life given a thought to the mystery of growing things, nor to the beauty of flowers. But now, as Scraggs madly chased saucy butterflies, or frantically endeavored to capture smug woodchucks, Skinny began to realize that he had missed something. Instead of hastening toward his contemplated crime, he deliberately loitered. Why hurry?

Scraggs was apparently having the time of his life, and they had money enough to last them a month. While in prison Skinny had been the recipient of several five-and-ten-dollar bills from different guards who had bet quite heavily between themselves on him to win the baseball games he had pitched during the previous summer. This money had been given to him secretly, for it was against the rules for a guard to give money to a convict, but he had kept it hidden successfully and had managed to smuggle it out with him, never dreaming that he would put it to such use as this. He had seen himself celebrating his release in the city, with his boon companions about him. That had been his intention. Scraggs had changed it.

At last, after two weeks of delicious dawdling, they arrived at Woodhaven, and Skinny made a careful daylight reconnoiter of the old-fashioned house.

"It'll be like taking a chicken out of water, old sport," he confided to Scraggs. "That old box will crush in like pasteboard, no matter where I tackle it. There's no use waitin', that I can see, so we'll make the raffle to-night and have it over with."

Scraggs voiced staccato acquiescence.

It was two a. m., and all was still as the grave. The Harney house was in darkness. Under the shelter of a grape

arbor in the back yard stood the shadowy and motionless figure of a man, with a still more shadowy figure of a dog at his feet. Presently the man's figure crouched, and on the stillness of the night came a tersely whispered command. "You stay right here, Scraggs, until I come back. Right here, and don't move!"

As if conscious of the need for silence and secrecy, the dog licked his master's hand and then stretched out, with his nose between extended paws and pointing toward the house. Skinny patted him softly and then glided forward. He crossed the lawn and stopped before one of the side windows, where he worked silently for several minutes before slowly and cautiously raising the sash. A moment later he disappeared through the black aperture. Scraggs remained still, even though a cat, blissfully unaware of his presence, came perilously near. It was a new game, and he didn't understand it, but Skinny had commanded silence, and that settled it. He would stay there until doomsday, if need be.

Half an hour passed, when suddenly the night stillness was shattered by a revolver shot, then another, and another, and Skinny came tumbling through the open window, landing in a heap on the walk. He arose quickly and ran directly to Scraggs.

"We're in for it, old boy," he announced tensely. "I got the swag, but stumbled over a kid's train of cars or something on my way out."

He had picked Scraggs up, while speaking, and jumped for the hedge that separated the Harney grounds from the place next door. Meanwhile a window had been thrown up, and some one was shooting into the night. Lights appeared in the near-by houses, and there was a confusion of voices coming from somewhere.

Skinny dropped Scraggs over the hedge and vaulted after him. Then he

raced, crouching, straight for the street, with the hedge as a screen. Just as they reached the sidewalk, a mounted night watchman came gliding out of the gloom, leaped from his bicycle, and commanded "Hands up!" Skinny saw the glint of a gun, and before he could comply the man fired, the bullet singing close. In another instant the man had seized him and was demanding his business. Skinny was unarmed. "It's all off," he thought. "This bird'll plug me, if I put up a fight. I'll pretend surrender and watch my chance."

But even before Skinny completed this resolve the watchman emitted a terrific yell and let go, reaching frantically for his legs. Something had seized him down there, and the pain was excruciating. Skinny, without comprehending what had happened, saw his chance. He jumped for the abandoned bicycle, mounted it in a flying leap, and streaked into the darkness. Several revolver shots followed him, neighbors having arrived on the scene just in time to see him disappear, but he was unhit. Like a racer, he pedaled until he had placed several miles between himself and the scene of his mishap. Then he jumped off and looked back.

"It's too much to expect," he panted. "I'm running poor Scraggs to death. As it is, I must be way ahead of him."

Not for an instant did he anticipate that Scraggs would fail to follow, and it wasn't until a quarter of an hour had passed, and he heard distant sounds of pursuit, that it occurred to him that Scraggs was not coming. His impulse was to start back, no matter the risk, and find out what had happened. But second thought told him how senseless that would be. He would probably be caught, and that would mean separation from Scraggs, anyway, for they would never admit a dog into a jail, let alone a new stir, if he were convicted. No, he must resort to patience and strategy. If they had captured Scraggs, there

would be some way to recover him—and he had the jewels. Their future was assured, provided he used good judgment. Then suddenly it occurred to him that it would be a simple matter to follow the bicycle tracks, and that it would be but a few more minutes before his pursuers would arrive.

"I hate to do it—it seems like deserting my pal—but I've got to get going, and 'cross country at that," he mumbled. Reluctantly he climbed the snake fence that skirted the road and set off across the fields. By a circuitous, all-day journey, keeping to the shelter of the woods, when possible, Skinny arrived late the next afternoon at the car tracks of a distant interurban line, that ran into the city, and boarded a car. In town he bought an evening paper, went directly to a cheap hotel and got a room. Inside the room, with the door locked, and the shades drawn, he eagerly scanned the paper for news of the burglary. On the third page he found it. The burglar had escaped because a mongrel dog had attacked the night watchman, seizing him by the leg and clinging there, despite kicks and blows, until the watchman had shot him. The shot had not killed the animal, but had wounded it badly, so badly that the probabilities were it could not live, but the police were holding it in the hope that it would furnish a clew to the miscreant. An abalone-inlaid collar of peculiar workmanship had been taken from the animal's neck, but the officers had failed to hit upon a name to which the dog would respond. Two suspects had been brought to the police station, but had been released when the dog failed to recognize either of them. If the police could discover the dog's name and learn where that peculiar collar had come from, the identity of the burglar might be established, et cetera.

Skinny winced, as he read. Poor Scraggs. Wounded and probably confined in a cell for safe-keeping. And

if the prison officials in the next State happened to see the account, they could hardly fail to recognize him and the dog from it, which would make it harder yet to recover Scraggs—for that he had already determined to do.

"The chances are the cops will nurse him carefully," he mumbled miserably. "They figure he'll prove the star witness, if they get their mitts on the prowler. That gives me time and a chance to think out a plan. I've burglarized all kinds of places," he chuckled, "but never a police station. But who knows? The very unexpectedness of it might make it dead easy."

And then he remembered the stolen jewels. He glanced furtively about the room before drawing a large handkerchief, that had been converted into an improvised bag, from his coat pocket. He spread the newspaper out on the bed and dumped the contents of the handkerchief upon it. The glittering jumble exalted him, and a thrill of immense satisfaction momentarily held him. "Big Casino" had not exaggerated; there was a small fortune before him.

"Easy Street for life," he mumbled. "Why, oh, why couldn't Scraggs have got away, too?"

Next morning the papers stated that the dog which had been captured at the scene of the Harney burglary was in bad shape and would probably have to be shot. The statement set Skinny's brain afire. "I can save him—I know I can save him if I can get him," he groaned. "But how can I get him?"

And then he had an inspiration—an inspiration involving risk and demanding sacrifice, but a seeming solution nevertheless. Five minutes later he was in a public telephone booth and talking over the line with Mr. Harney, owner of the stolen jewels.

"Yes, I've got them—all of them, and you can have them back on one condition," he announced. "Get that dog

from the police and have him at your house at six o'clock to-morrow morning. . . . What? The police say he'll have to be shot? . . . All right, let them shoot, but whistle for the sparklers the rest of your life if they do. It's up to you. Get busy right now with them. . . . Yes. And say, wait a minute—no double-crossing! Don't think I'll be chump enough to walk in with the jewelry on me. You just get the dog. I'll carry out my part—you can stack on it."

The conference lasted for a quarter of an hour, and Mr. Harney finally agreed to the plan. Skinny was to call him up at ten that night to ascertain the outcome of his negotiations with the police. "And remember," Skinny had admonished just before hanging up the receiver, "you've got to frame up some good story for the cops. Don't give them an inkling about a third party, or it's all off. Tell them you want the dog as a souvenir—tell them anything—so long as you get him. He's worth about thirty thousand dollars to you, as near as I can judge from present values of diamonds and pearls."

At ten that night Skinny again used the telephone, and he was made jubilant. Mr. Harney had succeeded in getting the dog from the police.

"But you can't see him," admonished the voice, "and he'll have to remain here for a while. He's getting expert treatment, but if he saw you and jumped up, as he would, his chances for recovery would be ruined. You may come at six to-morrow morning, if you care to do so, but you will have to take my word about your dog. . . . What? What do I care where the dog dies or not, so long as I get my jewels? Well, you come to-morrow morning, and I'll tell you why."

There was a quality to Mr. Harney's voice, even over the metallic telephone, that Skinny liked, and he felt no fear of a trap as he boarded the five o'clock

interurban car for Woodhaven next morning. After leaving the car he had a quarter mile to walk, and, as he went along the country streets, his senses were filled with the beauty of the scene. Why had he never before given a thought to the wonder of growing things, to the lure of outdoor life—the whispering trees, the bedewed grass, the flowers turning their faces to be kissed by the rising sun. It was a new, a different world, and it fascinated him.

"Just let me get Scraggs back and in the clear of this mess, and I'm going straight," he declared out loud. "Why can't I raise vegetables and gather butter from the buttercups like any other guy?"

At the front door of the Harney house he rang the bell confidently and then stood contemplating the spot, only a few feet distant, where he had encountered the night watchman two nights before. There was something amiss in the order of things that he should thus be back at the scene of the crime. His reflections were interrupted by the opening of the door by a servant who quickly showed him into a front room and left him there before he could utter a word. Skinny began pacing the floor.

"I wonder if I'm taking the prize boob medal after all," he thought. "If Harney ain't on the level, and a bunch of dicks suddenly pop in here on me I——"

A slight cough at the door of the room interrupted his misgivings. He wheeled sharply and found himself contemplating an elderly, white-haired man who was built very much like himself, and who had his left forefinger against his lips, and his right hand upraised to enjoin silence.

"Let me speak first," he said quickly. "Don't you speak save in a very low voice. That dog of yours has ears like a rabbit, and, even as it is, he's liable to smell you and get excited. He's in

a room up on the third floor, and he will recover all right, if he's kept quiet. We swabbed the wound and have a drain in it. He ought to heal up nicely, if we can keep him still. I'm giving him morphine to make him sleep, but the rascal keeps one eye open and one ear cocked all the time. I—I assume that you are Mr.—er——" He stopped, not knowing Skinny's name.

"Mr. Scraggs," said Skinny, impulsively voicing the name that was uppermost in his mind.

"Yes—yes, Mr. Scraggs," ruminated the other. "I assume you are the gentleman who telephoned me about the jewels," continued Mr. Harney imperperturbably. "I——"

"Yes, I'm the guy," interrupted Skinny. "And, what's more, I don't mind sayin' that I like the cut of your jib. I knew you was square when I was chinning with you over the phone, but now I'm sure of it. And, just to show you that I'm no four-flusher, and that I know I'm dealin' with a square guy, here's your tinware, all of it, safe and sound. I'm takin' your word about the dog, and that you'll let me have him soon's he's well." He drew the knotted handkerchief from his pocket and placed it on the near-by table, as he was speaking, deftly untying it so that the jewels could be seen in the dim light. Harney stepped forward eagerly and began fingering the heirlooms fondly.

"It's like a miracle," he asserted, turning to Skinny with sudden intensity. "Do you mean to tell me that you are returning these gems just for the dog—that you don't expect any reward—money for instance?"

"Say, bo," replied Skinny in an aggrieved tone, "you look and talk like a pretty wise bird. Ain't you hep yet that I wouldn't take all the jewelry and kale in the world for that dog? Why, I'm a steamless engine, a rudderless ship, a gasless lizzie without him. Do you suppose I'd have come here, takin' a chance

like this o' breakin' into the penitentiary, if I didn't think more of him than anything else on earth?"

Mr. Harney did not reply immediately. He was contemplating his strange visitor appraisingly.

"You interest me very much," he finally said. "I mean, as man to man," he hastened to add, fearful that the other might take the expression for patronage. "I'd like to have a talk with you. I'm a dog fancier myself; in fact, I have extensive kennels only five miles from here. I keep no dog about these premises on account of my daughter, who has a pronounced and incurable aversion for them. They upset her nerves. She was badly frightened by a boisterous bulldog when she was a little child. If she knew your dog was in the house, I fear there would be a rumpus—though the sight of these jewels ought to justify my action, for they will be hers eventually. Could you come out again to-morrow afternoon, say about three, and meet me at the little park up the street? You probably noticed the benches, as you came by."

"Sure," agreed Skinny promptly. "I'll be there."

"And—and—just a moment," added Mr. Harney, as Skinny took a gliding step toward the door. "You'll pardon me, I'm sure, for you must know I mean all right, but—er—well, you must have been urgently in need of money, or these jewels would not have been taken. Can't I lend you a few dollars until your dog is recovered?"

It was the final winning stroke. Skinny had no exaggerated notions of modesty or independence where money was concerned, and he was down to his last dime. It had taken his last half dollar to pay his car fare from town. And he had "sized up" the likely-looking merchandise store in the village, as he left the car—a place with a big, inviting transom—and had determined to "get it" that very night. Yet, even as

he had made this resolve, he had been bothered by a new and strange aversion for further thievery, and here was the chance to evade the necessity for it.

"Sure, I need dough badly," he acquiesced. "But no reward stuff. Just a loan until I get back on my feet."

Mr. Harney took a twenty-dollar bill from his wallet and laid it on the table. Skinny picked it up and stuffed it into his pocket. "To tell you the truth, I didn't know where I was gon'er get breakfast," he said, "and I've never begged a cent or a bite to eat in my life. No good thief knows how to beg. Much obliged. You'll get it back later."

Three o'clock next afternoon found Skinny and Mr. Harney seated on one of the benches in the little village park. They were talking dog, and Skinny had just finished recounting in droll fashion how Kelly, the prison guard, had mistaken the string of sausages for a boa constrictor. It had been quite a shock to his auditor when Skinny, enthusing over the cleverness of Scraggs, had inadvertently disclosed that he was an infant ex-convict, but the older man had soon forgotten this unpleasant fact in listening to and studying his visitor. Adroit questioning had led Skinny to reveal his entire life's history, including his orphanage days, when he had "gone to bed many a night with his little belly feelin' as if his little throat had been cut," as he expressed it.

"Well, I've checked up the jewels," said Mr. Harney at last, "and they're all there. Scraggs, as I've told you, is doing nicely and will soon be snapping flies again. And I've a proposition to make to you. Would you consider taking a steady place at the kennels? We have nearly a hundred dogs there, all thoroughbreds and some of them very valuable. I need a good, trustworthy man who loves dogs. What do you say?"

"Can I raise vegetables—is there a garden space?" asked Skinny

"Three acres, if you want them," replied Mr. Harney.

Skimpy had no idea what an acre measured, but nodded his satisfaction.

"And you say the dogs are all thoroughbreds and very valuable?" he asked. "What's the highest priced one worth?"

"About five thousand dollars, I should judge," replied Mr. Harney.

Skinny mused a moment, regarding Mr. Harney speculatively.

"The job appeals to me, with one exception," he said. "But that can be overcome, if you'll agree to my putting up a separate kennel, as you call 'em." He smiled at the term.

"And why that?" asked Mr. Harney unsuspectingly.

"So's I can keep my thirty-thousand-dollar hound away from them cheap, common canines," laughed Skinny, and the two shook hands.



### ASKED TO DIG HIS OWN GRAVE

**E**DWARD PINKHAM, sixteen years old, recently saved himself from burial alive by turning on Edward Harrington, an escaped patient from the asylum for the insane at Norwich, Connecticut, and felling him with the shovel with which he was being forced to dig his own grave. The blow knocked Harrington unconscious, and before he had recovered the boy fled to safety. Harrington later took to his heels, but was captured in Webster, Massachusetts, and returned to the asylum.

Harrington escaped from the institution during the night. He met the Pinkham boy, who was on his way to school. Under the pretext of offering the lad a job, Harrington lured him into the woods and then pulled him into the cemetery, where he procured a shovel from a vault which he opened with a skeleton key, and compelled his young victim to begin digging his own grave. After Pinkham had excavated two feet of earth, he saw his chance and suddenly struck down the escaped lunatic.



### BAD MONEY FOR GOOD "BOOZE"

**A** CONFESSION recently made to the police of Chicago explains how the West was flooded with counterfeit bills of the new Chicago Reserve Bank. The man who made the confession is Edward Thompson, and the police say that he offered to deliver a big cargo of pre-war whisky to a syndicate for twenty thousand dollars. He delivered the liquor, and though it was moonshine, they accepted it.

They paid him twenty thousand dollars in new ten-dollar notes. He divided with his associates. They were all happy until a cigar-stand girl handed back one of the bills with the remark that it was counterfeit. Bronson, determined to make the best of his bargain, then organized a touring party of four additional members, and they all started for Denver. Hotel clerks, merchants, and garage men along the way all accepted the bills. No one ever questioned their genuineness.

Bronson was apprehended in Chicago, two others in Denver, and the remaining pair in Kansas City. Government investigators have the names of the syndicate that passed out the bad bills.

# One Sweet Crime

By John Baer

Author of "Caught on a Pin," etc.

**I**N itself there was nothing unusual in the fact that "Pug" Safarty had a cold in the head. Safarty was an almost constant victim of this malady, or of one of its allied afflictions, catarrh and hay fever. As far back as he could remember, there had been some trouble with his nose. That was his weakest feature.

Safarty got so he didn't mind it much. One doctor who examined him muttered something about an affection of the mucous membrane, and then he discovered that Safarty had entirely lost his sense of smell. "But it's nothing very serious," he added. "Besides, there's nothing much to smell in this world, anyway." On the whole, that's how Safarty felt about it.

But this particular cold was noteworthy because it gave Safarty an idea; more precisely, it modified an idea he already had. The same idea had occurred to Safarty on many previous occasions; in fact it came to him every time he was out of funds. "I'll stick up somebody," is how he usually phrased it to himself. He was unmethodical and had no patience for planning. The "somebody" he held up was generally the first person who passed the dark spot which Safarty had chosen more or less at random.

This time his thoughts were a little more definite. The cold was exceptionally noxious, and, despite his original intention to disregard it, he was finally driven to seek temporary relief. He had gone to Brooklyn to look up an old acquaintance, but had failed to

find him in. He was in the residential district just south of Borough Hall, when his chronic annoyance became unbearable. In the drug store which he entered, Safarty was charged half a dollar for the patented nostrum he could buy in New York for forty-five cents.

That made him angry. And in the rage which overpowered him, after he had left the store, the idea was conceived! "I'll stick up a druggist. *This* druggist!"

The pharmacy of G. F. Melline was strategically placed to do a big business. Pug Safarty, prowling around in the neighborhood, noted that the nearest competitor was five blocks away. Further, the store was in the center of a fashionable residential district. Melline could well afford to be high-priced and independent. There was every reason to believe that there would be quite a respectable sum of money in Melline's till on any evening. And this was Saturday, a busier day than any other for druggists.

In less than an hour Pug Safarty was back again on the premises. He had made a careful survey of the neighborhood, fixing in his mind the several streets by which he could gain one of the many Borough Hall subway entrances in the event of pursuit. That was the extent of his preliminary work. He tied himself to no set plans; his methods were simple, and his actions were based on the inspiration or the necessity of the moment. There were no frills to any of his tricks, and he used but one of the tools of his trade, a revolver.

At the moment Pug Safarty entered the store, Mr. Melline was standing in front of his counter, talking to a rather stout, elderly gentleman. The druggist was holding up a small corked bottle for inspection and saying, "Yes, sir, Mr. Clark, remarkable as it may seem, there is in the little bottle enough——"

The customer was not interested in the contents of the bottle. "I say," interrupted Pug, "can you give me something for a cold? I got a cold in my——"

"Eh?" Melline turned toward him. "Ah, yes, a cold. Seems to be in your head. Fix you right up."

He placed the small bottle on the counter and walked across his store to a show case.

Safarty, keeping his chin well buried in his upturned coat collar, noted that neither Melline nor Clark had paid much attention to him. The druggist had favored him with a passing glance; Clark practically ignored him. As soon as the druggist had put down the bottle, Clark had picked it up. He was now gazing at it intently, standing with his back partly turned toward the counter.

Presently Melline was behind his counter again, wrapping two small boxes into a neat parcel. "The capsules are to be taken one every two hours," he said. "And if you'll rub a little of this ointment on your forehead before retiring, it ought to clear the congestion by morning." But it was evident that his major interest was not in the sale. Even as he spoke, his gaze wandered in the direction of the bottle which Clark was holding. He added, "One dollar thirty, please."

Safarty stepped close. He thrust forward a two-dollar bill. A bell tinkled, and the drawer of the cash register slid open. That was the cue.

"Now you two keep your mouths shut and step behind that partition darned quick, if you don't want to be plugged!"

Safarty snapped out the command in

a low, growling voice. A passer-by on the outside, had there been one, would have noticed nothing unusual. Pug stood with his left arm hung at his side and his right hand seemingly on his hip. But his right hand was actually just above his coat pocket, and the barrel of his stubby gun protruded from his fingers. He made a half turn, describing an arc with the revolver, threatening first one man, then the other.

Melline, of dreamy, phlegmatic temperament, bore the shock in a quizzical, perplexed manner. He stared ahead of him, like a man coming out of a trance, and edged slowly back toward the partition.

But the nervous Mr. Clark was jolted out of his wits. He made a jumpy little movement toward the counter, and then, when he was standing directly in front of the cash register, he began to raise both arms jerkily. In his dazed condition he could not conceive of a holdup in which the victims did not raise their hands above their heads.

Safarty was made unduly excited by Clark's confusion. "Keep your hands down!" he ordered. "And move faster!" To emphasize his remarks he thumped his left fist against Clark's chest.

This unnerved the old gentleman altogether. He toppled backward against the partition. To regain his balance he grabbed for the counter, entirely forgetting the small bottle he held in his right hand.

The bottle crashed against the top of the open cash register. There was a groan from Clark, mingled with the tinkling of splintering glass. A fluid trickled down into the open drawer.

Safarty now lost his patience. He gave Clark a vehement shove, so that he lurched behind the counter, near the partition toward which Melline was still moving slowly. Then he commanded the two men to walk ahead of him into the room behind the store. He prodded

them in the back with his gun, so that they moved quickly.

They were now in a room which Melline evidently used to store excess stock. There was no furniture except one chair. In the right wall, to the rear, was a door.

"What does that open into?" demanded Pug.

"It's a closet door," answered Melline.

"Open it!"

The druggist did so. It was a small room, several feet deep, hung with a few clothes.

"Get in, both of you!"

Thereupon Safarty got down to business. In this part of the game he was a practiced hand. It took him less than a minute to strip both men of the contents of their pockets and the jewelry they wore. He met with no resistance, for both men were too cowed even to protest.

"If either of you yelp before five minutes is up, I'll come back and blow you to pieces!"

Pug slammed the door shut and then rammèd the back of the chair under the knob. "That'll hold 'em only for a spell," he thought. A few moments more were all that he needed.

He sauntered quickly, but with a quiet, self-possessed air, out into the store again. His gaze lingered longingly upon the open cash register drawer for a second. Then, with both hands, he greedily began to stuff his overcoat pockets.

But he paused abruptly to frown his annoyance. Some of the money was wet. In fact miniature puddles had formed in one of the bill compartments. He picked out the bills gingerly and then wiped his hands on the side of his coat. The bill at the bottom was thoroughly soaked. As Safarty withdrew it from the till, some of the liquid dripped on his coat sleeve.

The last thing he did before leaving

the store was to pocket the package Melline had wrapped up for him. It was part of his philosophy to take everything he could get for nothing.

Pug Safarty had been in Melline's store about six minutes. The job had been one of the easiest in his long criminal career. Never before had he tackled any one quite so meek as either the druggist or Mr. Clark. He now walked hurriedly along the wind-swept streets, weaving an intricate path toward the business section through which the subway ran. He wondered how long the two men would stay in the closet. They seemed scared enough to stay there all night, he thought. But, even if they were already raising a din, it was too late to catch him.

The chances that either of them would be able to give an accurate description of him were remote. Melline appeared to be a most absent-minded fellow; it was doubtful if he would recall that Safarty had been in his store twice during the same evening. And that funny Mr. Clark would not be able to furnish a description of the man who had held him up.

Pug recalled newspaper accounts of some of his previous crimes. The victims had generally described him as "a big man who wore a cap and a dark coat." An excellent identification that, on which to pick a man out of a city of six million people! And he had no record, so there was no need to worry about finger prints.

So Safarty swung into a jaunty gait, pleased with himself and the world. Then on Court Street he passed two pretty girls who were standing in front of a lighted shop window, debating the purchase of a dress. A blast of wind hurled the exclamation, "Oh, lady, lady!" into his ears, and, turning, he saw that the girls were now giggling. Well, there's nothing overwhelmingly unusual in that. Pug muttered "Dumb-bell!" and walked on.

After half a block he brushed by a young couple. It seems that the wind that night made private conversations impossible, for Pug distinctly heard the young man remark, "Gee, Carrie, and if you ever use stuff like that, I'll murder you!"

And no sooner had the ultimatum died on the breeze when a messenger boy who approved heartily of the slogan, "They shall not pass," collided headlong with Safarty, threw the latter out of his line of locomotion, stopped, glared impertinently into Safarty's face, sniffed, bowed, and said gravely, "Excuse me, madam," and then ran like a college sprinter.

"By gollies, there's a lot of nuts in Brooklyn," thought Pug. "Me for New York and civilization!"

He was near a subway kiosk now. Directly before its entrance a policeman was standing. He was talking to an elderly woman, and, to judge by his manner and gestures, he was explaining to her the intricacies of travel in Brooklyn. Safarty marched by them boldly, suppressing a snicker at the man in uniform.

As he started down the stairs, the rasping voice of the woman caused him to slow up somewhat. "Isn't it disgraceful! And on a man, too!"

"Thim cake eaters give me an acute pain, madam," the officer replied. "They ought to put the law on 'em."

"Cops and dames is always kickin' about something," reflected the gunman and strode on. He headed for the turnstiles, where he again slowed up to allow the outcoming crowd to filter through. And now he noticed that several persons, who had brushed close to him, suddenly stared up at him incredulously and then edged away to give him a wide berth. He pushed forward impetuously, forced his way through the revolving gate and then turned angrily, when he caught the comments: "Good grief!" "Can you beat it?" "What kind

of a tank did he fall into?" "Everywhere flowers fair shed their fragrance on the air."

Pug's menacing attitude brought an end to the remarks, but, as he walked in the direction of the uptown East Side platform, he turned to look behind him and was annoyed to find the others doing likewise. Furthermore, two of the passengers were conversing with the agent who had stepped out of his change booth. The men nodded in his direction; they laughed heartily, and one of them touched a finger meaningly to his forehead.

A train thundered into the station just then, and Pug Safarty boarded it. "Is *everybody* in Brooklyn bughouse?" he was thinking. He dropped into a seat near the door. He was pretty nettled. He could not shake off the creepy sensation that something was decidedly askew, and the very vagueness of it all left him greatly perturbed. Persons were finding something about him that was amusing; that was obvious. But for the fact that his pockets were stuffed with stolen articles which could be identified—the rings and watches he had taken from Melline and Clark—he'd have punched somebody long ago and demanded an explanation. But right now he couldn't risk getting into a fight. Just the same, he was itching to crack somebody.

For several stations he had the car practically to himself. But at the Bridge stop on the New York side, a crowd rushed into the train.

Pug Safarty had just begun to be comfortably oblivious of his surroundings again, when he looked up and beheld the eyes of every one in the car resting upon him! And there were murmurings—wise cracks, undoubtedly—there were scowls, smiles, grins, grimaces, wry faces.

Relief is a mild word to describe his feeling at alighting at Fourteenth Street to change for a local. But this relief

was of short duration. For he noted that the entire platform was whispering, snickering, glancing at him side-long.

The platform guard walked by him. The enraged Pug felt that he had to vent his wrath on somebody. He had been waiting less than a minute, but he snapped nevertheless, "Hey! When's the next train? Swell service you got down this dump!"

"Why don't you go up into the air where you belong," retorted the guard.

Pug stepped into the local which had just pulled in. But the end was not yet. It so happened that the man who sat down beside Safarty was, for some reason or other, in a morose mood. He sniffed disdainfully and then announced, "Spring has come!"

This utterly incomprehensible remark caused a mild stir among the other passengers—some of whom found it difficult to repress their merriment when the man began to sing, "'The flowers that bloom in the spring, tra-la——'"

It was then that Safarty's patience gave out. "I'm getting off at the next station, mister," he said to the man beside him. "Come up into the street with me, and I'll cave in our ribs!"

"Me—strike a woman——" began the other.

Pug seized the stranger by the collar and yanked him toward the door. Several men jumped up and intervened. The train stopped, and the door rolled open. Safarty fought furiously and finally got clear. The women were screaming now, and Safarty was pushed toward the door. He struck out blindly and toppled two men before they shoved him out on the platform. The alert guard slammed the door in his face.

The station agent, alarmed by the noise, called out of his booth and demanded to know what was up. Safarty stepped truculently against the booth and told the agent that nothing was up, and that if he said anything about

spring or flowers, he'd be annihilated on the spot.

Safarty lumbered up the stairway into the fresh air. He went two blocks east to Third Avenue, where he entered a cigar store. Here a friendly countenance was turned to him; the proprietor knew him, and Pug was a good customer. It was not necessary for Safarty to name his wants; the man immediately reached for a pack of cigarettes and handed it to him.

Safarty brightened; it was good to meet a human being who didn't begin cutting unintelligible capers as soon as he hove in sight.

"Blustery night, eh?" He wanted to add that it was a fine night for a murder or a stick-up, but refrained. "How's business, Wicker?" And so saying, Safarty dug into one of his coat pockets, pulled out a handful of Mr. Melline's coins, and then laid the exact amount on the show case.

"Business is fine." Wicker was picking up the coins. "Been out for a good time?"

"Oh, just bummin' round uptown—shootin' some——"

"Say," interrupted Wicker, "where the deuce did you get this money?"

Safarty was in the act of lighting a cigarette. Frightened and enraged at the same time, he snuffed out the match with his fingers and turned fiercely on the man behind the counter. "What's the matter? Ain't my money any good? What dif——"

"Sure, it's good all right," Wicker assured him. "Only it——"

"Give it back to me if you don't want it! I guess I can find a lot of places where they'll take——"

"I'll take a barrel of it, myself," smiled Wicker. "But it must come from a mighty——"

"Where it comes from ain't none of your darn business!" flared Safarty. "Holy smoke, can't a guy buy a pack of spuds without——"

"I wasn't trying to be flippy," said Wicker in a conciliatory tone. "Everything is perfectly O. K. I was just curious. But it's none of my business, of course——"

"Good night!" Pug slammed the door after him.

Directly across the street was the hotel in which he lived. It required some determination on Safarty's part not to run for it. He had the depressing feeling that some mysterious power was dogging him. Everywhere he went he seemed to be marked for the scorn and suspicion of the rest of humanity.

But, in spite of his premonition, he reached his room without further encounters. The hotel in which he was staying was called by its owner's name, but every one else referred to it simply as "Joe's place." It was a remodeled four-story tenement, patronized almost exclusively by men of doubtful occupation. There was no lobby; not even an elevator.

The owner was in the office just inside the entrance when Safarty came in. He merely nodded. Safarty returned the greeting and hurried up the stairs to his room on the second floor. He locked his door, hung his cap on the knob, and then impatiently pulled the loot out of his pockets and laid it on the table. Then he tossed his overcoat on a chair.

He took an accounting of his haul. He made a rough estimate of what he might get for the jewelry and trinkets; then he counted the cash. Altogether the booty came to a little more than a thousand dollars.

A thousand dollars for a few minute's work, and yet Safarty felt not a whit cheerful. He had met with no opposition from his victims, and he had effected a clean get-away. But now that he was safe in his own room, he was harassed by a lurking fear that he had unconsciously made a terrible blunder. He brooded for over half an hour, re-

calling his actions during and after the holdup, but he could think of nothing that might betray him.

And yet, after he had left the drug store, he had undoubtedly become a marked man. He was certain now that the comments he had overheard, even before going down into the subway, had been aimed at him. Some subtle, mysterious change must have come over him which set him off from all the rest of the people in the world.

But what could that thing be? He examined his clothing and looked into a mirror. He could find nothing humorous about his appearance. He slumped into a chair and began to concentrate on the problem.

After a short while a startling fact struck him. Wicker had remarked on the strangeness of his *money!* Now what could there be about the money to make Wicker ask questions. It struck him like a bolt. The money he had taken out of Melline's cash register was wet! That fool Clark had dropped that bottle, and it had broken, and the liquid had run down into the drawer.

Safarty grabbed some of the money from the table and scrutinized it. Some of the bills were still moist. Well, what of it? No one whom he had passed on the street had seen the money. Money—spring—flowers—"excuse me, madam!"

Fire and brimstones! What an idiot he was! Just because his own nose was of no use to him, it had never occurred to him that other people had noses at all! The darn money smelled! That was what had jinxed him! The stuff which ran out of that bottle must have had a peculiar odor. That was all there was to it. The money in his overcoat pocket had smelled—smelled so strongly that——

"Smell?—will he smell?"

Twenty-five minutes after Safarty had left the store, Mr. Melline was ex-

claiming excitedly to Detectives Cogswell and Brophy who had been sent from headquarters in answer to his telephone call.

"Will he smell?" shouted Melline. "I tell you the first thing I did after calling you was to throw open every window and door in the house and start spraying the place with deodorizing chemicals. I assure you this place won't smell like a drug store for the next six weeks! My customers will think they have come into a perfume factory.

"Listen! I'm a skilled chemist; I have a laboratory upstairs, and just now I'm experimenting with a new process for making perfumes. That stuff in the bottle Mr. Clark dropped—I procured a sample of it because of its unique characteristics. Do you know what that stuff was? It was ionone. It is made by condensing citral with acetone in the presence of alkali, and it forms the basis of all violet scents. Ionone is probably the most wonderful of all artificial scents. It is so powerful that the contents of that one small bottle is sufficient to envelope a small town in an atmosphere of violet perfume! Good heavens! Don't you—didn't you notice the odor even before you were anywhere near——"

"Now that I've mopped the stuff up, the odor will soon disappear," Melline continued. "But the robber undoubtedly put the money in his pocket. I don't care where he goes, or how long he stays there, I tell you he's a marked man until he burns his clothes! He isn't merely going to smell! He's going to reek. To judge by the amount of stuff I found had dripped into the cash drawers, there was enough ionone on that money to make a whole flock smell like one huge bed of fragrant violets! No matter how he travels, as long as that man carries my money on him, he's going to leave a trail a child could follow! The trail won't be red—it'll be lurid! He ought to be as easy to——"

"Say," interrupted Cogswell suddenly, "I got a wild idea!" He gave some hurried directions to Detective Brophy. Then to Melline: "It's possible he had no car but will travel in a public conveyance. Say, if you want to come with me——"

"May I come, too?" asked Clark.

"Certainly." A minute later, Detective Cogswell, Mr. Melline, and Mr. Clark were headed in the direction of Borough Hall.

"The darn money smells!" As soon as he had arrived at that remarkable conclusion, Pug Safarty broke into a laugh. "It smells like flowers." He had been ridiculed simply because it is not customary for gentleman to use perfume. Good joke, that. Pug appreciated it, even if it was on himself.

And he had imagined he had something to be afraid of. He'd fix things up. No need to hurry; he could wait until morning. He couldn't smell anything himself, but he knew all about odors. Fight one odor with another; that was the idea. Camphor was supposed to smell; folks put it in their clothing to keep away the moths. Simple. He'd put the money into his coat pocket and then fill the pocket with camphor balls. The camphor would smell, but it wouldn't be a funny smell.

About an hour and a half after Safarty reached his room, there was a loud, insistent pounding on his door. Safarty put away the paper he was reading and called out guardedly: "Who's there?"

"A detective," came the prompt reply. "Open up. I want to speak to you."

"About what? I'm in bed. You'll have to wait." As Safarty spoke, he slipped to the door and yanked his cap off the knob. A moment later he was in his overcoat, tiptoeing toward the window. No chance to bluff now; he had identifiable jewelry in his room. "Be with you in a minute!" He threw

open his window and stepped on the fire escape.

But the game was up. A man in uniform was coming up the ladder. "You're covered," said the officer. "Stand right where you are. I want to go in directly behind you."

At headquarters they considered it one of the most remarkable cases in the history of the department. About two hours after the robbery the guilty man had been caught, and the detectives had not had even a description of the criminal to work on.

"It took a little time to find where the trail began," explained Detective Cogswell to his chief. "But after Officer Goeffe, stationed near Borough Hall, told us that a man reeking of violets had gone down into the subway, we never got off the trail. The station agent recalled him and remembered that he had bordered an uptown East Side train. We took an East Side train and got off at every station to make inquiries. The platform guard at fourteenth Street told us he had changed there for a local. The agent at Eighteenth Street had fresh memories of a perfumed man who had evidently been in an argument on a train. There is nothing at all strange in the fact that no one whom Safarty passed forgot him; in fact they will all remember him for a long time.

"At Eighteenth Street we had to do some thinking. We reasoned that a thug wouldn't be likely to live on Fourth or Fifth Avenue; and that, if he lived further west, he would have taken a West Side and not an East Side train. At any rate the East Side was the best first guess, so east we headed.

"And then we had a bit of luck. We met a private patrolman who told us

that the perfumed man had gone on past Irving Place toward Third Avenue. Even without the help of the policeman we'd have eventually found Safarty, because I had intended to concentrate the search in his neighborhood, since many of the cheaper hotels and rooming houses are there.

"On Third Avenue we began entering stores and public buildings. We didn't know, of course, that the robber had lost his sense of smell; we hardly dared hope he would try to pass some of the reeking money. But we thought that there was an excellent chance that some one who had passed the scented man would mention that fact to some shopkeeper. Every man who passed Safarty this evening certainly experienced a unique sensation and had something to talk about.

"Well, Mr. Wicker, the cigar-store man, still had some of the violet-scented money. He told us from whom he got it, and where Safarty lived. We smelled him as soon as we entered the hotel; every corner of the building was permeated with the scent. The owner knew that Safarty had brought the scent in with him and he was on the point of going up to Safarty's room and demanding an explanation, when we arrived.

"We'd undoubtedly have caught him sooner, had he attempted to leave town, for Detective Brophy had a general warning sent to all terminal men, telling them to be on the lookout for the violet man."

The chief smiled his satisfaction at the speedy solution of the case. "When Safarty is arraigned in the morning before a magistrate, I'll wager his honor will give you a queer look, when you pass him the stolen money and ask him to please smell the evidence!"



# The Scientific Detective at Work

No. IV.

*By* Norman G. Meade

**L**OGICAL reasoning and a capacity for drawing accurate deductions are essential to the success of the scientific detective, for in many cases there is no available evidence to throw light on a crime; or, if there is any evidence, it is too elusive to point in any one direction. Under such conditions, possible motives for a crime necessarily have to set up a train of reasoning that will lead to some logical conclusion. This is well illustrated by a case in a large Middle Western city which required all of the skill of the investigator to clear up what seemed to be a hopelessly baffling mystery.

William Marsh was a prominent and wealthy attorney, an ex-county judge, and a man of high standing in the city. He was about fifty years of age, in robust health, an enthusiastic golf devotee. One evening in the summer of 1922 he was found dead in his bathroom, his body in the tub, with head and shoulders hanging over the side. There was no evidence of violence of any kind, but there was a slight burn on the inside of the left hand, which had the appearance of having been made by grasping a heated rod or a small pipe. A physician was summoned hastily and, after an examination, said that death had been caused by heart failure. This was a great surprise, as Marsh had apparently enjoyed the best of health.

His residence was located in an aristocratic section of the city, well out from the business center. It was a modern three-story brick dwelling, with spacious grounds surrounding it. The household consisted of William Marsh, a nephew of the deceased lawyer, a young man of about thirty; Dorothy Marsh, a daughter, twenty-one years old; Hawkins, the chauffeur; Mrs. Stokes, the housekeeper; a maid, and Barlow, the gardener. The chauffeur had quarters over the garage, and Barlow lived in another part of the city. The housekeeper and the maid lived in the Marsh home.

Young Marsh became a member of the household when his father died some fifteen years before, and he was regarded as one of the family. Marsh showed great affection for his nephew and looked upon him as a son rather than a more distant relative. William was a handsome fellow, tall, with dark-brown hair and eyes, square shoulders, and a military bearing. He had been an officer in the engineers during the war, and he was a consulting electrical engineer by profession. It was generally accepted that the nephew and the daughter would share equally in his large estate upon the death of the elder Marsh.

William was a wild fellow, frequenting the "white-way" resorts, and he was frequently in financial straits. His repeated demands for money from his

uncle had brought about strained relations between the two men, and William seemed resentful. Dorothy was a typical society girl. She was a tall, slender blonde, with large blue eyes. She possessed unusual good sense for a wealthy girl, and frequently talked to her cousin about his wild and extravagant habits. William would always listen to her with respect, kiss her, and promise to do better; but the promises he made were never fulfilled.

The family sleeping rooms were on the second floor, where there were two bathrooms, a private bath adjoining Miss Dorothy's room and a second bathroom opening from a hall, which was used by Marsh and his nephew. William had been wrapped up in science earlier in his life and had a complete laboratory fitted up in a room adjoining his sleeping room, where he used to study and experiment. At the time of his uncle's death, William was a radio enthusiast and had a large receiving set in his laboratory, where he would work at intervals in the evenings. There was an ordinary lath-and-plaster partition of the usual thickness separating this laboratory from the bathroom.

After the physician's examination of Marsh's body, a death certificate was issued, and funeral arrangements were made. Owing to the prominence of Marsh in the city, great quantities of flowers were received, and the family was overwhelmed with sympathy. One of Marsh's most intimate friends, for many years before his death, was District Attorney Stevens, who was not convinced that Marsh came to his death by natural causes. He therefore employed a scientific detective, who, with the permission of the family, had an autopsy performed upon the dead man's body.

As the autopsy progressed, it was watched with the keenest interest by the scientific detective, and he gave the burned place on Marsh's hand a critical examination under a powerful magnify-

ing glass. Upon opening the heart, at the detective's request, it was found to be empty of blood. As we all know, the heart is the engine which propels the blood. It is a hollow, pear-shaped muscle, about the size of the fist, and it hangs point downward, just to the left of the center of the chest. It is inclosed in a loose sack of serous membrane, called the pericardium, which secretes the lubricating fluid. The movement of the heart consists of an alternate contraction and expansion. The former is called the systole, and the latter the diastole. During the diastole the blood flows into the heart to be expelled by the systole. The alternation of these movements constitutes the beating of the heart, which we hear distinctly between the fifth and the sixth ribs. Now, to the keen mind of the scientific detective, the fact that the heart was devoid of blood indicated that it had stopped instantly in the fraction of a second that occurs between the contraction and the expansion of the heart. What did this indicate? Autopsies performed on the bodies of criminals who had been electrocuted showed the same phenomenon. That fact, coupled with the burn on the hand, indicated to the scientific detective that Marsh had been electrocuted.

One hundred and ten is the ordinary house voltage of the lighting system, and at one time it was thought to be harmless to human beings. Later investigations, however, have shown that it is many times fatal. For example, a man was inside of a boiler, cleaning it, and he held a portable electric lamp in his hand. The insulation in the lamp socket was defective, and the bottom of the boiler was wet, making an excellent ground contact. The workman was killed instantly. There have also been instances where a person, standing in a bathtub, has come into contact with a heater cord, which was bare in spots, and he had been electrocuted. A bathtub partially filled with water makes an

excellent ground. Further, under the rules of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, one side of all house circuits must be grounded permanently; so, if a person standing in a tub of water comes into contact with the opposite side of the circuit, the body is the connecting link between that side and the ground.

The scientific detective said nothing of his deductions, but made a thorough examination of the second floor of the house. In the bathroom the lighting fixture was in the ceiling, and a push-button switch controlled it. This switch was on the opposite side of the room from the tub and out of the reach of a person sitting or standing in the tub. It was hot weather, and of course there had been no use for an electric heater or other portable electric appliance. In fact, there had been no place to connect one, without climbing on a ladder to reach the ceiling fixture.

After getting this far in the case, the detective sat down to think. Right here let the reader start his train of thoughts and draw some deductions to see how near they check up with the later findings of the investigator. On the side wall above the tub there was an ordinary nickel-plated towel rack, placed at such a height that it would naturally be grasped to steady one's self when standing in the tub preparatory to stepping out of it. Every one knows that a tub is slippery, and, if not careful, a person is liable to get a nasty spill.

Next in order was the search for a motive for the murder of Marsh, if he was really murdered. The servants did not possess sufficient knowledge to plan so subtle a crime, and the daughter could be eliminated. The nephew was an electrical engineer by profession, and his laboratory adjoined the bathroom. It was learned that young Marsh had put up the towel rack the afternoon before the evening when his uncle's death occurred. He was known to be in finan-

cial difficulties, and he had had trouble with his uncle. He also knew that he would receive a large inheritance upon his uncle's death.

The detective loosened the screws through the flanges of the towel rack. Upon removing it there were no indications of any electrical connections, but the screws projected through the laths and plaster into the interior of the partition. The rack was replaced, as it had been found, and the detective made careful measurements to determine the spot in the laboratory opposite to the location of the towel rack. This he found to be the back of a case of scientific instruments. When the case was swung out from the wall, a hole, about an inch in diameter, through that side of the partition was disclosed. By throwing a light from a pocket flash into the hole, the points of the screws projecting through the partition from the opposite side, which secured one end of the towel rack in place, could be seen.

From the appearance of the wall about the hole it was apparent that a fixture has been removed at some time, and the hole was probably the outlet for wires connecting with the fixture. It would have been easily possible for one conversant with electricity to make connection with the house circuit on the side that was not grounded and touch one of the screws with the bared end of the wire by inserting it in the hole in the wall. The person standing in the tub would then make a connecting link of a circuit to the ground by means of the water and the waste pipe. The scheme was clever, and it looked as though young Marsh had used his knowledge of electricity to commit a murder that would defy detection.

But the keen eye of the scientific detective had seen something else. The wires that had evidently been connected to the old fixture had been shoved back into the wall, and the end of one of them was improperly insulated. It came

into contact with the end of one of the projecting screws. When the state of affairs was brought to the attention of young Marsh and the district attorney, it developed that several months previous to that time the young man had engaged an electrical contractor to make some changes in the lighting arrangements of the room, and the work was done in his absence. When he came home Marsh moved the furnishings of the room about, and that was the cause of the hole being covered.

The solution of the case was entirely deductive, as the scientific detective had no tangible evidence that Marsh had not come to his death from natural causes. But his training, coupled with his logical method of connecting up theories with facts, led to the almost certain conclusion that the dead man had been electrocuted. The next step of course was to determine if the death had been accidental, or was part of a diabolical plot to kill Marsh and secure his wealth. Under such circumstances it will be seen that the ordinary detective would have been entirely in the dark and would have been helpless, so far as solving the mystery was concerned.

Trick photography is another means of bringing false charges against a person, and, unless some one versed in such matters is employed, serious consequences may result. In a certain city there existed a bitter political war between the incumbents of the city hall and a faction supporting a reform ticket which would be put into the field at the coming election. The reform candidate for mayor was the most irritating thorn in the sides of the politicians, and an attempt was made to "frame him." From a number of photographs of the candidate one was selected, and a photograph of a pretty girl was cut out and pasted on the original in such a way that, by the aid of a clever artist, it was made to appear that the worthy candidate was about to kiss the young woman.

This piece of art was then photographed, and a reproduction was made in the newspaper friendly to the politicians. Appropriate reading matter accompanied the illustration. This, of course, created a furore, and a scientific detective was employed. He saw the trick at once and prepared a similar photograph, with the mayor in the picture with the girl, instead of the candidate. This was published, with caustic remarks on the mayor's fondness for his rival's girl, and then the article went on to explain how such trick photographs were made.

When a scientific detective is employed to run down graft in a city administration, he encounters a line of work that not only requires his technical knowledge, but considerable sleuthing as well. For example, in a Western city, the superintendent of the board of public works was suspected of grafting, but he had been clever enough to cover his tracks effectively. We will call this man Martson, as for obvious reasons it will be necessary to use fictitious names.

Just how far the graft permeated the city organization could only be conjectured, but Marston was considered the ringleader, as he was the political boss of the party in power. There was an organization in the city known as the Civic Reform League, composed of business men who had organized to expose corrupt conditions. Robert Hardgrave, president of a large electrical company, was also president of the league. In the past his company had tried unsuccessfully to sell the city electrical supplies, but all orders went to a rival company which handled inferior goods, and the supposition was that Marston and his henchmen received a "rake-off."

At Hardgrave's suggestion a scientific detective was employed. After a long consultation it was decided to have the detective act as a salesman for the electric company and work under that guise. He secured a room at a local family hotel, and, being a radio enthusi-

ast, he was provided with a radio set, having a loop antenna and all of the parts he wished to experiment with. These were placed in his room. After becoming conversant with the electric company's line and prices, as far as was necessary to keep up appearances, the detective called on Marston and endeavored to land an order. Marston informed him that the city liked his goods, that the prices were right, but he had been unable to do any business with his company for several reasons.

This remark was rather vague, but to the keen mind of the detective it was apparent that Marston was making an opening for an offer of graft. After a short visit the detective left, saying that he would call again. He threw himself in the way of the city-hall bunch and, being a good mixer, was well liked and soon got on a very friendly footing with Marston and other city officials. After a few calls on Marston the detective won the confidence of the board members.

One day Marston came out openly and stated that he wanted to give Hardgrave's company business and would, if that company did as other companies had done. Of course this conversation took place in Marston's office, without witnesses, and there was no chance of implicating him. It was thought that the board was getting worried about complaints regarding inferior supplies purchased by the city and wanted to change, but disliked losing the graft.

The detective thought time was opportune for a move, so he invited Marston to his room in the hotel, ostensibly to display the workings of his powerful radio set. He told Marston that if he would bring along a list of the material he needed, they might be able to talk business. The detective was provided with five thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills which had been carefully marked. That evening Marston

the radio for a time, turned to the subject of supplies. He felt assured that the detective was all right, and that no one could overhear the conversation. Marston produced a list of supplies needed and requested the detective to estimate the cost. This was done, and the sum reached nearly one hundred thousand dollars. Marston told the detective that he could have the order if he was willing to bill the goods to the city five thousand dollars in advance of the price quoted and pay him the difference in cash, as no checks would be accepted. After an affected hesitation, the detective agreed to the proposition, filled out the order blank which Marston signed, adding five thousand dollars to the selling price.

Then the detective produced the marked bills. After the money had pocketed by Marston, the two men sat and smoked for a short time. As Marston started to leave, two detectives from the district attorney's office came in and he was placed under arrest. Of course he stormed and threatened dire vengeance.

How was the trap sprung so neatly? Among the radio parts in the room was a microphone transmitter similar to those used in broadcasting stations. This was connected by wires through an amplifier to a loud speaker in a room on an upper floor. In that room Hardgrave, a stenographer, the district attorney, and two of the district attorney's detectives listened to the conversation between Marston and the detective. The two detectives in the room above took their cue from the conversation and went downstairs and arrested Marston, as he went out.

Poison cases are frequently referred to the scientific detective, and some of them are baffling in the extreme. The greater the knowledge of chemistry the detective possesses, the easier it will be for him to solve his problem. For example, let us refer to a case in western

New York which created much comment locally a few years ago.

Milton Sommers was a man of advanced years, living on his extensive farm, with his son Harry, a young man of twenty-two, who had recently been graduated from an agricultural college. Mrs. Sommers had been dead for a number of years, and a close companionship had developed between the lonely father and the motherless boy. The house was presided over by an elderly housekeeper, a Mrs. Hawkins, and the many farm hands lived with their families in a large tenant building not far away.

Edna Scott lived with her parents about a mile from the Sommers place. She was a poor girl possessed of rather startling beauty. She was a plump little blonde, with large blue eyes, a cupid's bow mouth, and a milk-white complexion. She was an untamed creature who wandered about in her bare feet during the warm weather, with her yellow curls hanging about her shoulders. Her bared throat and her arms were bronzed by the summer sun. Harry Sommers fell in love with the girl and married her.

He had not mentioned his love for Edna Scott to his father, as he knew that the old gentleman would oppose such a marriage strenuously, for he was proud of his lineage and considered the Scotts beneath him. He frequently referred to Edna as "the hell-cat," owing to her fiery temper, for he probably knew more about the girl's real character than did his son.

Harry, believing that his father would relent and forgive them, took the girl to the city, where they were married. However, Sommers was obdurate and would not listen to the appeals of his son. Hot words passed between them, and the young people were ordered from the house never to return. It was at this time that Harry first realized the fury of his wife's temper, and why his father

had called her a hell-cat. Although little more than a child, she possessed the attributes of a much older person. Her outburst of temper and her vituperations at the time the father ordered them from the house were startling.

Heartbroken at the turn of affairs, Harry rented a small farm not far from his father's place and struggled to maintain himself and his wife. Time wore on, and a little girl came to them. The child seemed to change the young mother, for she was more subdued and forgiving.

After a time Milton Sommers' health failed rapidly, as he was a grief-stricken and lonely old man. Finally, he became confined to his bed, and he sent for Harry and his family to come home; Harry to take charge of the farm, and Edna to supervise the domestic work.

Sommers grew very much worse, so that it became necessary to employ a professional nurse. Cora Ward, a handsome young woman, came from the city and soon evinced a strong affection for Harry, which was apparently reciprocated. For a time the advent of the nurse seemed to arouse all that had lain dormant in Edna Sommers. Although there was no open outbreak, she cast malevolent glances at the handsome young woman and demanded that her services be dispensed with at once or she would get even with the whole bunch.

It was the habit of the young wife to prepare the meals herself, leaving the menial work to the old housekeeper, whose feelings toward Edna Sommers since her marriage had been most bitter, and she also resented being placed in the background, after having run the house so long in her own way. Late one afternoon Edna went to the barn during milking time to get some fresh milk, little thinking that the simple act would result in a complicated murder case. She returned to the house and poured the milk into a frying pan on the stove, with

the intention of making some milk gravy; but for some reason she abandoned the idea and returned the milk to the pan and placed it in the pantry to cool.

During the evening Milton Sommers became feverish and complained of thirst. The nurse went to the pantry for milk and found the pan which had been placed there a while before. The milk was fed to the invalid, and, as the nurse poured the last of it from the pan, she paused and looked intently. There was a green sediment, which she concluded to be Paris green, so she took the pan into the living room, where young Sommers and his wife were sitting. She called their attention to the sediment and asked them if the green deposit did not look like Paris green. Harry said that it did, but his wife made no comment. The nurse suggested that the family physician be called, and upon his arrival he too said that the sediment was Paris green. A short time later Milton Sommers became much worse and died before morning, the doctor pronouncing the cause of death to have been arsenical poisoning.

Owing to the happenings earlier in the evening and the suspicious circumstances surrounding Sommers' death, the coroner was notified. After a preliminary examination, Doctor Stewart, an operating pathologist, was summoned and performed an autopsy. He removed the stomach and its contents, made an analysis and reported that he found a large quantity of arsenic present, which is one of the constituents of Paris green. The district attorney was acquainted with the facts, and a thorough search of the Sommers home and all of the buildings was begun.

The family and the employees were questioned in the hope of throwing some light upon the mystery, and it was a time of suspense for the principals, as the searching continued hour after hour. At last the patience of the searchers

was rewarded. Stowed away on a high shelf in a harness closet in the barn there was a pasteboard container of Paris green. It had been broken open, and some of the contents was missing, a portion of the powder having been spilled upon the floor. It was evident that the package had been handled hastily not long before. It was well after harvest time, and there had been no use for the poison in the treatment of vegetation since spring. Why had the package been disturbed recently? Undoubtedly to obtain some of the contents which was found in the pan of milk.

All of the farm hands professed ignorance of the presence of the poison in the barn, and none of them had access to the house. Motives for the crime were not hard to find, but whose motive was so overwhelming that it resulted in a murder? The box of Paris green was examined for finger prints, and several were easily distinguishable, owing to its dust-laden condition. They were photographed, and the finger prints of the entire household and those of the farm hands were taken and compared with the photographs of those found on the poison package. The finger prints on the box of poison were those of Harry Sommers, his wife, and the nurse. It was a baffling condition, as it was practically out of the question for the three persons to have entered into a conspiracy, considering the relationship that existed. No amount of questioning on the part of the district attorney elicited any information from the three persons suspected, as the finding of the prints was carefully withheld from them. An inquest was ordered, and all in the household were placed under surveillance.

Public sentiment was aroused, as Sommers had been a prominent and well-liked man. Speculation was rife, and many theories for the crime were advanced. The earlier trouble between

Harry and his father over his marriage, his ejection from the old home, his struggle and the bitterness displayed by his wife toward the old gentleman, the advent of the nurse and the apparent affair between her and young Sommers, had caused people to view the murder from many angles. There were several possible solutions which were advanced by the residents and the press.

It was claimed by some people that Harry Sommers had never forgiven his father, and that his struggle for a living had intensified his bitterness; that he had brooded over his wrongs so long that he had deliberately planned his father's death. It was the opinion of others that the nurse, knowing Milton Sommers was a wealthy man, had deliberately set out to capture the affections of Harry, make away with the old man, and then get rid of Harry's wife, so as to benefit by Harry's inheritance. Other people placed the blame upon Edna Sommers on account of her bitterness against her father-in-law. However all of the speculations were the merest guesswork, and on the day of the inquest the greatest crowd that had ever been in the county seat was present to hear the verdict. It was soon reached. The jury, after a short deliberation, rendered a verdict that Sommers came to his death by arsenical poisoning, and that Mrs. Sommers was responsible for her father-in-law's death. She was quickly indicted for first-degree murder and confined in the jail to await trial.

To add to the misery of Edna Sommers' position, she became a mother again, and she knew that the little one must bear the stigma of being born in a penal institution, born to a mother charged with murder. Public opinion was bitter against the accused woman, and it was said that the crime was figured out well in advance, that she had pined for luxuries which she knew that she could have if her husband came into possession of his father's estate.

The attorney for the defense employed a scientific detective to make an investigation, as he was firmly of the opinion that Mrs. Sommers was innocent. The technical features only interested the detective, and he saw at once that the prosecution was laboring under a misapprehension. He saw that something was radically and chemically wrong. If Paris green had been placed in the milk by any one, when the milk was heated and later cooled, a thick green scum would have accumulated on the surface, and it would have been impossible to have administered the liquid without somebody having seen it. Evidently there was something omitted or suppressed in preparing the case for the district attorney. He must make further investigations.

He went over the case in great detail with the attorney for the defense, and the two mapped out a line of cross-examination of the prosecution's experts. On the second day of the trial application was made to the court for an order for samples of the stomach contents in order to make a second analysis. The application was granted. The samples were bottled, sealed, and turned over to two eminent chemists in adjacent cities. Later these chemists made their report, and the trial proceeded. The defense opened the case by summoning the operating pathologist, Doctor Stewart, to the stand for cross-examination. The pathologist went into great detail, stating that he had found arsenic in the stomach of the deceased. He used many technical terms to embellish what he hoped to be a learned statement. The defense followed him with the testimony of the chemists. Each in turn told of making an analysis of the stomach contents, stating that he was unaware that the other was making an analysis. Both chemists stated that there was not the slightest trace of arsenic poisoning, and that in their opinion the deceased came to his death by natural causes. They

further stated that they had made an analysis of the test solutions used by the State's experts, which showed them to contain arsenic. The courtroom was crowded, and there had been an atmosphere decidedly antagonistic to the accused.

During the prosecution's presentation of the case, the spectators nodded their heads in approval and were greedily awaiting the verdict, which they felt sure would come—murder in the first degree, and the sentencing of the hell-cat to the death penalty. Therefore it can be imagined that there was an uproar in the courtroom when the chemists gave their findings, and there was an immediate change of sentiment. The case went to the jury at once, and a verdict of not guilty was returned in less than twenty minutes.

The solution of the mystery of how Paris green came to be in the pan will have to be left to conjecture, as it was not brought out at the trial and did not become a matter of court record. Until the scientific detective called it to their attention, no one had noticed that the Paris green had been dusted into the pan after the milk had been emptied from it. But by whom? The detective had pointed out how the pathologist had made a grievous mistake, and, needless to say, Doctor Stewart's services were

not in great demand after that time. The acid-test question asked by the scientific detective was: "Knowing that the Paris green was not mixed with the milk, but was dusted into the pan after the milk had been removed, who was it that had the opportunity to do that dusting and have the pan turn up in the nurse's hand, with the story she then told?"

It was understood that the nurse decided that it would be pleasanter in some remote part of the West. It is not altogether satisfactory to clear up one mystery, only to leave another, but, as this is a true story and not fiction, the ultimate solution of the problem will have to be left to the deductive minds of the readers. Harry Sommers and his wife were happily reunited and are now living on their estate.

There is a lesson to be drawn from this case. Circumstantial evidence is likely to condemn an innocent person. Had it not been for the deductions of the scientific detective and his intimate knowledge of chemistry, his rapid grasp of conditions and his quick action, an innocent woman would undoubtedly have paid the penalty for murder, a murder that was never committed, and the populace would have said that the hell-cat was simply living up to her name.



## TO FINGER PRINT HOLDERS OF GUN PERMITS

**N**O person in the State of New York is allowed to carry a gun without a police permit. Recently Police Commissioner Enright of New York City ordered that all applicants for licenses to possess or carry pistols must be fingerprinted at the precinct station where the application for the license is made. The fingerprints will be sent to the Criminal Identification Bureau, where it will be ascertained if the applicant has a criminal record. A copy of the applicant's thumb print will be on the license if it is granted.

Householders must apply to the commanding officer of the precinct in which they live. Storekeepers must apply for a license to the precinct in which their business is located. It is estimated that thirty thousand permits were issued last year.

# The Trail of Smoke

## & Herbert Twining

### CHAPTER XII.

#### THE RED-FEATHER FAN.

**R**AND did not find an opportunity to tell Crane what Mason had said regarding the light in Red Chimneys, until after the funeral; and then the detective had made little of the information, merely remarking briefly that he had known some one had beat it by that French window, and that Spuds had evidently seen the some one. Further than that he did not commit himself, but the idea was horrible to Rand. The thought of the guilty person or some other, creeping about that silent house, while he made his investigation, perhaps at his very heels, peering at him when he explored behind that screen in the study, where the logs burned, turned his blood to ice.

"I'm going to tackle this thing from another end," Crane said curtly, as they separated; "the Spuds end of it."

Rand, having sent up his sympathy and some roses to Julia Baird by the wisely smiling Marie, dreading yet longing for an interview with the woman he loved, wandered out to the garage. Here he got his roadster and motored into the village, leaving the car a block away and sauntering by a side street to the rear of the Spuds meat store, where the entrance to the stable that sheltered the old gray mare, was blocked by a rickety gate. Rand stood regarding the gate for some time, half amused at his desire to look over the horse and runabout that might tell the story Spuds would never tell now, if they but had the power.

It was after nine o'clock, and the moon was high in the heavens, shedding an unearthly radiance on the quiet street. Rand with a shrug laid his hand on the gate and opened it, stepping into the narrow alleyway, that was revealed to him, and closed the gate carefully. A figure loomed suddenly out of the shadows, and he found himself looking into the amazed eyes of Patrolman Boggs.

"Hello, doctor, so it's you!" said the officer, and Rand recalled that Boggs had almost accused him the night of the crime, when he had come upon him in Red Chimneys. "What can I do for you?"

"I have an insane desire to interview Spuds' gray mare," replied Rand with a twisted smile. "I dare say you think I've stolen in to tell her not to say anything that will incriminate me! I just wanted to see that horse and runabout, that's all."

"Well, I guess you can," said Boggs reluctantly, recalling the fame and social position of the young surgeon, whom he had suspected from the first of the killing of Baird. "What good will that do you?"

"I've no idea," replied Rand with a smile. "I simply have to be doing something, that's all. My interest in this thing, which you will admit comes mighty close to me, is reaching fever heat."

"Well, if you can get the old gray mare to talk, go to it," grinned Boggs. "As for the runabout—it's just an ordinary runabout, I guess."

His words gave Rand slight hope.

Evidently the slow local men had not examined closely that runabout! Would it tell him anything, give any clew to the secret Spuds had died for? But Crane—he had Crane to deal with, for the detective had told him distinctly that he was going to work the matter from the Spuds end.

“You’ve no objection to my looking it over then?” asked Rand courteously.

“Go to it,” said Boggs, with a curious glance. “Door is right ahead of you.”

Rand strolled on through the narrow alley, well aware that he was followed by the eyes of the patrolman and would presently be followed by his feet. He cared little for that, so that he might have a look at that runabout in which, insane idea that it was, he had the fear Spuds had driven Julia Baird from Red Chimneys after the crime! He had dismissed that idea once as ridiculous, but he could not rid himself of it.

The gray mare, gentle creature, took up but little of his time, and he was conscious that Boggs passed the door, as he was looking her over. He grinned, as he realized that he was most disconcerting to the patrolman, and that fear of his fame and position alone kept the man from ordering him out of there and accusing him more openly.

The runabout stood alone in the stable behind the stall of the mare, and Rand ran his head against a dangling electric bulb, even as he was feeling for his flash light. He reached up and turned on the light before he recalled the watchful Boggs, then he put out the light and used his flash and the moon.

The runabout was old and rather rickety, and Rand went over it thoroughly, guessing that it had not had much of an examination, for several straws and bits of paper clung to the cushioned seat, showing that Mr. Spuds was anything but a tidy gentleman regarding the vehicle that carried him to his lady love.

He waited until Boggs’ steps had passed the door again before he lifted the seat cushion and examined beneath it. There was nothing but accumulated dust, and he was about to replace the cushion, with a rush of relief, when his hand came in contact with something that had been thrust down between the side of the seat and the seat itself and was almost completely out of sight. Waiting until Boggs had again passed the door, and holding his flash light in his left hand, so that no eyes but his own would see what that strange something was that had been thrust so carefully out of sight, Rand worked the thing loose. Presently there lay in his hand, ere he snapped off his flash light and stood there in the darkness, a crushed and broken crimson feather fan, which even yet gave forth a faint exquisite fragrance, a fragrance he knew all too well!

Thrusting the fan in his pocket, Rand turned on his light and pretended to be further examining the runabout, as Boggs paused in the door.

“Hey, don’t you know there’s a light up over your head, doctor?” called the patrolman suspiciously.

Rand swiftly explored the hiding place of the fan, even as he answered, making sure there was no trace of it left in the runabout.

“Of course I didn’t know it,” he replied curtly. “But I’m through now, anyhow. I didn’t expect to find anything after you fellows had gone over things, but I have to do something.”

“Sure, that’s all right,” agreed Boggs ungraciously. “But there’s been nothing left undone. You’ll only get yourself all dirty, there in that old stable.”

“Thank you for permitting me to look about,” said Rand, as he passed Boggs, handing him a cigar. “Hope you come upon something soon. Good night.”

“Good night, sir,” said Boggs more respectfully, gazing at the five-dollar bill which was wrapped about the cigar.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## LINK BY LINK.

IN a daze of misery Rand returned to Somerset House. It was only too plain that Julia Baird had been brought home by Spuds, must have been. How else could that exquisite broken fan have got into the butcher's runabout? Some one had thrust it far down into the side of the old vehicle, obviously in the hope that it would defy detection until it could be removed. Spuds had done that, of course; for Julia herself must have forgotten it.

But Julia Baird riding in that runabout with Elmer Spuds—Julia Baird, the elegant, haughty mistress of Somerset House and Red Chimneys? It was harder than ever to imagine, even with the crimson evidence in his pocket.

But, granting all that, how then had Spuds been killed, and why? Granting even that Julia had shot her husband, which he could not believe; that she had stolen from Red Chimneys by that open French window, knowing, as she must have known, that she left her lover alone in the house with the dead; that she had run wildly across the lawn and had come upon Spuds in his runabout by the back gate and hysterically, without thinking, asked him to take her home—granting all that, Julia Baird had most certainly never cut the throat of Spuds, there at the spot where, possibly, she had got into his runabout and asked his protection and silence.

The butcher's silence did point to Julia; but why should his stubborn silence have cost his life? Not even to his fiancée, Miss Lucy Daly, had the man told the secret of that hour by the back gate of Red Chimneys.

If there had been that between them, and with the thought of her fan in her distracted mind, how could Julia Baird have sat so quietly during that inquest, especially when Spuds, the unreliable, was on the stand?

Link by link he seemed to be, against his will, connecting the woman he loved with the killing of Roger Baird. There was only one thing which comforted him. Who had brought those heavy logs into the study of the empty house and made that roaring fire? Never Julia. He clung to the idea of the fire, for even Crane had said that first morning that the answer to that question was most important.

Lucy Daly had said a shadow had followed Spuds when he left her the night he died. That shadow, too, could not be connected with Julia Baird. The more Rand thought the more he felt that he would go mad if he could not have a private interview with the young widow. The evening papers had said more about the dinner party at Somerset House the night of the crime than any public sheet had ventured to say yet, and Rand felt desperately that it was only a matter of time before opinions would swing more strongly toward the guilt of himself or Julia.

But why, with such damning evidence left in the runabout of the man who had been killed at the back entrance to the house of tragedy, did not Julia make an effort to recover that evidence? To get back her fan? The crimson feathers might as well have been a trail of blood, so persistently did they keep leading to her. Then Rand remembered that she had had little opportunity to get the fan, and that, involved as she was, and as Jenkins and Marie knew she was, she dared not move.

Alone in his room, doors and windows locked, Rand examined the crushed red feathers and ivory sticks before he dropped them upon his fire and watched them turn to ashes. The fan had been badly mutilated and crushed before ever it had been thrust deep into the side of that runabout seat, he decided that.

He could see where her slim fingers had cracked the delicate sticks and hopelessly torn the lovely sweeping plumes

that he had watched, as they swept lazily across her bare white breast at the head of her dinner table. Had the fan not been in her hands at the dinner, he would have known it by its perfume.

Not until it was no more, and he had even scattered the ashes, did Rand retire, and then not to sleep. He felt that they were both being whirled on and on to destruction. Would it come to the point where he would have to confess to a crime he was innocent of, to clear her name?

Rand had not a trained mind in the methods of detection, no matter how skillful a surgeon he was, and he could not see that autumn night, as he tossed on his bed, what a part that moth-eaten ramshackle old runabout of the defunct butcher was to play in the exciting events which had befallen him so unexpectedly.

The next morning, shortly after he had breakfasted with Waldon and Chalmers and seen Waldon depart for town on some cases for him, Julia Baird sent for Rand. He did not know whether he felt glad or sorry that the silence between them since that terrible night was to be broken. Eager for the interview, every nerve throbbing at the thought of again looking into her exquisite face, he shrank from it, knowing what he knew and fearing more.

Julia received Rand in her boudoir, a lovely little apartment of grays and pinks, where singing canaries dispelled the air of gloom which dwelt all over the rest of the great house. The young widow wore a straight little black gown, with a relieving touch of soft white at her firm throat and about her wrists. To the man who loved her she had never been fairer.

"Raymond," she said gravely, as he took the seat she indicated, the discreet Marie departing, "I felt that I must see you, no matter how unwise this may be. I fancy you read last night's papers?"

"Yes."

"They dared a great deal," her dusky

eyes flashed, "but I fancy we must expect it after the horrible thing Roger Baird did to us both the night he died. I have gone mad expecting it, and the tension has been dreadful. They will go on and on now and——" Rand started to speak, but she lifted her hand with a faint smile. "I did not send for you to go over that. We both knew that must come. I saw Mr. Grantly early this morning, very early in fact, for he arrived at six o'clock. Mr. Grantly is my husband's lawyer."

"Yes?" Rand watched her exquisite cold little face, with eager miserable eyes.

"Mr. Baird has left me only enough to exist upon, no more, only what he had to leave me as his wife. He has cut that down to the last possible cent. Somerset House is not mine. I could not live here, anyhow, in the style in which I would have to live.

"I am moving as soon as possible to Red Chimneys. That, when I married him, was made over solely to me, and he could not alter it. I wanted you to know."

"You would move to Red Chimneys!" Horror gripped Rand, and he could say no more for a moment.

"Yes. Why not? It is the home I have always known. I've had nothing but misery here. Red Chimneys has been closed to me ever since my marriage, because Roger Baird knew I sold myself for that and my mother. It was a bargain. I have paid, and so has he. He has left me Red Chimneys."

"But this is unthinkable!" cried Rand. "Aside from your going to live in that house, where two wretched crimes have been committed, such a will ought not to stand! Who then inherits Somerset House and the bulk of the Baird fortune?"

A slight smile touched the girl's disdainful mouth. "Mr. Baird's nephew, George Chalmers," she replied.

Chalmers! Chalmers, whom even,

Jenkins knew Baird never liked, and who had not been in his rooms at the time of the crime in Julia's girlhood home! How could this lovely little creature before him speak of going to live in a house where, if she had not killed her husband, she must have seen him killed? The delicate room whirled about the young surgeon's head. He knew not what to think.

"That is outrageous," he said at last. "Such a will can surely be broken."

Julia shook her head. "Mr. Grantly says not, and, besides, you misunderstand me. I would not break it if I could. My one desire is to get away from here. I would drop his name if it were possible. I wish to wipe him out, to blot Roger Baird from my life forever!"

Rand watched the slender little hands clench each other, and in them he seemed to see the broken feathers and ivory sticks of that cursed fan.

"But to live at Red Chimneys!" said Rand softly, his eyes upon her face. "You, Julia!"

A strange expression crept into the dusky eyes that met his, and the little hands grew lax and lay as though tired.

"You were in that house, too, that night," she whispered.

Too! Rand's heart sank. What was she about to tell him?

"Will you tell me your story, Julia, after I tell you mine?" he asked gently and lifted her hands and laid the pink palms against his lips. Even as he did so, his heart sank, for from those delicate little fingers there stole up the faint sweet fragrance that had clung about that crushed feather fan!

"We must stand firmly together, dear, before anything that may happen."

Julia looked at him with a growing horror in her eyes, and against his lips her palms grew cold.

"I knew you were there," she whispered, bending above his bowed head, "Oh, Raymond, that knowledge has tortured me!"

"I must hear your story, Julia," he said quietly. "I am in torment until I do."

As he spoke, Marie knocked discreetly at the door.

"Mr. Crane wishes to see Doctor Rand at once, if it is possible," she said, and Julia thrust him from her.

"Go to that man, Raymond," she said eagerly; "I do not wish him to know we have talked together."

"But your story, Julia? I must have it," he still held her hand.

"Later—some other time." She nodded toward the door. "Please go. I am afraid of that Crane man."

Afraid of Crane! And she had admitted that she had been at Red Chimneys! Yet she could go back and live in the horrible place! Rand went out in a daze of miserable apprehension, not a question answered.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE RUNABOUT.

CRANE was waiting for Rand in the summer parlor, where he had waited that first morning after the crime. The detective wore the same tweed suit and was strolling about gazing at the hanging baskets, when Rand entered. He swung around with a grin.

"See you're staying with the game, doctor," he greeted. "I just came up to talk things over a bit. I've unearthed two rather interesting facts. One is that Spuds was head over ears in debt everywhere. I reckon that's why he didn't marry that faithful little lady of his. Kept her dangling, so to speak."

"I don't see what that has to do with the case," frowned Rand.

"You don't? It has this to do with it. If Spuds was so much in debt he would be liable to do anything for money, even tell the secret of that night of the crime. Do you get me?"

"You mean that the criminal was afraid he could be bought to talk?"

"You have grasped it," grinned Crane. "I mean exactly that. The criminal, knowing Spuds' financial state, could not trust his silence. After the inquest the guilty party got cold feet regarding our butcher friend. And he made short work of him."

"I see. Yes, I can see that," mused Rand. "Have you any idea about this criminal, Crane?"

"Not much. But we've got you and Finley and Mason and Chalmers to work on. We've got plenty of clues, but none of them works."

"I'll thank you not to joke about Doctor Finley and myself," flashed Rand haughtily.

"Joke! I'll say not! Finley took the victim to Red Chimneys alone and let him in. We've got only his word that the affair ended there. I been trying to look up something about Finley, but I haven't had much chance. Then Mason, who had an eye on the house, walks in and finds you alone there with the murdered man, who had just placed you in the devil of a position! Man, you are getting off lucky if you don't get deeper into this, innocent or guilty."

"I see your point," said Rand calmly. "But I advise you not to make too much of it, if you value what fame you have up to this acquired. I hated Baird and had the utmost contempt for him, but I certainly did not kill him. As for Doctor Finley—the idea is too absurd."

"How about Chalmers? Know he has inherited this house and most of his uncle's money?" asked Crane. "He is a gay bird, too, and has a lot of lassies, so I hear. Pretty soft, eh?"

"That is outrageous," said Rand, not caring to let Crane know he was aware of the will. "I should think that could be broken and a decent settlement made upon the widow."

"Oh, she'll get her share; old Baird couldn't help that, I reckon. He didn't have anything on her, even though he did try to make out he had that last

night at dinner. But it's a rotten deal, and I guess he deserved to die. That, however, is not all about Chalmers."

"What is there beside that and the fact that he was not in his rooms the night of the crime?"

"There's this," said Crane. "He was down this morning trying his best to buy that old runabout of Elmer Spuds—yes, sir, buy the thing, and he offered as high as five hundred dollars for it, if he could get it! Why, that thing's own sister to the one-hoss shay!"

Rand was conscious of a vast bewilderment. Of all people in the world, Chalmers, whom Crane himself had cleared from having any hand in Spuds' death, was interested intensely in that runabout, where he himself had by pure luck found the broken feather fan! Had Chalmers known about that fan, and did he wish to hold it over Julia, possibly with the idea of forcing her to marry him? That was all wild guess work on Rand's part, for he knew nothing about the relationship of the nephew and his uncle's young wife.

"What would any one want with that runabout?" he asked.

"What did you want with it?" grinned Crane.

"What do you mean?"

"After you had gone over it pretty thoroughly, these idiots about here, informed by Boggs who had not dared forbid you, shut up the thing and refused to let anybody near it. I been over it, myself, since, and I can't for the life of me see where its great value comes in. Mind telling me what you found?"

"Found? Nothing, of course. I simply went down there out of idle curiosity. Great Scott, a man cannot even take a walk about here without attracting attention to himself and becoming a suspect!"

"Well, you took one pretty thrilling ride," said Crane dryly. "And Chalmers got out his window to take one, too, or a walk, as you say; and when people

do such queer things, and a fastidious young society man like you, doctor, goes poking about in smelly stables, looking in musty old worn-out runabouts, naturally I get interested."

"Have you any idea that Chalmers has valuable knowledge of this affair?" asked Rand impatiently.

"I leave it to you. Take Jenkins' testimony; take his trotting out to Miss Daly to find out what Spuds knew; take the fact that he inherits this place and most of the old gent's cash; and then take his crazy bidding for that runabout of Spuds, and, especially, the last incident in view of the fact that he is always notoriously hard up! Five hundred dollars for a runabout that has been the joke of the village for years, and that would fall to bits, if a horse got out of a walk!"

"I cannot understand it," frowned Rand.

"Neither can I, and I tell you right now that I don't like the guy," said Crane bluntly.

"Who is selling the runabout?" asked Rand.

"Some chap Spuds owed money to. He claimed a lot of his stuff, and, since we've gone over that runabout pretty well, we haven't any use for it. Guess Chalmers would have bought it all right, but the fellow who has it got greedy when he heard the price offered and set it higher. Chalmers went off in a huff."

"I suppose you're investigating these people Spuds owed?"

"Sure. But what's the use? No man is going to kill another man who owes him a lot of cash, especially when he's got nothing to leave worth mentioning. And none of these people could have any connection with Baird."

As Rand looked at the detective, he recalled the back of that old farm journal which he had taken from the study at Red Chimneys, the paper that was punched full of holes. Should he take

it from his pocketbook and give it to Crane? What would the trained mind make of that? Impatient at having been interrupted just at the moment when Julia would have spoken, he decided not to take the detective into his confidence. Until he knew the story of that night, as the woman he loved knew it, he would not give up any clues that might in some strange fashion lead to her.

As he strolled out of the summer parlor with Crane, Rand stopped at the door of the little room where Roger Baird had spent much of his time reading and writing and dictating to Chalmers, who did a great deal of his work for him. It was a small room and had one long window which opened on the lawn outside.

"I suppose you've gone over all Mr. Baird's effects, Mr. Crane?" asked Rand and stepped inside, glancing about with interest, for he had seldom been allowed access to that small private room. "I hoped you would come upon something that would give a clew to the person Baird went to Red Chimneys to meet, the man who built that fire. There must have been an appointment."

"Oh, yes, I've gone all over that," said Crane wearily.

"There is positively no clew to anything. All Baird's affairs were in the kind of order that shows a diabolically clever mind."

As he spoke, Rand's eyes traveled downward to the smooth top of the mahogany desk, beside which he had unconsciously paused. Upon its surface, close to his hand, were groups of tiny white punctures, startlingly like those small perforations in the back of that old farm journal he had taken from the study at Red Chimneys!

Had the man who had sat with Baird beside that fire in the closed house, absently punching holes in the magazine top, been at one time there in his private study, at his old habit while he talked?

The thing might be far-fetched, but still the punctures looked very new in a house where not a scratch was permitted to remain upon the magnificent old furniture. It was just a chance, but Rand resolved to take it, once he got rid of Crane.

"Since you won't tell me what you found in the runabout, I fancy I must amble on," said Crane with a shrug. "Of course I know you're holding out on me, doctor, but what for, I don't see clearly yet, for, much as the evidence is against you, I don't think myself you killed Baird."

"That's good of you," said Rand with a slight smile. "I suppose I must be grateful for that. But I am going with you, if your way is toward the village. I want to see for myself what has become of that famous runabout. I'm sorry if my curiosity led you to suspect me further, for my position is quite unpleasant enough, and I am afraid I cannot stay around here much longer. My assistant has done well so far, but he can only go so far."

"If I were you I'd stay," said Crane significantly.

As the two men motored toward the village, each busy with his own thoughts, Rand wondered more and more what Chalmers could want with the runabout. Five hundred dollars! So far as he could tell, the thing had not been worth ten. And those strange little punctures. He had read somewhere how a famous criminal had been traced and captured by just some little fool habit like that. He made up his mind to question Jenkins, when he returned, as to the callers Baird had had preceding the crime. If Jenkins could not help, possibly Waldon, in whose care the sick man had been left, might be able to.

Chalmers and his open window, his dark rooms the night of the crime, his inheriting that vast fortune, and this ridiculous bid for the old runabout!

A chain quite outside the one which

involved Julia Baird. But was it? Did the links intertwine?

The man who had taken possession of Spuds' mare and runabout was found at last at his place of business, behind the hotel bar, where he served soft drinks. He was a stout person whom not even the strange romantic killing of Roger Baird had roused in any way.

"That there runabout?" he asked, as Crane and Rand leaned on his bar and ordered root beer. "I reckon I'll never sell her now. I made an awful mistake about that broken-down old wagon of Spuds, gentlemen. I refused five hundred dollars for it, thinking I would hold out for more, if that there thing was worth so much to folks; but, gosh, after I looked her over and called up the party that offered me all that cash, and said I'd take it, he was so mad he told me where to go. Said he was through. Yes, sir, unless he changes his mind, I lost out on a lot of money there."

"So you still have the runabout?" asked Crane, while Rand's heart seemed to pause and wait for the answer.

"Yep. But I'll let her go for anything now."

"I'll take another look at it," said Crane. "Might find something interesting. Care to come along, doctor?"

As Rand met the detective's eyes, he knew that Crane knew that he and no other had drained the old runabout dry of whatever valuable evidence it might have contained.

"No, thanks," he replied curtly, "I'll be getting on out home. I have a lot of work waiting for me."

## CHAPTER XV.

### SPUDS' MURDERER?

ON the way back to Somerset House Rand felt that he was in more of a daze than ever, and that, if some of the muddle was not cleared up in short order, he would be permanently unfitted for the work which had brought him

fame. There was now one more question added to his list. They ran now in something like this order:

Who had carried those logs into Red Chimneys and built that roaring fire before Roger Baird got there? What arrangement had Roger Baird made to get home from Red Chimneys, and why had he gone? Who had carried the flash Mason had seen and escaped by that open French door? What had Spuds seen? How had Julia Baird's red feather fan gotten into the runabout of the dead butcher? Who had killed Spuds? What had Chalmers wanted with that broken-down runabout? Why had he changed his mind about buying it?

Not one of those questions had been answered, though the local men had been working hard day and night, and Crane, one of headquarters' best, had been on the job from the first. Rand felt that one at least should be answered. There were many more, but those were paramount.

Jenkins was in the pantry solemnly polishing silver when Rand sought him out, and once more the young surgeon felt that the path he had suddenly seen before him was blocked.

"There was nobody to see Mr. Baird for some weeks before that dinner party, Doctor Rand," Jenkins said positively.

"Nobody but Mr. Chalmers was in that room with him. I would have known, because I haven't been off duty at all, sir, and I wouldn't have dared let anybody go in that room. I had strict orders about that. You know how it was. And there was nobody in the house but yourself and Mr. Waldon. No, sir, I am sure about that."

As he turned disconsolately from the butler, a sudden thought struck Rand. Chalmers had had free access to that private room! Chalmers! Yet again, if punching holes in whatever chanced to be near him, as he talked, was a habit of his, surely that desk in the den would have been filled with those little punc-

tures by that time! No amount of polishing could completely cover them up. Rand felt that, after all, he had better show the back of that old farm journal to Crane and let him make what he could of it. It might mean nothing.

Strolling into the study again he took the paper from his pocketbook and compared it with the tiny white marks on the smooth mahogany. They seemed identical. Under a lens he had looked at the punctures in the paper and decided that they had been made by the end of some small instrument that was not round. A pen knife would have made the same mark. But how trace a man by a thing like that? Rand shrugged. As he left the study, however, he felt positive that the criminal had sat there not so long since with Baird, and that, if the criminal had not been Chalmers, who inherited the great fortune of the dead man, he or she had come in by the French door from the lawn, and Jenkins had known nothing about it.

Passing up the stairs to the room he had used as a study ever since he had taken on the case of Roger Baird, the thought of Julia thrust itself suddenly into his mind. Julia Baird had had access to the private room at all times! He recalled her little quick, nervous motions, the restlessness of her slim white hands, always playing with something, if nothing else, then the rope of pink pearls she wore about her throat. Could Julia—

The thought was torture.

Also came the realization that he could no longer leave his immense practice to Waldon. He could not idle away any more days at beautiful Somerset House, trying to find a solution to the dark tragedy which might at any moment engulf himself and the woman he loved. He determined to ask for another interview and win from her the story he had seen trembling upon her lips that morning when Crane had interrupted them.

He walked up and down his study

floor, not touching the luncheon tray Jenkins brought to him, after he had sent his request to Julia Baird. In his mind persisted two thoughts that comforted him. Julia had never made that fire at Red Chimneys on the night of the crime, nor could she speak so calmly of going back there to live, if she had, in a moment of desperation, driven insane by his taunts, shot her husband.

A tap on his door interrupted his pacing back and forth, and he opened it to stand gazing in astonishment at Lieutenant Waring.

"Thought you were in here, doctor," said that official with a wide grin. "We've just arrested the man who killed Spuds. I thought you'd want to know."

"You've *what*?"

"Yep. Great work, I say. He ain't confessed, but he's the stubborn kind. There ain't a doubt about it. He was seen right at the spot, beating it away."

"But who is he?" Rand, with his own firm opinions upon the subject of Spuds' murderer, was skeptical.

"His name is Ed Myers, and he has hated Spuds like a rattler all his life, been sworn enemy of his. Went to school together and all that kind of thing. Lives right over in the village."

"But what was his motive for such a horrible thing?" Rand recalled the shadow Miss Daly had seen creeping after her lover down the road.

"He had plenty," the constable grinned. "They were forever fighting, and Spuds worsted him at everything that went on. Besides being in love with the Daly woman, who was engaged to Spuds, he had said many a time he would kill him. We found the razor he done the trick with, fresh cleaned, stuck in his bathroom closet, but there was plenty of towels showing where he had rubbed the blood."

"What had he to say about that?" asked Rand, not at all convinced.

"Oh, he said he cut himself, of course, and wiped it on the towel. What any

man would say. But we got two witnesses who saw him running away from the direction of that back gate at Red Chimneys before I near rode onto the body."

"There seems to be a great many people about lately in that vicinity," said Rand dryly.

"I'll say so," grinned the constable, who seemed highly pleased with himself. "Everybody and their aunt goes past there now to stare at the place."

"Well, I hope you're right," said Rand. "Do you suppose this Myers chap could have had a hand in the Baird affair?"

"Never," said the constable with a shake of his head. "That there killing of Spuds was just a happen at this time. He was a mean cuss and had lots of enemies. That Myers man never had a thing to do with the Bairds or their two houses. I bet he never was inside Red Chimneys, even when it was just an old farm. My idea is that Spuds had gone there to look at the place that Crane man had roped off, all tramped up with his own horse's feet like it was, and maybe he thought he'd rub it out some, and along come Myers, and they met. Nothing to it. We'll get his confession before another day."

Rand shook his head with a keen sense of disappointment.

"Afraid you're wrong, Waring, but I hope not," he said. "What does Crane say?"

"Ain't told him yet," said Waring, as he backed away.

"I know how interested you are because a slight turn in this here investigation might point it all straight at you, you being alone in that house and hating Baird after that dinner-party scene. I come up to tell you, but I don't care whether Crane knows it or not, for he sticks up his back at everything we do down here."

"I beg pardon, sir," said Jenkins' discreet voice at the door. "Mrs. Baird

says she has a bad headache and cannot see you now. In the morning, if you will, sir——”

“I’ll be getting on,” said Waring taking up his cap. “Is this thing true about Mrs. Baird being cut out of most of the cash and Somerset House along with it?”

“I don’t know,” said Rand carelessly, disappointment overwhelming him. She would not see him! What could have changed her mind so quickly?

“Well, we ain’t no nearer the solution of the Baird affair,” said Waring, as he departed, “but I’m glad one thing is cleared up anyhow.”

After the officer left him, Rand, filled with the great disappointment—Julia’s refusal to see him again—had brought, turned to his desk and his telephone and tried to work, but it was impossible. Through and through his mind shot the tormenting questions that shown in the high lights of the strange case. He felt that if Crane was doing something, he must be acting himself.

What, to begin with, turning from the mysterious and torturing connection of Julia with the crime, had the nephew Chalmers to do with it? Something, that was only too evident, and Rand found himself very willing to believe in the young man’s guilt. Chalmers knew he was suspected. Why not lay the cards on the table and simply ask Chalmers what he knew? He might let slip some word that betrayed him, or he might punch holes in whatever was near him, as he talked! Rand smiled, as he recalled his puzzle about the top of that old farm journal, but through the grotesqueness of the idea, there still persisted the possibility that it might be a valuable clew.

George Chalmers was going over some papers in that private room of the dead man’s, when Rand sought the interview, and he glanced up, apparently not much pleased, though the surgeon paid small attention to that.

“I’ve come in for a frank talk with you, Chalmers,” he said quietly, drawing up a chair where he could see every motion of the other man. “I think it’s time we all came out from cover. The public is demanding some action in this case, and the authorities are bound to give it to them. We don’t want them jumping in the wrong direction.”

“What are you coming to me for?” asked Chalmers curiously.

“Because, with me, you are a suspect,” replied Rand. “I have told my story, but no one as yet has had yours.”

“You think I possess one?” sneered Chalmers.

“I know you do, and so does Crane. Crane is no fool. Don’t think it. He takes no one into his confidence, and he’s out to add another feather to his cap. It doesn’t help you, under the circumstances, to inherit Somerset House and your uncle’s fortune, for you were not in your room at the time of the tragedy, and you cannot produce an alibi. I know why. You were at Red Chimneys.”

Chalmers flushed furiously.

“How can you prove such an assertion as that?” he snapped.

“Because I was there myself,” replied Rand quietly. “You know that. The world knows that. At any moment I may be accused of this murder, if the authorities grow desperate. I have escaped so far, because I told a frank story, and you have not.”

Chalmers’ eyes narrowed.

“Did you see me at Red Chimneys?” he asked.

Rand hesitated. Something warned him to go slowly, and suddenly, out of nowhere, came the disturbing conviction that Chalmers was innocent of the crime!

“No,” he replied. “But I am positive you were there, and I’ve come to get a frank statement from you. If you are interested in clearing this matter up, we should work together.”

"Do you know why I have been silent regarding that night?" asked Chalmers.

"I have no idea."

"Because I followed a woman, the woman I have loved, and I have shielded her to the best of my ability."

The color drained from Rand's handsome face.

"You mean——" He got no further. His worst fears were realized. Julia was in this man's power!

"I'll tell you what little I know, if you wish," said Chalmers, with curious calm, and Rand noted that his hands were quiet. "You love her, too, and so I am not afraid to trust the thing with you, doctor. I am not such a fool as that."

"Go on," said Rand tensely.

"Julia has a little car of her own, which she bought entirely without Baird's knowledge," began Chalmers evenly. "She keeps it in a shed at the edge of the estate, where Baird himself could never nose about. I doubt if any of the chauffeurs knew of it, for she trusted no one here. In that car she used to get away by herself when Uncle Roger thought her resting in her rooms. I am sure she visited Red Chimneys often and spent hours in the old home he had denied her. I do know she had had a key made to the front door."

Rand's heart was sinking. What was he to hear next? The manner in which Julia had got to her old home the night of the tragedy was only too simple and clear. But it hurt him that she had never confided in him regarding the miserable little subterfuges she had had to invent to grasp at a few moments of freedom and happiness.

"That night of the dinner party I thought she would go to Red Chimneys to meet you," said Chalmers deliberately. "I admit that. I thought you were aware of the car and the key and the whole secret. So I watched her, and I never knew when Finley took my uncle from the house. My suspicions were confirmed when I saw Julia creeping

through the halls with her fur cloak, and, not wishing to be connected with anything that might follow, I went to my room and locked the door. I took my coat, went out the window, and beat it straight to that shed where Julia keeps her car. She had never confided in me, but I came upon it once by accident, and the rest she told me in a kind of defiance. Her car was gone; so I went back and got my own, which had not been put into the garage that night, and I drove straight to Red Chimneys, just on a guess, but feeling pretty mad, for I thought she had gone to meet you. Any woman would have after that scene at the dinner table."

"But why didn't Crane find out about your car?" asked Rand.

"Believe me, he did," said Chalmers dryly. "He thinks he is building up a case about me, but he won't get a thing on me, for I never went into Red Chimneys that night. I never got any further with my machine than that gateway."

"What!"

"I saw no sign of life when I arrived, save the smoke coming from that chimney you made so much about. I ran my car into the bushes and turned off the lights. Then I saw Spuds."

"Spuds!"

"Yes. It was some minutes after eleven, and I guess I must have missed by quite a little while the arrival of Baird and Finley, for everything was quiet, and I didn't see a sign either of Julia's car. But I fancied she was in that house with you, and I was mighty mad."

"But Spuds?" Rand felt more and more bewildered. Were they nearing the solution, or only getting into more difficulties?

"Well, Spuds was sitting there in his runabout in the moonlight at the place where Crane found the marks of his horse's feet. He was staring at the house, and I drew the conclusion that

he had seen Julia, though so far I had no reason to believe she was there. I still think he had. I watched him a while, and then I left my machine and stole around the house, for the chimney out of which that smoke was coming was on the other side, you'll remember."

Rand nodded. He would never forget the location of that little study, or the wide drawing-room, with that open, swaying French door!

"The shades were down when I got there, and I saw a dim flickering kind of light through the cracks. I suppose that was the big fire on the hearth, though to think of that thing happening in there in that uncanny light makes my flesh creep! I didn't hear a sound, and I stood there quite a time. I walked to other windows and found everything as dark as could be, but I didn't try a door. I had an idea that it behooved me to be careful how I entered that place, though I had gone there with the full intention of confronting you both together, on the eve of the day you were to operate on Baird. I was on the other side of the house when I saw your car swing in the drive, and my suspicions were confirmed. You had come to see Julia, and that cursed butcher, spying there in the moonlight, had seen the aristocratic Mrs. Baird arrive at the trysting place! From the side of the house, in the shadow, I saw you go in. Then I was uncertain what to do. For I had heard the shot that had startled you, as you opened that front door!"

"But up to this you had seen no trace of Mrs. Baird?" said Rand, his nerves throbbing with interest.

"No, not up to that point. I knew Spuds had. I do not know how long I stood there, shaking with apprehension, sure that Julia had come to her old home to end her life."

"But if you saw me when that shot rang out, you can clear me," said Rand, with a sudden lightening of the weight that had pressed upon him ever since

he had first glimpsed the famous trail of smoke. "You can prove that I did not fire the gun that killed Baird."

"I know you did not," replied Chalmers evenly. "I was looking at you when I heard it. I am prepared to clear you, doctor, if the need arises, but I did not wish to do so at the expense of Mrs. Baird, when they seemed unable to find anything that pointed to your guilt—anything save your presence in the house, that is."

"I am grateful to you for that, Chalmers," said Rand with a long breath. "I have misjudged you."

"I'm not quite that type," said the other man curtly. "To resume, then. I left you with whatever you might find inside there and went back to my car, giving Spuds, who still sat in the moonlight, no hint of my presence. The side of the house and part of the back which we could see, was in full moonlight, and, as I stood there, hesitating, miserable and chilled with uncanny horror, wondering what you had come upon inside that wretched place, I saw Spuds get out of the runabout and start to creep toward the house. He was low enough to spy and then levy on either Julia or you—blackmail, you know, and I could not stand the thought of that. So I followed him, determined to choke the fellow, or beat him up before he should enter that house.

"Some time had elapsed since you had entered, and as yet no sign of life other than that smoke was apparent in the place. Spuds and I both paused when near the house, and the man seemed uncertain what to do. I watched him. In the face of his silence since, before his own death, I do not know what his object was. I lost track of time, and all I know is that, while we both stood there, slinking in the shadows, some distance apart, I saw a flash light moving uncertainly about near the long drawing-room windows, a brilliant light, like a will-o'-the-wisp. While I gazed, my

heart in my mouth, Julia Baird crept out that French door and, not waiting to close it behind her, sped across the lawn, straight toward Spuds' hiding place! You can imagine my feelings."

Rand leaned back, every tense nerve relaxed. He had heard the worst. Who, knowing the story of their love and that wretched dinner party, would believe in her innocence now?

"Go on," he said simply.

"I saw Spuds come out and speak to her; I saw her start and throw out her little hands and say something to him. Then she vanished toward her car, I knew, and Spuds stood there, gazing after her, while I was too bewildered to move for a moment. If Julia was alive then, who had fired the shot inside Red Chimneys, and what for? What had you, who were still in the dark empty house, found there, and what had Julia fled from? Believe me, I was in a daze. I was still in it when I saw that cursed Spuds across the lawn in the moonlight, stoop and pick up something, and beat it quickly to his runabout. I also heard the voices and saw the lights coming across the fields, so I crept back to my car, deciding that the least the world knew about my presence at Red Chimneys that night, no matter what had happened there, the better. I had no idea at the time that Roger Baird was in that house.

"I forgot the thing Spuds had picked up and which I saw him thrust deep into the side of that old runabout, until after you men came to Somerset House with the news of the crime at Red Chimneys. That is my story, Doctor Rand."

Rand sat staring at the floor. Spuds had told Miss Daly that he knew who had killed Roger Baird. And Spuds had never entered the house. Julia was in the house even up to the time when he had moved that screen in the study and discovered the body!

"According to that, then, who killed Spuds?" he asked.

Chalmers smiled grimly. "They say they have the man."

"Rot. Neither of us believe that. So you tried to buy that runabout?"

"Yes. I failed in my attempt to get at it, so I did my best to buy the thing, fearing that Spuds had forgotten to remove whatever he had thrust deep in its side."

"Then you withdrew your offer, the bartender tells us."

"Yes. I heard since that you had got ahead of everyone and, to the vast indignation of Boggs, had inspected the runabout, yourself."

Rand smiled slightly. "I'll be frank with you, Chalmers, for you've been frank with me. I took Julia's red-feather fan from that runabout that night."

"Heavens!" Chalmers sank back in amazement. "What did you do with it?"

"I burned it."

"Both of us working with the same object!" said Chalmers, with a long breath. "Let me say here, doctor, that I have no intention of accepting the whole of the fortune my uncle has sarcastically left me. I know him, and why he did it. He wished to shame me and hurt her. But I'll worst him even now."

"Mrs. Baird is content with things as they are," said Rand quietly. "And she is moving to Red Chimneys as soon as possible. She told me so."

"Red Chimneys! Man, that is out of the question! How can she?" cried Chalmers, stark horror in his face.

"Chalmers," said Rand, his hand on the door, "your love for her is a poor thing beside mine. I have feared only that others might think her guilty of this wretched thing, while you have believed her guilty!"

The rest of that day Rand devoted to his work and to talking with Waldon over the telephone. It was apparent to him, as the hours dragged on, that he could not neglect his cases any longer.

But to leave the woman he loved in the net that was tightening ever more and more certainly about her? Every path he trod, with new hope in his heart, only led to Julia. And she had refused to see him until the next day!

With Finley called back to town, and Waldon away, with no one about but Chalmers, of whom he wished to see as little as possible, the hours, though packed with work, as they were, dragged unbearably to the young surgeon. He knew nothing of Crane's activities, and he had no desire to see the man they had arrested for the murder of Spuds. But he had a strange reluctance to run away, even for a day; he was possessed of a tormenting fear for what each hour might bring.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### JULIA BAIRD'S STORY.

**D**EEP in his correspondence and his papers, Rand requested Jenkins to bring his dinner tray to his study, but after the excellent meal he found that he could not get back to work. Memories of that horrible night, when he had motored past Red Chimneys, tormented him, and he felt a devouring impatience when he realized how the authorities were all dealing with the case. Surely, if not there at Somerset House, as at first he had feared, there were clues to follow; there might be a few at Red Chimneys—a few that had been overlooked! How did he know what Crane was capable of, even with his reputation behind him? Had the man ever had so puzzling a case as this?

One thought tortured him, even though he believed firmly in her innocence. If Julia had been in the house at the time of the crime, as she surely must have been, why had she not spoken? Why had she not given her evidence against the criminal?

She had even said that night, when she had come to the library to see the of-

ficer, that she cared not whether the murderer was found or not! What had she said to Spuds on the lawn in the moonlight? Spuds must have been convinced of her guilt. Had he kept quiet for the sake of blackmail? He would have been capable of that. But why then had he died so horribly on the very spot where he had stopped to spy?

By ten o'clock these things so preyed upon the mind of the wretched young surgeon that he got his coat and hat, took his car from the garage, and set out boldly and without any definite purpose for Red Chimneys. What he would do there, he had no idea, but he felt that he must be making some effort to come upon a clew that would lead, more surely than that old farm journal, to the mysterious murderer of Baird and Spuds. That the one crime was connected with the other by the closest kind of links he never for a moment doubted.

The guards had been taken from Julia Baird's old home, and the magnificent place loomed darkly under a moon that was growing fainter. It was a gruesome spot to visit alone, but fear was a thing utterly foreign to the nerves of Raymond Rand. If he had felt a touch of it since that disastrous dinner party at Somerset House, it had all been for her.

Breaking into other people's houses was not exactly in Rand's line, but he did not hesitate upon this occasion. Leaving his car at the side entrance, he walked, without any attempt at secrecy, to various windows and tried them. His efforts were in vain until he recalled that French door which had swung open so uncannily the night of the crime, the door by which Julia had made her escape, leaving him alone in the house with her murdered husband. Waring had said that lock was not worth much, and after a few moments work upon it Rand found that he had spoken the truth. The French door opened, and he stepped, not without a queer sensation at the,

roots of his hair, once more into the darkness and silence of Red Chimneys.

Carefully closing the door behind him, Rand fished for his flash light and turned it upon the familiar objects in the luxurious room. As he did so, a sharp sound broke the utter quiet of the old house—the deliberate slam of the very door he had heard upon the night of the crime, shortly after the shot! He could have sworn it was the same door; the sound was identical with that other.

Even as he stood there in the darkness, tensely listening, Crane's words regarding that door recurred to him. Had he heard it letting some one out, or admitting some one into the house of tragedy? Anyhow, he was not taken by surprise at that moment; he had come to discover what he could, no matter where it led him!

And so, with the sound still in his ears, though it had been followed by absolute silence, he moved noiselessly in the direction of it, feeling that he knew more about the location of doors than he had known upon that first night. If he was not wrong, then the door which had twice slammed so gayly upon his entrance into Red Chimneys, was a back door, leading directly out of the kitchen, a door that would have been in full view of Spuds, had he remained, as Chalmers said he had, in his runabout at the rear gateway! What, beside that encounter with Julia, had Spuds seen?

As he came out into the back hall which led to the morning room and kitchens, Rand got a second shock, for a soft glow came from the direction of the study where Baird had been shot, a glow that beyond mistake was a lamp! He recalled then that Crane had said something about the electricity having been turned back into Red Chimneys, along with other conveniences, at Mrs. Baird's request. But who under the sun had lighted that lamp in that horrible room?

Rand, still moving softly, crept along the hall and stood in the door, getting

a full view of the pretty little apartment and the rose lamp on the center table.

Julia Baird, in a soft white fur cloak, with no covering on her pretty head, had turned from the fireplace to face him, and they stood so a moment, looking steadily into each other's eyes.

Then the girl spoke, with that curious calm which had held her ever since Baird had made his speech at his own dinner table.

"Raymond, I came to get my red-feather fan," she said very low, but quite distinctly. "I lost it here the night—the night Roger was killed. I have not dared make the attempt before, but you see that I must have it! Every one knows it is mine!"

"Julia," he said sadly, "how could you come back here alone at night—here of all places?"

"Why not here?" She lifted lovely serene eyes. "I had nothing to do with shooting my husband. Surely you do not think that?"

"No," Rand replied, with a faint smile, "I never thought that, but every one else in the world will. That is what I have feared."

Julia shrugged with a splendid defiance, sinking down in the soft chair that was drawn furthest from the fireplace. It was cold in the empty house, and no logs crackled to-night upon the hearth from which that telltale chimney rose.

"I care little what they think," she said grimly. "I had no hand in killing him, though Heaven knows I had reason enough! If you wish, I'll tell you the story now. I did not feel equal to it to-day, because I thought that I saw in your eyes that you believed me guilty."

Rand drew another chair close to hers. "Don't think about the fan, dear," he said quietly and laid his hand on her small white ones, clasped nervelessly in her lap. "I found it in Spuds' old runabout, and I burned it."

"In the runabout! Then Spuds had

picked it up!" Her eyes brightened. "Dear old Spuds! I would not have feared if I had known that."

"Dear old Spuds!" echoed Rand in amazement. "The man has a bad name, Julia, everywhere. He must have meant to blackmail you. You are not accustomed to——"

"He was my friend!" flashed the girl, her eyes widely indignant. "He had always been my friend. But you must be impatient for the story. Will you believe me when I say that I have no idea, though I was in the house at the time, who killed my husband?"

"You do not even know who shot him?" Rand's amazement was overpowering.

"I do not."

Julia's eyes closed a moment, and then she roused herself and began her story.

"I was wild with fury after that scene at the dinner table, and I made up my mind I would not be at Somerset House when that dreadful operation he had forced you into was performed the next day," she said very low and without any trace of emotion. "I knew that in refusing to operate you were following your best impulses, and I raged at our intolerable position. I got my cloak and, not waiting to pack a bag, for I did not wish Marie to know my plans, I took my car from a shed where I kept it unknown to Roger, and I drove to Red Chimneys. I intended to stay here and, if Roger lived through the next day, let him sue me for divorce. Red Chimneys was mine, and he could not take it from me. I was not in a hurry, so I did not come the short way, and I took my time. I arrived after Roger had entered the study, though I thought myself alone there when I opened the front door. According to your testimony I must have forgotten to close it, for I was a bit nervous about coming into an empty house, though I loved every inch of it and knew every turn. I went upstairs to the room I had had furnished as my

own, expecting to spend part of my time there, when Roger Baird did over the house for me. I never guessed that he would not permit me to enter it, because it had been one of my reasons for marrying him."

She paused and drew a sharp breath, her dusky eyes darkening, her hands clenching.

"Go on," said Rand softly. "It is all over now. When you went upstairs you heard nothing in this room?"

"No. You know yourself you must come into this back hallway to hear logs crackling, or voices, or any sound from this part of the house. Roger must have been here when I entered, according to the time Doctor Finley says he left him at the back door."

"Have you any idea why he came?" asked Rand.

"I think he came because he thought he would find us here together," said Julia simply.

"But there had been a fire made here," reminded her lover.

"That is true. I do not know what that meant. I never knew he had a key to the house even, he was always so uninterested in it. All the remodeling was done before our marriage."

"Finley told me in secret that he knew Baird brought that thirty-eight automatic with him," said Rand. "He felt it in his pocket."

"Then he intended to kill us—or you or me," said Julia with a pale smile. "Possibly not you, since he believed you alone could give him back life and strength the next day. But he hated me."

"A moment before I came upon you here to-night," said Rand, "I heard a back door slam. Did you make that sound? If you did not, we had better look about before you go on. Some one might be listening."

"I came in the back door," nodded Julia. "I was sure there was no one here, and I had waited at home until my

aunt was asleep. I simply had to find that fan. You see, my key fits both front door and back, for I had always the fear that Roger would find me here some day, and I wanted to be able to get away."

"But the night of the crime, after the shot," said Rand gently, "I heard that very door slam in the very same fashion."

"So did I," said Julia with a faint horror in the eyes she kept upon his. "But, Raymond, when that door slammed that night, I was crouched on the stairs, frightened half to death."

"Well, go on; we must have the story now," urged Rand, patting the little hand he held.

"I was then up in the room I had furnished myself," resumed the girl. "And I used my flash light going about. I had brought another battery with me, for I knew I would be afraid here in the dark, and that Roger had cut out the lights. The first thing I heard was loud voices downstairs, and then silence. I did not recognize either of the voices, but one must have been Roger's."

"I was paralyzed with horror. To my knowledge no one but myself possessed a key to my old home. I stole along to the top of the stairs, listening, not having removed my cloak or my fan, and the flash was in my hands. When I was near the top of the stairs, I heard that shot, the one you heard, as you opened the front door which I had not locked. I was frozen there a moment, and then I crept down the stairs, drawn on by some awful fear of—I knew not what, when that door slammed at the back of the house. Up to that time I knew nothing of you, and I turned and fled wildly up the stairs again, clinging to the balustrade that runs along the hall, and peering downward. I saw your flash light then. If the hall had not hidden the stairs by that slight curve it takes, you must have seen me, and I you, when that door slammed.

"As it was, you missed me by a hair-breadth. Not knowing who you were, of course, and frightened half to death, I yet tried to gain control of myself to see what had happened. So I crept down the back stairs. Raymond, we played a game then of hide and seek. I dodged you everywhere, for I was determined to know what had happened, and it did not take me long to realize that you were bent upon the same errand. It was in the hall, near that study door that I saw who you were, and I nearly fainted. I would have called to you, but you entered the study immediately and set aside the screen. I was peering in the door from the hall, and I saw what you saw—the dead body of my husband, with your flash light turned upon it! I do not know how long I was in the hall, watching you, knowing that I must not tell about that night, for the awful fear of incriminating you, who had such a powerful motive to kill Roger! After you had gone upstairs I fled, not by the back door, for I still heard that mysterious slam and feared the back of the house; and not by the front, for I was afraid there might be some one else with you outside, Waldon, very likely, and I got out the French door in the drawing-room. I was sick with fear. I was afraid to be found there with Roger's body, and I was afraid to leave you there after that scene at my own table. I decided the best thing to do was to go home and be silent.

"On the lawn I ran into Spuds, who said he had seen the smoke from that chimney and stopped at the back gate to look the house over. Spuds was always my friend, and in the old days we used to do a great deal for his family. He never forgot it, and he hated my husband. So I was not too alarmed when I saw that the man I had collided with was Spuds, and I asked him to say nothing about having seen me—that I had come upon my husband dead in that

house and was going home and to bed. I told him I had had no hand in it, and he believed me. He said no one would get a word out of him, and he kept his promise, poor Spuds! In my room, after Marie had let me in, I remembered my fan. I have been panic-stricken about that ever since."

"I knew you were here for I picked up a feather from it in the hall," said Rand. "You have no idea, Julia, who was with Baird in the study?"

"No. I've told you everything."

"Spuds believed you innocent?"

"Yes. He knew me well and was fond of me."

"Then he saw more than you at Red Chimneys that night," said Rand grimly, "for he told Miss Daly he knew who killed Roger Baird. And for that knowledge he died."

"He could see the back door from where his runabout stood," said Julia. "I have thought of that."

"And all through the thing, knowing what you did of my love for you and the powerful motive I might have had, seeing what you had seen here, you never believed I shot your husband?" asked Rand tenderly.

Julia Baird lifted serene radiant eyes. "Of course I never believed you guilty!" she replied steadily. "Raymond, I knew you too well!"

A slight sound at the door startled them, so that they both turned swiftly.

Detective Crane stood there, smiling at them with satisfaction.

"Thank you, Mrs. Baird, for your frank story," he nodded. "I knew you had one, and I followed you to-night, hoping I might get it in some fashion, here where the tragedy had occurred. But I never expected this luck. I knew you were innocent, but things were looking mighty black."

"Anycy it is part of your business to spy upon the most private affairs of your suspects," said Rand hotly, "but I mightily despise such a profession!"

Crane shrugged. "You get hardened to it," he said carelessly. "Now, doctor, if you wish to see Mrs. Baird home, there are a few new developments I would like to talk over with you."

"If you mean Chalmers, I am convinced he had nothing to do with the crime," said Rand stiffly.

Crane smiled wryly.

"I do not mean Chalmers," he replied.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE OLD FARM JOURNAL.

I DIDN'T want to startle that little lady any more to-night," said Crane, when Rand and he were seated in the library at Somerset House, a box of cigars between them. "She's had about enough. But, Doctor Rand, the case is closed. I've got our man."

"What!" Rand laid down his cigar. "You've got what?"

"I've got our man," said Crane with obvious complacency. "I'm slow, but I get there."

"Have mercy on me and tell me!" cried Rand impatiently. "I've been through Hades!"

"I know it," chuckled Crane. "That's why I've come to you to get you to go along when I arrest the gentleman. Got the warrant and everything nice and handy. For a while I was dead sure the man was Chalmers. But I soon swung off him, and to-day I was sure, though I've been gathering stuff together for quite a time, I ran across that fat bartender this afternoon, and he was tickled to death. Somebody had bought Spuds' famous old mare and runabout. Paid a hundred dollars for both. Who do you suppose, it was?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Rand.

"Tom Mason, chap who come holler-ing in at Red Chimneys, with Boggs, the night you were there alone with the dead!"

"Mason! What could he want with that?"

"What did Chalmers want? What did you go snooping around that dirty old stable for, poking into the insides of that one-hoss shay? With what I had gathered regarding Mason's love for Julia Gray, when she lived on the old farm, long before the days of Baird, his almost fanatical worship of the girl and his resentment of anything that hurt her in the least, his coming up here now and then to ask her if there was anything he could do for her, and his watchdog eye on that old home of hers, I put together the facts I've unearthed to-day. I found a kid who saw Mason coming out of Red Chimneys one day with a key. Mark that. I established that Mason had a key, and it was the back door he come out of. Get that, too, and remember your gay little slam just after that shot. He is the daring type that doesn't care for consequences. I've found out a hundred little things about him that prove it. He hated Baird like a snake, while he worshiped his wife. I feel sure Mason was in Baird's private room here during that scene at the dinner table, and that he heard every word of it. Fancy his fury."

Rand suddenly saw light, even though he was still greatly bewildered. Mason—why had he never even thought of that fellow? Mason had been in that private room! How about the punctures on the top of that mahogany table? On the top of the old farm journal?

"How did Mason get into that room? I questioned Jenkins about callers," said Rand.

Crane smiled a twisted smile. "I reckon he got in by the French door," he said. "Them new-fangled things are fine for affairs of this kind. I've got no time for them, myself, opening right out on porches and grass! Anyhow, I got it in my head he was there, because I picked up some red clay under Baird's desk, just a little of it, the morning I

arrived here before I saw you. I found some more near Mason's garage where he keeps his flivver.

"I got it that Baird went to that study right after he left the table here, and I guess he knew Mason was there. Anyhow, he went. A moment later we have him asking Doc Finley to take him to Red Chimneys. I figure that Mason did not wait, but left a note for him and beat it out to make that fire and get ready for the old gent. I have no doubt he meant to kill him, for he loved Mrs. Baird enough to take that old man of hers out of your hands and off your conscience for the next day. Mason is a dangerous type of criminal, but he has his fine points.

"He was infuriated by that scene in the dining room, when Baird had shamed the woman he loved and placed you, the man of her choice, in that position. Mason's devotion was that of a dog—he never aspired to the hand of Mrs. Baird. You may guess the rest. He simply met Baird at Red Chimneys, having got him there with some tale of his wife's faithlessness, I fancy, and shot him. He made short work of it, I reckon, though they must have talked some, and I guess he told the old brute what he thought of him. Baird probably pulled out his pistol, for I looked that up and found out he had sent for that himself some weeks ago, probably when he noticed your attraction toward his wife. Mason, of course, had gone prepared with his own weapon, but, in the fury of something the old gent said, he grabbed the nearest one and shot him. Then he went out the back door and locked it with his key, and Spuds, sitting in that runabout in the bright moonlight, saw him!"

"That was before he saw Mrs. Baird," said Rand.

"Yes, some time before. Mason knew that Spuds saw him, and, no matter what he said about his actions, he saw Spuds intercept Mrs. Baird, and he must have

got an awful shock, for he was absolutely ignorant of her presence in the house. After that, of course, Spuds simply had to die. No man like Mason would trust him a minute. Spuds was a coward and kept quiet on the Mason subject; I have no doubt, through fear. But that would have broken down ere long, and Mason knew it. So he watched Spuds after the inquest and ended his life."

"Have you proof of all this?" asked Rand in amazement.

"Not all of it," chuckled Crane, as he rose. "Got to leave something to the poor guy to confess. But I'm dead sure of my man, even if he did leave us no finger prints anywhere. I've got a hundred other little things, which I haven't told you, that point to his make-up."

"Where are you going now?" asked Rand curiously.

"I'm going out to the Mason farm to grab my man," said Crane. "Want to come along? It's late, and I guess we'll find him."

"What made you lay off Chalmers?" asked Rand, as he got into his coat.

"Chalmers? He came near getting himself in wrong," grinned Crane. "Chalmers and you, I was swinging between the two of you, like a pendulum. When I heard about Chalmers getting out that window of his, and wanting to buy the runabout, and all the rest of it, I was strong for him, for he came in for the money. But when I found the old man gave him a generous allowance, even if he did run through it right off, and was pretty good about money, when he had to have it, even though they didn't get along, I wasn't as keen about Chalmers as I might have been, if the old man had held him up for cash until his death. Then another thing; Chalmers hadn't had anything to do with that red clay in the private room, for he was with the guests every minute, and there wasn't any red clay like that anywhere near Somerset House, anyhow.

"I figured Baird had had a caller there whether he saw him or her or not, and I looked around a bit."

"None of the servants saw Mason then," mused Rand, as the two men sped down the road toward the Mason farm.

"No; whoever left that red clay came in by the window, and that looked queer. So I just looked around some."

The Mason farm was in darkness, save for a window on the lower floor. A green reading lamp shone there, and the two men looked in the window.

Tom Mason was seated beneath that reading lamp, bent over a book, one hand rumpling his thick black hair, and the other—Rand drew a quick breath—the other jabbing tiny holes in the desk top with a pen knife!

"There's your man, all right!" he said grasping the detective's arm. "I found an old farm journal in the study at Red Chimneys jabbed full of little holes like that, and there are similar marks on the mahogany of the table in the private room at Somerset House! Mason was in both places. I've got that page of the magazine in my pocketbook."

"Well, you've been a long time giving me any help, but better late than never," said Crane dryly.

Detective Crane had had the story of the crime, as committed by Mason, almost correct, and the man confessed without any reluctance whatever, when the two men walked into his study. He seemed delighted because of what he considered he had done for Julia Baird, and it had been because of her that he had killed Spuds.

"After I saw Mrs. Baird meet Spuds, when she was running from that house, I knew I could not trust him," he told Crane and Rand. "I didn't care because he saw me. I didn't care a rap whether they got me or not. He was dead, and his death would not be at the door of the man Julia loved and would marry. I knew neither of them would ever get over that, and after I had sat in that

room of his that night at Somerset House, waiting for him to come to me, like I had called him up and asked him to, and heard his accusations at his dinner table, I made up my mind I would kill him before Doctor Rand had a chance to operate. I left a note for him and beat it to Red Chimneys. I took that note and burned it, you bet, after I shot him. I had a key to Red Chimneys, which Baird had given to me, to go in to see that nothing was stolen there. I dragged in some logs and made up a fire, for there was no light in the house, and it was cold as ice and damp.

"I had written him that I had knowledge that his wife was to meet Doctor Rand there after dinner, and I guessed that was enough. It was. He come along. I guess you know the rest."

"Why did you go to Somerset House

that night in the first place," asked Crane.

"I went for a simple enough reason. The locks in the French doors were mighty flimsy, and in some of the lower windows, as well, and Mrs. Baird loved everything in that house. I went to ask him to put some real ones on those doors and windows. I didn't know anything about the dinner party, nor did he, when I called him up. He got that up quick, I guess, when he got his fiendish notion in his head."

"I guess that's all," said Crane, as he rose and looked smilingly into Rand's eyes. "Let me congratulate you, Doctor Rand, upon the acquisition of a charming bride and that rather famous domicile—Red Chimneys! Wouldn't think a trail of smoke could lead to so much, now would you?"

THE END.

## IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE:

*Two Complete Novelettes*

# TWO WHO WORKED ALONE

By HARRINGTON STRONG

These two will baffle you as much as they baffled one another.

# THE MAN WITH PAPER HANDS

By EDWARD LEONARD

After all hands are not as indispensable as they seem. It's the brain behind the hands that really counts.

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# Headquarters, Chat

**I**F there is one thing which annoys, angers, enrages man and boy, woman and girl, it's to be made fun of, to be held up to ridicule, to be called stupid, a fool.

Did ever a person live who was proud of being a fool, proud of being a stupid ass? Never!

Strange to relate, however, there is a certain glamour for many in having the name of being bad. The naughty child with pouting and defiant face, carries himself with a certain air of prideful, sullen defiance when called into the presence of his accuser, and often still maintains it when taking his punishment. The village rowdy, with hat tipped at rakish angle, is ever of jaunty mien. And so through the whole gamut of wrongdoers, till, most astounding to relate, we often find the convicted murderer, with head thrown back, stepping with firm and even proud tread to the gallows or the electric chair.

Theology, religion, teaching love of God and fellow man, holding out a perpetual life of happiness to those who are good on this earth, and a life of perpetual suffering and damnation to those whose tenure here is spent in ways of wickedness, has accomplished wonders in a sinful world.

But truly, it seems to us, any other means which will help in accomplishing

this most admirable of desired ends, that of making mankind less wicked, should not be ignored.

Then why not show up the child who is naughty to be a fool, the village cut-up who is a rowdy to be a silly ass, the criminal of all grades, a pitiable, stupid oaf.

Being naughty does not pay. Crime does not pay. Every one, save those of the lowest degree of stupidity, knows in the bottom of his heart that this is so.

Surely then, as it is also true that none like to be thought fools, it will not be hard to keep many from sinful ways, by holding up to ridicule, by making fools of all who follow criminal courses, acknowledged paths of folly.

We all know the power of the cartoon and the well-directed shaft of jest. They have often accomplished more than the best sermons, essays, and lectures.

Don't you think, then, that in so far as it is practicable, enlightened people should speak of that silly naughty child, that *stupid dolt*, who stands in the felon's dock? And not let those who would sin or who have sinned, fool themselves for a minute into thinking—as they are doubly fools for trying so to do—that it is only the fools who get caught?

Any man who knows the world will tell you that the criminal who "gets away with it" is the exception to the rule, that

all of them, in time, even the "slick named types of fool, but they do suffer gent," the sharp-practice business man, loss of reputation, honor, business, sentence by public opinion to ostracism. get "caught up with." Jail may not always be the penalty for these two last- We want to hear from you.



## DIGS HIS WAY OUT OF ATLANTA

**T**HE most sensational jail delivery in the history of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary took place a short time ago. Having wormed their way to freedom through a narrow, fifty-foot tunnel which ran under the concrete wall encircling the prison, four convicts, one a partner of Gerald Chapman, million-dollar mail bandit, are now at liberty, George Anderson, Chapman's partner, was serving a twenty-five-year sentence for his part in the New York mail robbery of which Chapman was convicted.

The tunnel, barely large enough to admit passage of a human body, was found to lead from the center of a small tent in the prison tubercular zone to a point fifty or more feet away and outside the big stone wall. The warden and guards were at a loss to explain how the prisoners conveyed the great quantity of dirt from the tunnel to a freshly graded spot seventy-five feet away from the tent. They suppose the passage has been in course of construction for the past two months or more, and they think the dirt was smuggled to the new site in buckets. Near the exit of the tunnel, the officials found a small shovel and a lighted miner's lamp.

Entrance to the tunnel was through a trapdoor which had been constructed in the wooden floor of the tent. Under the trapdoor was a drop of eight feet through a hole three feet square, in the sides of which small steps had been dug. From that point the passage ran horizontally to the wall, where it curved down under the foundation until the eight-foot thickness of the wall was passed, and then it went straight up alongside the wall to daylight.



## DOGS AS BURGLAR ALARMS

**D**OGS may make good burglar alarms in New York, but they are not a success in Berlin," declared a German official of the criminal police, when the dog owners, alarmed by rising taxes and frequent fines for violations of the muzzle ordinance, pointed out that a big New York insurance company recently cut its burglar rates ten per cent on houses where dogs are kept, and used this as an argument to obtain more lenient laws in Berlin.

"There are two hundred and fifty thousand dogs in Berlin to-day," said the official; "yet the number of burglaries and petty thefts is many times greater than last year, when there were only one hundred and thirty thousand dogs in the city." He denies that the number of dogs is due to the insecurity of the streets. He produced the report of a robbery in the residence section where a woman had intrusted the guardianship of her flat to a wolf, reputed to be a savage police dog. When the woman returned one day she found not only her property missing, but the wolf had been spirited away as well.

# MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid those 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 name "blinded" if you prefer. In sending "blinded" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that 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 certify me 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.

**HANLEY, JACK.**—He is a brakeman and was last seen in Kansas City in August, 1922. Any one who knows his address will do a favor by sending it to L. Paris, 1308 Virginia Avenue, Kansas City, Missouri.

**WAGNER, BEULAH.**—She was last heard of in 1919, shortly after the death of her mother at Kansas City, Missouri. She is about five feet six inches tall, with light brown hair and brown eyes. Any one who knows her address will do a great favor by sending it to J. Bowen, Jr., S. S. "City of Grand Rapids," Holland, Michigan.

**HARTNE, W. A.**—He was last heard of in Tampa, Florida, in 1918. Any information about him will be greatly appreciated by his son, G. W. Hartne, care of this magazine.

**TOMZAK, EDMUND F.**—He is twenty-one years old, about five feet eleven inches tall, has blue eyes, and was last heard from at Grand Island, Nebraska. His mother is very anxious about him and will be most grateful for any information that will help to find him. Please write to his brother, Frank J. Tomzak, 126 East Market Street, Corning, New York.

**VAN FOSSEN, CHARLES OFF.**—His daughter has been seeking him since 1910, when she left the children's home. She hopes he will see this and write to her. Mrs. Harry May, 517 Market Avenue North, Canton, Ohio.

**ERNEST, BOB.** who has a sister in Omaha, Nebraska, and one in Minnesota, is asked to write to a friend, who will be glad to hear from any one who can give news of him. B. Haynes, care of this magazine.

**CRUTCHFIELD, J. L.**—He was last heard from at El Paso, Texas, in 1908, when he was leaving there for Houston. Any information will be appreciated by his sister, Mrs. A. D. Wyatt, Route 6, Morristown, Tennessee.

**EDNA**, of Oakland, California, is asked to write to her friend of the "Orient City," who would be very happy to hear from her. Harold Patterson, 18 Paget Terrace, Penarth, South Wales, Great Britain.

**MARGARET F.**—Please write me as to your intentions before it is too late. Martin.

**WOYTCH, ELSIE.**—Any one who knows her whereabouts, or who knows any persons by the name of Woytch, please write to Mrs. Arthur Van Orman, 124 South Jefferson Avenue, Battle Creek, Michigan.

**HORNER, FLOYD L.**—Please write to me in care of this magazine. Just a few lines will do. Mother is dead. Margaret Cole.

**CRAWFORD, WILLIAM H.**—He was chief engineer of a motor ship and was last heard from in San Francisco. Any information about him will be gladly received by Mrs. E. B. Gillock, 16 First Street, Biverside, Norfolk, Virginia.

**MILLER, FRANK L.**—Please write and do as you agreed. Shall try to go West in August. Clarence, 14 Dempsey Place, Lowell, Massachusetts.

**SIMPSON, RUTH.**—She was last heard from in Los Angeles in the spring of 1923. Any one who knows where she is will do a great favor by notifying Mrs. Vera Hutchens, 301 Adams Avenue, Ogden, Utah.

**FULTZ, BILLIE.**—He is twenty-two years old, five feet eight inches tall, with brown eyes and black hair. Any one who knows where he is will do a kindness by writing to his sister, Grace Fultz, 822 South Sixth Street, Louisville, Kentucky.

**HAMILTON, DOCTOR THEODORE E.**—When last heard from he was in Springfield, Massachusetts. He is asked to write to James H. Williams, care of this magazine.

**YUELSKY, PERLIE.**—Please write to your aunt, Mrs. Minnie Cooper, 985 D. Street, Muncie, Indiana.

**HINKLE, JAMES WORTHY,** formerly of Jarvisville, West Virginia, who left home twenty years ago and was last heard of in Wyoming. Any information about him will be appreciated by his niece, Mrs. N. C. Yerkey, Box 162, Nutter Fort, West Virginia.

**BRANDT, OPAL** who married Ralph Mack in March, 1920, in New York City, and was last heard from in 1921. She separated from her husband. She had relatives living near Philadelphia named Barr. Any information will be thankfully received by O. T. D., care of this magazine.

**USELDINGER, MARIE.**—She is about forty-one years old and has two daughters, Marcella, nineteen, and Esther, about fifteen. Her maiden name was Marie Korth. She has brown hair and eyes and the third finger of her right hand is dislocated. She left Cleveland, Ohio, about eleven years ago. Her mother is ill and her sister is very anxious to find her. She will gratefully appreciate any information as to where she or her daughters may be at this time. Mrs. Bristol, 1010 Temple Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**MANN, MERTON M.**—Please write in regard to cases and trunks. It may be necessary to move them. Have tried to reach you but failed. Any information as to the address of this man will be greatly appreciated. When last heard from he was in Tampa, Florida. J. Hosking, 29 Mountain Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

**HARRIS, HENRY.**—He left Merthyr Tliffville, South Wales, about thirty-three years ago for Ohio. Florence Matthews, of Penarth, would like to hear from him and hopes he will see this and write to her at 3982 Parrish Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**HEASTER, LOUIS ESTELLE,** nicknamed "Hex," and last heard of near Meadow Creek, West Virginia. He is about forty years old, slender and of dark complexion. Any information will be gladly welcomed by F. E. B., care of this magazine.

**SMITH, HARRY.**—He formerly lived at 23 West One Hundred and Seventeenth Street, Cheyenne, Wyoming. His brother, Alton Smith, wishes him to write to him at Montville, Connecticut.

**BARTLEY.**—Information is wanted concerning the relatives of Walter Bartley who was adopted from a Baptist home in Little Rock, Arkansas, by T. E. Harris, over twenty years ago. Send information to W. B. Harris, Box 315, Sand Springs, Oklahoma.

**GRAY, LOLA.**—Her father, David Gray, was killed in Lexington, Missouri, in 1893. She later married and moved to Texas. Any information will be appreciated by her uncle, Leroy P. Gray, Blaine, Oregon.

**DAY, DOUGLAS.**—Write your mother at once, so she can send you some important papers that have to be signed before the estate can be settled. All is well. Mrs. C. A. at the same address.

**REGGINS, BELL and BOYO.**—Formerly of Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and Muskogee, Oklahoma. Please communicate with Elijah Allen, Box 164, Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

**"EK."**—Please write to me in care of American Cedar Company, C-17, Kelliber, Minnesota. H. J.

**SCHERBANIR, FRANK.**—He was last heard from in San Francisco, California, about six months ago. Any one who knows his whereabouts will do a great favor by writing to his sister, Anna Snell, 12 N. Fountain Avenue, Springfield, Ohio.

**TRACY, OTTO CLAUDE.**—He left his home in Kansas fifteen years ago. Any one knowing him or any of his relatives please communicate with his son, Martin Tracy, Fort Lupton, Colorado.

**DENYES, BERT,** formerly of Kansas City, Missouri. Please write to me as I have interesting news for you. I. F. A., care of this magazine.

**MANN, WILLIAM.**—He formerly lived with his sister at 1561 Albion Avenue, Portland, Oregon. He is the brother of P. Mann Burr, that died in San Diego, California, early last summer. Valuable information in regard to his sister's will awaits him, and any information will be appreciated by Arthur Kuehnle, 3445 Grim Street, San Diego, California.

**MILLER, WILLIAM McK.,** whose last known address was Storm Lake, Iowa, any information will be appreciated by his brother, James V. Miller, Priest River, Idaho.

**OGILIVE, T. B.,** last heard of in the United States army. Please get in touch with your brother. J. L. Ogilive, 462 First Street, La Habra, California.

**BENNETT, JAMES D.,** formerly of Greenville, Mississippi. He is about sixty years old. He is a newspaper man and his pen name is James Dordon. Any one knowing his whereabouts will do a favor by writing to his son, Jack E. Bennett, General Delivery, Detroit, Michigan.

**POTTS, MARGARET.**—She formerly lived in Lancaster, Ohio. Information is desired by W. E. Wilson, Box 11, Steubenville, Ohio.

... in Corry,  
... Million Con-  
... years old. He is  
... hair and blue eyes.  
... help to find him will be grate-  
... G. Meyer, 2720 W. Grand River

...  
... WALTER.—He was stationed at one time  
... School, Camp Perry, Great Lakes. Please  
... M. R. Brand, care of this magazine.

...  
... witzle and I  
... but have moved.  
... would be forwarded.  
... telephone book. I am try-  
... and hoping every day to

...—His last known address was Globe.  
... We are of the opinion he still resides  
... Washington, four years ago. Any one knowing his address  
... important that he get in communication with his  
... other. Address W. G., P. O. Box 514, Chicago, Illinois.

**CARLI, DAVID (Babe).**—A logger, last seen in Aberdeen,  
Washington, four years ago. Any one knowing his address  
is asked to write to Luke, care of Mrs. C. F. Luke, 820  
Emerald Street, Redondo, California.

**COLLINS, C. O.**—He married Nellie or Florence Barnes,  
and they had two children, Nellie and Harry. Michigan  
was their home State. Any helpful information would be  
appreciated by R. H. Cole, Jewel Hotel, San Antonio,  
Texas.

**CHARLES.**—Please let me hear from you, for Margaret  
and Lucy are waiting for you at 612 East Second Street,  
Pueblo, Colorado. Lucy.

**DINGWALL, MURDOCK.**—He is a Scotchman, about  
thirty years of age. He formerly lived in Helena, Montana,  
and has spent most of his time working on ranches. His  
address is desired by Clyde English, 120 Thompson Street,  
Poughkeepsie, New York.

**D. D. F.**—There is a letter at this office from your mother  
J. J. P. Please arrange to get it and give her full name  
in order to avoid mistake.

**McDONALD, Mr. CHARLES or LEE.**—Charles was last  
seen at Green Ridge, Missouri, while Lee was in the  
British army in Canada. Send information to Lynhall Mc-  
Donald, care of this magazine.

**WILSON, CHARLES.**—Your letter received. It surprised  
me, but I wish you would write again. My new address  
is 2265 North Nineteenth Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylv-  
ania. P.

**M. LEROY.**—We have written you, but our letters are  
returned. Please send a permanent address. We are hurt  
by your selfishness, for your sick father needs you. G. M.

**ADAMS, CLEMENT SCOTT.**—When last heard from he  
was in Butte, Montana. He is about five feet ten inches  
tall, and has blue eyes and dark hair. Please send infor-  
mation to his brother, Harold F. Adams, 408 East Seventh  
Street, Oakland, California.

**EDWARDS, GEORGE W.**—He was last heard of in Gel-  
veston, Texas, in 1915. His father's name was Clayborn  
H. Edwards. His brother, J. H. Edwards, would like him  
to write to him at 285 Delmonte Street, Pasadena, Cali-  
fornia.

**THROCKMORTON, FLOYD.**—You are requested to write  
at once to your cousin, R. Throckmorton, Oil Hill, Kansas.

**LORENZEN, GUSTAV,** born in 1876, at Ottensen near  
Hamburg, Europa. He came to New York in 1888, and  
later wrote from Aleman, Wisconsin. He made a search  
for his people in 1905 through the "War Cry," published  
in Canada. They answered his appeal, but never heard  
from him. His sisters have important news for him.  
Please send any information to Mrs. Helene Gerhardt Loren-  
zen, P. O. Box 1126, Pocatello, Idaho.

**GRAN, Mr. AXEL,** born in Christania, Norway, about  
twenty-six years ago. He has light hair and blue eyes,  
and is six feet tall. He has spent most of his time on  
the sea, especially around Seattle, Washington. He was  
last heard from in Beaumont, Texas, in 1913, when he  
said of the S. S. "Tiger." His mother in Norway is  
anxious to hear from him. Please send information to  
William Wilbur, Box 97, New Suffolk, Long Island.

**CAYA, CORPORAL ARTHUR G.**—Write to your old pal  
that left you in the Burlington Station at Chicago on his  
way to Milwaukee. Everything is O. K. K. R., in care  
of this magazine.

**McDONALD, ALEX,** better known as Slim. He is tall,  
with dark hair, and has a scar on his face. His home is  
somewhere in Idaho, but he was last seen in Dearborn,  
Michigan. Any information as to present whereabouts will  
be appreciated by Velma Shane, Wood's Hotel, Anderson,  
Indiana.

**DE A.**—Please write to me in care of this magazine and  
give your address. No one shall ever know. G. A.

**WHITTAKER, A.**—He was a patient in Letterman Hos-  
pital in 1921. He is about twenty-three years old and has  
red hair, brown eyes, and a fair complexion. His old  
buddy would like to hear from him. F. C. Vickers, Walter  
Reed Hospital, Washington, D. C., Ward 31.

**STAFFORD, Mr. and Mrs. J. D.**—They were last heard  
of in Los Angeles, California. Please write to your mother  
at Sullivan, Indiana.

**JOHN.**—If you are living, please write to me and end  
this suspense. Ozle.

**TAYLOR, LILLIAK V.**—Eacine, Wisconsin, August 4,  
1923. Please communicate. I will take the entire blame.  
I wish you nothing but happiness, fortune and forget.  
C. T., 15 North Oakley Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois.

**WELLS, CLARENCE McRAY,** who left his home in New-  
port News, Virginia, in January, 1923, with his brother  
Jesse. Please write to J. D. Wells at Etoosa, Michigan.

**MORGAN, M. L.**—He lived in West Virginia or western  
Pennsylvania about thirty years ago. Any information about  
him will be appreciated. J. L. R., care of this magazine.

ELL...  
and has been  
ago he was profes...  
Any information as  
gratefully appreciated by  
magazine.

**MAKINSON, HOWARD L.**—He was  
June, 1922, when he was seen in Hamilton,  
serving in the Canadian army. His brother,  
son, wishes information sent in care of this

**BRENNAN, FRANK, JIM and MICHAEL.**—They came  
this country from Kildare, Ireland, over twenty years ago.  
When last heard of all three were in Philadelphia, Penn-  
sylvania, where one was supposed to be keeping a boarding  
house. Any information will be appreciated by their  
brother, John Brennan, care of this magazine.

**BROWN, Mrs. MARY,** known as Mrs. Laura Hambar.  
She left Council Bluffs over five months ago to visit in  
Sioux City, Iowa. She was to meet Mr. Robert McFarland,  
but no trace of them can be found. All the trouble in  
Council Bluffs has died down. Please send any information  
to Frank, care of this magazine.

**DROUET, E. V.**—He was in North Pittsburgh, Pennsylv-  
ania, in September, 1923. His wife and children are  
anxious to hear from him. Any one who can give infor-  
mation about him please write to Mrs. E. V. Drouet, Inde-  
pendence, Missouri, Route 6, Box 766.

**KNOWLTON, GRACE, and WOODS, MYRNA.**—Please  
write to an old school chum. I have important news for  
you. Maa (13-20) Songer, 1067 Acoma Street, Denver, Colo-  
rado.

**LINDERMAN, Mr. SAM.**—Please write your nephew,  
Roy Lee Linderman, at Creco, Iowa.

**CROWL, NELLIE.**—Please write me at once at 823 Bu-  
ford Street, Beaumont, Texas. N. D.

**GALLIAR, LODIA and LILLIE,** formerly in an orphans  
home in Fort Worth, Texas. Please write to your uncle,  
Sam Erdavon, 848 Toltac Street, Beaumont, Texas.

**FRASER, JOHN, and HICKMAN, FLOYD.**—Their home  
is in Charleston, West Virginia, but they were last seen in  
Philadelphia. John is a cook, while Floyd is a cabinet  
maker. Please send any information to Kenn. Thompson,  
735 Broad Street, Stratford, Connecticut.

**ROWE, Mr. ALVIN.**—He was sent to Fort McDonnell in  
December, 1920, for discharge from the army, but has not  
been heard from since. Any information will be appre-  
ciated by Flossie Beeder, 1521 N. Maple Street, Spokane,  
Washington.

**COUGHLIN, WILLIE.**—Please write to your sister, Mrs.  
Ola Coughlin Egan, at 708 Broadway, Joplin, Missouri.

**GORMON, DEALE.**—She left Ireland several years ago  
and married a man named John Manning, who was em-  
ployed in a coal mine in Colorado. Any information will  
be gratefully appreciated by her cousin, Mary Newcombe,  
North Charlotte, North Carolina.

**LEEK, Miss JACQUELINE,** of Long Beach, California,  
or Denver, Colorado. An old friend has good news for her.  
J. W. C., care of this magazine.

**NICHOLS.**—Information is wanted concerning the rela-  
tives of Jesse Nichols. His brothers' names are Melvin,  
Ray, and Thomas. They are requested to communicate with  
their cousin, who has good news for them. Mrs. Marie  
Weigand, 618 1/2 South Eighth Street, St. Joseph, Missouri.

**MORDENBERG, OSCAR,** last heard of in Ohio about  
ten years ago. Any news will be greatly appreciated by  
Kathryn Leonard, 170 Amory Street, Jamaica Plain, Massa-  
chusetts.

North...

**COFFEE,**  
He has been st...  
in a tallor shop...  
A. M., care of this...

**ROBERTS, A.,** who called  
Tampa, Florida. He is about...  
He is asked to write to J. D. Sm...  
Bay View, Baltimore, Maryland, who  
mother.

**O'HARA, BILL or EARLE,** formerly of Butler, I...  
vania. If he will communicate with Thomas Austin, 506  
Countyline Street, New Castle, Pennsylvania, he will hear  
something to his advantage.

**HARRINGTON, Private JOSEPH RAYMOND.**—When  
last heard of, in 1919, he was stationed at Camp Devens,  
Ayer, Massachusetts. His home was in Crown Point, New  
York. He is asked to write to A. E. C., care of this  
magazine.

**C. P.**—I have just received your letter and have impor-  
tant news for you. If you will tell me where to write,  
I will send you some money. Sister M. P.

**ROY.**—Please write at once. Things have been very hard  
for me since you left. I am still in Oklahoma, and a  
letter to the B. B. will reach me. M. G.

**MENDENHALL, ARTHUR,** painter and interior decorator,  
formerly of Cleveland, Ohio, is asked to write to Jack  
Crossan, of Keokuk, Iowa, and E. D. Heminger, 1019 Put-  
nam Street, Findlay, Ohio.

**DOLLY.**—Please write your sister Laura, as she is out  
of the convent and needs you. Address is 320 N. Mill-  
wood Avenue, Wichita, Kansas.

**STANFORD, WILLIE W.**—Please write me at once.  
Everything has been arranged and uncle joins me in urging  
you to come home. Katherine.

**PAVEY, MARIE J.,** and daughter, CHARLOTTE.—I was  
forced to separate from my wife and daughter in 1910, when  
we lived in Newark, New Jersey. Any information will be  
appreciated by D. K. Pavey, care of this magazine.

**MYERS, HOWARD,** who was in Jackson, Michigan, in  
1918, with Jimmie, better known as "Kid Shimmie." If  
Jimmie would be glad to hear from his old friend and  
asks him to write to him in care of this magazine.

**WILCOX, WILLIAM FRANK.**—An old friend would  
like to have his present address. L., care of this maga-  
zine.

**ENGLE, or ANGLE, FRED and his wife EDNA,** who  
left Philadelphia in 1921, for Black Rock, Arkansas. In-  
formation as to his present address would be greatly  
appreciated by Harry W. Brantz, 11 Leebank Avenue,  
Jersey City, New Jersey.

**HUFF, JACK.**—He was last heard of in Alberta, Mon-  
tana, where he has a sheep ranch. Any one who knows  
his exact address please write to B. Murphy, 314 South  
Fourth Street, Columbus, Ohio.